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# Turnover Reasons and Employee Attitudes: Examining Linkages within the Framework of Behavioral Reasoning Theory

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TURNOVER REASONS AND EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES: EXAMINING LINKAGES  
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF BEHAVIORAL REASONING THEORY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

By

Gregory David Hammond  
M.S., Wright State University, 2008

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Wright State University

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SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Gregory Hammond ENTITLED Turnover Reasons and Employee Attitudes: Examining Linkages within the Framework of Behavioral Reasoning Theory BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Abstract

Hammond, Gregory David. Ph.D., Department of Psychology, Wright State University, 2011.

Turnover Reasons and Attitudes: Examining Linkages Within the Framework of Behavioral Reasoning Theory.

This study investigated the relationship between individuals' reasons for leaving their former employers (e.g., inadequate pay) and relevant attitudinal variables (e.g., attitudes regarding pay and other compensation). The role of attitudes as a mediator of the relationship between reasons and intentions was also investigated. Finally, the relationship between reasons, attitudes, and reemployment in the same industry was investigated. Results from an archival sample of former employees ( $n = 5044$ ) from 8 small to medium-sized companies in a variety of industries indicated mixed support for the hypotheses. Implications and directions for future research were discussed.

## Table of Contents

	Page
I. Introduction	
a. Traditional Turnover Theory.....	5
b. Contemporary Turnover Theories.....	7
c. Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behavior.....	9
d. Reasons Theory.....	13
e. Behavioral Reasoning Theory.....	14
i. Reasons as Antecedents of Intentions.....	15
ii. Intentions as Antecedents of Behavior.....	16
iii. Reasons as Antecedents of Global Motives.....	17
iv. Utilization of BRT in the Literature.....	18
f. Attributions.....	20
g. Hypothesis.....	22
i. General Hypothesis Forms.....	23
1. Reason-Attitude Hypotheses.....	24
2. Mediation Hypotheses.....	24
3. Industry Turnover Hypotheses.....	25
ii. Specific Hypotheses.....	26
1. Pay.....	26
2. Advancement.....	27
3. Long Hours.....	29
4. Workload.....	31
5. Working Conditions.....	32

Table of Contents (Continued)

	6. Reemployment.....	33
II.	Method.....	35
	a. Sample.....	35
	b. Measures.....	36
	i. Reasons for Leaving.....	36
	ii. Attitudes.....	36
	iii. Willingness to Recommend.....	37
	iv. Willingness to Rejoin.....	37
	v. Reemployment in the Same Industry.....	37
III.	Results.....	37
	a. Reason-Attitude Hypotheses.....	38
	i. Hypothesis H1a.....	38
	ii. Hypothesis H2a.....	38
	iii. Hypothesis H3.....	39
	iv. Hypothesis H4a.....	39
	v. Hypothesis H5a.....	40
	vi. Hypothesis H6.....	40
	b. Mediation Hypotheses.....	41
	i. Hypothesis H1b.....	42
	ii. Hypothesis H1c.....	42
	iii. Hypothesis H2b.....	42
	iv. Hypothesis H2c.....	43

Table of Contents (Continued)

v.	Hypothesis H4b.....	43
vi.	Hypothesis H4c.....	44
vii.	Hypothesis H5b.....	44
viii.	Hypothesis H5c.....	45
c.	Reemployment Hypotheses.....	46
i.	Hypothesis H7a.....	46
ii.	Hypothesis H7b.....	47
IV.	Discussion.....	47
a.	Implications.....	49
b.	Limitations.....	51
c.	Future Research.....	54
V.	References.....	57

## List of Figures

Figure	Page
1. Depiction of Behavioral Intention Models.....	88
2. Depiction of Behavioral Reasoning Theory.....	89

## List of Tables

### Appendix

Table	Page
B1. List of Reasons for Leaving with Frequencies.....	67
C1. Tables Detailing Information about Companies and Samples Used.....	68
C2. Sample Size and Companies Included by Hypothesis.....	68
D1. Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations.....	69
D2. Results for Hypothesis H1a.....	71
D3. Results for Hypothesis H2a.....	72
D4. Results for Hypothesis H3.....	73
D5. Results for Hypothesis H4a.....	74
D6. Results for Hypothesis H5a.....	75
D7. Results for Hypothesis H6.....	76
D8. Results for Hypothesis H1b.....	77
D9. Results for Hypothesis H1c.....	78
D10. Results for Hypothesis H2b.....	79
D11. Results for Hypothesis H2c.....	80
D12. Results for Hypothesis H4b.....	81
D13. Results for Hypothesis H4c.....	82
D14. Results for Hypothesis H5b.....	83
D15. Results for Hypothesis H5c.....	84
D14. Results for Hypothesis H7a.....	85
D15. Results for Hypothesis H7b.....	86

## Introduction

The objective of this paper was to examine the relationship between employees' attitudes and reasons for leaving within the turnover process. To achieve this goal the paper first reviewed the turnover literature to establish what has been examined previously. Next, the paper examined Behavioral Reasoning Theory (Westaby, 2005) as a framework for understanding the role of an individual's reasons for leaving within the turnover process. The paper then hypothesized and tested a number of relationships between attitudes and reasons for leaving. Finally, the implications of the findings as well as limitations and directions for future research were discussed. It is important to note that this paper did not aim to explain variance in turnover. Rather, the goal was simply to examine, via existing theory and archival data, the role of employee reasons within the turnover literature and to develop an understanding of the relationship between attitudes and employee's reasons for leaving.

Researchers within Industrial/Organizational psychology have had a longstanding interest in employee turnover as a criterion. Indeed, voluntary turnover has been among the most popular research areas over the last several decades (e.g., Griffeth & Hom, 1995; Lee & Mitchell, 1994). This high level of interest resulted partly from the realization that voluntary turnover can represent a significant cost (e.g., Cascio, 1991 estimated \$4,031 per employee<sup>1</sup>; McConnell, 2007 estimated 1.2-2.0 times the annual salary<sup>2</sup>) to an organization and that research can aid in managing and mitigating some of

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<sup>1</sup> Estimate based on the cost of replacing 288 nursing staff per year, in a hospital with 200 beds, employing 1200 individuals, and experiencing a turnover rate of 2%.

<sup>2</sup> Estimate based on the cost of replacing a salaried individual. Estimated cost of replacing an hourly individual was .75 times annual salary.

that cost (Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001; Steel, Griffeth, & Hom, 2002). One method that managers and organizations have often used for attempting to understand and control voluntary turnover has been through the use of interviews and questionnaires that are designed to examine exiting employees' self-stated reasons for leaving their organization (Campion, 1991). These self-reported reasons for leaving are likely to be representations of former employees' self-perceptions about their own motivations and justifications for their decision to turnover (e.g., Westaby, 2005). This suggested that self-reported reasons were an important method by which former employees understand themselves and communicate with others about why they left their former employers (Maertz et al., 2007). Indeed, many organizations have made employee-stated turnover reasons the centerpiece of their own self-diagnostic research (e.g., Campion, 1991; Steel et al., 2002). Managers have utilized these self-stated reasons with the assumption that they shed light on the underlying problems within the organization and that they may be predictive of future turnover trends (Maertz et al., 2007). Managers may have believed that by taking action to address the issues cited by former employees the organization could ameliorate turnover, especially turnover due to the same reasons.

Yet, despite the apparent central importance of reasons for leaving to former employees themselves, those reasons have not been given much attention in the turnover literature (c.f., Campion, 1991; Maertz, Stevens, & Campion, 2003). Indeed, there has been very little research done on turnover reasons. In fact, within the I/O psychology literature it was not possible to find any theory-driven research regarding turnover reasons and no theoretical models that attempted to integrate turnover reasons. This represented a significant gap between research and what has been happening in the

applied world. This gap would perhaps seem more surprising if one were to disregard the methodological problems associated with using turnover reasons.

The first problem with turnover reasons has to do with the response options available to former employees. If employees are given an open-ended question and simply asked about their reason for leaving they may not be able to state, or may not have, a single reason for leaving. This problem would be exacerbated by the fact that individuals may have varying degrees of idiosyncrasy in their responses that would make it difficult to compare responses. The alternative would be to ask former employees to choose from a list of possible reasons. In that case former employees might be unable to fit their reasons for leaving into the generic categories of reasons provided to them. This could represent a threat to the validity of the reasons measure in that it would be uncertain if individual's responses accurately represent their actual reasons for leaving.

Another methodological problem has to do with the fact that the agreement between sources regarding an employee's reason for leaving are likely to suffer from unreliability, especially when checklists or surveys are used (Campion, 1991). Managers, coworkers, and former employees may all have differing perspectives on the reasons for an individual's departure and these differing perspectives could lead to unreliability when trying to aggregate reasons across sources. Although it would be possible to remedy some of the above issues by allowing an employee to state in their own words their reasons for leaving, there would also be shortcomings to this approach. In particular, such reasons would likely be so highly idiosyncratic that it might not be possible to make comparisons across individuals. In addition, individuals may sometimes be motivated to inaccurately report their reasons for leaving. For example, in the case of involuntary turnover, an

individual may feel motivated to report that the turnover was voluntary. Another possibility is that individuals might be influenced by contextual cues such that they report inaccuracies or alter their explanation of a turnover event (Brown, Stacey, & Nandhakumar, 2007; Salancick & Pfeffer, 1978). For example, if an individual has recently had a frustrating encounter with a current manager, they may be more likely to report problems with management as a reason for leaving a previous employer.

Despite these methodological shortcomings it should be noted that the reasons people give regarding their turnover are central to their understanding of the turnover experience (Westaby, 2005). In addition, former employees utilize their reasons to explain the turnover event when interacting with others as well (Maertz et al., 2007). Interestingly, the assertions about the personal relevance of reasons in the turnover context (Maertz et al., 2007; Westaby, 2005) closely mirror many findings in the sensemaking literature about how individuals apply meaning to events in their lives. For instance, sensemaking researchers have found that individuals create narratives in order to organize, control, and predict their experiences (Abolafia, 2010; Isabella, 1990; Weick, 1995). These narratives are sometimes constructed during retrospection and the retrospection process can be susceptible to context effects (Brown, Stacey, & Nandhakumar, 2007; Salancick & Pfeffer, 1978). In other words, depending on how and when the recall of an event takes place, an individual's recall of that event may change so that the individual maintains a coherent and plausible explanation of the event. Although this possibility is not directly addressed by BRT it is nevertheless worth mentioning and could certainly be integrated into BRT in the future.

At a minimum, the turnover reasons that individuals give are personally relevant. More likely though, self-stated turnover reasons are part of a mental representation of the former employee's motives for leaving. This suggests that turnover reasons deserve to be considered in relation to other existing turnover theories. At the very least, self-stated reasons should be investigated in order to ascertain their relationship with known turnover correlates. This would help to establish a basic understanding of how self-stated reasons should fit into the turnover literature. In order to accomplish this goal we must first have an understanding of what has been previously accomplished within the turnover literature. With that in mind we turn now to a review of the turnover literature.

### *Traditional Turnover Theory*

Any discussion of turnover should certainly acknowledge the contributions that past research has made. One of the most noteworthy contributions made by past researchers was the model proposed by March and Simon (1958). In their model, March and Simon identified the major antecedents of turnover. More specifically, they proposed that turnover results from the individual's perception about the desirability of alternatives and the ease of movement to an alternative. As research has progressed over the years the concept of the desirability has come to simply mean job satisfaction, or lack thereof, (Jackofsky & Peters, 1983) and the concept of ease of movement has come to simply mean the number of perceived alternative job opportunities (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). These constructs, availability of alternatives and level of satisfaction, have since become major theoretical underpinnings for research into employee turnover (Hulin et al., 1985).

