

The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization

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Organizational commitment has been conceptualized and measured in various ways. The two studies reported here were conducted to test aspects of a three-component model of commitment which integrates these various conceptualizations. The *affective* component of organizational commitment, proposed by the model, refers to employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization. The *continuance* component refers to commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization. Finally, the *normative* component refers to employees' feelings of obligation to remain with the organization. In Study 1, scales were developed to measure these components. Relationships among the components of commitment and with variables considered their antecedents were examined in Study 2. Results of a canonical correlation analysis suggested that, as predicted by the model, the affective and continuance components of organizational commitment are empirically distinguishable constructs with different correlates. The affective and normative components, although distinguishable, appear to be somewhat related. The importance of differentiating the components of commitment, both in research and practice, is discussed.

A great deal of attention has been given recently to the study of commitment to the organization (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). Like many constructs in organizational psychology, however, commitment has been conceptualized and measured in various ways. Common to all the conceptualizations of commitment found in the literature is a link with turnover; employees who are strongly committed are those who are least likely to leave the organization. Perhaps more important than this similarity, however, are the differences between the various conceptualizations of commitment. These differences involve the psychological state reflected in commitment, the antecedent conditions leading to its development, and the behaviours (other than remaining) that are expected to result from commitment.

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Not surprisingly, confusion surrounding the conceptual distinctions is reflected in attempts to measure the construct. Indeed, relatively little attention has been given to the development of measures of commitment that conform closely to the researcher's particular conceptualization of the commitment construct. Our intention here, therefore, is threefold: (1) to delineate the distinctions between three of the more common conceptualizations of 'attitudinal' commitment,* (2) to develop measures of each, and (3) to demonstrate that these measures are differentially linked to variables identified in the literature as antecedents of commitment. The third aim serves the dual purpose of providing evidence for the convergent and discriminant validity of the new measures and of providing a preliminary test of hypotheses concerning the development of commitment.

The conceptualization and measurement of attitudinal commitment

Although several conceptualizations of attitudinal commitment have appeared in the literature, each reflects one of three general themes: affective attachment, perceived costs and obligation (Meyer & Allen, 1987 *a*).

Affective attachment

The most prevalent approach to organizational commitment in the literature is one in which commitment is considered an affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in, the organization. This view was taken by Kanter (1968) who described 'cohesion commitment' as 'the attachment of an individual's fund of affectivity and emotion to the group' (p. 507) and by Buchanan (1974) who conceptualized commitment as a 'partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of the organization, to one's role in relation to the goals and values, and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth' (p. 533). The affective attachment approach is perhaps best represented, however, by the work of Porter and his colleagues (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979; Porter, Crampon & Smith, 1976; Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974) who defined organizational commitment as 'the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization' (Mowday *et al.*, 1979, p. 226).

Porter and his colleagues developed the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) to measure the commitment construct (Mowday *et al.*, 1979). This 15-item scale has been used extensively in research and has acceptable psychometric properties. A parallel measure developed in Great Britain for use with blue-collar workers has also been shown to be 'psychometrically adequate and stable' (Cook & Wall, 1980, p. 39). Although other measures of affective attachment have been developed for use in specific studies, they typically have not been subjected to rigorous psychometric evaluation.

Perceived costs

For other authors, affect plays a minimal role in the conceptualization of commitment.

* A distinction is made in the commitment literature between attitudinal commitment and behavioural commitment (Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Staw, 1977). The focus of the present research is on attitudinal commitment, conceptualized as a psychological state that reflects employees' relationship to the organization

Instead, commitment is viewed as a tendency to 'engage in consistent lines of activity' (Becker, 1960, p.33) based on the individual's recognition of the 'costs' (or lost side-bets) associated with discontinuing the activity (Becker, 1960; Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983). Kanter (1968), for example, defined 'cognitive-continuance commitment' as that which occurs when there is a 'profit associated with continued participation and a "cost" associated with leaving' (p. 504). For Stebbins (1970), continuance commitment is the 'awareness of the impossibility of choosing a different social identity . . . because of the immense penalties in making the switch' (p. 527).

Cost-induced commitment has typically been assessed using a measure developed by Ritzer & Trice (1969), and modified by Hrebiniak & Alutto (1972), that requires respondents to indicate the likelihood that they will leave the organization given various inducements to do so (e.g. increases in pay, status, freedom, promotional opportunity). It is doubtful, however, that this measure actually reflects cost-based commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984; Stebbins, 1970). Indeed, the fact that high scores on the scale reflect an unwillingness to leave the organization, in spite of attractive inducements to do so, suggests that it may measure affective attachment rather than, or in addition to, cost-induced commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984).

