



Building Organizational Commitment: The Socialization of Managers in Work Organizations

Author(s): Bruce Buchanan II

Source: *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Dec., 1974), pp. 533-546

Published by: [Sage Publications, Inc.](#) on behalf of the [Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2391809>

Accessed: 26-02-2015 21:13 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Sage Publications, Inc. and Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Administrative Science Quarterly*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Building Organizational Commitment: The Socialization of Managers in Work Organizations

Bruce Buchanan II

Based on a questionnaire survey of 279 business and government managers, this study sheds light on two questions: (a) which organizational experiences have the greatest impact on managers' organizational commitment attitudes and (b) how does the significance of such experience vary with organizational tenure, particularly at early career stages? The results identify several commitment-relevant experiences and suggest that the influence potential of particular experiences varies significantly with tenure.

There has been increasing interest among scholars in the concept of commitment and in empirical assessments of its causes in a variety of organizational settings. Most numerous have been studies of the commitment of such professionals as scientists, nurses, and teachers to their employing organizations (Sheldon, 1971; Lee, 1971; Hrebiniak and Alutto, 1973). Other studies have explored the roots of commitment to utopian communities (Kantor, 1968; 1972) and of employees to large public bureaucracies (Patchen, 1970; Brown, 1969).

Scant attention has been paid in the literature to the commitment of managers or to the organizational processes by which commitment is inculcated.

The present research is concerned with identifying the kinds of organizational experiences which have the effect of stimulating commitment among the people who manage large government and industrial organizations.

What is commitment? There is little consensus concerning the definition of the concept or its measurement. Lyman Porter (1968), for example, saw it as the willingness of an employee to exert high levels of effort on behalf of the organization, a strong desire to stay with the organization, and an acceptance of its major goals and values. Sheldon (1971) viewed it as positive evaluation of the organization and the intention to work toward its goals. Kantor (1968) defined it as the willingness of social actors to give energy and loyalty to the organization. Hrebiniak and Allutto (1973) considered it the unwillingness to leave the organization for increments in pay, status, or professional freedom or for greater collegial friendship. Lee (1971) defined a related concept, organizational identification, as "some degree of belongingness or loyalty." Most of these scholars conceived of commitment as involving some form of psychological bond between people and organizations, although there is little consensus as to a useful operational index of the concept.

The concept employed in this study resembles those surveyed. Commitment is viewed as a partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of an organization, to one's role in relation to goals and values, and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth. Methodologically, commitment consists of three components, each of which is measured with an independent series of questionnaire items (see Table 1). These are (a) identification—adoption as one's own the goals and values of the organization, (b) involvement—psychological immersion or absorption in the activities of one's work role, and (c) loyalty—a feeling of affection for and attachment to the organization.

The commitment of managers is essential for the survival and effectiveness of large work organizations because the fundamental responsibility of management is to maintain the

organization in a state of health necessary to carry on its work. Effective management thus presupposes a proprietary concern, a sense of responsibility for and dedication to sustaining the well-being of the organization. In the absence of ownership as a motive for such concern, modern organizations have of necessity turned to the deliberate creation and protection of committed élites (Selznick, 1957; Perrow, 1972).

Though few scholars have concerned themselves with describing or outlining the totality of the process by which committed managers are molded, insights can be gained from empirically oriented studies of commitment which seek to identify its correlates in organizational settings. Sheldon (1971), for example, found that commitment was related to social involvement with colleagues and to such personal investments as length of organizational service, age, and hierarchical position. Lee (1971) found that organizational identification was determined in part by a sense of work accomplishment, relations with supervisors, and length of organizational service. In her analysis of utopian communities, Kantor (1968) argued that different aspects of commitment are elicited by different behavioral requirements imposed on community members. Thus, continuance commitment, defined as member dedication to system survival, was stimulated by requiring personal investments and sacrifices of members, such that it was costly and difficult for them to leave. Cohesion commitment, defined as member attachment to the social relationships which comprise the community, was secured by such techniques as verbal public renunciation of previous social ties and engaging in ceremonies which enhanced the sense of group cohesion and belonging. Control commitment, conceived as attachment to norms which shape behavior in desired directions, was encouraged by requiring members to publicly disavow previous norms and to reformulate their self-conceptions in terms of system values.