In an effort to expand on the existing turnover literature Mobley (1977) put forth some intermediate linkages of the satisfaction-turnover relationship. Mobley indicated

that dissatisfaction leads to thinking about quitting, which in turn leads to an evaluation of the expected utility and cost of the job search. Based on that evaluation, an intention to search for a different job may occur. If such an intention does occur, then the actual search for alternative jobs may commence. Once alternatives are identified a final evaluation takes place in which the prospective job is compared to the current job. If the alternative job is deemed more favorable an intention to quit may arise which will eventually lead to turnover. According to Mobley (1977) the ordering of the steps can vary, and some individuals may not engage in all parts of the above process.

Nevertheless, the process was an important contribution in the sense that it greatly enriched the theoretical work laid down by March and Simon (1958). Unfortunately, support for the model was mixed. On the one hand, the antecedents to turnover related to one another in the way that Mobley (1977) predicted (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Yet the model was able to account for no more than 5% of the variance in turnover (Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Hom, Griffeth, & Sel-laro, 1984; Lee, 1988). There was still more to the turnover construct that was yet to be uncovered.

In 1985, Hulin et al. presented a new conceptual component of turnover. What they proposed was that different groups of individuals could have substantially different experiences in terms of their satisfaction levels and opportunities for alternative employment. For example, temporary employees might be more susceptible to quitting when presented with a job alternative than would permanent employees. In contrast, permanent employees might need to be presented with alternatives and be experiencing low levels of satisfaction in order to turn over. In essence, the very cognitions that led to turnover could vary for both of these populations (Hulin et al., 1985; Price & Mueller,

1986). In addition, Hulin et al. (1985) proposed that diverse spectrum of other variables (e.g., luck, differing foci, inertia, etc.) could have effects on turnover. Though these ideas were not directly tested, they represented an attempt to account for more of the variance in turnover. This, in turn, signified the beginning of a broader effort to branch out from March and Simon (1958).

### *Contemporary Turnover Theories*

Contemporary turnover theories represent the different paths that researchers have taken in their attempts to understand the turnover construct. The following sections review 3 distinct schools of thought that constitute the major turnover research that evolved from the traditional theories.

The first perspective belongs to Hom, Griffeth, and their colleagues (e.g., Hom et al., 1992; Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Hom et al., 1984). The major thrust here was to improve and expand upon the intermediate linkages between satisfaction and turnover. This was achieved by utilizing various methods to attain greater levels of reliability and validity in the major theorized antecedents of turnover. Research in this area has also investigated multiple moderators such as turnover base rates, unemployment rates, and type of population. Hom et al. (1992) is a good example of how the traditional turnover theories (i.e., Mobley, 1977) have been updated and refined. However, readers should be reminded that research on the traditional models (e.g., Mobley, 1977; Steers & Mowday, 1981) can only explain a limited portion of the variance in turnover (e.g., Hom et al. 1992; Hom & Griffith, 1991). For this reason it seems that the traditional approach to turnover has left us with a significant amount of ground yet to cover and that new theoretical inputs are needed.

In recognition of this issue, Hulin (1991) suggested expanding the traditional research models on satisfaction-turnover links to include more input from attitude theory. Specifically, he suggested taking a closer look at withdrawal behaviors, including transfer, absenteeism, and sabotage; this would later become what he would refer to as the adaptation/withdrawal construct. Of course, this would bring turnover research back in closer proximity to more general psychological concepts (i.e., attitude-behavior consistency). Unfortunately, one issue that has emerged (Lee & Mitchell, 1994) is that the variance in turnover is thought to be derived from alternative underlying processes. For example, motivation to attend and ability to attend underlie an employee's absenteeism (Rhodes & Steers, 1990); and it is unclear how those theoretical constructs would fit within the turnover literature in general, much less Hulin's adaptation/withdrawal construct in particular.

In a third orientation, Lee and Mitchell (1994) proposed a new model of the turnover process called the unfolding model, which has significantly expanded the scope and depth of turnover research (e.g., Hom & Kinicki, 2001). The theoretical advancement that they proposed was based on decision-making concepts from image theory (e.g., Mitchell & Beach, 1990), which states that individuals use heuristics in order to conserve mental resources. For example, when faced with multiple job alternatives, individuals will automatically disregard options that are a poor fit between their values and goals and those espoused by the organization in question. Another important contribution from Lee and Mitchell's (1994) unfolding model was the concept of a shock, which is some event that impels an individual to begin to consider leaving their job. Lee and Mitchell (1994) propose that at after the shock event some employees will follow a preformed plan, or

script, that eventually leads them to alternative employment, or at least to turnover from their current position. One example of script might be that a person decides that if their company were ever bought out by a large corporation they would leave. If that event were to occur (i.e., a shock) that employee then might follow their script and begin the search for alternative employment.

The contributions of Lee and Mitchell (1994) represented a marked departure from previous research and highlight just how diverse the theoretical conceptualizations of the turnover process have become. Unfortunately, like its predecessor theories, the unfolding model made no attempt to integrate employee's reasons for leaving. Therefore, it was necessary to draw on theoretical developments from outside of the turnover literature to explain reasons. In particular, the social psychology literature has a long history of behavioral intention models that are useful for the prediction of behaviors such as turnover. Indeed some of the more recent models to come out of that literature are very relevant for the current discussion (i.e., Behavioral Reasoning Theory; Westaby, 2005). However, in order to understand the current theories we must first understand the classical theories on which they are based. Therefore, we now turn to a discussion of the theories of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which formed the basis for most behavioral intention models.

#### *Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behavior*

The theory of planned behavior was an extension of its predecessor the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In essence, and in function, the theory of planned behavior was an updated version of the theory of reasoned action that dealt with one of the original theory's shortcomings. In particular, the theory

of planned behavior had additional provisions for dealing with situations in which individuals did not have full volitional control (Ajzen, 1991). Because there is such an extensive overlap between the theories it was appropriate to review both in tandem and from the perspective of the more current theory (i.e., the theory of planned behavior). Figure 1 presents a visual representation of the major components of both theories.

A central tenet of the theory of planned behavior was the link between intentions and behaviors. It was believed that intentions represented the motivational forces that influenced behavior (Ajzen, 1991); they indicated the level of effort one was willing to put forth to perform a behavior. Generally speaking, stronger behavioral intentions resulted in a greater likelihood of engaging in the particular behavior. However, as Ajzen (1985) noted, the relationship between intention and behavior was moderated by the extent to which the behavior was under volitional control. That is, outside factors (e.g., time, money, opportunities, assistance of others, etc.) could restrict an individual's ability to engage in an intended behavior.

In addition to the aforementioned situational restrictions, the theory of planned behavior hypothesized 3 main determinants of intentions. First, the attitude toward the behavior influenced intentions of engaging in the behavior. Here attitude was defined as the degree to which one had a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior in question. Second, a social factor called the subjective norm influenced one's intentions of engaging in the behavior. The subjective norm referred to the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the given behavior. The last predictor of intentions was perceived behavioral control; it indicated the individual's perceptions about the ease or difficulty

associated with engaging in the behavior. Perceived behavioral control could be influenced both by past behavioral experience as well as anticipated difficulties.

Generally speaking, the theory of planned behavior predicted that the more favorable the attitude and subjective norms were with respect to the behavior, then the greater the likelihood of an individual intending to engage in the given behavior. Similarly, the greater the individual's perceived control the greater the likelihood of that individual intending to engage in the given behavior. While attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control may have all played a role in the formation of intentions, their relative importance may have varied. That is, with some behaviors and in some situations, it could be the case that only attitudes influence intentions. In other situations perhaps attitudes and perceived control would influence intentions. In other words, it was not necessary for all three antecedents to be present for an intention to be formed.

There was a fair body of empirical evidence to support the antecedents of intentions as stated in the theory of planned behavior. Ajzen (1991) reviewed 16 studies that assessed attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control predicting intentions. Multiple correlations from those studies ranged from as low as .43 to as high as .94, with an average multiple correlation of .71. It was also noteworthy that attitudes made a significant contribution in 15 of the 16 cases where intentions were regressed on attitudes. Subjective norms had mixed results with no clear reason for the inconsistency. This suggested that attitudes were a more important predictor of intentions than subjective norms.

The final portion of the theory of planned behavior had to do with its treatment of the antecedents of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control. At a basic level, the

theory proposed that salient beliefs were the root cause of behavior. Although people could have a multitude of beliefs, only a limited number could be consciously attended to (Miller, 1956). It was the beliefs that were currently being consciously attended to that were most relevant for predicting an individual's behavior. Additionally, beliefs could be specified according to what they were influencing. More precisely, behavioral beliefs influenced attitudes toward the behavior, normative beliefs influenced perceived subjective norms, and control beliefs influenced perceptions of control.

The influence of beliefs within the theory of planned behavior was derived from an information-processing approach to attitude formation. This approach was heavily influenced by Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) expectancy-value model of attitudes. Within that model, attitudes develop directly from the beliefs that individual's hold about the attitude object. Beliefs themselves were developed during the natural process of forming associations between certain attributes. For example, one may associate positive feelings with the sensation of sweetness that is experienced while eating an ice cream cone. This in turn would lead to the generation of a positive attitude toward ice cream cones. Within beliefs, the attributes that became linked with behaviors were naturally evaluated as positive or negative and therefore led automatically to the development of attitudes. In this way, we have learned that behaviors we believe have largely desirable consequences are favorable just as we have learned that behaviors we believe have largely undesirable consequences are unfavorable; thus, attitudinal evaluations were formed.

It is worth noting that the theory of planned behavior was consistent with theoretical approaches within the turnover literature (e.g., Steel & Ovalle, 1984; van Breukelen, van der Vlist, & Steensma, 2004). In both perspectives behavioral intention

was thought to be an important predictor of actual behavior. This overlap was important because it opened the way for more aspects of the theory of planned behavior, or its decedents, to inform research on turnover.

While the contributions of the theory of planned behavior to the area of behavioral intention were substantial, the theory did not make any provision for reasons. Though a historically popular research topic, reasons didn't begin receiving a bona fide theoretical treatment until Westaby and Fishbein (1996) proposed reasons theory.

### *Reasons Theory*

Beginning in the early 1990's the use of self-reported reasons for behavioral motivation research became popular among researchers. Between 1993 and 1994 alone, over 100 studies assessed self-reported reasons from various topic areas including work related behaviors, academic affairs, exercise and health behaviors, law, and personal decision making (Westaby, 1995; Westaby, Fishbein, & Aherin, 1997). Despite such widespread use, there was very little theoretical attention given to reasons. In answer to this problem Westaby and Fishbein (1996) undertook one of the first theoretical treatments of reasons. Their approach hinged on three concepts: behavioral frequency/intention, reasons for performing a behavior, and reasons for not performing a behavior. Essentially, the frequency with which a person performed a given behavior or intended to perform a given behavior determined which set of reasons was most appropriate (i.e., reasons for, or reasons against). For example, if a person never gave blood and did not intend to, then it would make little sense to ask them about their reasons for giving blood.

Together there were 3 core postulates of reasons theory. First, if a person would not perform a behavior, then only reasons for not performing the behavior would be appropriate. Second, if a person would perform the behavior, then only reasons for performing the behavior would be appropriate. Third, if it was possible that a person could either perform a behavior or not perform a behavior, then both reasons for and reasons against performing the behavior were appropriate. Basically, a valid assessment of reasons must appropriately match a person's behavior and behavioral intentions. The postulates of reasons theory were later integrated into a more comprehensive theory of behavior and motivation, Behavioral Reasoning Theory (BRT; Westaby, 2005). BRT was the integration of the theory of planned behavior with the reasons theory. Additionally, BRT posited an extensive theoretical consideration for the role of reasons within the existing theoretical frameworks. Therefore, BRT was an excellent starting point for understanding how reasons and attitudes should interact with one another.

#### *Behavioral Reasoning Theory*

BRT proposed that reasons help to link people's beliefs, global motives, (e.g., attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control), intentions, and behavior (Westaby, 2005). More specifically, BRT stated that reasons impacted global motives and intentions directly, because individuals used those reasons to justify and defend their actions. BRT also differentiated between global motives and context specific beliefs. That is, global motives were defined broadly as substantive factors that influenced a multitude of behavioral intentions across different contexts. Thus, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control were all subsumed under global motives because they all significantly predicted intentions across studies (Ajzen, 2001). In contrast to global motives, context-

specific beliefs and reasons were linked to specific behaviors and served as the antecedents to global motives and intentions. That is, a person might use multiple context specific reasons to explain their behavior, but that person would have only one relevant global attitude toward that behavior. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the major components in BRT.

