COMMITMENT AS AN INDICATOR OF TURNOVER IN FIRST LINE MANUFACTURING SUPERVISION

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of North Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

Tamara K. Tuggle, B.S.
Denton, Texas
August, 1994
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Tuggle, Tamara K., Commitment as an Indicator of Turnover in First Line Manufacturing Supervision. Master of Science (Industrial/Organizational Psychology), August, 1994, 69 pp., 8 tables, 2 figures, references, 45 titles.

Organizational commitment is most commonly defined as a measure of an employee's commitment to the company or larger organization. In a longitudinal study, the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was administered to 123 first line manufacturing supervisors in a defense contracting firm. After a one year check, subjects were grouped into categories of voluntary and involuntary turnover. The results suggest that significant relationships exist among the variables of departmental commitment, turnover and tenure. However, the study failed to show any relationship between organizational commitment and turnover.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Dan Watson for his expertise, coaching, and never-ending patience. Not often does one get the opportunity to work with someone who's technical expertise is equal to his ability to teach others.

Drs. Douglas Johnson and Michael Beyerlein for their persistence, patience, and valuable input.

Dr. Jerry Bayless for his encouragement, coaching, and continued guidance in life, as in industry. Rarely does one have a leader who is also a true mentor, however I have been fortunate.

My colleagues, Carolyn Miller and Sharon Lively for their daily inspiration, contribution, and humor.

It is most difficult to express the enormous gratitude I have for my mother, Kay, sister, Tina, and brother, Brad. Thank you for your constant encouragement, unconditional support and acceptance.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In today's workplace, new methods of managing and communicating with people continue to evolve. Innovative organizational effectiveness techniques such as self-directed work teams, reengineering, empowerment, and pay-for-knowledge, have refocused organizational imperatives from top-down implementation to one of people development and involvement.

Conversely, today's workforce is far less likely to stay with a company for several years, much less their entire career. In a 1981 article in Fortune, William H. Whyte stated, "Although the symptoms of eroding loyalty are widely recognized, the severity of the disease is startling. Turnover among managers out of college less than five years has quadrupled since 1960. Today, the average corporation can count on losing 50% of its college recruits within five years" (p. 54). In addition, organizations are also less loyal and committed to their employees. When organizations are forced to make difficult decision around reducing the workforce, seniority or tenure is less of a determinant than adaptability and an ability to work cross-functionally.
This high rate of turnover among recent college graduates can quickly lead to technical obsolescence. In past years, many of the world’s major corporations have overlooked issues of commitment and turnover due to the constant influx, or high volume of new employees each year.

Those high performing, technically competent individuals who left the organization were quickly replaced with promising new recruits. This phenomenon has been especially typical in the supervisory and entry management ranks.

Typically, organizations selected potential supervisors from a pool of talented individual contributors. High performing individual contributors were rewarded for their technical competence by being promoted to a supervisory or management position. However, many organizations failed to advise newly appointed supervisors that the rules determining exemplar performance had changed. While technical knowledge continued to be valuable, the competencies determining success as a supervisor were often those related to interpersonal and communication skills.

In the past, failure of an individual in a supervisory role was often of little consequence to the organization or the individual. A wealth of new, developing employees allowed the organization to easily replace the ineffective supervisor. The replaced supervisor’s career often suffered little, as well. He or she might be rotated to a new position,
or perhaps promoted. This was possible because the importance and performance of an individual within a multi-layered structure was naturally diminished.

Today, many leading corporations are faced with a myriad of economic problems. Declining market share, global competition, rapidly changing technology, poor strategic planning, an aging workforce, and large scale corporate downsizing are just some of the issues forcing organizations to become leaner and more strategic in order to remain competitive. Faced with these realities, organizations must now tackle staffing and people development issues with a new, rigorous strategy.

Two major workforce issues must be addressed by organizations willing to confront these issues. First, they must select new employees and promote current employees in the most systematic manner to ensure success in the job. Secondly, organizations must actively and aggressively pursue initiatives that retain current exemplar performers in all positions. Therefore, they must take responsibility by developing processes to address the symptoms leading to a lack of organizational commitment among employees, and ultimately, to turnover.

Commitment

Definitions of organizational commitment vary widely (Hall et al., 1970; Hrebfniak and Alutto, 1972; Kanter, 1968; Salancik, 1977; Sheldon, 1971). However, a review of
the literature reveals commonalties among the researchers. Definitions of commitment fall under two headings, behavioral and attitudinal. The behavioral definition suggests that commitment is manifested in overt actions readily visible to others. For example, "a person is 'committed' if he or she is bound by past actions or if he or she has 'sunk costs' into the organization that are difficult or impossible to retrieve" (Steers and Porter, 1982, p.442). An employee is presumed to be committed to an organization if he/she has been with the company many years and has accumulated financial and personal benefits that cannot be duplicated elsewhere. Behavioral commitment is explained in great detail in the works of Staw (1977) and Salancik (1977).

Conversely, if commitment is attitudinal, it is seen as a state in which an individual identifies with organizational goals and wishes to maintain membership in order to facilitate those goals (Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1982). To this date, the most exhaustive review of research on the topic of organizational commitment has been the book entitled Employee-Organization Linkages: The Psychology of Commitment, Absenteeism, and Turnover by Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982). Their work in this area is consistent with that of Staw (1977), Salancik (1977) and Becker (1960). Much of the following discussion, as well as the discussion of turnover, is based on their review.
For the purposes of this investigation, commitment will be defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization (Porter and Smith, 1970). Commitment is characterized by three primary factors: (a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (c) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

This definition of commitment is in line with the theory of exchange, [italics added] first conceptualized in the work of March & Simon (1958), which suggests that employees attach themselves to an organization in return for rewards. The March model contends that commitment is a give and take between the organization and the individual, where the environment is such that the individual's basic needs are satisfied by an organizational climate that needs their skills. Buchanan (1975) states that "the commitment attitude is reciprocally valuable. It advances the interests of the individual as he develops the patterns of his work life just as surely as it furthers the ends of the organization" (pp. 70-71).

Much of the recent references on the exchange theory are based on the work of Peter Blau (1964). Blau suggests that this exchange process is not restricted to economic
situations. For instance, a friend may feel the need to return a favor provided by another. This ideal is at work in organizations, as well. Although the most common exchange between an individual and an organization is a provision of skills for economic rewards, employees often expect social rewards, as well. Extra effort on the part of an employee can be rewarded with social exchanges such as time off, public recognition, or perhaps, increased visibility in the organization. In fact, some employees may stay in an undesirable position for a designated period of time with the expectation that the he or she will be given a promotion, or more preferable position after "paying their dues".