Obligation

Finally, a less common but equally viable approach has been to view commitment as a belief about one's responsibility to the organization. Wiener (1982, p. 471) defined commitment as the 'totality of internalized normative pressures to act in a way which meets organizational goals and interests', and suggests that individuals exhibit behaviours solely because 'they believe it is the "right" and moral thing to do' (p. 421). Although they do not refer to it as commitment, other authors (e.g. Prestholdt, Lane & Mathews, 1987; Schwartz, 1973; Schwartz & Tessler, 1972) have identified personal norms (defined as internalized moral obligation) as important contributors to behaviour, including terminating employment with an organization (Prestholdt *et al.*, 1987).

The only measure of this obligation-based commitment in the literature is the three-item scale used by Wiener & Vardi (1980). Respondents are asked the extent to which they feel 'a person *should* be loyal to his organization, *should* make sacrifices on its behalf, and *should* not criticize it' (Wiener & Vardi, 1980, p. 86, italics added). Other than internal consistency, the psychometric properties of the scale are not reported.

A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment

In a model of commitment developed recently by Meyer & Allen (1987 *a*), the three approaches outlined above were labelled 'affective', 'continuance' and 'normative' commitment, respectively. Although common to these approaches is a *link* between the employee and organization that decreases the likelihood of turnover, it is clear that the nature of that link differs. Employees with strong affective commitment remain because they *want* to, those with strong continuance commitment because they *need* to, and those with strong normative commitment because they feel they *ought* to do so.

Affective, continuance and normative commitment are best viewed as distinguishable

components, rather than *types*, of attitudinal commitment; that is, employees can experience each of these psychological states to varying degrees. Some employees, for example, might feel both a strong need and a strong obligation to remain, but no desire to do so; others might feel neither a need nor obligation but a strong desire, and so on. The 'net sum' of a person's commitment to the organization, therefore, reflects each of these separable psychological states.

Given their conceptual differences, it seems reasonable to suggest that each of the three components of commitment develop somewhat independently of the others as a function of different antecedents. It has been suggested (Mowday *et al.*, 1982) that the antecedents of affective attachment to the organization fall into four categories: personal characteristics, job characteristics, work experiences and structural characteristics. As Meyer & Allen (1987 *a*) pointed out, however, the strongest evidence has been provided for work experience antecedents, most notably those experiences that fulfil employees' psychological needs to feel comfortable within the organization and competent in the work-role.

It is proposed that the *continuance* component of organizational commitment will also develop on the basis of two factors: the magnitude and/or number of investments (or side-bets) individuals make and a perceived lack of alternatives. These predictions derive from the theoretical work of Becker (1960) and Farrell & Rusbult (1981; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983). According to Becker, individuals make side-bets when they take an action that increases the costs associated with discontinuing another, related, action. Consider, for example, employees who invest considerable time and energy mastering a job skill that cannot be transferred easily to other organizations. In essence, they are 'betting' that the time and energy invested will pay off. Winning the bet, however, requires continued employment in the organization. According to Becker, the likelihood that employees will stay with the organization will be positively related to the magnitude and number of side-bets they recognize.*

Like investments, the lack of employment alternatives also increases the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization (Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983). Therefore, the fewer viable alternatives employees believe are available, the stronger will be their continuance commitment to their current employer.

Finally, it is proposed that the *normative* component of organizational commitment will be influenced by the individual's experiences both prior to (familial/cultural socialization) and following (organizational socialization) entry into the organization (Wiener, 1982). With respect to the former, we might expect, for example, that an employee would have strong normative commitment to the organization if significant others (e.g. parents) have been long-term employees of an organization and/or have stressed the importance of organizational loyalty. With respect to organizational socialization, it is proposed that those employees who have been led to believe – via various organizational practices – that the organization *expects* their loyalty would be most likely to have strong normative commitment to it.

* In the past, Becker's (1960) side-bet theory has often been discussed in the context of behavioural commitment. Like Kresler (1971) and Salancik (1977), Becker defines commitment as the tendency to persist in a course of action. Unlike Kresler and Salancik, however, Becker emphasizes the importance of *recognizing* the cost associated with discontinuing an action. Recognition of the costs associated with leaving an organization can be viewed as a psychological state reflecting the employee's relationship to the organization and is, therefore, included here as a component of attitudinal commitment.

Research overview

If the three components of commitment reflect distinct psychological states, it should be possible to develop independent measures of these states. This was the purpose of Study 1. Moreover, if the three components of commitment develop as described above, these measures should correlate with measures of those work experiences predicted to be their antecedents, but not with those predicted to be antecedent to the other components. This hypothesis was tested in Study 2. Because there has been less of a research tradition to guide the identification and measurement of predictors of normative commitment compared to affective and continuance commitment, the focus of Study 2 was on the latter two components. Normative commitment was included because, by examining the pattern of its relations with predicted antecedents of the affective and continuance components, its relation to these components can be better understood.