*Reasons as antecedents of intentions*

One area where BRT differed from preceding theories was in the treatment of reasons as antecedents to behavioral intentions. BRT proposed that reasons would account for incremental variance in intentions beyond what was accounted for by global motives. As detailed by Westaby (2005), there were several theoretical reasons for this. First, reasons included information about an individual's justifications and defense mechanisms regarding their behavior. This was especially relevant when it is considered that such mechanisms have been shown to be critical for maintaining an individual's self-worth (Steel et al., 1993; Wood, 2000). That is, individuals utilized reasons in anticipation of a behavior in order to justify and defend that behavior to themselves and others. In essence, reasons exerted a substantial influence over intentions because they enable individuals to be more comfortable with their own actions.

A second line of reasoning that supported the link between reasons and intentions had to do with context specific factors. Specifically, BRT presumed that reasons captured context-specific justification information that would otherwise be unaccounted for. This was consistent with social psychological research which espoused the importance of context factors in behavioral intention research (Bagozzi et al., 2003; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). The implication was that reasons, particularly when context-specific, might exert a

direct influence on intentions without the need for other global motives (e.g., attitudes). Westaby (2005) provided some empirical evidence to support his assertions by demonstrating that both reasons for a behavior and reasons against a behavior predicted behavioral intentions ( $r = .26$  and  $-.16$ , respectively).

#### *Intentions as antecedents of behavior*

Of course the relationship between reasons and intentions would be worthwhile only if intentions actually predicted behavior. Fortunately, there was substantial support for this proposition. One source of support came from social psychological research, where both the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) stated that intentions were important determinants of behavior. Essentially, intentions served to mediate the relationship between actual behaviors and the various cognitive, affective, and contextual variables that influenced behavior (Westaby, 2005). Thus, those cognitive, affective, and contextual variables were filtered through intentions which in turn drove behavior. In addition to being a central tenant of social psychological theory, this hypothesis has also been supported with research (e.g., Ajzen, 2001; Tett & Meyer, 1993; Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005).

The preceding discussion served as a framework for understanding BRT. In particular, the main tenants that have been discussed demonstrated that reasons were linked to actual behaviors indirectly, with global motives and intentions serving as mediators. Indeed, one of the main assertions of BRT was to indicate the importance of reasons in relation to behavioral outcomes. With support for this linkage in place we can now turn our attention to the issue of understanding attitudes and reasons.

### *Reasons as antecedents of global motives*

BRT stated that reasons were critical antecedents of each of the global motives. Essentially, BRT integrated reasons into the framework of the theory of planned behavior by placing them as the predictors of global motives. Global motives were comprised of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control. However, for the purpose of the present paper the focus was entirely on attitudes and as such the theoretical justifications that follow were based primarily on the relationship between attitudes and reasons.

The relationship between reasons and attitudes was based primarily on two main lines of research. The first was in regard to research on attitude formation processes. Bagozzi et al. (2003) conducted a study of Italian army enlistment where the author's considered the role of reasons. Their findings suggested that reasons form an important part of the motives and justifications that underlie attitudes. In fact, Bagozzi et al. (2003) concluded that reasons and their justifications should be utilized in future research as part of the basis for understanding the process of attitude formation.

Theoretically, the work of Bagozzi et al. (2003) was also consistent with decision making models such as the theory of explanation based decision making (Pennington & Hastie, 1988). In one of their experiments, Pennington and Hastie (1988) conducted legal judgment task that simulated a trial by jury. They found that individuals spontaneously evaluated various pieces of evidence by constructing a narrative story regarding the objects. When later tested, participants gave higher ratings of importance to objects they had included in their narratives. The implication here was that individuals form positive evaluations toward an alternative when they already have reasons to support that

alternative. In other words, reasons led individuals to construct attitudes that were consistent with their reasons.

A second theoretical perspective that could be used to justify reasons predicting attitudes was based on spreading-activation theory (Collins & Loftus, 1975). The basic premise of this theory was that when information was presented related information in memory became activated and therefore readily available. Spreading activation theory would predict that when a reason for a behavior was presented similar cognitions related to the specific behavior would also become activated. Through this process, attitudes related to the given behavior would become activated. For example, an individual who had strong reasons for leaving their job would activate related cognitions such as a generally positive attitude toward the quitting behavior. In fact, experimental research has shown that judgments (Levi & Pryor, 1987) and attitudes (Wilson, Dunn, Craft, & Lisle, 1992) can be influenced by reasons. This suggested that reasons lead individuals to activate attitudes that are relevant to their reasons.

An ancillary line of research that was incidentally related to the relationship between reasons and attitudes was that related to the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). The basic premise underlying cognitive dissonance was that individuals experience an unpleasant feeling known as dissonance when they hold conflicting ideas. Because of the unpleasantness individuals were motivated to reduce their level of dissonance. This was achieved by altering attitudes or behaviors; reductions in dissonance can also be achieved by justifying, blaming, or denying. For example, an individual might initially hold a positive evaluation of the benefits offered by their employer but would leave later because a better opportunity became available. In this

instance, the individual might retroactively change their evaluation of the initial employer's benefits to be consistent with the later decision to quit. Unfortunately, the theory of cognitive dissonance does not specify the directionality of the relationship between reasons and attitudes; therefore, it cannot be used to support the relationship between reasons and attitudes as specified by BRT.

#### *Utilization of BRT in the literature*

BRT was still a relatively young theory and, as such, did not have a large body of established literature supporting it. However, some research had been done that either focused on BRT specifically or at least utilized concepts from BRT to test hypotheses. In this section, select articles from a variety of topic areas that have utilized BRT were reviewed. The aim here was to provide examples of the use of BRT and thereby enhance the understanding of BRT as it related to the current study.

Westaby, Probst, and Lee (2010) utilized BRT in a study of leadership decision making. Specifically, the authors reviewed and evaluated BRT in the context of leaders' decisions to employ youth workforces. Their findings supported some of the major theoretical components of BRT and provide a useful example of the application of BRT.

First and foremost, Westaby, Probst, and Lee (2010) established that intentions did show a relationship with behaviors ( $r = .29$ ). Although it has been well established in the literature that intentions are related to behavior (Ajzen, 2001; Tett & Meyer, 1993) it was important that this study also found this relationship in order to demonstrate convergent validity.

A second finding of Westaby, Probst, and Lee (2010) was evidence in support of the importance of reasons. One of the key ways that BRT differed from other behavioral

intention models (e.g., the theory of planned behavior; Ajzen, 1991) was in the importance of context-specific reasons. More precisely, BRT proposed that reasons would account for incremental variance over and above what was accounted for by global motives alone. An example of this given in Westaby, Probst, and Lee (2010) was that although a leader may feel badly about terminating an employee (negative attitude), feel social pressure to not terminate the employee (subjective norm), and may find it difficult to actually carry out the task of termination (perceived control), the leader may retain the intention of terminating the employee due to his or her reasons for doing so (e.g., the need to downsize). What this demonstrated was the proposition of BRT that reasons were an important addition to previous theory because they accounted for incremental variance.

#### *Attributions*

Another line of theoretical reasoning that had a bearing on the importance of reasons is that of attributions. Briefly put, attributions referred to the causal explanations that individuals utilized to explain behavior and events (Heider, 1958). This was a close parallel to reasons, which were considered to be representations of former employees' self-perceptions about their motivations and justifications for their own behavior (Westaby, 2005). One important distinction between reasons and attributions was that the emphasis on the perspective of observation. That is, BRT the emphasis was primarily on the internal reasons that an individual had about their own behavior; in attribution theory the emphasis was primarily on the mechanisms that individuals used to explain the behavior of others (c.f., Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967; Weiner, 1992). However, despite

this difference in perspective there was still some valuable insight from attribution theory that needed to be acknowledged.

Heider (1958) suggested that individuals actively and continuously perceive the events unfolding around them and that those individuals make spontaneous causal inferences about those events as they occur. Ultimately, the causal inferences that an individual drew regarding some event become part of their understanding of the event that then enabled the individual to make predictions about similar future events. The process of generating and relying on causal inferences closely paralleled the concept of a narrative within the sensemaking literature. In particular, sensemaking researchers have found that individuals create narratives in order to organize, control, and predict their experiences (Abolafia, 2010; Isabella, 1990; Weick, 1995). In both the sensemaking and attribution literatures individuals draw conclusions about their experiences in order to develop an understanding that is used to predict future events.

One unique contribution of the attribution literature is the concept of attribution types. According to Hewstone, Fincham, and Jaspars (1983) there were 3 types of attributions: explanatory, predictive, and interpersonal. Explanatory attributions were those an individual used to explain an event and they represented the assertion of a causal inference about an event in an attempt to generate understanding. Predictive attributions represented the application of existing information to guide behavior in order to influence the likelihood of an event's occurrence. Predictive attributions were often utilized to prevent the occurrence of undesirable events. Finally, interpersonal attributions occurred when an event involved two or more individuals and often involved the attempt of one or more individuals to influence the asserted causal inference for personal gain. Of the 3

causal attributions explanatory attributions were the most relevant for reason research as they dealt directly with the individual's development of causal inferences which may have contained justification and motivational information. As stated in BRT (Westaby, 2005) the justifications and motivational information that underlie a behavior were important components in determining the root cause of that behavior.

A contribution of the attribution literature that may be of special relevance to the study of turnover reasons is the concept of the self-serving bias. Essentially, the self-serving bias was an attributional bias in which an individual attributed success to internal factors and failure to external factors (Forsyth, 1987). This mechanism served to protect an individual's self-efficacy and may have led to systematic distortions in one's perception of the inferred causes of an event. With regard to turnover, individuals may have been motivated to attribute some turnover events (e.g., involuntary turnover due to performance issues) to external factors (e.g., lack of support from coworkers or supervisors) in order to protect one's self-efficacy. While an investigation of this mechanism was beyond the scope of this paper its effects bore mention as a concept of potential relevance to the overall investigation of turnover reasons.

### *Hypotheses*

One of the problems that naturally arose with utilizing reasons in research was that they were necessarily idiosyncratic. Each reason that an individual had was unique to that individual. However, in order to conduct hypothesis testing it was necessary to first have a concise list of reasons that could be applied across individuals. Fortunately, the archival data that was used for this paper had reasons that were already classified into a list of 39 categories. Although these reasons did not correspond to any classification

system found in the literature (e.g., Campion, 1991) they did represent a rich diversity of possible reasons and were easily interpretable. Therefore, hypotheses were developed from the available data utilizing the existing reason categories.

Another noteworthy point is that only reasons that were voluntary in nature were used in this paper. The reason for this constraint is two-fold. First, the archival data that was used for hypothesis testing did not contain a sufficient variety of involuntary reasons for leaving necessary for forming meaningful hypotheses. Instead the data consisted mostly of individuals who voluntarily left or retired, and thus presented the greatest opportunity for hypotheses relating to those categories. Second, organizations potentially have a greater interest in voluntary turnover. That is, the voluntary turnover category potentially includes talented and high-performing individuals that the organization would otherwise like to retain as employees. Moreover, individuals who left voluntarily may have done so due to factors that were within the organization's control (e.g., wages, vacation time, career opportunities, etc.). Hence, it would be beneficial to the organization to have a good understanding of the reasons that drive voluntary turnover so that measures can be taken to prevent the loss of talented and high-performing individuals. For interested readers, the full list of reason categories is given in Appendix B. With the major reason categories in place we turn now to a direct discussion of the hypotheses themselves.

#### *General hypothesis forms*

The following section was designated to discuss the general types of relationships that would be investigated as well as some of the overarching theoretical reasoning for each type of relationship.