Brown (1969) discovered that individuals in his sample tended to identify with the organization in three situations: when they saw the organization as providing opportunities for personal achievement, when they had power within the organization, and when there were no competing objects of identification. Hrebiniak and Alutto (1973) found that the best predictors of commitment for their sample were role tension, years of organizational service, and dissatisfaction with the bases of organizational advancement.

Common themes emerge from these studies. Three authors identify years of service to the organization and social interaction with peers or superiors in the workplace as commitment-relevant experiences. Two identify job achievement and hierarchical advancement as factors likely to enhance commitment.

SOCIALIZATION OF MANAGERS

While the literature contains many clues to the nature of commitment-relevant experience, it is virtually silent on the question of the relative importance of particular experiences for influencing commitment and of how these experiences may vary in importance with time. If, as Hall and Nougaim (1968) found, the relative importance and intensity of particular needs change during the first five years of the managerial career, it is reasonable to expect that the relative impact of the experiences which stimulate commitment by gratifying needs may change as well.

Organizational Commitment

To test this, a scenario was constructed from a synthesis of the social influence and organizational socialization literature. Commitment-relevant experience is defined at each of three stages of managerial tenure. Stage one is the first year of organizational membership. Stages two and three correspond to years two through four and years five and beyond, respectively. The stages correspond in part to the career stage formulations of Schein (1971a) and Hall and Nougaim (1968). It is more appropriate, however, to view the present stages as influence susceptibility stages, rather than career stages. The two overlap in the sense that the career stages suggest the experiences likely to influence managers at given career points. Influence susceptibility stages, however, are skewed toward the early career years in keeping with the focus of this study on the inculcation of commitment, as contrasted with its maintenance at labor career stages. It is during the early career years that susceptibility to influence is greatest and attitudes toward the organization will be shaped.

Brown (1963) spoke of a law of primacy which holds that the earlier an experience, the more potent its effect, since it influences how later experiences will be interpreted. Many scholars have noted the special malleability of people in the early stages of organizational membership. Parsons (1951) talked of plasticity, Katz (1967) of role-readiness, and Brim (1968) of a special motivation to conform during this period. Presumably this unique malleability is at its peak during the first few years and may diminish rapidly thereafter. Special susceptibility to influence, coupled with the fact that new managers are *tabula rasa* insofar as the organization is concerned, suggest that enduring attitudes toward the organization are formed during this period. For present purposes, the assumption was made that by the fifth year, organizational attitudes will have reached a mature stage of nongrowth, even though their intensity remains subject to influence and fluctuation. Thus, stage three is the outcome stage in the sense that the organization's influence attempts will by then be directed at maintaining or changing existing attitudes rather than implanting new ones.

THE FIRST YEAR

The first year is a period during which management recruits undergo what Schein (1971a) has termed the basic training and initiation stages. From the standpoint of organizational influence, this year is probably the most critical in the managerial career (Caldwell, 1962; Berlew and Hall, 1966). Most who find themselves in the early stages of management development programs in large organizations are young persons who have recently decided on management careers and who are questioning whether the reality of that career is congruent with their inner sense of self. Hall and Nougaim (1968) contended that the primary concern of those at this career stage is safety: getting established with and accepted by the organization. Certainly such people are intensely anxious to prove themselves by showing that they can learn and adjust to the demands of the new environment (Wheeler, 1966; Becker and Carper, 1956).

This general state of mind suggests the kind of experience likely to shape attitudes toward the organization. Initially, the most influential are experiences which attune the recruit to what is expected of him (Berlew and Hall, 1966). His mild anxiety over his ability to live up to expectations activates the affiliative tendency and prompts him to identify and attach himself to significant others who can furnish

guidance and reassurance (Schacter, 1959). The creation of this initial reference group is a profoundly important experience. By gratifying first needs for guidance and reassurance and ultimately for respect and affection, such groups probably exert a lasting influence over individual attitudes toward the organization (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Asch, 1951; Etzioni, 1961). Moreover, interaction with veteran managers is the principal means by which recruits absorb the subtleties of organizational culture and climate (Schein, 1971b).

Next most influential are experiences which enable the recruit to test his expectations of organizational life. This pertains to vague, unspecific anticipations as well as to such concrete issues as job content or perquisites. Research has shown that when expectations of organizational life are exceeded, the likelihood of commitment is enhanced (Grusky, 1966). Presumably a significant negative discrepancy between expectations and reality, termed reality shock, would undermine the long-run prospects for commitment.