Study 1: Development of measures

Method

Subjects and data collection procedures. Data were collected from full-time, non-unionized employees in three organizations: two manufacturing firms and a university. Approximately 500 questionnaires were distributed to employees in clerical, supervisory and managerial positions at these organizations; of these, 256 (52 per cent) were completed and returned. Females comprised 57 per cent of this sample. Forty-two per cent were under 30 years of age, 39 per cent were between 30 and 40 years of age, the remaining 19 per cent were above 40 years of age.

Questionnaires were distributed to employees by a member of the personnel department in the participating organization. Accompanying each questionnaire was a letter explaining the general purpose of the study and a stamped envelope addressed to one of the authors. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary.

Measures. A pool of 51 items was generated for purposes of scale construction. Some of these items were modified versions of those used in other scales; others were written by the authors. Each item was worded in accordance with one of the conceptualizations of commitment described above. Included along with these 51 items was the 15-item OCQ (Mowday *et al.*, 1979). With the exception of the OCQ items, which were presented first, the order of items on the questionnaire was random. Responses to all 66 items were made on seven-point scales ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree').

Results and discussion

Scale development. Selection of items for inclusion on the final scales was based on a series of decision rules concerning item endorsement proportions, item-total correlations (with both keyed and non-keyed scales), direction of keying and content redundancy. Specifically, items were eliminated if (a) the endorsement proportion was greater than .75,* (b) the item correlated less with its keyed scale than with one or both of the other scales, and (c) the content of the item was redundant with respect to other items on the scale. An attempt was made to select both positively and negatively keyed items. Finally, the number of items selected for each scale was set equal to that for the scale with the minimum number of items surviving the aforementioned exclusion criteria. Although it

* To calculate endorsement proportions for ratings made on seven-point scales, responses were divided into three categories: 1, 2 and 3 (strongly, moderately and slightly disagree), 4 (neither agree nor disagree), and 5, 6 and 7 (slightly, moderately, or strongly agree)

was not of primary concern, equality of scale length was considered desirable when it became apparent that few items would be lost as a result. Following the application of these rules, eight items were selected for inclusion in each of the Affective Commitment Scale (ACS), Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS) and Normative Commitment Scale (NCS). The reliability for each scale (i.e. coefficient alpha) was as follows: ACS, .87; CCS, .75; NCS, .79. The 24 items comprising these scales were subjected to a factor analysis (principal factor method). Three factors, accounting for 58.8, 25.8 and 15.4 per cent of the total variance, respectively, were extracted and rotated to a varimax criterion. The items and their factor loadings are reported in Table 1. In all cases, the items loaded highest on the factor representing the appropriate construct. Shown in Table 2 are the means and standard deviations for the three new commitment scales and the OCQ.

Relationships among the commitment scales. Also shown in Table 2 are the correlations among the new scales and the OCQ. As can be seen, the CCS is relatively independent of both the ACS and NCS. The OCQ correlated significantly with the ACS but not with the CCS,

Table 1. Varimax rotated factor matrix based on correlations among the items of the affective, continuance and normative commitment scales

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
<i>Affective Commitment Scale items</i>			
1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization	.55	.47	-.07
2. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it	.56	.10	-.07
3. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own	.52	.39	-.06
4. I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one (R)	.45	.21	.18
5. I do not feel like 'part of the family' at my organization (R)	.63	.15	-.04
6. I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization (R)	.81	.23	.03
7. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me	.79	.19	.02
8. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization (R)	.82	.18	-.05
<i>Continuance Commitment Scale items</i>			
1. I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up (R)	-.10	.02	.39
2. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to	.22	.14	.58
3. Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now	.33	.27	.44

Table 1. *Continued*

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
4. It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave my organization now (R)	18	12	<u>46</u>
5. Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire	-24	-01	<u>59</u>
6. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization	-14	00	<u>67</u>
7. One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives	-17	-07	<u>60</u>
8. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice – another organization may not match the overall benefits I have here	15	-01	<u>50</u>
<i>Normative Commitment Scale items</i>			
1. I think that people these days move from company to company too often.	14	<u>67</u>	-06
2. I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organization (R)	29	<u>43</u>	00
3. Jumping from organization to organization does not seem at all unethical to me (R)	07	<u>63</u>	01
4. One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organization is that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain	17	<u>59</u>	07
5. If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organization	17	<u>49</u>	09
6. I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organization	15	<u>49</u>	10
7. Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organization for most of their careers	05	<u>56</u>	11
8. I do not think that wanting to be a 'company man' or 'company woman' is sensible anymore (R)	17	<u>47</u>	-03
% of variance accounted for	58.8	25.8	15.4