### *Reason-attitude hypotheses*

BRT states that reasons are antecedents of attitudes toward a specific behavior. Within the turnover framework, for example, individuals would have a reason for turning over that would then lead to the formation of an attitude about turning over. The present paper sought to expand on this relationship by demonstrating that individual turnover reasons were related to attitudes that were specific to the turnover reasons. That is, rather than looking only at the general attitude toward the turnover behavior, the present paper sought to look at more specific attitudes that should have been related only to certain reasons for leaving (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Generally speaking, hypotheses directed at this relationship would hold to the following pattern: reasons for leaving would be related to relevant attitudinal variables.

### *Mediation Hypotheses*

The reason-attitude hypotheses would only examine a very specific subset of the overall BRT framework. That is, the relationship between reasons and relevant attitudes. It was useful and informative to expand on those hypotheses to include an additional portion of the BRT framework. Specifically, BRT proposes that reasons are antecedents of attitudes and those attitudes are, in turn, antecedents of intentions. In other words, attitudes mediate the relationship between reasons and intentions. However, according to Westaby (2005) there were also direct effects between reasons and intentions. Thus, the relationship between reasons and intentions would be partially mediated by attitudes.

Intentions themselves would consist of two important aspects of former employee's potential behavior toward their former employer: employee's willingness to recommend their former employer to friends and family, and employee's willingness to

rejoin their former employer if given the opportunity. Because the turnover process can be very costly (e.g., Cascio, 1991; McConnell, 2007) it may sometimes be in the best interest of the organization to reemploy former employees. Doing so would help to ameliorate turnover related costs by reducing the need for training and by capitalizing on the existing experience of a former employee. Moreover, former employees would be more familiar with the requisite tasks and would take less time to acclimate to the job. This would help to reduce the cost of low productivity normally associated with someone who is new to a job. In a similar sense, individuals who have had experience with a job can make informed recommendations to others about their former employers. In this way the organization can recruit individuals who are more informed about the job and may be a better fit for the job and the organization.

#### *Industry turnover hypotheses*

A final set of hypotheses had to do with the reemployment of former employees, who voluntarily left, by other organizations in the same industry. Such individuals represented a population of special interest to both organizations and researchers for two reasons. First, reemployed individuals not only had the usual turnover costs associated with them (Cascio, 1991; McConnell, 2007) but they were also directly contributing to the success of another organization that might have been a competitor of their initial employer. Therefore, individuals reemployed in the same industry potentially enabled a competitor to capitalize on the training, expertise, and experience developed by the initial employer. Hence, information on what factors contribute to reemployment in an industry would be of value to organizations.

A second point of interest had to do with the fact that there has been very little research done on turnover from an industry. When an individual leaves an industry they take with them their accumulated knowledge, skills, and abilities. This would potentially represent a net loss to

the occupation if those individuals could not be readily replaced. This issue has been noted in the field of nursing where the high industry turnover rate has begun to translate into a labor shortage (Heijden, Dam, & Hasselhorn, 2009). Thus, from a research perspective, understanding the antecedents of industry turnover was of value.

### *Specific Hypotheses*

The following section was designated to discuss specific hypotheses and the theoretical justifications for each.

#### *Pay*

The first reason for leaving that was addressed was pay. For this category of reasons it was expected that attitudinal ratings regarding their compensation would be more negative. Individuals may have had a desire, or need, for greater compensation that simply wasn't met by their employer. Such an individual may have developed negative attitudes about their compensation that would later compel them to seek other employment opportunities. Essentially, the expectation was that when individuals left because of pay their attitudes regarding compensation would reflect this reason.

Pay satisfaction was a variable that had received a fair amount of attention in the literature, especially as it pertained to turnover. A meta-analysis conducted by Williams, McDaniel, and Nguyen (2007) reported on 28 correlates of pay satisfaction. However, none of the research on pay satisfaction has attempted to investigate turnover reasons as a correlate, much less as an antecedent, of pay satisfaction. However, pay satisfaction has been investigated as an antecedent of turnover intentions ( $\rho = -.31$ , Williams, McDaniel, & Nguyen, 2007). This provided partial support for the notion espoused in BRT that relevant attitudinal variables should predict behavioral outcomes (Westaby, 2005). That is, when individuals were incentivized to leave because of pay they should have had more

negative attitudes toward pay and those negative attitudes should have predicted behavioral intentions. What was lacking in the research was an understanding of reasons as antecedents of attitudes regarding pay.

H1a: Individuals who cited higher pay as a reason for leaving would have attitudes regarding their compensation that were more negative than individuals who did not cite pay.

In this instance the expected attitude resulting from the former employee's turnover reason was negative. Therefore, it was reasonable to expect that the intended behaviors toward the organization would also be negative. More precisely, it was expected that individuals who have negative attitudes regarding their compensation would be less willing to recommend or rejoin their former employer. In other words, the employee's attitude would mediate the relationship between the individual's reason for leaving and the intended behavior.

H1b: Attitudes regarding compensation would mediate the relationship between pay as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to recommend their former employer.

H1c: Attitudes regarding compensation would mediate the relationship between pay as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to rejoin their former employer.

#### *Advancement*

In terms of advancement it was expected that individuals citing advancement as a reason for leaving would have lower ratings of opportunities for advancement than individuals citing other reasons. In a meta-analysis Carson, Carson, Griffeth, and Steel

(1994) found that promotions were negatively related to turnover ( $r = -.45$ ). This indicated that individuals who achieved promotions were less likely to turnover. In contrast, when individuals seeking career advancement were frustrated in their attempts to attain advancement they may have left the organization. Subsequently, such individuals may have come to hold attitudes toward the opportunities for advancement available from their former employer that were more negative than individuals who left for reasons other than advancement.

H2a: Individuals who cited advancement as a reason for leaving would have attitudes regarding opportunities for advancement that were more negative than individuals who did not cite advancement.

Here again the expected attitude resulting from the former employee's turnover reason was negative. Therefore, it was reasonable to expect that the intended behaviors toward the organization would also be negative. More precisely, it was expected that individuals who have negative attitudes regarding their opportunities for advancement would be less willing to recommend or rejoin their former employer. In other words, the employee's attitude would mediate the relationship between the individual's reason for leaving and the intended behavior.

H2b: Attitudes regarding opportunities for advancement would mediate the relationship between advancement as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to recommend their former employer.

H2c: Attitudes regarding opportunities for advancement would mediate the relationship between advancement as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to rejoin their former employer.

Among individuals citing advancement as a reason for leaving, it was expected that attitudes regarding opportunities for training would also be lower than among individuals leaving for other reasons. Previous research has found that training correlated with managerial advancement ( $r = .36$ , Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994). Therefore, individuals who value advancement would likely seek out opportunities for training in order to increase the likelihood that they will be promoted. If such an individual was unable advance then they may have come to view the training opportunities as inadequate or insufficient. Therefore, individuals who left due to a lack of advancement should have more negative attitudes toward training opportunities than individuals who left due to other reasons.

H3: Individuals who cited advancement as a reason for leaving would have attitudes regarding training opportunities that were more negative than individuals who did not cite lack of advancement.

#### *Long Hours*

Among individuals who cited long hours as a reason for leaving one set of relevant attitudes might have been their evaluation of their hours. Excessive hours may have interfered with the individual's familial or personal responsibilities and therefore may have created a conflict of interest for the individual. For these individuals the amount time they are required to spend working did not match the commitment they were willing to make. In a meta-analysis, Kossek and Ozeki (1998) demonstrated that such work to family conflict was negatively related to both job satisfaction ( $\rho = -.27$ ) and life satisfaction ( $\rho = -.35$ ). This indicated that work to family conflicts had the potential to generate negative attitudes. Eventually the poor fit between the needs of the organization

and the needs of the individual may have incentivized the individual to turnover. As a result, the individual may have developed a negative attitude toward the hours set by the employer.

Conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1988, 1989) also provided some support for the notion that working excessive hours would have a negative impact on job attitudes. Conservation of resource theory maintains that the accumulation and protection of resources of personal value (i.e., objects, personal characteristics, conditions, and energies) is a central human drive (Hobfoll, 1988, 1989). When those resources (e.g., time) are lost, threatened, or not replenished stress can result. In particular, Hobfoll (1989, 2001) noted that the loss of resources was disproportionately more salient than the gain of resources. Hence, the loss of time associated with working long hours could have been a profound negative influence on the attitudes of individuals who left due to working excessive hours. It should also be noted that research conducted on conservation of resource theory (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999) has demonstrated that chronic stressors were linked to turnover intention.

H4a: Individuals who cited long hours as a reason for leaving would have attitudes regarding hours that were more negative than individuals who did not cite long hours.

Here again the expected attitude resulting from the former employee's turnover reason was negative. Therefore, it was reasonable to expect that the intended behaviors toward the organization would also be negative. More precisely, it was expected that individuals who have negative attitudes regarding their hours would be less willing to recommend or rejoin their former employer. In other words, the employee's attitude

would mediate the relationship between the individual's reason for leaving and the intended behavior.

H4b: Attitudes regarding hours would mediate the relationship between long hours as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to recommend their former employer.

H4c: Attitudes regarding hours would mediate the relationship between long hours as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to rejoin their former employer.

#### *Workload*

Workload was another reason that was similar to, but still distinct from, long hours. Excessive workload referred to either the quantitative (i.e., volume or quantity of work required) or qualitative (i.e., the difficulty of the work performed, especially when it exceeds an individual's ability) aspects of the work. While a heavy workload may induce an individual to work long hours it was the perceptions about the work itself that were the actual source of turnover. As with long hours, an excessive workload may have interfered with the individual's familial or personal responsibilities and thus created a conflict of interest for the individual. For these individuals the amount of work required of them does not match the commitment they were willing to make. In this instance the poor fit between the needs of the organization and the needs of the individual may have incentivized the individual to turnover (c.f. Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). As a result, the individual may have developed a negative attitude toward the workload required by the employer.

As with long hours, conservation of resource theory could also have helped to explain the relationship between workload and negative attitudes. In particular, the loss of resources (e.g., energy or time) could have led to stress which, in turn could have led to negative attitudes about the stressor event (i.e., excessive workload).

H5a: Individuals who cited workload as a reason for leaving would have attitudes regarding their workload that were more negative than individuals who did not cite workload.

Here again the expected attitude resulting from the former employee's turnover reason was negative. Therefore, it was reasonable to expect that intended behaviors toward the organization would also be negative. More precisely, it was expected that individuals who have negative attitudes regarding their workload would be less willing to recommend or rejoin their former employer. In other words, the employee's attitude would mediate the relationship between the individual's reason for leaving and the intended behavior.

H5b: Attitudes regarding workload would mediate the relationship between workload as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to recommend their former employer.

H5c: Attitudes regarding workload would mediate the relationship between workload as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to rejoin their former employer.

#### *Working conditions*

The relationship between dissatisfaction with working conditions and attitudes regarding the physical working conditions were examined. Physical working conditions

could have referred to a wide range of workplace characteristics that inhibit productivity or make employees uncomfortable (e.g., poor lighting, small work spaces, potentially hazardous conditions, etc.). In each instance the working conditions interfered with an employee's ability to execute their job tasks. The issue of poor working conditions was potentially even more important when dealing with unsafe conditions where safety tasks could compete with performance tasks directly, thus acting as a situational constraint (Spector & Jex, 1998). A study by Young and Corsun (2010) found the overall physical working conditions (i.e., appearance of the workspace, cleanliness of the workspace, maintenance of equipment and tools, the speed with which broken equipment and tools were repaired, and overall physical working conditions) were correlated with turnover intention ( $r = -.15$ ). Thus, individuals who cited working conditions as a reason for leaving should have had more negative attitudes toward physical working conditions than those who did not cite working conditions.

H6: Individuals who cited working conditions as a reason for leaving would have attitudes regarding the physical working conditions that are more negative than individuals who did not cite working conditions.