Of considerable importance among the specific experiences is the quality of the initial work assignment. The reason is that an individual's job is the main tangible manifestation of the organizational goals with which he is encouraged to identify. It will thus figure heavily in personal judgments about the adequacy of the organization as an identity object. If it is challenging and stimulating, such that it bolsters the self-image and gratifies the achievement needs of the individual, it will affect the commitment attitude positively. If, on the other hand, the job seems trivial or unimportant to the organization, the opposite effect can be expected.

A final category of experience is likely to be specially important to first-year managers. The category might be termed loyalty conflicts. Its significance stems from the fact that many recruits are torn between learning and surrender to the new environment on the one hand and suspicion and mistrust of it on the other. Thus, an early concern of many will be to sense whether the organization is trying to dominate them, and subvert their individuality through a substitution of organizational for personal values. Research has consistently demonstrated that challenges to, or attempts to change, ego-related attitudes will encounter defensiveness, resistance, and even solidification of the threatened attitude (Ostrom and Brock, 1968; Katz, Sarnoff, and McClintock, 1956; Sarnoff and Katz, 1954; House, 1967). To the extent that recruits feel threatened or compromised, commitment will probably be undermined.

THE SECOND THROUGH FOURTH YEAR

Stage two might be termed the performance stage. For Nougaim and Hall (1968), it was signaled by a shift in emphasis from safety and security to a concern with achievement, the making of a mark. For Schein (1971a), the stage began with the transfer of the individual to an assignment that embodies his first genuine responsibilities. The desire for achievement and for the recognition that goes with it suggests the experiences most likely to influence commitment during this intermediate stage. Most influential will be those that reinforce the fledgling manager's sense that he is making a real contribution, carrying his own weight. This class of experience is labeled personal significance reinforcement or personal importance. Managers who believe themselves to be making significant contributions and who sense that their

Organizational Commitment

contributions are appreciated are likely to develop commitment. Such reinforcement might result either from the individual's observation that his efforts have some direct or indirect impact on the success of the organization or it may result from the assurances of significant others. Salary increases, greater perquisites, casual remarks, promotions, and social invitation all illustrate the disparate things which can signal increasing organizational stature.

Another characteristic of managers in the middle of the second stage, particularly before achieving significant accomplishments, will be uncertainty regarding the suitability of the career choice. Thus, experiences which reinforce the occupational self-image may well contribute to the growth of organizational commitment. These might include interaction with a supportive peer group which anchors favorable attitudes toward the organization or reassurances from superiors. Romanticization of the organization and its aims might also bolster identification and assuage self-doubt. Such experiences are called self-image reinforcement in the scale titles below.

Another potentially influential experience is fear of failure. Moore (1968) held the possibility of failure to be characteristic of most professional occupations. A sense of the possibility of failure could certainly keep alive a keen interest in one's evaluated activities. Such a fear might reinforce commitment by sharpening the appreciation for success when it occurs.

It can also be anticipated that stage two managers will be sensitive to expectations for organizational commitment. If they perceive that loyalty is expected of successful managers in their organizations, they will be motivated to adopt such an attitude (Berlew and Hall, 1966). Organizations vary in the degree to which they encourage commitment norms among their managers, but those who expect commitment seem more likely to get it (Selznick, 1957).

Stage two clearly illustrates the partial distinction drawn between a career stage and an influence susceptibility stage. Even though the experiences likely to exploit the malleability of intermediate managers were suggested in part by the career stage descriptions of Schein (1971a) and Hall and Nougaim (1968), the time span suggested by the latter authors—from one to eight years—considerably exceeds the likely duration of the special susceptibility to influence which characterizes most persons in the early years of organizational membership.

THE FIFTH YEAR AND BEYOND

For research purposes, the fifth anniversary of organizational membership was designated as the beginning of the outcome stage of socialization. The rationale was that by this time organizational attitudes would have passed from a formative to a mature stage. Fundamental personal decisions about the adequacy of the organizations would have been made and solidified and the organization would have assumed a relatively enduring place in the psychic economy of the individual. This is not to suggest that the commitment attitude cannot be influenced beyond this time. The implication is simply that organizational efforts to influence managers must now involve the maintenance or alteration of existing attitudes rather than the molding of new attitudes.