Note. The following items were adapted from items used in previous research: ACS items 1 and 3 from Buchanan (1974) and CCS items 1 and 2 from Quinn & Staines (1979). Factor loadings greater than 0.40 are underlined, decimal points have been omitted. R = reverse keyed items.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of commitment measures

Scale	\bar{X}	SD	ACS	CCS	NCS	OCQ
ACS	4.63	1.33	—			
CCS	4.51	1.16	.06	—		
NCS	3.77	1.13	.51*	.14	—	
OCQ	5.32	1.07	.83*	-.02	.51*	—

Key * $P < 0.001$. ACS = Affective Commitment Scale, CCS = Continuance Commitment Scale, NCS = Normative Commitment Scale, OCQ = Organization Commitment Questionnaire

thus providing evidence for the convergent validity of the former and for the discriminant validity of the latter. The correlation between the OCQ and the NCS is consistent with the correlation between the ACS and NCS noted above.

Taken together, the results of the present study suggest that each of the psychological states identified in the literature as 'commitment' to the organization can be reliably measured. The independence of CCS scores from scores on the other two measures was expected. Not expected, however, was the significant relationship between the ACS and the NCS. This was observed despite efforts to include items that correlated only with others on the same scale, suggesting that feelings of obligation to maintain membership in the organization, although not identical to feelings of desire, may be meaningfully linked. The purpose of Study 2 was to examine the generalizability of these findings and to test the hypothesis that the three components of commitment would be related to variables assumed to be their antecedents.

Study 2: Antecedents of commitment

Method

Subjects and data collection procedures Following the same procedure used in Study 1, data were collected from full-time, non-unionized employees in three organizations: a retail department store, a hospital and a university library. In total, 634 questionnaires were distributed to employees in clerical, supervisory, management and technical positions within these organizations. Of these, 337 (53.2 per cent) were completed and returned. Females comprised 80.2 per cent of this sample. The mean age of participants was 38 years.

Measures. The commitment and antecedent measures used were as follows.

Organizational commitment measures. The Affective, Continuance and Normative Commitment Scales, developed in Study 1, were included on the questionnaire.

Proposed antecedents of the affective component Also included on the questionnaire were 11 two-item measures assessing various work experiences. The work experience variables selected for inclusion were those found in previous research to correlate with affective commitment. Specifically, we assessed employees' perceptions of the extent to which their jobs were challenging (job challenge), roles (role clarity) and goals (goal clarity) were clearly defined, goals were difficult (goal difficulty), management was receptive to employee suggestions (management receptiveness), employees were cohesive (peer cohesion), the organization was dependable (organizational dependability), employees were treated equitably (equity), employees were made to feel that they were important to the organization (personal importance), feedback concerning their work performance was provided (feedback), and they were allowed to participate in decisions regarding their own work (participation). As noted earlier, work experience variables contributing to affective commitment can be grouped into those that satisfy employees' needs to feel comfortable in their relationship with the organization

and to feel competent in the work-role. Although experiences may contribute to the satisfaction of both needs, it might be argued that the comfort need would be best served by organizational dependability, management receptiveness, equity, peer cohesion, role clarity and goal clarity, whereas feelings of competence would be enhanced most by job challenge, goal difficulty, personal importance, feedback and participation.

Some of the work experience measures used were modifications of those used in Buchanan's (1974) study of managers; others were developed by the authors. Each scale item had a seven-point response format ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'). Sample items are presented in the Appendix.

Proposed antecedents of the continuance component. Several single-item measures were used to assess the magnitude of the organization-relevant investments respondents had made. These included questions about the transferability of both organization-based skills (skills) and formal education (education) to other organizations, the likelihood that employees would have to move to another geographical area if they were to leave the organization (relocate), the extent to which employees felt they 'themselves' had invested (i.e. time and energy 'learning the ropes') in the organization (self-investment), and the extent to which their pension fund would be reduced if they left the organization (pension). Responses to these questions were made on seven-point scales. Also included – as an index of 'investments in the community' – was the proportion of employees' life during which they had resided locally (community). It was predicted that each of these variables, with the exceptions of skills and education, would be positively correlated with continuance commitment, the relationships involving skills and education were expected to be negative.

The perceived availability of alternatives was assessed by asking employees to indicate, on a seven-point response scale, how easy they felt it would be to obtain comparable or better employment in another organization (alternatives). Scores on this measure were expected to correlate negatively with CCS scores.

Proposed antecedent of the normative component. Although normative commitment was included in this study primarily for exploratory purposes, one variable, the two-item Organizational Commitment Norm Scale (Buchanan, 1974), was included as a potential predictor of this component of commitment. Scores on this scale, which reflect the extent to which employees feel that the organization *expects* their loyalty, were expected to correlate positively with NCS scores.