In an illustration of this concept Steers (1977) states:

Individuals come to organizations with certain needs, desires, skills, and so forth, and expect to find a work environment where they can utilize their abilities and satisfy many of their basic needs. When the organization provides such a vehicle (for example, where it makes effective use of its employees, is dependable, and so forth), the likelihood of increasing commitment is apparently enhanced. When the organization is not dependable, however, or where it fails to provide employees with challenging and
meaningful tasks, commitment levels tend to diminish.

(p. 53)

An employee's underlying belief in the organization, or organizational trust, is inherent to this theory. This trust in an organization (or in an individual representing the organization such as a manager) is developed over time and is based on the individual's work experiences (Steers, 1977).

Another attitudinal outcome of an employee's cumulative work experience is job satisfaction. A review of the existing literature shows a strong link between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Substantial debate continues over the exact relationship between these two variables. Does job satisfaction facilitate the development of organizational commitment? Researchers still question this link (Steers & Mowday, 1981; Arnold & Feldman, 1982; Muchinsky & Morrow, 1980). Characteristics of one's work or personal environment determine both satisfaction and commitment. However, whether or not satisfaction is an antecedent of commitment has been questioned. Although most researchers acknowledge some connection between the two, most found little evidence of a direct causal relationship. One study however, broke from conventional wisdom.

Williams and Hazer (1985) argued that the causal relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment had been overlooked. Structural equation
methodology was used to reanalyze data from previous studies, (Micheals and Spector, 1982; Bluedorn, 1982) and four causal models were examined. Williams and Hazer's results supported a hypothesis that personal and organizational characteristics influence satisfaction directly and commitment indirectly through satisfaction and its effect on commitment. Their results indicated a possible limitation of previous studies using path analysis. The use of path analysis methodology prevented an examination of the direct effects of determinants on both of these variables at the same time.

Williams and Hazer (1985) suggested that a direct link between satisfaction and commitment was supported. There was more support of a causal link from satisfaction to commitment than in the reverse direction. However, their comparisons supported the widely held belief that commitment has a more important effect on intent to leave or quit than did satisfaction. The authors did indicate this relationship is tentative. In summary they stated:

The present research, in conjunction with existing reviews of the antecedents of satisfaction, which have validated the roles of personal and organizational characteristics (e.g., Mitchell, 1979), supports the proposal that these factors may influence commitment only indirectly. In other words, through a process of the evaluation of costs and benefits, individual needs
and desires are satisfied, and the resulting affective state becomes associated with the organization, which has provided the job and its associated characteristics and environment. Commitment results from this association. (p. 230)

Many studies have looked at the similarities and differences between commitment and job satisfaction, and most agree that commitment is a stronger determinant of turnover than is satisfaction. Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1982) addressed the difference between the two by stating:

commitment as a construct is more global, reflecting a general affective response to the organization as a whole. Job satisfaction, on the other hand, reflects one's response either to one's job or to certain aspects of one's job. Hence commitment emphasizes attachment to the employing organization, including its goals and values, whereas satisfaction emphasizes the specific task environment where an employee performs his or her duties. (p. 28)

In addition, job satisfaction seems to be of a more transitory nature than commitment. While day-to-day occurrences may have an effect on job satisfaction, an employee's commitment level will remain more stable, unaffected by such situations (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). In a study of 2,563 employees in nine divergent organizations, Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) used the
Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OPQ) to examine the differences between job satisfaction and commitment. The results suggested that in a comparison of the predictive power of commitment and a well developed measure of job satisfaction, commitment was found to be a better and more stable predictor of turnover. A discussion of the differences between job satisfaction and commitment as a determiner of turnover follows.

Mobley (1977) developed a conceptual model of the intermediate linkages between the relationships of job satisfaction and turnover. This model focuses on how dissatisfaction conceptually leads to turnover. As a result, Mobley's model goes further than previous models by suggesting that the behavioral intention to leave is more of a determinant of actual employee turnover than is job satisfaction.

Other studies support the transitory nature of job satisfaction and confirm the stable nature of organizational commitment (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian 1974; Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969). While particular events may cause satisfaction to grow or wane at any given time, commitment is less affected by immediate reactions to tangible events in the work environment (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). Commitment is an affective response to the organization as a whole. Satisfaction however, tends to be a reaction to
specific aspects of the job (i.e. pay, supervision, benefits, co-workers).

Based on the foundation of research cited above, this study will focus on commitment, rather than job satisfaction, as a determiner of job turnover. Job satisfaction is determined in part by the ability of an organization to provide an environment allowing for satisfying job characteristics. The resulting affective state allows an individual to become associated with an organization. Commitment results from this association (Rusbult & Farrell, 1983; Williams & Hazer, 1985). However, looking at the effects of the two antecedents, commitment and satisfaction and their effect on turnover, commitment has been shown to have the greater cause and effect relationship.

Therefore, this study will only examine organizational commitment as an indicator of turnover. Three categories of antecedents for commitment are generally identified as personal attributes, organizational factors and role-related factors (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Stevens, Beyer, & Trice, 1978). Personal attributes include such factors as age, tenure, education, gender, and personality traits (e.g., need for achievement.) Work and organizational experiences such as employee involvement, organizational structure, and the size of the organization make up the second category. The third category of antecedents deals
with issues related to role-ambiguity, role-conflict, job scope, and challenge, as well as social interaction (Williams & Hazer, 1986).

Consequences of organizational commitment examined in the literature fall into five possible outcomes, including job performance, tenure with the organization, absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover. The discussion that follows will include a brief overview of the findings in the categories of job performance, tenure, absenteeism and tardiness, with an expanded discussion of commitment as a determiner of turnover to follow.

Studies of commitment have shown a particularly weak relationship between commitment and job performance (Mowday et al., 1974; Porter, Crampon, & Smith, 1976). Commitment might be expected to influence one aspect of job performance, but have very little global effect.

Meyer and Allen (1984) used the term affective commitment to describe the definition put forth by Porter. Those employees with a strong affective commitment remain with the organization because they want to. They operationalized Becker’s definition as continuance commitment. Employees with strong continuance commitment remain with the organization, because they need to do so. As employees’ tenure with the organization increases, so do benefits and compensation. They may choose to remain with the organization for financial or security reasons rather
than identifying with an organization's goals and objectives. Therefore, one could assume that employees who are experiencing affective commitment would perform better on the job than those experiencing continuance commitment (Meyer, Sampo, Gellatly, Goffin, and Jackson, 1989).

Commitment might have some influence over the amount of effort an employee puts into a job, thereby having some impact on performance. In a unique study, Meyer, et al., 1989, examined the link between employees' commitment to the organization and supervisors' evaluations of their performance. They distinguished two definitions of commitment for use in their research. The first, a popular definition by Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) that states commitment is "the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (p. 604). The second definition of commitment used in the study was put forth by Becker (1960) who described commitment as "the tendency to engage in 'consistent lines of activity'" (p. 33) because of the perceived cost of doing otherwise (Meyer et al., 1989).