### *Reemployment*

Reemployment in the same industry after a turnover event was an area of interest due to the practical implications for labor availability. Consider that while a turnover event signaled the end of an individual's employment with a particular organization, it may have also signaled the end of their employment in an entire industry. Although the amount of previous research in the area of industry turnover was rather small, a couple of examples provided some guidance. First, a study of chefs conducted by Young and Corsun (2010) demonstrated that working conditions and job satisfaction were significantly related to intent to turnover from the food

service industry ( $r = -.15$ ,  $r = -.13$  respectively). This indicated that the evaluations and attitudes that individual's held about their jobs could influence their decisions about whether or not they would remain in their industry. A second study of nurses conducted by Heijden, Dam, and Hasselhorn (2009) demonstrated that social support from supervisors and job satisfaction were significantly related to intent to turnover from nursing ( $r = -.11$  and  $r = -.24$  respectively). This study provided further support for the notion that an individual's evaluations and attitudes regarding their work could have an influence on their intention to leave an industry.

While previous research had made some interesting contributions to understanding industry turnover, there were still many antecedent relationship yet to be explored. The trend in previous research (e.g., Heijden, Dam, and Hasselhorn, 2009; Young and Corsun, 2010) was that more negative attitudes corresponded to a higher likelihood of industry turnover. Therefore, the present study hypothesized that the more negative individual's attitudes (i.e., attitudes regarding pay, opportunity for advancement, hours, and workload) the more likely that an individual would not be reemployed in the same industry.

H7a: Individual's attitudes about their former job would be positively related to their reemployment in the same industry.

A related hypothesis that had not been explored in the literature was that an individual's reasons for leaving their organization may be related to their reemployment in the same industry. Simply put individuals may have had the perception that the reasons were localized to a particular company rather than being endemic to an entire industry. In other words, pay, workload, hours, working conditions and opportunities for advancement were reasons for leaving that might have varied highly from one company to the next. Therefore, an individual who left their organization due to one of these reasons may have sought reemployment in the same industry with the perception that a different company would have provided better pay, a lighter workload, better hours, advancement opportunities or better working conditions.

H7b: Individual's reasons for leaving their former job would be positively related to their reemployment in the same industry.

## Method

### *Sample*

An archival sample of 5044 former employees from eight small to medium-sized companies was used. The data were collected using telephone interviews and mail surveys (a sample survey is given in appendix A). The companies represented various industries including finance ( $n = 1830$ ; 36.3% of sample), insurance ( $n = 1750$ ; 34.7% of sample), distribution ( $n = 148$ ; 2.9% of sample), manufacturing ( $n = 918$ ; 18.2% of sample), and corporate services ( $n = 398$ , 7.9% of sample). Respondents had organizational tenures ranging from less than 1 year to 47 years with a mean tenure of 9.86 years. Respondents had position tenures ranging from less than 1 year to 20 years with a mean tenure of 2.19 years. Out of the total sample, only 3 companies ( $n = 3483$ ; 69.1% of the sample) reported gender data. Among respondents for whom gender data was collected 63.9% ( $n = 2226$ ) were female, and 36.1% ( $n = 1257$ ) were male. Out of the total sample, only 2 companies ( $n = 1805$ ; 35.8% of the sample) reported ethnicity data. Among respondents for whom ethnicity data was collected .9% ( $n = 16$ ) were American Indian, 2.6% ( $n = 47$ ) were Asian, 5.3% ( $n = 95$ ) were African American, 3.7% ( $n = 67$ ) were Hispanic, 87% ( $n = 1570$ ) were Caucasian, and .6% ( $n = 10$ ) reported being of two or more races. Data on respondent age was unavailable.

Because each company had a unique combination of questions that were asked of respondents the data available for the analysis of each hypothesis typically represented only a subsection of the total archive. For example, hypothesis H1a had data available from six of the eight companies with 2998 responses available. Tables 1 and 2 in

appendix C detail the companies and sample sizes that were utilized in each analysis. Information on the industries represented in each analysis is also presented.

### *Measures*

#### *Reasons for leaving*

Respondents were asked to state their primary reason for leaving their former employers. Those open-ended responses were then coded into a list of 39 reasons (a complete list is presented in appendix B) by trained interviewers. Sample reasons for leaving were “pay,” “working conditions,” and “advancement.”

#### *Attitudes*

Employee attitudes were assessed with a series of items that measured individuals’ evaluations of various aspects of their previous employment. Employees were instructed to rate various aspects of their former jobs and employers on a 5-point scale ranging from “Poor” to “Excellent” with higher points on the scale corresponding to more positive attitudes. Attitudes regarding pay were assessed with the item “(Please rate) Your compensation including subsidies, commissions, incentives, and rookie bonuses.” Attitudes regarding advancement opportunities were assessed with the item “(Please rate) Your opportunities for advancement.” Attitudes regarding training opportunities were assessed with the item “(Please rate) The training programs at (insert company).” Attitudes regarding hours were assessed with the item “(Please rate) Your work hours/work schedule.” Attitudes regarding workload were assessed with the item “(Please rate) Your workload.” Attitudes regarding working conditions were assessed with the item “(Please rate) Your physical working conditions.”

It should be noted that the attitude scales utilized in the current study were comprised of a single item and therefore do not have alphas. The issue of single item measures has been addressed in previous research (Nagy, 2002; Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy, 1997) and is acceptable provided the construct of interest is sufficiently narrow or is unambiguous to the respondent (Sackett & Larson, 1990). In all instances of single-item measures utilized in this paper the constructs being measured were both narrow and unambiguous to the respondent (e.g., assessing a respondent's attitude regarding their pay).

#### *Willingness to recommend*

Willingness to recommend was assessed with the item "Would you recommend (company name) to your friends and/or family members as a good place to work?"

Responses were scored dichotomously as yes or no.

#### *Willingness to rejoin*

Willingness to rejoin was assessed with the item "Would you be interested in re-joining (company name) in the future?" Responses were scored dichotomously as yes or no.

#### *Reemployment in the same industry*

Industry reemployment was assessed with the item "If you have gone on to another job, are you staying in the same industry?" Responses were scored dichotomously as yes or no.

## Results

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations between study variables were presented in table 1 (appendix D).

### *Reason attitude hypotheses*

Reason-attitude hypotheses (i.e., hypotheses H1a, H2a, H3, H4a, H5a, and H6) were tested using independent samples t-tests. Moreover, Levene's test for the equality of variances (Levene, 1960) was used to ensure the homogeneity of variance between groups (i.e., those stating a particular reason versus those stating other reasons). When this assumption was violated a modified version of the independent sample's t-test was used to compensate (Welch, 1947). The results of each hypothesized relationship are detailed below.

#### *Hypothesis H1a*

This hypothesis predicted that individuals who cited higher pay as a reason for leaving would have attitudes regarding their compensation that were more negative than individuals who did not cite pay. There was a significant difference in the attitudes regarding compensation for those citing pay ( $M = 2.18$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) and those citing other reasons ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ );  $t(956.22) = -14.45$ ,  $p < .01$  (see also appendix D, table 2)<sup>3</sup>. These results suggested that pay as reason for leaving was related to attitudes regarding compensation. Specifically, individuals who left due to pay were likely to have a more negative attitude regarding compensation than individuals who left for other reasons. Overall, hypothesis H1a was supported.

#### *Hypothesis H2a*

This hypothesis predicted that individuals who cited advancement as a reason for leaving would have attitudes regarding opportunities for advancement that were more negative than individuals who did not cite advancement. There was a significant

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that Levene's test showed that the assumption of equality of variances was violated ( $F = 11.61$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Therefore, a modified version of the independent samples t-test was used to compensate (Welch, 1947).

difference in the attitudes regarding opportunities for advancement for those citing advancement ( $M = 1.90$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) and those citing other reasons ( $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ );  $t(693.12) = -16.08$ ,  $p < .01$  (see also appendix D, table 3)<sup>4</sup>. These results suggested that advancement as reason for leaving was related to attitudes regarding opportunity for advancement. Specifically, individuals who left due to advancement were likely to have a more negative attitude regarding opportunities for advancement than individuals who left for other reasons. Overall, hypothesis H2a was supported.

### *Hypothesis H3*

This hypothesis predicted that individuals who cited advancement as a reason for leaving would have attitudes regarding training opportunities that were more negative than individuals who did not cite lack of advancement. There was not a significant difference in the attitudes regarding training opportunities for those citing advancement ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ) and those citing other reasons ( $M = 2.77$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ );  $t(1332) = -.508$ ,  $p = .61$  (see also appendix D, table 4). These results suggested that advancement as reason for leaving was not related to attitudes regarding training opportunities. Overall, hypothesis H3 was not supported.

### *Hypothesis H4a*

This hypothesis predicted that individuals who cited long hours as a reason for leaving would have attitudes regarding hours that were more negative than individuals who did not cite long hours. There was a significant difference in the attitudes regarding hours for those citing long hours ( $M = 2.53$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) and those citing other reasons ( $M$

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that Levene's test showed that the assumption of equality of variances was violated ( $F = 67.69$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Therefore, a modified version of the independent samples t-test was used to compensate (Welch, 1947).

= 3.67, SD = 1.21);  $t(160.85) = -9.26, p < .01$  (see also appendix D, table 5)<sup>5</sup>. These results suggested that long hours as reason for leaving was related to attitudes regarding hours. Specifically, individuals who left due to long hours were likely to have a more negative attitude regarding hours than individuals who left for other reasons. Overall, hypothesis H4a was supported.

#### *Hypothesis H5a*

This hypothesis predicted that individuals who cited workload as a reason for leaving would have attitudes regarding their workload that were more negative than individuals who did not cite workload. There was a significant difference in the attitudes regarding workload for those citing workload (M = 1.61, SD = 1.02) and those citing other reasons (M = 2.53, SD = 1.20);  $t(92.07) = -7.76, p < .01$  (see also appendix D, table 6)<sup>6</sup>. These results suggested that workload as reason was related to attitudes regarding workload. Specifically, individuals who left due to workload were likely to have a more negative attitude regarding workload than individuals who left for other reasons. Overall, hypothesis H5a was supported.

#### *Hypothesis H6*

This hypothesis predicted that individuals who cited working conditions as a reason for leaving would have attitudes regarding the physical working conditions that are more negative than individuals who did not cite working conditions. There was a

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that Levene's test showed that the assumption of equality of variances was violated ( $F = 11.39, p < .01$ ). Therefore, a modified version of the independent samples t-test was used to compensate (Welch, 1947).

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that Levene's test showed that the assumption of equality of variances was violated ( $F = 7.50, p < .05$ ). Therefore, a modified version of the independent samples t-test was used to compensate (Welch, 1947).

significant difference in the attitudes regarding physical working conditions for those citing working conditions ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) and those citing other reasons ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ );  $t(3301) = -6.589$ ,  $p < .01$  (see also appendix D, table 7). These results suggested that working conditions as reason for leaving was related to attitudes regarding working conditions. Specifically, individuals who left due to working conditions were likely to have a more negative attitude regarding physical working conditions than individuals who left for other reasons. Overall, hypothesis H6 was supported.

### *Mediation Hypotheses*

Mediation hypotheses (i.e., H1b, H1c, H2b, H2c, H4b, H4c, H5b, and H5c) were tested using the procedure outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). This process involved first establishing that reasons were correlated with intentions (i.e., willingness to recommend and willingness to rejoin). Next it was necessary to demonstrate that the reason variable was correlated with the mediator (i.e., the attitudinal variable). It was then demonstrated that the mediator affected the outcome variable. To do this, a regression equation was used to determine the relationship between attitudes and intentions when reasons were controlled for. Finally, a regression of reasons on intentions controlling for attitudes was used to indicate whether attitudes were partial or full mediators. When mediation was shown to occur, a Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) was used to estimate the indirect effect. Because the outcome variables used in the mediation analyses were dichotomous the standardization procedure for regression coefficients suggested by MacKinnon and Dwyer (1993) was utilized.