Data analysis. The relationships among the three commitment measures and those variables hypothesized to be their antecedents were examined using canonical correlation analysis. The aim of canonical correlation analysis is to derive a linear combination from each of two sets of variables (commitment measures and antecedent measures, in this case) in such a way that the correlation between them is maximized. As such, this analysis is particularly appropriate for the present data. If the affective, continuance and normative commitment measures represent separable components, we would expect them to define distinct canonical variates. In addition, the linear combination of antecedent variables that corresponds to a particular commitment measure should weight most heavily those variables predicted to be antecedent to that commitment component.

Results and discussion

Relationships among the commitment and antecedent measures. To handle missing data, a list-wise deletion procedure was used; this reduced the sample to 250 individuals who responded to every item on the questionnaire. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities and intercorrelations of all measures appear in Table 3.* As in Study 1, the reliabilities for each of the newly developed commitment measures were acceptably high; the same is true of the two-item antecedent measures. Once again, the correlation between the ACS and the CCS was negligible ($r = .01$), and that between the ACS and the NCS was significant ($r = .48, P < .001$). Although the relationship between the CCS and the NCS was also significant ($r = .16, P < .01$), the magnitude of the correlation suggests that the two scales share little variance. In general, the pattern of correlations between the antecedent

* The factor structure of the 24 commitment items administered in Study 2 closely resembled that of Study 1. Although not included here, it is available from the authors.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities and intercorrelations of commitment and antecedent measures

Variable	\bar{X}	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1 ACS	4.36	1.38	(86)	01	48	63	53	35	56	48	51	61	55	68	36	51	25	-15	06	13	20	-12	-13	39
2 CCS	4.49	1.35	(82)	16	-14	-11	-04	-17	-16	-16	-05	-04	-02	-18	-18	-12	-20	-16	06	06	17	14	-43	-12
3 NCS	3.80	1.08	(73)	29	39	31	25	20	24	20	24	38	26	34	21	27	19	-15	-10	00	22	14	-08	24
4 Job challenge	4.75	1.86	(89)	42	31	78	44	40	48	40	48	40	48	66	37	48	37	-11	06	25	21	-20	-06	51
5 Role clarity	4.55	1.59	(74)	65	36	58	31	66	48	31	66	48	63	63	44	48	25	-04	00	-12	10	-12	-02	27
6 Goal clarity	4.91	1.56	(76)	25	41	18	52	37	36	32	40	21	02	-02	-06	07	-06	-02	15	07	-06	-02	15	07
7 Goal diffy	4.74	1.76	(73)	36	39	32	36	57	48	36	55	-08	06	30	23	-18	01	48	06	30	23	-18	01	48
8 Mgmt recept.	3.98	1.75	(78)	44	55	53	63	42	59	22	-08	12	00	02	-20	-09	33	37	05	-03	-08	37	05	-03
9 Peer cohesion	4.32	1.52	(44)	35	40	48	31	40	22	-09	06	-07	05	-05	-12	14	-10	-11	25	14	-10	-11	25	14
10 Org. dependy	4.61	1.75	(73)	51	54	37	51	18	-11	-05	-12	14	-10	-11	21	21	05	-16	-14	21	05	-16	-14	21
11 Equity	3.62	1.49	(61)	52	30	47	18	-06	10	05	05	10	05	10	05	05	10	05	10	05	10	05	10	05
12 Pers. import.	4.61	1.79	(78)	46	57	35	-12	07	09	14	-18	-01	45	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
13 Feedback	3.97	1.86	(81)	48	20	01	04	06	06	06	06	06	06	06	06	06	06	06	06	06	06	06	06	06
14 Participation	4.46	1.60	(61)	25	-10	13	02	10	-17	-08	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
15 Skills	5.77	1.59	(61)	25	-10	13	02	10	-17	-08	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
16 Education	5.04	2.07	(61)	25	-10	13	02	10	-17	-08	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
17 Relocate	3.10	2.29	(61)	25	-10	13	02	10	-17	-08	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
18 Self-invest.	4.51	1.90	(61)	25	-10	13	02	10	-17	-08	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
19 Pension	3.02	2.32	(61)	25	-10	13	02	10	-17	-08	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
20 Community	0.47	0.32	(61)	25	-10	13	02	10	-17	-08	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
21 Alternatives	3.78	1.88	(61)	25	-10	13	02	10	-17	-08	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
22 Commit norm	4.64	1.43	(61)	25	-10	13	02	10	-17	-08	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23

Note: Decimals have been omitted from correlation coefficients. For correlations > .12, $p < .05$. Reliabilities appear in the diagonal.

and commitment measures provides support for the hypothesis outlined above. This was examined further using canonical correlation analysis.