Meyer et al. (1989) compared supervisor's performance ratings to employee responses to the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OPQ) developed by Porter, Mowday, and Steers (1982). The results indicated that affective commitment of employees to the organization was positively related to their measured job performance, whereas
continuance commitment was negatively related to performance. They stated, "The value of commitment therefore, is dependent on the nature of that commitment" (p. 155).

These findings pose a challenge for today's organizations. Many companies are attempting to lure exemplary candidates and retain valued employees by offering a myriad of benefits such as on-site day-care facilities, alternative work schedules, stock options, and employee fitness facilities to name a few. The findings of the Meyer et al. study suggest that if organizations really want to foster commitment, they must look beyond the continuance commitment programs of the past and present to the more difficult, higher impact organizational behaviors that foster affective commitment.

Many companies are experimenting with breakthrough initiatives that allow employees to give input into and help redefine the organization's goals and values. Some of these initiatives, as stated previously, are self-directed work teams, pay for knowledge, valuing diversity, and empowerment. While being more difficult for an organization to encourage, these programs have the attributes needed to foster affective commitment among employees.

Dessler (1993) developed a wheel of commitment taking into account the principles of empowerment and teaming. His eight keys to commitment are:
Another possible outcome of organizational commitment is tenure. Highly significant positive correlations have been found between increased tenure and increased commitment. Highly committed employees are desirous of remaining with the organization, as suggested in the conceptual model by Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982). Their model is comprised of four influences: (a) length of service, (b) investments made by the employee, (c) increased social involvement in the organization and community, and (d) a decrease in the employee's job mobility. As the authors state, "Each of these factors, alone or in combination, may serve to strengthen commitment to the organization" (p. 66).

The literature suggests that commitment has some influence on absenteeism. Highly committed employees should be motivated to attend work, in order to facilitate the goals of the organization. However, only modest support for this relationship can be found, and this support is not
consistent among researchers (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982).

A study by Angle and Perry (1981) found commitment to be strongly and inversely related to tardiness. Their theory would suggest that committed employees are more likely to exhibit those behaviors desirous to the organization. Coming in habitually late would not be one of those behaviors.

Turnover

As with the topic of employee commitment, the definitive works on the subject of turnover have been based on the writings of Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982). Much of following discussion is based on their work. Researchers have put forth several differing conceptual models of turnover. However, many authors base their models on the principle that turnover is a result of negative attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, commitment, etc.) and an ability to find a position elsewhere. Every organization confronts the problem of turnover at some time. Some organizations seem particularly plagued with the difficulty of maintaining a stable workforce (particularly small companies and service organizations). Following is a review of some of the most important research conducted on the topic of turnover.

Through several decades, many researchers have attempted to develop models to account for the reasons individuals leave organizations. Herzberg et al. (1957)
conducted one of the first, and perhaps best known, studies
on the relationship between employee satisfaction and
turnover. Herzberg’s model included two types of job
determiners, motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are
those satisfiers, mostly intrinsic (job satisfaction,
feeling challenged, achievement, recognition, advancement,
the work itself and responsibility), that have a powerful
influence on one’s desire to remain with an organization or
seek employment elsewhere. Herzberg’s other determinant of
satisfaction was hygiene factors. These factors, mostly
extrinsic values such as pay, benefits, company policy,
supervision, and working conditions, are responsible for the
presence or absence of negative feelings. Hygiene factors
are not as powerful as motivators when making a decision to
leave an organization.

Brayfield and Crockett (1955) also did some early
research on the link between employee dissatisfaction and
subsequent turnover. However, many of the studies of that
time are questionable with regards to methodology (e.g., a
failure to obtain independent measures, and the use of
poorly validated or ambiguous research instruments) (Mowday,
et al., 1982).

A significant improvement in methodology occurred when
March and Simon (1958) put forth a model of the decision to
participate [italics added]. Their inducements-
contributions model represented a sizable theoretical
advance in the field of turnover and had two major components: (a) the perceived desirability of leaving the organization, and (b) the perceived ease of movement from the organization.

In 1964, Vroom published his landmark expectancy/valence theory. Vroom's revolutionary theory stated that the likelihood of an employee resigning was due to the difference in the relative strengths of two forces: those to remain with the organization and those to leave the organization. Vroom explained his theory by stating:

It seems reasonable to assume that simultaneous measurements of the valence of one's present position (i.e., job satisfaction), the valence of other positions, and the expectancy that these other positions can be attained would yield a better prediction of the outcome of an individual's decision to stay or resign from his job than would measurements of job satisfaction alone. (p. 178)

In a review of the existing literature, Porter and Steers (1973) argued that "much more emphasis should be placed in the future on the psychology of the withdrawal process [italics added]. While correlational studies abound...which relate various factors to withdrawal, our understanding of the manner in which the actual decision is made is far from complete" (p. 173). They also urged that future researchers examine the role of employee performance
in turnover, suggesting that high performers may leave for reasons that are very different from those of sub-standard performers (Mowday et al., 1982).

Price (1977) examined the literature for various ways in which turnover was defined and measured. He integrated this data into a conceptual model of turnover that suggests an incorporation of those variables shown to be more important in the review. His model again looked at the relationship between job satisfaction and opportunity outside the organization, but Price went a step further by defining the five factors determining job satisfaction as: pay, integration, instrumental communication, formal communication, and centralization. Turnover is generally discussed in terms of its negative impact on an organization. Price however, suggests that turnover does facilitate effectiveness in some ways.

Mowday et al. (1982) commends Price’s discussion of the impact of turnover on the organization by stating:

Price argued that successively higher amounts of turnover lead to (a) successively larger proportions of administrative staff relative to production workers; (b) successively higher amounts of formalization; (c) successively lower amounts of integration; (d) successively lower amounts of satisfaction; (e) successively higher amounts of innovation; and (f) successively lower amounts of centralization. (p. 116)
Even with decades of research, the studies of turnover are not without their limitations. Muchinsky and Tuttle (1979) in a review of the literature, considered the methodological and interpretive sources of error in the studies of turnover. Some of the problems outlined by their review include a lack of concern as to how turnover is measured, a failure to separate voluntary and involuntary turnover, a failure to do sub-group demographic analysis, an absence of cross-validation of findings and an implicit assumption that turnover is bad, when in fact some researchers (Jeswald, 1974; Porter & Steers, 1973) indicate that in some circumstances turnover can be healthy for an organization.

Steers and Mowday (1981) stated that despite the long history of research, there are, "nine shortcomings of many of the existing models, that need to be taken into account in any comprehensive model of voluntary employee turnover":

1. Many current models ignore the role of available information about one’s job or prospective job in an individual’s participation decision.