The third stage encompasses most of the career years and it is thus difficult to predict the experiences most likely to sus-

tain commitment throughout this period. In addition, the later career years seem to unfold along much less predictable lines than the formative years and the possibilities are more numerous. Presthus (1962), for example, posited three modal patterns of personal adjustment to the organization among senior managers. Downs (1967) suggested five ideal types of motive configurations among bureaucratic officials. It is reasonable to expect that managers with different modal orientations will be influenced by different qualities and intensities of experience. To cope with these potential differences, the relevant stage three experience was conceived in broad terms.

The prediction was made that the most influential would be those experiences which confirmed the important expectations of senior managers. Conversely, experiences which disrupted the stable flow of expected inducements from the organization to the individual could be expected to undermine commitment. This category of experience was labeled organizational dependability. Specific examples would include all of the

Table 1

Summary of Predictions

Experience

Stage 1

Role clarity
Peer group cohesion
Group attitudes toward organization
Expectations realization
Reality shock
First-year job challenge
Loyalty conflicts

Stage 2

Personal importance
Self-image reinforcement
Fear of failure
Organizational commitment norms
Work commitment norms

Stage 3

Organizational dependability

things which over the years had reinforced the steady growth of commitment: interesting work, signals of personal importance, rewarding colleague relationships, and the like. Table 1 summarizes the experience predictions for each of the three stages.

METHODOLOGY

Measurement Issues

Organizational commitment and socialization experiences were measured with a combination of previously used and specially constructed questionnaire scales. The commitment scale is a combination of the Hall, Schneider, and Nygren (1970) organizational identification scale, the Lodahl and Kejner (1965) job involvement scale, and a specially constructed index of organizational loyalty. This and other specially constructed scales employed in this study were constructed along a priori lines. Table 2 displays sample items for each scale and Table 1 contains the scale intercorrelations. The alpha coefficient for each scale (Table 2) is greater than its Pearson *r* with either of the other scales (Table 3). This lends a measure of empirical weight to the conceptual distinctions drawn between identification, involvement, and loyalty. The relatively high interscale correlations

Organizational Commitment

Table 2

Three-part Commitment Scale Sample Items and Reliability Estimates

Sample items	Cronbach's alpha
Organizational Identification Scale, 6 items I feel a sense of pride in working for this organization. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my problems.	.862
Job involvement scale, 6 items The most important things that happen to me involve my work. I live, eat, and breathe my job.	.837
Organizational loyalty scale I have warm feelings toward this organization as a place to live and work. I would be quite willing to spend the rest of my career with this organization.	.915
Combined scale reliability estimate	.944

N = 279

(Table 3), however, suggest the feasibility of collapsing the three component scales into a single commitment scale, designated as the dependent variable in the multiple regressions reported in Tables 5 and 6. Subjects responded to

Table 3

Commitment Component Scale Intercorrelations

	ID	INV	LOY
ID			
INV		.65	.74
LOY			.58

N = 279

ID = organizational identification scale

INV = job involvement scale

LOY = organizational loyalty scale

all questionnaire items by expressing the extent of their agreement on a one to seven scale, with seven indicating strong agreement.

All measures of experience were constructed especially for this study. Items were worded to determine whether the subject perceived himself to have undergone a particular class of experience, rather than being affected by a specific, substantive event. In the case of the personal importance scale, for example, subjects indicated the general extent to which their experience made them feel important to the organization. They were not asked about specific events which may have given rise to such feelings. Thus, each scale was designed to elicit a perceptual summary of a certain class of experience.

Thirteen experience scales were constructed, each containing four or five items. These are labeled below, along with one-sentence characterizations of the substance of each scale. Cronbach's alpha estimates of reliability appear in parentheses beside each scale title.

- (1) **Role clarity (.794)**. Has the organization made it clear to me what I am expected to do?
- (2) **Peer group cohesion¹ (.800)**. Are the people with whom I work friendly and close-knit or aloof and distant?
- (3) **Group attitudes toward organization (.909)**. Do the people I work with express mostly positive or mostly negative attitudes toward the organization?

¹ Stage two and three managers received two versions of the group scale in this and the following scale. One tapped first-year experience, the other current experience.