Antecedents of commitment: Canonical correlation analysis. The results of the canonical correlation analysis are summarized in Table 4. As can be seen, three significant canonical roots were produced; the correlations associated with these were .81; .56 and .38, respectively. For each of the three canonical variates, both the structure coefficients and standardized coefficients associated with each variable are shown. The standardized coefficients are the weights used in the computation of the commitment and antecedent canonical variates whereas the structure coefficients are the correlations of these linear combinations with each variable. Because structure coefficients tend to be more stable (Cooley & Lohnes, 1971), these were used for the purpose of interpretation. Following Pedhazur's (1982) recommendation, interpretation was based on variables correlating .30 or greater with the canonical variate.

Within the commitment set, both affective and normative commitment correlate strongly with the first canonical variate. A comparison of the two correlations (.98 *vs.* .53) suggests, however, that the first variate represents affective commitment. The fact that this variate also correlates with normative commitment reflects the overlapping variance between the two scales. Within the antecedent set, the largest correlations are associated with those variables hypothesized to be antecedents of affective commitment; these range from .46 to .87. Only two variables in the antecedent set (skills and commitment norm) which were *not* identified as affective antecedents correlated above .30 with the first canonical variate.

The second canonical variate was clearly defined, within the commitment set, by continuance commitment ($r = .99$) and, within the antecedent set, by education, pension and alternatives, all of which were hypothesized to be antecedent to continuance commitment. The correlation with skills, also predicted as an antecedent of continuance commitment, fell just below the cut-off ($r = -.28$).

Finally, the third canonical variate was defined, within the commitment set, by normative commitment and, within the antecedent set, by goal clarity, role clarity, relocate and community. Organizational commitment norm, the only variable within the set which was predicted to be an antecedent of normative commitment, did not correlate significantly with the third canonical variate.

This pattern of results provides partial support for the predictions made about the three components of commitment and their antecedents. At this stage in the development of the three-component view of commitment, it is particularly encouraging that the three commitment measures defined the three canonical variates as distinctly as they did. The fact that normative commitment correlated with both the first and third variates suggests that, although the desire to remain with an organization is not synonymous with the feeling of obligation to do so, there is a tendency for these feelings to co-occur. It is not clear at this point whether there is a causal ordering in the development of these two attitudes or, if so, what that ordering might be. One might speculate that as moral obligations are internalized to form personal norms, they influence individuals' feelings about what they *want* to do. Alternatively, to justify behaving in accord with their desires, individuals may come to accept that their actions are morally right.

With respect to the antecedent variables, the evidence seems strongest for our

Table 4. Results of canonical correlation analysis of the relationships of affective, continuance and normative commitment and their hypothesized antecedents

Canonical root	R_c	R_c^2	Wilks' lambda	F	R_{dx}	R_{dy}
1	.81	.65	.20	8.43**	.28	.29
2	.56	.32	.59	3.89**	.11	.06
3	.38	.14	.86	2.25*	.03	.06

Variables	Canonical variates					
	1		2		3	
	Struc. coeff.	Stand. coeff.	Struc. coeff.	Stand. coeff.	Struc. coeff.	Stand. coeff.
Commitment variables						
Affective	98	93	17	14	-10	-65
Continuance	-15	-19	99	98	-01	-19
Normative	53	11	26	03	81	116
Antecedent variables						
Job challenge	80	19	-08	-05	-12	-25
Role clarity	69	12	-04	05	32	41
Goal clarity	46	-04	03	14	35	22
Goal difficulty	71	09	-15	-17	-12	-07
Mgmt. receptiveness	62	-11	-15	-27	-14	-24
Peer cohesion	63	20	05	19	-13	-21
Org. dependability	77	31	09	12	14	-02
Equity	67	13	12	12	-14	-09
Personal importance	87	31	-12	05	-06	23
Feedback	49	00	-22	-20	10	11
Participation	65	07	-07	-06	01	14
Skills	36	01	-28	-13	25	37
Education	-16	-02	-32	-23	-13	-16
Relocate	04	-01	13	13	-45	-35
Self-investment	14	09	13	19	-25	-14
Pension	22	02	35	29	24	18
Community	-15	03	22	18	56	48
Alternatives	-06	03	-79	-69	19	06
Commitment norm	50	01	-09	-11	11	33

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$

Note. R_c = canonical correlation, R_{dx} = redundancy of antecedent variables given the canonical variate for commitment variables, R_{dy} = redundancy of commitment variables given the canonical variate for the antecedent variables, Struc coeff = structure coefficients; Stand coeff = standardized coefficients. Decimals have been omitted from coefficients.

predictions about affective commitment. Each of the affective antecedent variables correlated significantly with the first canonical variate. Thus, employees who felt comfortable in their roles and who felt competent in the job, expressed greater affective attachment to the organization.