### *Hypothesis H1b*

This hypothesis predicted that attitudes regarding compensation would mediate the relationship between pay as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to recommend their former employer. The results of the analysis regressing pay as a reason for leaving on willingness to recommend indicated that there was no relationship between the variables ( $\beta = -.03, p > .05$ ; see appendix D table 8). Because no relationship was evident in this step there was no possibility of a mediation relationship and thus no further testing was done (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Hypothesis H1b was not supported.

### *Hypothesis H1c*

This hypothesis predicted that attitudes regarding compensation would mediate the relationship between pay as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to rejoin their former employer. The results of the analysis regressing pay as a reason for leaving on willingness to rejoin indicated that there was no relationship between the variables ( $\beta = .05, p > .05$ ; see appendix D table 9). Because no relationship was evident in this step there was no possibility of a mediation relationship and thus no further testing was done (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Hypothesis H1b was not supported.

### *Hypothesis H2b*

This hypothesis predicted that attitudes regarding opportunities for advancement would mediate the relationship between advancement as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to recommend their former employer. The results of the analysis regressing advancement as a reason for leaving on willingness to recommend indicated that there was no relationship between the variables ( $\beta = -.07, p > .05$ ; see appendix D table 10). Because no relationship was evident in this step there was no possibility of a

mediation relationship and thus no further testing was done (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Hypothesis H2b was not supported.

#### *Hypothesis H2c*

This hypothesis predicted that attitudes regarding opportunities for advancement would mediate the relationship between advancement as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to rejoin their former employer. The results of this analysis are presented in appendix D, table 11. The analysis of step 1 indicated that advancement as a reason for leaving was significantly and positively related to willingness to rejoin ( $\beta = .08, p = .03$ ). The analysis of step 2 indicated that advancement as a reason for leaving was significantly and negatively related to attitudes regarding advancement ( $\beta = -.17, p < .01$ ). The analysis of step 3 indicated that attitudes regarding advancement were positively related to willingness to rejoin ( $\beta = .14, p < .01$ ). The final part of the mediation analysis indicated that there was a significant and positive relationship between advancement as a reason for leaving and willingness to rejoin after controlling for attitudes regarding advancement. This indicates that attitudes regarding advancement partially mediated the relationship between advancement as a reason for leaving and willingness to rejoin. The Sobel test indicated that the indirect effect from advancement as a reason for leaving to willingness to rejoin was  $.10 (p < .01)$ . Overall, Hypothesis H4b was partially supported.

#### *Hypothesis H4b*

This hypothesis predicted that attitudes regarding hours would mediate the relationship between long hours as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to recommend their former employer. The results of this analysis are presented in appendix

D, table 12. The analysis of step 1 indicated that long hours as a reason for leaving were significantly and negatively related to willingness to recommend ( $\beta = -.12, p < .01$ ). The analysis of step 2 indicated that long hours as a reason for leaving were significantly and negatively related to attitudes regarding hours ( $\beta = -.20, p < .01$ ). The analysis of step 3 indicated that attitudes regarding hours were significantly and positively related to willingness to recommend ( $\beta = .32, p < .01$ ). The final part of the mediation analysis indicated that there was no relationship between long hours as a reason for leaving and willingness to recommend after controlling for attitudes regarding hours. This indicates that attitudes regarding hours fully mediated the relationship between long hours as a reason for leaving and willingness to recommend. The Sobel test indicated that the indirect effect from long hours as a reason for leaving to willingness to recommend was  $-.09$  ( $p < .01$ ). Overall, Hypothesis H4b was supported.

#### *Hypothesis H4c*

This hypothesis predicted that attitudes regarding hours would mediate the relationship between long hours as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to rejoin their former employer. The results of the analysis regressing long hours as a reason for leaving on willingness to rejoin indicated that there was no relationship between the variables ( $\beta = -.01, p > .05$ ; see appendix D table 13). Because no relationship was evident in this step there was no possibility of a mediation relationship and thus no further testing was done (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Hypothesis H4c was not supported.

#### *Hypothesis H5b*

This hypothesis predicted that attitudes regarding workload would mediate the relationship between workload as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to

recommend their former employer. The results of this analysis are presented in appendix D, table 14. The analysis of step 1 indicated that workload as a reason for leaving was significantly and negatively related to willingness to recommend ( $\beta = -.18, p < .01$ ). The analysis of step 2 indicated that workload as a reason for leaving was significantly and negatively related to attitudes regarding workload ( $\beta = -.15, p < .01$ ). The analysis of step 3 indicated that attitudes regarding workload were significantly and positively related to willingness to recommend ( $\beta = .39, p < .01$ ). The final part of the mediation analysis indicated that there was a significant and negative relationship between workload as a reason for leaving and willingness to recommend after controlling for attitudes regarding workload ( $\beta = -.09, p < .01$ ). This indicates that attitudes regarding workload partially mediated the relationship between workload as a reason for leaving and willingness to recommend. The Sobel test indicated that the indirect effect from workload as a reason for leaving to willingness to recommend was  $-.15$  ( $p < .01$ ). Overall, Hypothesis H5b was partially supported.

#### *Hypothesis H5c*

This hypothesis predicted that attitudes regarding workload would mediate the relationship between workload as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to rejoin their former employer. The results of this analysis are presented in appendix D, table 15. The analysis of step 1 indicated that workload as a reason for leaving was significantly and negatively related to willingness to rejoin ( $\beta = -.08, p = .03$ ). The analysis of step 2 indicated that workload as a reason for leaving was significantly and negatively related to attitudes regarding workload ( $\beta = -.15, p < .01$ ). The analysis of step 3 indicated that attitudes regarding workload were significantly and positively related to

willingness to rejoin ( $\beta = .16, p < .01$ ). The final part of the mediation analysis indicated that there was no relationship between workload as a reason for leaving and willingness to rejoin after controlling for attitudes regarding workload. This indicates that attitudes regarding workload fully mediated the relationship between workload as a reason for leaving and willingness to rejoin. The Sobel test indicated that the indirect effect from workload as a reason for leaving to willingness to rejoin was  $-.06 (p < .01)$ . Overall, Hypothesis H5c was supported.

#### *Reemployment hypotheses*

##### *Hypothesis 7a*

This hypothesis predicted that individual's attitudes about their former job would be positively related to their reemployment in the same industry. To test this hypothesis a logistic regression was conducted. The Hosmer and Lemeshow (see appendix D, table 16) goodness-of-fit index indicated that overall a model consisting of attitudes predicting reemployment had good fit  $\chi^2 (8, n = 507) = 2.89, p = .94$ . Moreover, the overall model evaluations indicated that a model including attitudes was better fit for the data than an intercept-only null model (likelihood ratio test  $\chi^2 [4, n = 507] = 20.72, p < .01$ ; score test  $\chi^2 [4, n = 507] = 20.44, p < .01$ ). However, of the individual predictors only attitudes towards workload were significant (wald  $\chi^2 [4, n = 507] = 7.93, p < .01$ ). The exponentiated coefficient for attitudes toward workload ( $e^B = .78$ ) indicated a negative relationship between the attitude and reemployment variables. That is, the more positive an individual's attitude the less likely the individual was to become reemployed in the same industry. Overall, hypothesis H7a was not supported.

### *Hypotheses 7b*

Hypothesis H7b predicted that individual's turnover reasons would be positively related to their reemployment in the same industry. To test this hypothesis a logistic regression was conducted. The Hosmer and Lemeshow (see appendix D, table 17) goodness-of-fit index indicated that overall a model consisting of turnover reasons predicting reemployment had good fit  $\chi^2(3, n = 1949) = .00, p = 1.00$ . Moreover, the overall model evaluations indicated that a model including turnover reasons was a better fit for the data than an intercept-only null model (likelihood ratio test  $\chi^2[5, n = 1949] = 41.37, p < .01$ ; score test  $\chi^2[5, n = 1949] = 41.82, p < .01$ ; wald test  $\chi^2[5, n = 1949] = 40.27, p < .01$ ).

With regard to hypothesis H7b, advancement (wald  $\chi^2[1, n = 1949] = 34.47, p < .01$ ), pay (wald  $\chi^2[1, n = 1949] = 4.12, p = .04$ ), and workload (wald  $\chi^2[1, n = 1949] = 5.45, p = .04$ ) as reasons for leaving were significantly related to reemployment. Long hours and working conditions as reasons for leaving were not significantly related to reemployment. The exponentiated coefficients for advancement ( $e^B = 2.67$ ), pay ( $e^B = 1.29$ ), and workload ( $e^B = 1.71$ ) as a reasons for leaving indicated positive relationships between the reason and reemployment variables. That is, individuals who left due to advancement, pay, or workload were likely to be reemployed in the same industry. Overall, hypothesis H7b was supported.

### Discussion

The first finding of the present study was a significant relationship between attitudes and reasons. In particular, the present study demonstrated that pay, advancement, long hours, workload, and working conditions were all significantly related

to corresponding attitudinal variables (i.e., attitudes regarding pay, opportunities for advancement, hours, workload, and physical working conditions, respectively). In fact, the only hypothesized reason-attitude relationship that was not supported was between advancement as a reason for leaving and attitudes regarding training opportunities. The non-significant results for this relationship may have been due to respondents giving more consideration to other factors (i.e., too few opportunities for advancement) as a cause of their lack of advancement.

The current study also established several mediation relationships. In particular, it was found that attitudes regarding hours fully mediated the relationship between long hours as a reason for leaving and individual's willingness to recommend their former employer. It was also found that attitudes regarding workload mediated the relationship between workload as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to rejoin their former employer. Additionally, it was found that attitudes regarding workload partially mediated the relationship between workload as a reason for leaving and individuals' willingness to rejoin their former employer. Attitudes regarding compensation did not show any mediation effects. Attitudes toward advancement did not show any mediation with willingness to recommend as an outcome. Similarly, Attitudes toward hours did not show any mediation with willingness to rejoin as an outcome. Curiously, attitudes toward advancement partially mediated the relationship between advancement as a reason for leaving and willingness to rejoin. However, this relationship demonstrated an indirect effect that was in the opposite direction from what was hypothesized.

Lastly, the current study established several relationships between attitudes, reasons for leaving, and reemployment in the same industry. In particular, attitudes

toward workload were shown to significantly predict reemployment in the same industry. Moreover, several reasons for leaving (i.e., pay, advancement, and workload) were also shown to significantly predict reemployment. Other attitudes (i.e., attitudes regarding compensation, opportunity for advancement, and hours) and reasons for leaving (i.e., working conditions and long hours) did not show any significant relationship with reemployment.

### *Implications*

The foremost implication of the current study was the relevance and value of reasons, specifically with regard to turnover research. By establishing the existence of a relationship between reasons and attitudes in the context of turnover, the current study equipped future researchers with an empirical basis for approaching issues concerning reasons as a previously unexplored antecedent of turnover. Although it is important to add that while the current study did not establish that reasons cause attitudes, it was consistent with the theorized role of reasons. In this way, the current study filled a niche role by demonstrating that, with regard to the particular reasons and attitudes measured, the relationships observed were consistent with the expectations of researchers that reasons exert some influence on attitudes (Westaby, 2005; Westaby & Fishbein, 1996).

A related implication had to do with the relationship between the current study and that of reasons researchers (i.e., Westaby, 2005; Westaby & Fishbein, 1996). In affirming a relationship between reasons and attitudes, the current study did provide support for the assertion of BRT that reasons are antecedents of attitudes. However, the current study had mixed findings with regard to the assertion of BRT that attitudes mediate the relationship between reasons and intentions. BRT specified that the

relationship between reasons and intentions would be partially mediated by attitudes. This assertion was supported by only three of the eight mediation hypotheses used to test it. The implication was that the mediation relationship proposed in BRT may not adequately describe the true relationship between reasons, attitudes, and intentions. It may be possible that other, as yet unknown, factors would determine when mediation would occur. One possibility is that some reasons may have differential effects on the role of attitudes as a mediator. For example, the birth of a child may imply certain logistical concerns that lead directly to a turnover intention without any attitudinal influence. In contrast, reasons such as pay may leave open a greater possibility for attitudes to develop and influence behavioral intentions. Future researchers should investigate reasons in more detail to determine the possible impact of such factors.