2. The extent to which an individual’s expectations and values surrounding a job are met by one’s organizational experiences has also been shown to be an important factor in turnover. These factors have likewise received scant attention in comprehensive models of employee turnover.
3. The role of job performance level as a factor influencing desire or intent to leave has also been overlooked. High job performance may heighten one's expectations concerning organizational rewards, while poor performance may cause lower attitudes concerning the intrinsic worth of the job. In both cases, performance must be recognized in the turnover process.

4. Most models of turnover focus exclusively on one job attitude (namely, job satisfaction) and ignore other attitudes (like organizational commitment) that may also be relevant. In view of recent studies indicating that commitment (rather than satisfaction) represents a better predictor of turnover, this omission appears serious.

5. Current models ignore a host of non-work influences on staying or leaving. When one's spouse is transferred—or when one's spouse cannot transfer—the employee's mobility is affected.

6. Current models assume that once an employee has become dissatisfied, the wheels are set in motion of eventual termination. This assumption ignores the fact that the employee may be able to change his or her current work situation (perhaps through bargaining with the supervisor, threats to quit, etc.).

7. It would be useful if models of employee turnover would clarify the role of available alternative job...
opportunities, both in terms of which factors influence such availability and in terms of the consequences for employees of having no alternatives.

8. Current models of turnover assume a one-way flow process and ignore important feedback loops that serve to enhance or ameliorate one's desire to leave.

9. Very little thought has been given to how people accommodate the participation decision. What happens to those who want to leave but cannot or to those who choose to stay when their friends and associates are leaving? Alternatively, how do people adjust psychologically to the act of leaving one organization and joining a second? This accommodation process is perhaps the most fruitful area for future research on the turnover process since it has significant implications for the attitudes and behavior of both stayers and leavers. (pp. 470-473)

Building on their discussion of previous studies of turnover, Steers and Mowday (1981) developed a cognitive model of employee turnover. Their model focuses on the processes leading up to the decision to participate or withdraw. Their model of the participation decision is comprised of three sequential parts: (1) job expectations and job attitudes; (2) job attitudes and intent to leave; and (3) intent to leave, available alternatives and actual turnover. Steers and Mowday, along with Porter, (1982) also
wrote the definitive text on commitment and the relationship between it and turnover. Most of the following is taken from the references cited above.

Job expectations and values are expected to be somewhat different for each individual employee depending upon his or her own values and needs at the time. Expectations are believed to be influenced by three categories of variables. The first is individual characteristics, which includes occupation, education, age, tenure, family responsibility, and personality.

The second influence on job expectations is the available information about the job and the organization at the time of the participation decision. When provided with clear, accurate information, individuals are likely to make more informed choices and are in a better position to evaluate the match between their job expectation and values, and those of the organization.

The third influence is the extent to which an individual has alternative opportunities. The more choices one has, the more leverage afforded the individual when negotiating expectations with an organization. Given this fact, Porter and Steers (1973) stated that the expectation levels of employees are quite high at the point of organizational entry. However, once in a job for a period of time, expectations tend to become more realistic, as
behavioral commitments make it difficult to make an organizational move (Salancik, 1977).

The next step in the Mowday et al. (1982) model is the interaction between job expectations and organizational characteristics and experiences. Steers and Mowday (1981) state that, "following the literature on job attitudes, it is proposed that affective responses (including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement) result from the interactions of three factors: (a) job expectations (b) organizational characteristics and experiences; and (c) job performance level" (p. 475). In regard to job expectations, the authors suggest that attributes that are valued by the employee, not just expected, are in fact a stronger influence of satisfaction.

Organizational characteristics can include such factors as pay, coworkers, supervisory style and organizational structure. Opportunity for influencing decisions on organizational issues may facilitate job satisfaction. Job performance level has already been addressed in this discussion. The authors point out that "poor attitudes may in fact lead supervisors to take certain (punitive) actions which, in turn, lead to further reduced job attitudes. This degenerative, self-reinforcing cycle can significantly enhance an employee's desire and interest to leave" (p. 476).
The second phase of the Mowday et al. model, the linkage between one's job attitudes and one's desire and intent to stay, is influenced by affective responses to the job and non-work influences in staying or leaving. Factors such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction contribute to intent to leave. However, there are many situations in which an individual may choose to remain with an organization, even when a considerable amount of dissatisfaction is being experienced. Some of these situations might include a limited access to alternative employment, a spouse's unwillingness or inability to make a geographical move, or the realization that tolerating a less than satisfying job could lead to potential long-term career advancement.

The final link in the model focuses on behavioral intent to leave and actual turnover. While intent to leave often leads to turnover, several factors may prevent the final step. The authors state, "alternative job opportunities are also influenced by individual characteristics and economic and market conditions. Individual characteristics such as age, sex, and occupation often constrain one's opportunities for jobs" (Porters and Steers, 1973). Moreover, economic and market conditions also influence the availability of jobs (Forrest, Cummings, and Johnson, 1977). With this proposed model, Steers and
Mowday attempt to include and integrate the aspects they found lacking in previous models.

In one of the most recent works to address turnover, Abelson (1987) examined the difference between avoidable and unavoidable turnover. Previous studies had typically addressed turnover as a binary variable. Employees who remained with the organization and those who did not leave voluntarily (were involuntarily terminated) were distinguished from those who made the decision to leave on their own. However, no distinction was made between voluntary terminations regarding the employees reason for leaving. Abelson proposed that studies which examine employees who voluntarily left an organization should further separate subjects into avoidable and unavoidable turnover.

Based on the work of Dalton, Krackhardt, and Porter (1981), Abelson (1987) hypothesized that unavoidable leavers would score similar to stayers on issues such as withdrawal cognition, affective responses and job-relevant perceptions. Dalton et al. presented a taxonomy (see Figure 1) that distinguishes avoidable from unavoidable voluntary turnover in an effort to, "improve our understanding of the manner in which actual withdrawal decisions are made" (p. 721). By comparing scores of 191 registered nurses on a number of variables, Abelson (1987) found that avoidable leavers were less satisfied than those who left for unavoidable reasons.
(\(p < .05\)) or those who stayed (\(p < .05\)). In fact, stayers were no different (\(p < .05\)) from unavoidable leavers on levels of satisfaction. In addition, avoidable leavers were less committed to the organization than those who left for unavoidable reasons and those who stayed (\(p < .05\)). There were no differences in unavoidable leavers and stayers on commitment levels.