The relationships between the 'continuance antecedents' and the second canonical variate suggest that, in general, the strength of employees' need to remain with an organization is related to their perceptions regarding the availability of alternatives and the magnitude of particular investments they have made. It will be noted, however, that these relationships are not as strong as were those for the antecedents of affective commitment. This may be explained, at least in part, by the fact that, because respondents were employed at different levels in different organizations, it was necessary to restrict the assessment of investments to categories that would be relevant to employees in general (e.g. time and energy). The costs associated with leaving an organization, however, may be quite specific to an individual (e.g. losing a day-care benefit, moving from the home one has built) and not easily translated into these more general categories. It may be possible to account for more variance in continuance commitment using measures that permit employees to generate (and perhaps weigh the importance of) specific investments they have made. This would be analogous to the improvements in prediction obtained in expectancy theory research when outcomes were generated by subjects rather than the experimenters (Matsui & Ikeda, 1976).

The failure of the organizational commitment norm to correlate with the third canonical variate (defined by normative commitment) also may be attributed, in part, to its very general nature. Unfortunately, the diversity (e.g. organization, position, tenure) within the sample used in this study made it difficult to obtain more specific information about the various channels (e.g. recruitment, selection, socialization) through which the organization's expectations regarding commitment (or norms) are communicated.

General discussion

The purpose of this research was to provide preliminary evidence that the affective, continuance and normative components of attitudinal commitment are conceptually and empirically separable. It was argued that each component corresponds closely to one of three major conceptualizations of commitment found in the literature and represents a somewhat distinct link between employees and an organization that develops as the result of different experiences. It was found in Study 1 that the three components of commitment can be measured reliably and that, although there was some overlap between affective and normative commitment, both were relatively independent of continuance commitment. The results of Study 2 revealed a pattern of relationships between the commitment measures, particularly affective and continuance commitment, and the antecedent variables which was, for the most part, consistent with prediction.

Although the results of Study 2 are generally consistent with the hypothesis that the components of commitment develop as a function of different work experiences, it was not our intention at this preliminary stage in the research to address issues of causality. The dangers of causal inference in research of this nature have been described elsewhere (e.g. Clegg, 1983; James, Mulaik & Brett, 1982) and need not be elaborated here. The present results, therefore, should be seen as having set the stage for the kind of longitudinal study

of commitment antecedents carried out recently by Bateman & Strasser (1984) and Meyer & Allen (1987 *b*, 1988) using the OCQ.

Finally, it is clear from the results of Study 2 that further attention should be given to the development of the normative component of commitment. The inclusion of a single general antecedent measure in this study was not intended to suggest that this component is any less important than the other two. Unfortunately, there is little in the literature upon which to base predictions regarding the antecedents of normative commitment. Wiener (1982) suggested that such commitment may develop as the result of socialization prior to and following entry into the organization, but it is unclear how such influences, particularly those occurring prior to entry, might be measured. One potential source of pre-entry socialization is the example set by parents or significant others in an employee's life. The impact of this modelled behaviour is extremely complex, however, as illustrated in the following comment from one of the subjects in Study 2.

I was brought up in a house where we were taught that loyalty was very important to the company you worked for. My father gave that kind of loyalty [to his employer] for 30 years. He is now on strike pay receiving \$65 per week . . . and really doesn't know if he will have a job tomorrow. So although I was taught to believe in the value of loyalty, my attitude has changed.

The focus of the present research was on post-entry socialization. Even here, however, because of diversity in the sample tested, the measurement was restricted to a very general assessment of perceived organizational expectations of commitment. It would be useful in future research to examine the impact of specific socialization practices such as those identified by Van Maanen & Schein (1979).

Implications

The research reported here ties together what has, to date, been three separate streams of commitment research. The use of the term 'commitment' to describe very different constructs has led to considerable confusion in the literature. Indeed, some may argue that the term commitment cannot, or should not, be used to describe such distinct constructs. We retain the term, however, in recognition of the literature on which this research was based, and because it reflects the common denominator believed to underlie each of the three conceptualizations. In each case, commitment refers to a psychological state that binds the individual to the organization (i.e. makes turnover less likely). However, this may be where the similarity ends. Nonetheless, it should be recognized that the three approaches provide valuable insight into the employee-organization link, and that a more comprehensive understanding of this link is achieved when all three are considered simultaneously. By attaching the labels affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment to the three constructs, both the similarity (i.e. link to turnover) and differences among them are acknowledged.