A final implication had to do with the reemployment of individuals in the same industry. The current study demonstrated that reasons were related to reemployment and that there may be some potential attitudinal relationships as well. The first point to be taken from this finding was that turnover as a variable may be more complex than previously thought. In particular, when assessing turnover relationships it may be important to specify turnover from a job versus turnover from an industry. These disparate types of turnover may have different ramifications for individuals, organizations, and industries that require more sophisticated attention than what is currently available in the industrial and organizational literature. Currently there is no research in the turnover literature investigating the differential causes of job turnover and industry turnover. In fact there is very little research on industry turnover overall.

Certainly, the potential loss of knowledge, skills, and abilities due to industry turnover represents a significant incentive for researchers to investigate the causes and correlates.

From a practical standpoint the differentiation of the causes of job turnover versus industry turnover could be relevant for organizations in terms of the collective knowledge, skills, and abilities represented by the available labor pool. Understanding the reasons that drive job versus industry turnover could enable an organization to capitalize on turnover from a competitor and thus secure a workforce advantage which could, in turn, translate to greater profitability.

A second, related, point has to do with the role of reasons in regard to industry turnover. By demonstrating that reasons were related to industry turnover, the current study laid the foundation for future researchers to begin the investigation of industry turnover as a variable. That is, reasons may in fact be an important cause of turnover from an industry and this potential causality should be investigated. Moreover, this relationship also demonstrated further utility for reasons as a variable, especially with regard to turnover research.

### *Limitations*

One of the defining limitations of the present study was its use of archival data. While archival data can be uniquely capable of providing rich and diverse samples it simultaneously places multiple constraints on researchers. One proximal problem that any archival researcher would be likely to encounter is the problem of missing or incomplete data. Such incompleteness can make it difficult to determine whether the available information was adequate for drawing inferences about a population. In the present study, the issue of incomplete data was encountered with each of the hypotheses

tested. This is because each of the companies included in the archive collected data only on selected items. For example, one company might have collected data on employees' willingness to recommend or rejoin the organization while other companies may not have. The net result was that each hypothesis had a unique number of participants from a unique combination of companies. In order to understand what data was available for each analysis tables 1 and 2 of appendix C detailed the companies, industries, and number of participants used in each hypothesis.

A limitation related to the use of archival data had to do with the inferences regarding causality made in the present paper. The use of archival data did not allow for the manipulation of variables and, moreover, many of the variables in the present study would not have been possible to manipulate (e.g., individual's attitudes and reasons for leaving) even in a traditional research approach. This led to a pair of related weaknesses in the current paper. First, the paper made assumptions about the causal relationship of variables when testing the mediation relationships. Although these assumptions were based on theory (Westaby, 2005) they were tested with non-experimental procedures which may have led to bias in the results (Stone-Romero & Rosopa 2008; 2010). Also, because the present study was a non-experimental design it could not be empirically demonstrated that the direction of causality proposed in the mediation models was accurate.

A second, related, point has to do with the cross-sectional nature of the archival data used. It has been argued (Maxwell & Cole, 2007) that cross-sectional data is insufficient for modeling mediation relationships because those relationships unfold over time and require longitudinal data to appropriately model. This limitation may have

biased the results of the mediation analyses. Future research should utilize longitudinal designs to test the relationships between reasons, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. Such a longitudinal design would also help to set a temporal precedence by which the inference of causality could be more readily inferred.

The use of reasons themselves presented some unique limitations for the present study. By their very nature reasons tend to be highly idiosyncratic and quite varied. Within the data for this study, for example, there were 39 different reason categories. This issue was exacerbated by the fact that there is currently no standardized system for classifying reasons. Although Campion (1991) presented a list of reasons for use in hypothesis testing, that list was derived from a sample of university employees and, therefore, potentially misses reasons that would be available from a wider sample of occupations. Essentially this meant that the present study was utilizing reasons that may be difficult to generalize. However, in order to partially ameliorate this limitation, the hypotheses in this study were developed such that only reasons with substantial numbers of individuals (i.e.,  $n > 100$ ) were utilized. In this way, the likelihood of utilizing highly idiosyncratic reasons was minimized.

It should be mentioned once again that the present study was reliant on single-item measures for many of the variables tested. Although researchers are often wary of the use of single item measures their use has been addressed in previous research (Nagy, 2002; Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy, 1997) and is acceptable provided the construct of interest is sufficiently narrow or is unambiguous to the respondent (Sackett & Larson, 1990). Once again, in all instances of single-item measures utilized in this paper the constructs being measured were both narrow and unambiguous to the respondent (e.g.,

assessing a respondent's attitude regarding their pay). Therefore, the issue of single-item measures should not be a concern.

Another limitation regarded the manner in which the data were originally collected, which was by telephone interview or self-report survey. In both instances there was a potential for information to be misreported by the respondent or to be misinterpreted by the interviewer. In the case of the former, an effort was made to insure that questions were worded in such a manner that the possibility of misinterpretation was minimized (i.e., succinct, unambiguous items with follow up questions). Additionally, in the case of data collected via interview it was possible for respondents to ask interviewers for clarification on any item. Also, interviewers were specifically trained in the administration of the questionnaire and in procedures for coding responses. In this way, the potential for the misinterpretation of responses by the interviewers was minimized.

#### *Future research*

In consideration of the enormous costs associated with turnover (Cascio, 1991; McConnell, 2007) there is clearly a need for research that can provide insight into its causes. From both the perspective of research (Meertz 2007, Westaby, 2005) and practical application (Campion, 1991) employees' self-stated reasons for leaving are a potential resource that has been nearly untapped. The present paper merely scraped the surface of possible research avenues, and it will be left to future researchers to delve deeper into turnover reasons. With future research in mind, the following are some suggestions for possible directions.

In order for research on turnover reasons to proceed there is a clear need for a standardized and comprehensive list of reasons that researchers could utilize for hypothesis testing. Although Campion (1991) presented a list of reasons for hypothesis testing it had a serious limitation. That is, the sample for Campion (1991) was comprised entirely of university employees. This restricted sample necessarily translated into a restricted number of reasons included in the overall list. Certainly, any list of reasons developed by future researchers should rely on a diverse sample of individuals from a wide variety of occupations so as to have a representative list of reasons. Such a representative list would greatly aid in research on turnover reasons by enabling diverse and idiosyncratic reasons to be standardized thus enabling the comparison and generalization of results across studies.

Another recommendation for future research has to do with the causality of reasons. Although BRT states that reasons should cause attitudes alternative conceptions of this relationship are possible. Because there has been a limited amount of research done on BRT the assertion of causality regarding the relationship between reasons and attitudes has not been established empirically. One possible alternative is that attitudes could be a driving factor in the development of a reason for engaging in a behavior. Associated with the evaluative component of an attitude are the emotions, cognitions, behaviors relevant to the attitude object (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960). Those very emotions, cognitions, and behaviors could be important for determining what reasons are used to justify a given behavior. A second alternative to BRT is that reasons cause attitudes but attitudes also have a reciprocal influence on reasons. This conceptualization would be consistent with cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) which states that

individuals experience an unpleasant feeling known as dissonance when they hold conflicting ideas. Essentially, a person would modify their reasons when new information is figured into the overall attitudinal evaluation. To be sure, a critical examination of BRT is needed to determine the correct specification of the model. Specifically, an investigation of the causal sequence of attitudes and reasons should be undertaken by future researchers. Although, BRT provides an important and useful starting position for understanding the role of reasons across contexts, much more research is needed.

### *Conclusion*

Overall, this paper should be seen as an application of the work done by Westaby (2005). BRT represents the core foundational theory on which much of the present paper is based. More specifically, it was the assertion of Westaby and Fishbein (1996) and Westaby (2005) regarding the importance of individual reasons as a vehicle for communicating individual level experience and decision making processes that informed and drove the present paper. From that lineage, the present study proposed, tested, and supported several new linkages that had not been previously investigated in the turnover literature. In that sense, the current study represents a divergence from the main body of industrial and organizational psychology literature because it is concerned primarily with an aspect of the individual's turnover experience that has been paid relatively little attention. Moreover, the present study lends support to its parent theory by demonstrating the significance of reasons for understanding differences in attitudes.

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## Appendix A

### A Sample Survey Letter

Thank you for helping (Insert Company Name) understand what elements of their company are working well and what elements need to be improved. Please complete this survey and return it in the enclosed postage paid envelope.

**Manager**

**Job Title**

#### **Section One - General Questions**

1. What first attracted you to the District Sales Manager position?
2. Were you selected through the old MDP (Management Development Program) or current FMCD (Field Management Career Development) program?
3. What was your primary reason for leaving your DM position?
4. If you are leaving for another job opportunity, what prompted your job search?
5. What were the most rewarding elements of the DM position?
6. What were the most difficult or challenging responsibilities?

#### **Section Two – Ratings**

**Using a rating scale of Excellent, Very Good, Good, Average or Poor, please rate (Insert Company Name) on the following factors**

7. Your compensation relative to similar positions at other employers?
8. Your pay relative to your performance
9. Health benefits

If you answered Average or Poor, what specifically about your health benefits was average or poor?

If you answered Average or Poor, how could your health benefits have been improved?

10. Retirement program
11. Your opportunity for continuous learning

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

12. Your opportunities for promotion

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

13. The balance you were able to achieve between work responsibilities and personal commitments

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

14. Amount of work-related travel

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

15. Your amount of time off

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

16. The manner in which we conduct our business (ethical behavior)

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

17. The company's commitment to fostering a workplace that is inclusive & diverse

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

18. The diversity of your workgroup

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

### **Section Three – Ratings for Management**

Who was your most recent Manager?

**Using a rating scale of Excellent, Very Good, Good, Average or Poor, please rate your Manager on the following factors**

19. Consistently treated people with respect and fairness

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

20. Resolved complaints and problems fairly and effectively

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

21. Gave you the opportunity to make decisions and work independently

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

22. Provided recognition

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

23. Provided honest, timely, and specific feedback

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

24. Communicated expectations

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

25. Provided leadership and vision to your team

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

26. Invested time and effort in developing your knowledge and skills

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

27. Provided development opportunities

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

28. Displayed a high level of knowledge and expertise in his/her own job

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

29. Personality of your Manager

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

30. Overall rating of your manager

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

31. Is there anything else you would like to share about your manager?

32. If you were a part of MDP or FMCD, how would you rate the preparation for a DM position that you received from that program?

If you answered Average or Poor, how could it have been improved?

What are your suggestions for improving the MDP or FMCD program?

33. Would you recommend (Insert Company Name) to your friends and/or family members as a good place to work?

What was the most satisfying aspect of your experience with (Insert Company Name)?

If you could make any change to the District Sales Manager position at (Insert Company Name), what would it be?

34. Is there anything we haven't covered that would be valuable for (Insert Company Name) to know?

## Appendix B

### List of Reasons for Leaving and How Frequently Each Reason Was Reported

Table 1

Reasons for Leaving Given in the Raw Data	Frequency Reported
Advancement	505
Asked to leave	611
No authority/ autonomy	120
Inadequate benefits	94
Excessive cold calling	21
Career change	324
Join former colleagues	41
Poor communication	58
No cooperation from drivers (company specific)	3
Dissatisfied customers	8
Excessive travel time	32
Company direction	285
Inefficiencies/ bureaucracy	72
Personal issues	434
Full time opportunity	43
Honesty	123
Long hours	329
Physical demands	12
Poor fit	509
Commute time	159
Ineffective management	783
Relocation	223
Pay	907
Noncompetitive product	93
Production /quality issues	26
No recognition	103
Retirement	493
Job elimination	403
School	118
Stability	118
Small bank atmosphere (company specific)	33
Demotion	11
Staffing	101
Teamwork	111
Reduced/poor territory	51
Lack of tools/outdated technology	62
Training	86
Workload	353
Working conditions	379

## Appendix C

Tables detailing information about companies and samples used.