Abelson also found a trend in the attitudes and withdrawal cognitions of those leaving for avoidable reasons. Avoidable leavers were less satisfied and committed and experienced greater job tension and withdrawal cognitions than did unavoidable leavers or stayers. In addition, stayers and unavoidable leavers tended to have more tenure than did avoidable leavers, although the relationships were not statistically significant. Abelson summarizes by stating:

The definition of the turnover criterion measure itself, therefore, differs, depending on whether the traditional or expanded taxonomy is used. Although the traditional approach to examining turnover suggests that differences between stayers and all voluntary leavers are at issue, the expanded taxonomy suggests that further differentiating voluntary turnover as avoidable and unavoidable could be useful. If unavoidable and avoidable turnover groups respond to the variables differently, there is a need to segment
these different leaver categories when progressing further. (p. 386)

This investigation will examine the effects of organizational commitment on turnover in the job of first line manufacturing supervisor in a large electronics firm in the southwest region of the United States. The organization requested this examination as a response to a continuing problem with high turnover in the first line supervisor position. These supervisors often left this position within one to two years of beginning the assignment. However, typically the supervisor did not leave the organization, rather he or she either moved into an entry manufacturing manager position or into a manufacturing engineering job.

Many hypotheses addressing the cause of turnover in this position existed. Employees could be using this position as a "stepping stone" to higher level management. This position was often the entry point for new college graduates recruited by the organization. Quite often new graduates stay in their first organizational position for a short period of time, gaining experience and "paying their dues," then moving on to more challenging or more desirable positions.

As a result of the high rate of turnover among these supervisors, the organization requested a proposed method to determine which employees were more likely to stay in the position of manufacturing supervisor, and which employees
were likely to leave the job. Some organizational characteristics were present. For instance, in most cases, individuals who left the position, did not leave the organization, therefore turnover will be defined as leaving the position, not the organization. A modified version of Abelson's (1987) model of voluntary and involuntary turnover (see Figure 1) will be used. In this model, turnover is categorized as (a) voluntary/avoidable, (b) voluntary/unavoidable, (c) involuntary/avoidable, and (d) involuntary/unavoidable (see Figure 2). Several hypotheses regarding the antecedents of turnover among this group of supervisors were made.

1) It was hypothesized that those subjects classified as voluntary/avoidable would have less commitment to the department than to the organization.

2) It was hypothesized that the majority of those who left the position voluntarily, did not leave the larger organization, just the position of manufacturing supervisor.

3) It was also hypothesized that those supervisors who were exempt would have a higher turnover rate than those who were converted to supervisor from the non-exempt ranks.

4) It was hypothesized that those supervisors whose reason for leaving the position could be categorized as voluntary-avoidable would have a lower departmental and organizational commitment level than those classified as
EMPLOYEE CONTROL

Voluntary

1
- better pay elsewhere
- better working conditions elsewhere
- problem with leadership/administration
- better organization to work for elsewhere

Voluntary

2
- move to another location, spouse imposed
- mid-career change
- stay home to care for spouse/children
- pregnancy, did not return after limited period of time

Involuntary

3
- dismissal
- layoff
- forced retirement

Involuntary

4
- severe medical
- death

Figure 1. Expanded avoidability taxonomy
**EMPLOYEE CONTROL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voluntary</th>
<th>Involuntary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• promoted to manager</td>
<td>• dismissal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• lateral move</td>
<td>• layoff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• moved outside of organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoidable</th>
<th>Unavoidable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reorganization</td>
<td>• severe medical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• plant closing</td>
<td>• death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• career change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• move to another location, spouse imposed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Adapted avoidability taxonomy
voluntary-unavoidable, involuntary, or those who had stayed in the position.

5) Finally, it was hypothesized that tenure does not impact the relationship between organizational commitment or departmental commitment and turnover status when used as a covariate.
CHAPTER II

METHOD

Description of Setting and Corporation

This study was requested by the Defense Contracting division of a Fortune 500 electronics company in the Southwest. The organization at the time of the study had roughly 22,000 employees.

Subjects

A sample of 237 employees with a designated job class of First Line Manufacturing Supervisor were asked to complete the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1982). In the fall of 1988, the surveys were distributed to the subjects at staff meetings and subjects were asked to mail the surveys to the Human Resources Development department. No individual surveys were viewed by the subject's management. The inclusion of their employee number was requested in order to track turnover rates at a 12 month interval. Thirteen respondents neglected to include their employee numbers, therefore it was impossible collect turnover data for this group. The returned questionnaires, with employee numbers included, totaled 131 (55 percent response rate). Due to
the closing of a minor satellite manufacturing site, 11 subjects were eliminated from the sample leaving 120 subjects. No other company-initiated reductions (lay-offs, major reorganizations) were implemented during the time of the study.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this study, department is defined as the supervisor's immediate work group. Organization is defined as the company as a whole. Exempt subjects are those with a college degree and/or a salaried employee. Nonexempt subjects are those without a college degree and/or those paid at an hourly rate. Turnover will be defined as leaving the position, not the company.

**Measures**

**Commitment.** Commitment was measured using a modified version of Mowday, Porter and Steers Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (1982). The authors carried out a variety of analyses on the OCQ across nine samples. The mean level of commitment ranged from a low of 4.0 to a high of 6.1. The mean scores were typically slightly above the midpoint on the 7-point Likert scale. Moreover, standard deviations indicated an acceptable distribution of responses within samples.

In an analysis of internal consistency reliability coefficient alpha is consistently high ranging from .82 to .93, with a median of .90. In an examination of the
stability of the OCQ over time, test-retest reliabilities were completed on a sample of 2563 employees working in a variety organizations and positions. Test-retest reliabilities were $r = .53$, $.63$, and $.75$ over 2-, 3-, and 4-month periods respectively.

Due to the absence of acceptable standards for comparison, it is difficult to establish convergent validity for a measure of organizational commitment. However, the authors suggest that at least five lines of evidence which, when taken together, are suggestive of convergent validity. The OCQ was correlated with the Sources of Organizational Attachment Questionnaire, a 12-item scale designed to measure the perceived influence of various aspects of the job, work environment and organization on the individual's desire to remain with or leave the organization. Convergent validities across six samples range from $.63$ to $.74$ with a median of $.70$.

The predictive validity of the OCQ is demonstrated by relatively consistent relationships in the predicted direction between commitment and measures of employee turnover. The theory of organizational commitment suggests that highly committed employees will be less likely to leave their jobs and may, under some circumstances, perform at higher levels than their less committed counterparts. The predictive validities for the OCQ in relation to turnover
through six samples ranged from .17 to .43 significant at the .01 level and .32 to .58 significant at the .05 level.

For the present study, each subject was asked to answer all 15 items of the OCQ (see Appendix), first in relation to the current department in which they worked and second in relation to the entire organization. This approach was taken in an effort to discover why the subjects tended to leave the position of manufacturing supervisor (although they tended to remain in the organization, in another position.) Therefore, each subject has two commitment quotients; one for their department and one for the larger organization.