- (4) **Expectations realization (.823)**. Have I found what I expected to find since coming to work for this organization?
- (5) **Reality shock (.796)**. Am I disappointed as a result of the contrast between what I expected and what I found?
- (6) **First-year job challenge (.927)**. Was the work I was given to do during my first year challenging and interesting or routine and dull?
- (7) **Loyalty conflicts (.797)**. Has the organization tried to influence me to adopt values or practices I find personally repugnant?
- (8) **Personal importance (.881)**. Is it generally accepted by those who matter that my work is important to the organization?
- (9) **Self-image reinforcement (.846)**. Do people accept me for what I am here? Do I feel free to be myself?
- (10) **Fear of failure (.540)**. How often am I reminded that my job and chances for promotion depend on how well I perform?
- (11) **Organizational commitment norms (.734)**. Are managers like myself expected to be personally committed to this organization?
- (12) **Work commitment norms (.688)**. Are managers like myself expected to have a strong personal commitment to the work they do?
- (13) **Organizational dependability (.897)**. Has this organization always done the things it said it would do for me?

Table 4 contains interscale correlations for the 13 experience scales.

Table 4

Experience Scale Intercorrelations

	Role clarity	Peer group Cohesion	Group attitudes toward organization	Expectations Realization	Reality shock	First-year job challenge	Loyalty conflicts	Personal importance	Self-image reinforcement	Fear of failure	Organizational commitment norms	Work commitment norms	Organizational dependability
Role clarity		.38	.32	.53	.53	.41	.38	.38	.32	.18	.23	.32	.43
Peer group cohesion			.52	.78	.45	.13	.30	.54	.58	.39	.46	.49	.54
Group attitudes toward organization				.57	.56	.23	.35	.78	.63	.42	.37	.59	.72
Expectations realization					.78	.60	.51	.41	.40	.26	.28	.28	.52
Reality shock						.58	.57	.41	.42	.23	.27	.33	.42
First-year job challenge							.38	.32	.21	.18	.23	.27	.23
Loyalty conflicts								.40	.46	.32	.11	.25	.43
Personal importance									.65	.35	.45	.69	.70
Self-image reinforcement										.58	.34	.52	.75
Fear of failure											.02	.18	.49
Organizational commitment norms												.71	.30
Work commitment norms													.52
Organizational dependability													

N = 279.

Of the 78 correlation coefficients, only 24, or roughly one-third, are .50 or higher. Thus, in more than two-thirds of the cases, intrascale reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) are of greater magnitude than the interscale Pearson correlations. This suggests at least a tolerable level of discriminant validity between these experience scales. Such a claim is bolstered by the fact that a number of these scales—for example, expectations realization and reality shock or expectations realization and first-year job challenge—would be expected to be highly correlated on the basis of their substantive content. Moreover, the strength of these interscale correlations is at least in part a result of common method variance. The latter is a predictable consequence of a lengthy questionnaire instrument where most of the scales employ common response formats, as was the case in this study.

Organizational Commitment

SITES, SUBJECTS, AND DESIGN

Eight organizations participated in the study. Five were domestic agencies of the federal government, located in Washington, D.C. Three were *Fortune* 500 manufacturing concerns located in the northeastern United States.² All are among the largest bureaucratic work organizations in American society and were chosen to typify such organizations.

Access was arranged through personnel officers in the organizations. Each organization listed its managers in groups corresponding to the three tenure categories. Only those managers whose total years of service were with the organization that currently employed them were listed. Managers were randomly selected from these lists and invited to participate in the study. In three of the eight cases, the inclusion criteria reduced the numbers to the point where all managers listed were invited to participate. In both the public and the private organizations, a manager was a person to whom one or more others reported and who personnel officers certified was slated for or possessed significant administrative responsibility. In the public agencies, all subjects had GS-7 ratings or higher.

The research objectives dictated a cross-sectional design. Five hundred questionnaires were distributed and 279 were returned, for a response rate of slightly under 56 percent. Questionnaires were completed privately and returned directly to the researcher by mail. Sixty-six respondents were first-year managers, 71 were in years two through four, and 142 were in years five and beyond.

RESULTS

The results are considered in the light of two basic questions. First, are the 13 experiences among those with the greatest capacity to stimulate the commitment attitude? Second, are the predictions concerning the importance of particular experiences in each of the three tenure stages borne out by the data?