Another contribution of this research was the development of reliable measures of the three components of commitment. With the exception of the OCQ, relatively little attention has so far been given to the development and psychometric evaluation of commitment measures. The fact that the Affective and Continuance Commitment Scales generally correlate as predicted with the proposed antecedent variables provides prelimi-

nary evidence that they are valid measures of commitment, as conceptualized here, and may be useful tools in future research. More evidence is required before the Normative Commitment Scale can be used with as much confidence. The Affective Commitment Scale is shorter than the OCQ* and has the advantage that its items were written to assess only affective orientation towards the organization and not employees' behaviour or behavioural intentions (e.g. intention to exert effort or leave the organization). Thus, it can be used to test hypotheses concerning the consequences of affective commitment without concern that the relationships obtained merely reflect overlap in the content of the commitment and behaviour measures. This problem has been identified in studies that have used the OCQ (e.g. Hom, Katerberg & Hulin, 1979). To date, the Continuance Commitment Scale has no counterpart in the research literature. Although the commitment scale developed by Ritzer & Trice (1969), and revised by Hrebiniak & Alutto (1972), was purported to measure Becker's (1960) 'side-bet' commitment, this interpretation has been challenged both conceptually (Stebbins, 1970) and empirically (Meyer & Allen, 1984).

Finally, the conceptual framework provided here suggests an important consideration for the future study of the *consequences* of commitment. As noted above, in all three approaches to organizational commitment, commitment is seen as a negative indicator of turnover. A logical conclusion to be drawn from this is that one form of commitment is as useful as another. What is not recognized in such logic, however, is the fact that what employees *do* on the job is as important, or more important, than whether they remain. Dalton and his associates have acknowledged this by making a distinction between functional and dysfunctional turnover (Dalton, Krackhardt & Porter, 1981; see also Straw, 1980). It is important to consider, therefore, that the link between commitment and on-the-job behaviour may vary as a function of the strength of the three components. There is some evidence that this is the case. Specifically, Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin & Jackson (1989) found that supervisors' ratings of the overall job performance and the promotability of their subordinates correlated positively with those subordinates' affective commitment scores and negatively with their continuance commitment scores. Allen & Smith (1987) reported a positive relationship between affective commitment and a self-report measure of employee innovativeness; this measure was negatively correlated with continuance commitment scores. In the same study, affective and normative commitment scores, but not continuance commitment scores, were positively related to self-report measures of employees' consideration for co-workers and their efficient use of time.

In future research, it may be possible to identify 'commitment profiles' that differentiate employees who are likely to remain with the organization and to contribute positively to its effectiveness from those who are likely to remain but contribute little. If so, it should be possible for organizations to use the results of research examining antecedents (e.g. Study 2) to better manage the experiences of their employees so as to foster the development of the desired profile.

* Although a nine-item version of the OCQ has been used in the literature, Mowday *et al.* (1979) caution that this version includes only positively keyed items and may, therefore, increase the tendency towards acquiescent responding. Furthermore, they point out that some of the negatively keyed items excluded from the nine-item version 'were more highly correlated with the total score than several of the positively phrased items' (p. 244)

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (No. 410-87-1235).

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Received 12 November 1987; revised version received 12 August 1988

Appendix

Sample items: Proposed antecedents of organizational commitment

Antecedents of affective commitment

- Job challenge: In general, the work I am given to do at my organization is challenging and exciting
- Role clarity: This organization always makes clear what is expected of me
- Goal clarity: In my organization, I often find myself working on assignments without a clear understanding of what it is I am supposed to be doing (R)
- Goal difficulty: The requirements of my job are not particularly demanding (R)
- Management receptiveness: The top management people in my organization pay attention to ideas brought to them by other employees
- Peer cohesion: Among the people in this organization there are few close relationships (R)
- Organizational dependability: I feel I can trust this organization to do what it says it will do
- Equity: There are people in this organization who are getting much more than they deserve and others who are getting much less (R)
- Personal importance: In this organization you are encouraged to feel that the work you do makes important contributions to the larger aims of the organization

Feedback. I am rarely given feedback concerning my performance on the job (R)

Participation In my organization, I am allowed to participate in decisions regarding my workload and performance standards

Antecedents of continuance commitment

Skills: To what extent do you think the skills and experiences you have obtained at your current organization would be useful at other organizations? That is, how many of these skills/experiences would 'transfer' from one organization to another?

Education: My formal education would not be very useful if I was working anywhere but at this or a very similar organization (R)

Relocate If you were to leave your organization, do you think you would have to move to a different location?

Self-investment I have had to invest a great deal of time and effort in this organization ('learning the ropes', etc.)

Pension: If you were to leave your current organization now, would you lose any of the retirement funds you would have received if you stayed with the organization?

Community: Approximately how long have you resided in the local area? (Response to this item was divided by the respondent's age.)

Alternatives: If I were to leave this organization, I would have little difficulty finding a comparable or better job elsewhere

Antecedent of normative commitment

Organizational commitment norm Employees in this organization are expected to have a strong sense of personal commitment to the organization

Note. Reverse keyed items are indicated by (R). With the exception of the community variable, all items had seven-point response scales.