**Turnover.** One year after the administration of the OCQ each of the responding supervisors were contacted by telephone to determine their current position. Those who were still in the position of manufacturing supervisor were designated "stayers." Those who remained with the organization but had changed positions were asked, (1) reasons why they left the position they held at the time of the survey, (2) their current position and the date of the job change. In addition, those who left the company entirely, were also considered. Those respondents who had left the job were categorized as "voluntary/avoidable", "voluntary/unavoidable", or "involuntary/avoidable". category, it was not used in this study. These categorizations were made on the basis of the reasons for
leaving such as re-organization, lay-off, plant closing, promotion, lateral move, or termination (Figure 2).

Data Analysis

Hypothesis 1, that subjects classified as voluntary/avoidable would have less commitment to the department than to the organization, was tested using a comparison of mean score for organizational commitment and departmental commitment.

Hypothesis 2, that the majority of those that left the position voluntarily, was tested with a chi square.

Hypothesis 3, that supervisors who are exempt have a higher turnover rate that those who were converted to supervisor from a non-exempt position, was tested using a chi square.

In order to test Hypothesis 4, that those supervisors in the category of voluntary-avoidable turnover would have a lower organizational and departmental commitment index than those supervisors in all other categories, two 1 x 4 analyses of variance were conducted assuming normality between groups. One ANOVA was run for the dependent variable of departmental commitment and each of the four categories of the independent variable, turnover (voluntary/avoidable, voluntary/unavoidable, involuntary/avoidable and stayers). A second ANOVA was run to examine organizational commitment and each of the four turnover categories.
One by four analyses of covariance were conducted to test Hypothesis 5 that tenure does not impact the relationship between organizational and departmental commitment and turnover status.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study provides insight into how organizational commitment affects the likelihood of turnover; however, it does have limitations. The survey data relies solely on self-report of employee attitudes. This form of data collection is widely used and has many advantages, but it can be subject to a range of biases.

Sampling bias is a possible limitation of the sample since only 55 percent of the target population returned the surveys. The answers of the remaining 45 percent of the population must be assumed to be in line with those of the sample.

Response bias is also a limitation of surveys. Since this survey was administered in one time period, there is a chance that results could reflect an organizational variable or issue that was not anticipated. In addition, respondents could answer those questions that use the same response format consistently high. Conversely, it is possible some respondents were overly disgruntled with the organization at the time of the survey, thereby resulting in predominantly lower scores. In addition, respondents are often compelled to give the "socially desirable" response to a question
rather than their true attitude. Finally, when administering a survey by mail, it is possible that a respondent may simply have misunderstood the questions.

Reducing the effect of consistently high scores was compensated by using a reverse scoring process on six items. Questions of item and direction clarity were addressed by piloting the survey on a small sample of individuals who reflected the characteristics of the population prior to the administration of the survey.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The sample of 123 supervisors had a mean score on the level of departmental commitment of 5.4, with individual scores ranging from 1.8 to 6.9. The sample's commitment level to the larger organization had a mean of 5.6 with individual indexes ranging from 2.7 to 6.9.

Hypothesis 1

To test the hypothesis that those subjects with a turnover status of voluntary/avoidable would have a lower departmental commitment index than organizational commitment index, a comparison of means was conducted and a paired t-test was run on the two commitment index means. As indicated in Table 1, for those subjects with a turnover status of voluntary/avoidable, departmental commitment $m = 5.40$, organizational commitment $m = 5.63$. A paired t-test ($t = 1.92$) indicated difference between the two means of .231 ($p = .0319$). Therefore, results indicate that departmental commitment is in fact lower than organizational commitment for those subjects leaving the job voluntarily for reasons avoidable to the organization.

Hypothesis 2

A chi-square test of independence was performed to test the hypothesis that the majority of those that left the
Table 1

**Comparison of Organization Commitment and Departmental Commitment Means for All Turnover Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnover Status</th>
<th>Organizational Commitment</th>
<th>Departmental Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayers</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involuntary/Avoidable</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary/Unavoidable</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary/Avoidable</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

position voluntarily, did not leave the larger organization, just the job of manufacturing supervisor. The results indicated a chi-square value of 5.89 with one degree of freedom. This value was significant at the $p < .015$ level. As indicated in Table 2, only 8 out of the 45 subjects that had left the position voluntarily after one year, were no longer with the organization. Whereas, all of the subjects who left the position involuntarily left the organization as well.

**Hypothesis 3**

A chi-square test of independence was performed to determine whether nonexempt supervisors are more likely to stay in the job than exempt supervisors. The results
Table 2

**Number of Subjects Leaving the Job and Remaining in the Organization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnover Status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Number who left Organization</th>
<th>Number who remained in Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involuntary</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

indicated a chi square value of 5.95 with one degree of freedom. This value was significant at the \( p < .015 \) level. As illustrated in Table 3, after one year, 61.82\% of the nonexempt supervisors remained in the job, whereas, only 39.71\% of exempt subjects were still in the job of first line supervisor.

Of the 123 respondents, 61 remained in the position of manufacturing supervisor after one year. Of the 62 subjects who left the position, 21 were classified as nonexempt and 41 were classified as exempt.

**Hypothesis 4**

A one by four analysis of variance was conducted to determine if those subjects with voluntary/avoidable turnover status would have lower scores on both the organizational and departmental commitment indexes than those subjects with a turnover status of
Table 3

Turnover Differences Between Exempt and Nonexempt Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnover Status</th>
<th>Nonexempt</th>
<th>Exempt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Position</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remained in Position</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>61.82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

voluntary/unavoidable, involuntary/avoidable or those who stayed in the position. The results indicated a marginally significant relationship between departmental commitment and turnover ($F = 2.2, p < .0915$).

The analysis, as illustrated in Table 4, indicates that those with involuntary/avoidable status had a lower mean score on the departmental commitment index ($m = 4.92$) than those subjects within the other three turnover groups. The group with the highest mean score on departmental commitment ($m = 5.7$) were those with a status of voluntary/unavoidable. The voluntary/avoidable group had a mean score of 5.40, while the stayers had a mean departmental index of 5.50. Therefore, the results do not support the hypothesis that those in the voluntary/avoidable turnover group would have a lower departmental commitment index, however, they have the second lowest mean.