Table 5 presents the results of a multiple regression in which the commitment scale was designated as the dependent variable and the 13 experience scales the independent variables. The experiences entered the regression equation competitively, according to the best criterion. Only those experience scales contributing at least .01 to explained commitment

Table 5

Multiple Regression Depicting Impact of Experiences on Organizational Commitment

Organizational experience	Standardized coefficient
Personal importance	.21•
First-year group attitudes toward organization	.12•
Organizational dependability	.15•
Organizational commitment norms	.12•
First-year job challenge	.19•
Current group attitudes toward organization	.23•
Peer group cohesion	.08

$N = 279$

$F = 85.42, p < .0001, R^2 = .68, df = 269$

•
 $p < .01$

2

For an assessment of and differences between business and government managers see Buchanan (1974).

variance (R^2) entered the equation. As shown, 7 experiences entered the equation and collectively explained 68 percent of the commitment variance. These data pertain to the first question and suggest that the experiences selected for measurement are among the important predictors of commitment. Further, the relatively high proportion of variance explained suggests that comparatively few experiences of importance were omitted.

The next body of data provides a check on the accuracy of the predictions concerning the significance of experiences within tenure groups. Three multiple regressions were computed, one within each group. In every instance, all 13 experiences were allowed to enter the equation competitively. The results are given in Table 6.

Table 6

Organizational experience	Standardized coefficient
Stage 1	
<i>N</i> = 66	
Group attitudes toward organization	.56•
First-year job challenge	.31•
Loyalty conflicts	.11
<i>F</i> = 67.27, <i>p</i> < .0001	
<i>R</i> ² = .78	
df = 56	
Stage 2	
<i>N</i> = 71	
Self-image reinforcement	.34•
Personal importance	.25••
First-year job challenge	.15
Organizational commitment norms	.11
Group attitudes toward organization	.15
<i>F</i> = 33.81, <i>p</i> < .0001	
<i>R</i> ² = .73	
df = 61	
Stage 3	
<i>N</i> = 142	
Group attitudes toward organization	.62•
Expectations realization	.21•
Work commitment norms	.17•
Fear of failure	-.09
<i>F</i> = 47.53, <i>p</i> < .0001	
<i>R</i> ² = .58	
df = 134	
•	
<i>p</i> < .01	
••	
<i>p</i> < .05	

How accurate were the stage one predictions? Three experiences explained 78 percent of the commitment scale variance in the stage one regression. This was the largest proportion of variance explained among the three tenure regressions and suggests that most of the experiences relevant to first-year managers were included. Each of the three entering experiences was predicted. The importance of the work group's attitudes is consistent with the observation that first-year managers are ready for their roles and sensitive to expectations. The suggested importance of the initial work assignment is also supported. The strength of the loyalty conflicts experience suggests that there are limits to the

Organizational Commitment

malleability of new managers. Guidance is sought and accepted, but recruits apparently are skeptical of and sensitive to the organization's efforts to influence their attitudes and values. Influence attempts exceeding an individual's threshold of tolerance may well be counterproductive.

The major deviation from stage one predictions was the failure of the reality shock variable to enter the regression equation. This seems significant because many believe a discrepancy between expectations and reality to be the major cause of turnover among junior managers. One likely explanation is that the effects of this experience cannot be accurately assayed precisely because of turnover. Those most dissatisfied have probably departed, while those remaining to complete questionnaires found things sufficiently to their liking to stay with their organizations. Another likelihood is that feelings of unfulfilled expectations were absorbed by more substantively specific scales such as first-year job challenge, rather than the more general and unspecifically worded reality shock scale.

The stage two regression, given in Table 6, illustrates how sharply the importance of particular experiences may vary with tenure. Most noteworthy here is the strong emergence of self-image and personal importance as determinants of organizational commitment. These two experiences together explained 70 percent of the commitment variance among stage two managers. The other three experiences combined elevated R^2 only an additional .03, a miniscule impact. Nonetheless, two of the three, job challenge and organizational commitment norms, were important among the first-year group. Their entry here attests to their enduring significance despite their comparatively slight impact.

These findings square with the projections for managers in the second stage quite well. The appearance of the self-image reinforcement and personal importance experiences is consistent with the suggestion that intermediate managers need personal confirmation and reinforcement of the career choice, as well as evidence of increasing personal impact on the organizational affairs that concern them. The most prominent deviation from expectations was the apparent insignificance of the fear of failure experience. It was suspected that by increasing sensitivity to evaluations and heightening the satisfaction associated with success, such a feeling might enhance the commitment attitude. For this sample of managers, such was not the case.

Of the three tenure regressions, that which computed across the responses of stage three managers provides the least support for the predictions discussed in the previous section. Organizational dependability, the experience believed most likely to sustain the commitment of senior managers, did not even enter the regression equation. Even more surprising was the particular collection of experiences which did explain 58 percent of the commitment variance among this group (Table 6).