**Table 1. Sample Size and Industry by Company**

ID	Industry	n	Percentage of total sample
A	Professional Services	398	7.9
B	Finance	1830	36.3
C	Insurance	1657	32.9
D	Insurance	93	1.8
E	Distribution	148	2.9
F	Manufacturing	179	3.5
G	Manufacturing	432	8.6
H	Manufacturing	307	6.1

**Table 2. Sample Size and Companies Included by Hypothesis**

Hypothesis	Companies Included	n
H1a	A,C,D,F,G,H	2998
H1b	C	1020
H2a	A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H	4370
H2b	C	1001
H3	A, D, F, G, H	1334
H4a	C, E	1327
H4b	C	1026
H5a	A, B, D, E, F, G, H	1338
H5b	C	1026
H6	A, B, D, E, F, G, H	3303
H7a	C	507
H7b	A, B, C, E, F, H	1949
H7c	A, B, C, E, F, H	1949

## Appendix D

Tables detailing the results of all statistical analyses.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Between Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Cited Pay	.18	.38	-						
2. Cited Advancement	.10	.30	na	-					
3. Cited Long Hours	.06	.25	na	na	-				
4. Cited Workload	.07	.26	na	na	na	-			
5. Cited Working Conditions	.07	.26	na	na	na	na	-		
6. Pay Attitude	2.76	1.20	-.24**	-.07**	-.02	.00	-.04*	-	
7. Advancement Attitude	2.60	1.25	-.07**	-.20**	-.01	-.01	-.08**	.45**	-
8. Training Attitude	2.76	1.38	.07*	-.01	.00	.05	-.03	.22**	.34**
9. Hours Attitude	3.55	1.27	-.09**	.05	-.27**	-.15**	-.03	.33**	.22**
10. Workload Attitude	2.48	1.21	-.03	.01	-.16**	-.18**	-.06*	.37**	.29**
11. Physical Working Conditions Attitude	3.38	1.23	.00	.02	-.00	-.03	-.11**	.24**	.30**
12. Willingness to Recommend	.66	.47	-.05*	.02	-.04	-.09**	-.15**	.31**	.31**
13. Willingness to Rejoin	.68	.47	.04	.07*	-.01	-.07*	-.02	.15**	.10**
14. Reemployment in the Same Industry	.43	.50	.05**	.15**	.01	.04*	.02	-.07*	-.13**

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ . For turnover reasons 1 = cited this reason, 0 = did not cite this reason. For willingness to recommend 1 = willing to recommend, 0 = not willing to recommend. For willingness to rejoin 1 = willing to rejoin, 0 = not willing to rejoin. For reemployment in the same industry 1 = was reemployed in the same industry, 0 = was reemployed in a different industry. Turnover reasons were mutually exclusive and did not have intercorrelations. Other instances of not applicable data were due to the variables of interest being measured by different organizations and thus having no common data.

Table 1 Continued.

Variable	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Cited Pay							
2. Cited Advancement							
3. Cited Long Hours							
4. Cited Workload							
5. Cited Working Conditions							
6. Pay Attitude							
7. Advancement Attitude							
8. Training Attitude	-						
9. Hours Attitude	na	-					
10. Workload Attitude	na	.40**	-				
11. Physical Working Conditions Attitude	.27**	.42**	.48**	-			
12. Willingness to Recommend	.40**	.30**	.32**	.33**	-		
13. Willingness to Rejoin	na	.13**	.14**	na	.32**		
14. Reemployment in the Same Industry	-.08*	-.09*	-.16**	na	-.06	-.01	-

Note. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 2. Results of Independent Samples t-test for Hypothesis H1a

	Cited Pay	Cited Other Reason
<i>n</i>	571	2427
Mean	2.18	2.90
SD	1.04	1.20
<i>df</i>	956.215	
<i>t</i>	-.14.45	
<i>d</i>	-.64	
<i>p</i>	< .01	

Note. n = 2998.

Table 3. Results of Independent Samples t-test for Hypothesis H2a

	Cited Advancement	Cited Other Reason
<i>n</i>	486	3884
Mean	1.90	2.69
SD	1.00	1.25
<i>df</i>	693.12	
<i>t</i>	-16.08	
<i>d</i>	-.70	
<i>p</i>	< .01	

Note. n = 4370.

Table 4. Results of Independent Samples t-test for Hypothesis H3

	Cited Advancement	Cited Other Reason
<i>n</i>	113	1221
Mean	2.70	2.77
SD	1.32	1.39
<i>df</i>	1332	
<i>t</i>	-.508	
<i>d</i>	-.05	
<i>p</i>	.611	

Note. n = 1334.

Table 5. Results of Independent Samples t-test for Hypothesis H4a

	Cited Long Hours	Cited Other Reason
<i>n</i>	137	1190
Mean	2.53	3.67
SD	1.38	1.21
<i>df</i>	160.85	
<i>t</i>	-9.26	
<i>d</i>	-.88	
<i>p</i>	< .01	

Note. n = 1327.

Table 6. Results of Independent Samples t-test for Hypothesis H5a

	Cited Workload	Cited Other Reason
<i>n</i>	79	1259
Mean	1.61	2.53
SD	1.02	1.20
<i>df</i>	92.07	
<i>t</i>	-7.76	
<i>d</i>	-.83	
<i>p</i>	< .01	

Note. n = 1338.

Table 7. Results of Independent Samples t-test for Hypothesis H6

	Cited Physical Working Conditions	Cited Other Reason
<i>n</i>	268	3035
Mean	2.90	3.42
SD	1.34	1.21
<i>df</i>	3301	
<i>t</i>	-6.589	
<i>d</i>	-.41	
<i>p</i>	< .01	

Note. n = 3303.

Table 8. Results of Mediation Analysis Testing Hypothesis H1b.

Testing Steps in Mediation Model	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$
Testing Step 1 (Path c)				
Outcome: Recommend				
Predictor: Cited Long Hours	-.16	.11	.44	-.03

Note. n = 1020.

Table 9. Results of Mediation Analysis Testing Hypothesis H1c.

Testing Steps in Mediation Model	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$
Testing Step 1 (Path c)				
Outcome: Rejoin				
Predictor: Cited Pay	.26	.21	.22	.05

Note. n = 1020.

Table 10. Results of Mediation Analysis Testing Hypothesis H2b.

Testing Steps in Mediation Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$
Testing Step 1 (Path c)				
Outcome: Recommend				
Predictor: Cited Advancement	-0.18	.20	.36	-.07

Note. n = 1001.

Table 11. Results of Mediation Analysis Testing Hypothesis H2c.

Testing Steps in Mediation Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$
Testing Step 1 (Path c)				
Outcome: Rejoin				
Predictor: Cited Advancement	.43	.21	.03	.08
Testing Step 2 (Path a)				
Outcome: Advancement Attitude				
Predictor: Cited Advancement	-.98	.04	<.01	-.17
Testing Step 3 (Paths b and c')				
Outcome: Rejoin				
Mediator: Advancement Attitude	.21	.06	<.01	.14
Predictor: Cited Advancement	.65	.22	<.01	.12

Note. n = 1001.

Table 12. Results of Mediation Analysis Testing Hypothesis H4b.

Testing Steps in Mediation Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$
Testing Step 1 (Path c)				
Outcome: Recommend				
Predictor: Cited Long Hours	-.70	.21	<.01	-.12
Testing Step 2 (Path a)				
Outcome: Hours Attitude				
Predictor: Cited Long Hours	-1.21	.12	<.01	-.20
Testing Step 3 (Paths b and c')				
Outcome: Recommend				
Mediator: Hours Attitude	.50	.06	<.01	.32
Predictor: Cited Long Hours	-.15	.23	.51	-.02

Note. n = 1026.

Table 13. Results of Mediation Analysis Testing Hypothesis H4c.

Testing Steps in Mediation Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$
Testing Step 1 (Path c)				
Outcome: Rejoin				
Predictor: Cited Long Hours	-0.06	.21	.78	-.01

Note. n = 1026.

Table 14. Results of Mediation Analysis Testing Hypothesis H5b.

Testing Steps in Mediation Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$
Testing Step 1 (Path c)				
Outcome: Recommend				
Predictor: Cited Workload	-1.40	.27	<.01	-.18
Testing Step 2 (Path a)				
Outcome: Workload Attitude				
Predictor: Cited Workload	-1.17	.15	<.01	-.15
Testing Step 3 (Paths b and c')				
Outcome: Recommend				
Mediator: Workload Attitude	.66	.07	<.01	.39
Predictor: Cited Workload	-.79	.28	<.01	-.09

Note. n = 1026.

Table 15. Results of Mediation Analysis Testing Hypothesis H5c.

Testing Steps in Mediation Model	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>p</i>	$\beta$
Testing Step 1 (Path c)				
Outcome: Rejoin				
Predictor: Cited Workload	-.57	.26	.03	-.08
Testing Step 2 (Path a)				
Outcome: Workload Attitude				
Predictor: Cited Workload	-1.17	.15	<.01	-.15
Testing Step 3 (Paths b and c')				
Outcome: Rejoin				
Mediator: Workload Attitude	.24	.06	<.01	.16
Predictor: Cited Workload	-.30	.27	.26	.03

Note. n = 1026.

Table 16. Results of Logistic Regression for Hypothesis H7a

Predictor	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	Wald's $\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>e<sup>B</sup></i>
Constant	1.32	.33	16.28	1	< .01	3.74
Pay	-.10	.09	1.29	1	.26	.90
Opportunity for Advancement	-.11	.09	1.5	1	.22	.90
Hours	-.01	.08	.02	1	.88	.99
Workload	-.25	.09	7.93	1	.01	.78
Test			$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	
Overall Model Evaluation						
Likelihood Ratio Test			20.72	4	< .01	
Score			20.44	4	< .01	
Goodness-of-fit test						
Hosmer & Lemeshow			2.885	8	.94	

Note. Cox and Snell  $R^2 = .04$ . Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .05$ . *c*-statistic = 58.8%. *n* = 507.

Table 17. Results of Logistic Regression for Hypotheses H7b

Predictor	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	Wald's $\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	$e^B$
Constant	-.51	.06	71.97	1	< .01	.60
Advancement	.98	.17	34.47	1	< .01	2.67
Pay	.26	.13	4.12	1	.04	1.29
Workload	.54	.23	5.45	1	.02	1.71
Working Conditions	.33	.19	2.96	1	.08	1.39
Long Hours	-.10	.26	.14	1	.71	.91
Test			$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	
Overall Model Evaluation						
Likelihood Ratio Test			41.37	5	< .01	
Score			41.82	5	< .01	
Wald			40.27	5	< .01	
Goodness-of-fit test						
Hosmer & Lemeshow			.00	3	1.00	

Note. Cox and Snell  $R^2 = .02$ . Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .03$ . *c*-statistic = 60.5%. *n* = 1949.

## Figure Caption

*Figure 1.* Depiction of behavioral intention models. The theory of planned behavior is represented by all boxes and arrows. The theory of reasoned action is represented by the shaded boxes and relevant arrows.

*Figure 2.* Depiction of behavioral reasoning theory.

Figure 1

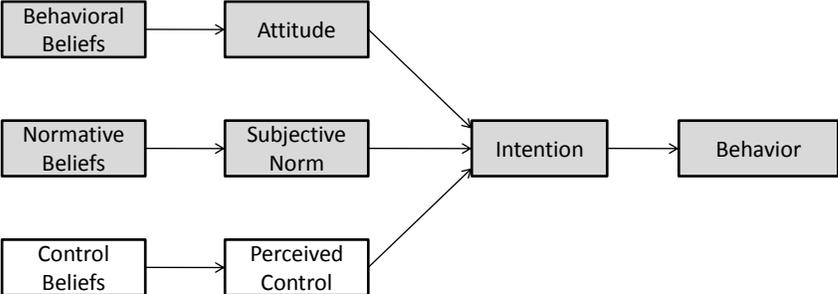


Figure 2