A second analysis of variance was run to test the hypothesis that the voluntary/avoidable turnover group would
Table 4

Comparison of Means among Turnover Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnover Status</th>
<th>Departmental Commitment</th>
<th>Organizational Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayers</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involuntary/Avoidable</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary/Unavoidable</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary/Avoidable</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

have a lower mean score for organizational commitment than the other three turnover groups. Again, the hypothesis did not hold. The analysis indicated that there is no significant relationship between organizational commitment and turnover ($F = .61, p < .610$. Those subjects with a turnover status of voluntary/unavoidable had the lowest mean ($m = 5.32$) score for organizational commitment. The highest mean ($m = 5.63$) score for organizational commitment was found in the voluntary/avoidable group. Those subjects in the group designated stayers had an organizational commitment $m = 5.61$, while those with a turnover status of involuntary/avoidable had a $m = 5.44$. 
Hypothesis 5

A one by four analysis of covariance was conducted to test the hypothesis that tenure does not impact the relationship between departmental or organizational commitment and turnover, when used as a covariate. The analysis of covariance for departmental commitment indicated a slight relationship between tenure and turnover status \( F = 6.77, p < .01 \). As indicated in Tables 5 and 6, the mean index for both departmental (.056) and organizational (.052) commitment decreases slightly for those in the stayer category. For the other three turnover groups, the mean scores of departmental and organizational commitment increase slightly with tenure as covariate (differences range from .105 to .024). No significant difference was found in the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover when tenure is used as a covariate (\( F = 5.49, p < .0208 \)).

Duncan's Multiple Range Test was run on the departmental commitment index to test for specific differences between the turnover groupings. The analysis of departmental commitment reflected in Table 7, showed a small but significant (\( p < .05 \)) difference between the scores of the involuntary/avoidable group and both stayers and voluntary/unavoidable. These findings suggest that departmental commitment may be a factor in the turnover of
Table 5

Mean Organizational Commitment Scores by Turnover Grouping with Tenure Covaried Out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnover Status</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Org. Commitment Index</th>
<th>Index with Tenure Removed</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stayers</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involuntary/Avitable</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary/Unavoidable</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary/Avoidable</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

Mean Departmental Commitment Scores by Turnover Grouping with Tenure Covaried Out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnover Status</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Dept. Commitment Index</th>
<th>Index with Tenure Removed</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stayers</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>-.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involuntary/Avitable</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary/Unavoidable</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary/Avoidable</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

**Duncan's Multiple Range Test for Departmental Commitment and Turnover Sub-group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnover Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary/Unavoidable</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stayer</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary/Avoidable</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involuntary/Avoidable</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Alpha = .05, \( df = 119 \), \( MSE = .825 \)

a Significantly different from Voluntary/Unavoidable and Stayer.

employees leaving involuntarily, but for avoidable reasons (i.e. forced retirement, lay-offs, terminations).

There appeared to be no significant relationship between organizational commitment and turnover; therefore, Duncan’s Multiple Range test was not performed for organizational commitment.

There is however an interesting relationship between employee tenure and the organizational commitment index. While the correlation was non-significant (\( r = .05, p < .02 \)), an analysis of the data (Table 8) reveals an interesting
Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Org. Commitment</th>
<th>0-5 Yrs.</th>
<th>6-10 Yrs.</th>
<th>11-15 Yrs.</th>
<th>Over 16 Yrs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. 61 observations hidden.

variation of organizational commitment scores when grouped by tenure.

Those subjects with less than five years experience and those subjects with more than 15 years of experience have a greater variation of scores than those employees with 6 to 15 years experience. In addition, the mean organizational
commitment score for both the less than five year tenure group ($M = 4.63$) and the over 15 year tenure group ($M = 4.7$) are lower than the mean scores of the 6 year to 10 year group ($M = 6.0$) or those with 11 to 15 years ($M = 5.3$) tenure with the organization. This suggest that a unilinear relationship exists between these two variables.

**Supplementary Findings**

A Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = .23$ ($p < .01$) indicated a positive correlation exists between tenure and commitment to the department. For data analysis purposes, the sample was grouped into four tenure levels, 5 or less years, 6 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years, and 16 years or more with the organization. The median tenure of the subjects fell in the 6 to 10 year range.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

A test of the hypothesis that those subjects with a turnover status of voluntary/avoidable would have an organizational commitment index lower than the departmental commitment index indicated that indeed this was the case. The departmental commitment indexes were significantly lower than the organizational commitment indexes for the group who left the position voluntarily after one year. This may suggest that departmental commitment is a better indicator of intention to stay in a given position, while a measure of organizational commitment would prove far less insightful, it could show a marginal indication of intent to leave the job. However, these results cannot be used to predict an employee’s intention to leave the organization.

As indicated by the results of the chi-square test to determine how many of those subjects in the voluntary/avoidable turnover group actually left the organization, employees who leave this position tend to stay with the company, serving in some other capacity. This seems to support the theory that the position of first line manufacturing supervisor in this organization may be viewed as a “stepping stone" to higher management positions or a
job that people rotate in and out of in order to gain experience and "pay their dues". The fact that all of the respondents in the involuntary turnover category left the organization is not surprising since those assigned to this group had been terminated or layed-off.

There was a strong indication that exempt/nonexempt status is related to the likelihood of turnover. Those supervisors who are non-exempt were twice as likely to remain in the position after one year than their exempt counterparts. This may be explained by several factors. Non-exempt first line manufacturing supervisors in this organization rarely get promoted to management. The job of line supervisor is quite often where the careers of these supervisors plateau. Therefore, it is rare that these supervisors would be promoted to management, unlike many of their exempt peers who often are given this position when they enter the organization out of college. In addition, the exempt supervisors often rotate into engineering positions after a year or two on the line. However, the non-exempt supervisors often lack the technical expertise and education required for engineering positions elsewhere in the organization. It may be the lack of career options for non-exempts that causes such a discrepancy in the turnover frequency between the two groups.

Few significant differences were found in organizational or departmental commitment scores between the
four turnover groups. Only the category of involuntary/avoidable had a significantly different score for departmental commitment than the categories of voluntary/unavoidable and stayers. Those in the Involuntary/Avoidable category were either layed-off, terminated, or forced to take early retirement. The fact that they were terminated in such a way suggests that they may have been poor performers.

It is possible that during a time when there is no large-scale downsizing within an organization, those who are asked to leave may have been singled out due to poor performance. Some of the literature suggests a link between declining commitment and poor performance; however, this study did not take performance into account.

The mean score for departmental commitment is slightly lower for the voluntary/avoidable turnover group when compared to stayers and voluntary/unavoidable. The hypothesis that this difference would be significant did not hold up. A possible reason may be that the supervisors feel a commitment to their department while they are there; however, they go into the job with an expectation of only staying one or two years. Therefore, it may be that some supervisors never feel truly committed to a department, due to the transitory nature of the job. Further study on this subject is suggested in order to clarify the relationship
between departmental and organizational commitment and their separate and cumulative effects on turnover.

The results of the one by four analysis of variance with tenure as a covariate indicated that tenure has little effect on commitment scores. It is interesting that while all of the differences between both organizational and departmental commitment when tenure is factored out is slight, the direction of the change for those categorized as stayers was in the negative direction, while all other groups changed in the positive direction.