Especially noteworthy is the resurgence of the reference group following an apparent decline in significance among stage two managers. The group attitudes toward organization experience alone explained 52 percent of the commitment variance among stage three managers. An explanation might be that senior managers tend to draw closer together as time brings more unfamiliar faces into the organization. There is additional evidence which lends credence to this speculation.

On the measure of peer group cohesion, senior managers reported significantly more cohesion than stage two managers ($p < .05$) and approximately the same cohesion as stage one managers. This increased cohesion may be a defensive reaction to the new ideas and new competencies young managers bring into the organization. The mild anxiety this might stimulate could reenergize the affiliative tendency, thus increasing the group's influence over the attitudes of individual members.

The most curious result was the impact of expectations realization. While it did not make a large contribution to explained variance, its entry seems unusual and deserves comment. The items comprising this scale deal solely with comparisons of the manager's expectations before joining his organization with his experiences the first year after joining. That this variable, which did not even enter the first two regression equations, would suddenly emerge in the third stage is perplexing. The most plausible explanation is that senior managers responded to these items in terms of their current experience or their experience of the recent past, rather than in terms of their first-year experience. This seems reasonable in light of the fact that many of these people have been employed by the organization for more than ten years, which would understandably dim recollections of the initial year.

Why is there a discrepancy between reality and expectations influential at mature career stages and not in earlier stages as expected? One possibility stems from the defensive reaction to young managers suggested above. Sensitivity to the competitive threat they pose might lead senior managers to reflect on their own beginnings and to conclude that they didn't have it so easy. This, in turn, could stimulate satisfaction or disappointment, depending on whether the dreams and aspirations of those early years have been realized. A related possibility has to do with the midcareer crisis identified by Sofer (1970) and Levinson (1969). These authors noted that managers in midcareer often undergo an identity crisis, during which they pause to reassess the evolution of their lives and careers. Have I come as far as I wanted? Do things have the meaning for me now that they once had? Such self-scrutiny would quite naturally focus on the contrast between youthful aspirations and the reality of experience in the course of a career. Further, it is conceivable that some of the blame for any dissatisfaction with the contrast would be transferred to the organization in the form of diminished commitment or general disenchantment. Certainly satisfaction with the comparison would be likely to bolster commitment. The accuracy of these suggestions is at best uncertain, but little else could logically account for the pronounced importance of expectations realization among senior managers.

Finally, the commitment variance explained in the stage three regression is the lowest of the three tenure groups. Fifty-eight percent is a respectable proportion of variance to explain, but it is clear that many significant experiences were not included among those measured.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study are generally consistent with the common themes found in the review of similar research early in this article. Collectively, these studies identified years of organizational service, social interaction with organizational peers and superiors, job achievement, and hierarchical ad-

Organizational Commitment

vancement as determinants of various aspects of commitment. The present study found measures of similar experiences to be significantly related to commitment. Thus, social interaction with peers and superiors corresponds to the two group experiences, peer group cohesion and group attitudes toward organization. Years of organizational service squares with the present finding that raw commitment scores increased significantly from tenure stage one to two and two to three, holding experiences constant ($p < .01$). Job achievement plus hierarchical advancement can be subsumed under the broad personal importance experience.

The results of the present study seem significant in two areas. First is the identification and comparative weighting of experiences which collectively explained 68 percent of the variance on the commitment scale (Table 5). Second, and most important, was the attempt to assess variations in the significance of experience within the three tenure stages. The major interest was in the development or inculcation of the commitment attitude and most of the predictions accordingly centered on stages one and two. The stage three results, coupled with the wide variety of possible managerial orientations mentioned earlier, indicate that much additional research is needed to understand how commitment is maintained at mature career stages. The results at all three stages represent little more than preliminary indications, but the sharp variations in commitment-relevant experience revealed by the regressions suggest clearly that this is a fruitful area for investigation.

Bruce Buchanan II is assistant professor of government at the University of Texas at Austin.