These results seem to be in keeping with the very definition of commitment as having "sunk costs" into the organization that at some point become irretrievable. Those with more tenure have made more of an investment in the organization than those with less tenure, of course. This may be an explanation for the decline in commitment levels on both the departmental and organizational level when the effects of tenure are removed.

In a supplementary finding, the data suggests that a unique relationship may exist between tenure and organizational commitment. In this study, those employees with the organization for less than five years and more than 15 years, exhibited a greater variability in scores and more individuals with scores below the mean than their colleagues with 6 to 15 years of tenure.
A possible explanation of this phenomenon may be found in the definition of behavioral commitment. New hires have less commitment to the organization because they have yet to "sink costs" into the organization that they cannot retrieve, as opposed to their more senior counterparts. In addition, many new hires are college recruits, who, in today's organizational environment, often move to a new job every 2 to 3 years. Another impact may be transition of the supervisor role from directive to facilitative and organizational flattening, resulting in less advancement opportunities for those new hires wanting a traditional managerial career.

The variation of commitment scores among new hires is not as surprising as the data regarding senior employees. The employees with over 15 years of tenure with the organization may feel "let down" or "betrayed" by the organization that has cut benefits, implemented reductions in force, and can no longer guarantee life-long employment. As these employees experience a split between the organization's values and goals and their own, the result can be a dramatic decrease in their willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, non-exempt employees, who have been with the organization more than 15 years and are manufacturing supervisors, have typically reached their career peak. As a consequence, decline in
attitudinal commitment leads to less loyalty among employees and organizations.

The fact that these two groups scored alike reinforces a dynamic reflected in focus groups and change management interventions. This area warrants more research to clarify the reasons for this finding.

During the time, since the collection of data for this survey, many changes have been made in this organization. Some of the major changes include large-scale downsizing, reduction in contracts, quality and continuous improvement campaigns, and the implementation of self-directed work teams.

The latter initiative holds perhaps the biggest challenge for first line supervisors and their organizations. As the organization moves toward teaming, the role of the supervisor is often in flux. Some become facilitators, some move to other positions, and all struggle with their new role. Too often their roles have not been defined before the change occurs. This can leave supervisors feeling left out, causing a lessening of commitment to the organization.

In addition, many companies are removing levels of management, doing away with hierarchy, and increasing the manager's span of control. This decline in the number of employees in the management ranks results in less opportunities for supervisors to move up the management
ladder. To counter this, Dessler (1993) suggests that organizations foster commitment in new hires by assigning them to teams or mentors where they can feel productive and where they are expected to contribute at once to accomplishing challenging projects.

In a review of the control model and the commitment model of management, Walton (1985) suggests that the center of the commitment model rests on the philosophy, that eliciting employee commitment will lead to enhanced performance. In the commitment model, the role of the supervisor shifts from direct supervision to coaching, delegating, and facilitating as their teams mature. Supervisors in empowered organizations are asked to walk a fine line between coaching and being directive when needed. In the 1970s and 1980s, plant managers and line supervisors made the majority of the decisions impacting their work group. Today, the initiatives mentioned here are typically driven by ideas and imperatives formulated by top executives. Senior management has a critical role in ensuring the transition to self-managed teams. Top management must commit to supervisors or line-level employees whose jobs will become obsolete, to ensure that they will have employment security and full assistance in finding comparable positions (Selby, 1993). Organizations must guard against the reduction in commitment this process may cause.
As the results of this study indicate, supervisors can have a strong attachment to the organization as a whole, while commitment to their immediate department wains. To guard against losing exemplar supervisors who would be very valuable during the transition to teams, senior managers and executives must reinforce open communication among all employees. Ensuring the support of the supervisors, and or facilitators, can be advantageous for enhancing commitment throughout the workforce.

By the time the development of a self-managed team is complete, supervisors have largely worked themselves out of a job. Those managers guiding the team through the transition must ensure that supervisors "land on their feet". Otherwise, the supervisors may undermine the team development process (Selby, 1993).

Dessler (1993) discusses the commitment dilemma faced by individuals and organizations experiencing rapid change. Commitment becomes more elusive as employees struggle with the consequences of organizational changes. Commitment must be redefined on a personal, rather than organizational, level.

William Morin, an expert in outplacement, states in the Dessler (1993) article:

As an individual and as a professional—you must care for yourself and assume responsibility for your future. No longer do you look to the company, or your
boss, or your colleagues or friends for a ready-made sense of security. Instead, you realize that you are the only one who can create and maintain a personal scenario for happiness and success. (p. 8)

Future Research

All of these data suggest three lines of future research. The first is to determine how organizational initiatives effect organizational commitment. The literature suggests that there are actions organizations can take to foster commitment in a rapidly changing environment. In addition, further research is warranted to investigate the behaviors organizations can reinforce in order to foster commitment in new hires, through values-based selection systems and aggressive mentoring processes. Finally, more research about the variation of scores among those employees with the most seniority could indicate actions organizations could take in order to maintain commitment in a group that may feel "betrayed" by the organization.

Conclusion

This study suggests that it is important to consider commitment to a work group as well as organizational commitment when exploring reasons for turnover. Lowered commitment was associated with involuntary/avoidable turnover in this supervisory sample. Further research should be conducted to determine whether an organization's commitment to supervisors should be reinforced in order to
increase the success of self-managed work team start-up and implementation, and other organizational changes.
SECTION EIGHT

INSTRUCTIONS

Write the number in the blanks to the right, which most closely reflects your feelings toward a each item. The first time you read the question, think of your department when you read the word "organization". Then read the question again, this time think of DSEG, when you see "organisation". In other words in the first column answer the questions while considering your department and in the second column answer while considering DSEG as a whole.

(1) = Strongly disagree  
(2) = Moderately disagree  
(3) = Slightly disagree  
(4) = Neither disagree or agree  
(5) = Slightly agree  
(6) = Moderately agree  
(7) = Strongly agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Col 1: Dept.</th>
<th>Column 2: DSEG</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I feel very little loyalty to this organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization.</td>
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<td>5. I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.</td>
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6. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organisation.

7. I could just as well be working for a different organisation as long as the type of work is similar.

8. This organisation really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.

9. It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organisation.

10. I am extremely glad I chose this organization to work for, over others I was considering at the time I joined.

11. There is not too much to be gained by sticking with this organisation indefinitely.

12. Often, I find it difficult to agree with this organisation's policies on important matters relating to its employees.
(1) = Strongly disagree  
(2) = Moderately disagree 
(3) = Slightly disagree 
(4) = Neither disagree or agree 
(5) = Slightly agree 
(6) = Moderately agree 
(7) = Strongly agree 

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dept.</td>
<td>DSEG</td>
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13. I really care about the fate of this organization.

14. For me, this is the best of all possible organisations for which to work.

15. Deciding to work for this organisation was a definite mistake on my part.
REFERENCES