References

- Asch, Solomon E.
1951 "Effects of group pressure upon the modification and distortion of judgements." In Harold Guetzkow (ed.), *Groups, Leadership and Men*: 177-190. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press.
- Becker, Howard S., and James W. Carper
1956 "The development of identification with an occupation." *American Sociological Review* 21: 341-347.
- Berlew, David E., and Douglas T. Hall
1966 "The socialization of managers: effects of expectations on performance." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 11: 207-233.
- Brim, Orville G.
1968 "Adult socialization." In John Clausen (ed.), *Socialization and Society*: 182-226. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Brown, J. A. C.
1963 *Techniques of Persuasion*. Baltimore: Penguin Books.
- Brown, Michael E.
1969 "Identification and some conditions of organizational involvement." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 14: 346-355.
- Buchanan, Bruce
1974 "Government managers, business executives and organizational commitment." *Public Administration Review*, 34: 339-347.
- Caldwell, Bettye M.
1962 "The usefulness of the critical period hypothesis in the study of filiative behavior." *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly of Behavior and Development*, 8: 229-242.
- Downs, Anthony
1967 *Inside Bureaucracy*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Etzioni, Amitai
1961 *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations*. New York: Free Press.
- Grusky, Oscar
1966 "Career mobility and organizational commitment." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 10: 488-503.
- Hall, Douglas T., Benjamin Schneider, and Harold T. Nygren
1970 "Personal factors in organizational identification." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15: 176-189.
- Hall, Douglas T., and Khalil E. Nougaim
1968 "An examination of Maslow's need hierarchy in an organizational setting." *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 3: 12-35.
- House, Robert J.
1967 *Management Development: Design, Evaluation and Implementation*. Ann Arbor: Bureau of Industrial Relations, University of Michigan.
- Hrebiniak, Lawrence C., and Joseph A. Alutto
1973 "Personal and role-related factors in the development of organizational commitment." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 18: 555-572.

- Kantor, Rosabeth M.**
1968 "Commitment and social organization: a study of commitment mechanisms in utopian communities." *American Sociological Review*, 33: 499–517.
- 1972 *Commitment and Community*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Katz, Daniel**
1967 "The motivational basis of organizational behavior." In Walter A. Hill and Douglas Egan (eds.), *Readings in Organization Theory*: 175–195. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Katz, Daniel, Irving Sarnoff, and Charles McClintock**
1956 "Ego defense and attitude change." *Human Relations*, 9: 27–45.
- Lee, Sang M.**
1971 "An empirical analysis of organizational identification." *Academy of Management Journal*, 14: 213–226.
- Levinson, Harold**
1969 "On being a middle-aged manager." *Harvard Business Review*, 47: 51–60.
- Lodahl, Thomas M., and Mathilde Kejner**
1965 "The definition and measurement of job involvement." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 49: 24–33.
- Moore, Wilbert E.**
1969 "Occupational socialization." In David A. Goslin (ed.), *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research*: 861–884. Chicago: Rand-McNally.
- Ostrom, Thomas M., and Timothy C. Brock**
1968 "A cognitive model of attitudinal involvement." In Robert P. Abelson *et al.* (eds.), *Theories of Cognitive Consistency: A Sourcebook*: 577–589. Chicago: Rand-McNally.
- Parsons, Talcot**
1951 *The Social System*. New York: Free Press.
- Patchen, Martin**
1970 *Participation, Achievement, and Involvement on the Job*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Perrow, Charles**
1972 *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay*. Chicago: Rand-McNally.
- Porter, Lyman W.**
1968 *The Etiology of Organizational Commitment: A Longitudinal Study of Initial Stages of Employee-Organization Relationships*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Presthus, Robert**
1962 *The Organizational Society*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Sarnoff, Irving, and Daniel Katz**
1954 "The motivational base of attitude change." *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 49: 115–124.
- Schacter, Stanley**
1959 *The Psychology of Affiliation*. Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press.
- Schein, Edgar H.**
1971 "Organizational socialization and the profession of management." In David A. Kolb *et al.* (eds.), *Organizational Psychology: A Book of Readings*: 1–14. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- 1971 "The individual, the organization and the career: a conceptual scheme." In David A. Kolb *et al.* (eds.), *Organizational Psychology: A Book of Readings*: 301–316. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Selznick, Phillip**
1957 *Leadership in Administration*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sheldon, Mary E.**
1971 "Investments and involvements as mechanisms producing commitment to the organization." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 16: 143–150.
- Sofer, Cyril**
1970 *Men in Mid-Career*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Thibaut, John W., and Harold H. Kelley**
1959 *The Social Psychology of Groups*. New York: Wiley.
- Wheeler, Stanton**
1966 "The structure of formally organized socialization settings." In Orville G. Brim and Stanton Wheeler (eds.), *Socialization After Childhood*: 51–106. New York: Wiley.