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MODÉLISATION DES POINTS DE FOCALISATION DE L'ENGAGEMENT
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ABSTRACT

Organizational commitment (OC) is defined as the relative strength of an individual's attachment towards the organization. It is also an important concept in understanding employees' behaviors in the workplace. The present study has four main objectives: (a) improve the understanding of OC's process using Lewin's (1943, 1951) theory, (b) design a model of this process using structural equation modeling (EQS; Bentler, 1995) instead of classical multiple regressions, (c) bring about a conceptual contribution to the understanding of OC using Becker's (1992) proposed measure instead of Meyer and Allen's (1991) proposed measure and, (d) provide a conceptual contribution to the understanding of OC by integrating foci of commitment rather than bases of commitment. Aside from a few articles by Becker (1992; Becker & Billings, 1993; Becker et al., 1996), there are few models and empirical research integrating foci of commitment. In order to attain our objectives, we will analyze results obtained from 22 health establishments. Questionnaires were distributed to personnel and doctors with an active status in each participating establishment according to a proportional stratified probabilistic sampling. The determination of stratums was a function of occupational category, job status and occupational status. This study was conducted to put forth and confirm the first model, tested through structural equation modeling, of distal and proximal antecedents of four organizational commitment (OC) foci: organization, top management, supervisor, and work group that were assessed with Becker's (1992) scale and its consequences. The results, obtained from a sample of 3,037 participants from all occupational categories, showed that the data fit our model.

The model suggests a structure where the influence of the two distal variables (Locus of control and Work involvement) on the four foci of OC is totally through the proximal variables (Perceived role states, Perceived immediate supervisor's leadership, Job involvement, Perceived organizational characteristics). We found that employees distinguish foci of commitment and that those foci of commitment were important determinants of job satisfaction.

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INTRODUCTION

The turn of the century brings about a new millennium as well as a multitude of changes in the world. Much has been said about this new era in terms of science, technology, and business. We will focus our discussion here on the changes predicted for the business world. Prophecies are that roles will replace jobs (Bridges, 1994), global competition will increase (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992), information technology will develop further (Workplace of the Future, 1993), and that businesses will be reengineered (Hammer & Champy, 1993).

Meyer and Allen (1997) offered that such mutations will inevitably appeal to new approaches in the manner with which enterprises organize. Flexibility and efficiency are the essence of what companies are now, more than ever, looking to achieve (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Julien, 1993d). Indeed, competitiveness can most likely be attained through a greater faculty of adaptation along with cuts in costs. Old paradigms must be replaced by new ways to see and do things.

The individual commits to an entity in order to make his way through the organization. According to Meyer and Allen (1997), there are two perspectives to commitment: one from the employers and the other from the employees. On the one hand, "commentators typically describe the committed employee as one who stays with the organization through thick and thin, attends work regularly, puts in a full day (and maybe more), protects the company assets, shares company goals, and so on" (p.3). It would be natural to assume that a committed workforce would be an asset. Research has demonstrated that

commitment to organizations is positively related to desirable outcomes like job satisfaction (Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982), motivation (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979), and attendance (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Steers & Rhodes, 1978).

On the other hand, blindly committed employees could lead to the acceptance of the status quo on the employees' part, ultimately leading to a situation where the organization would be unable to innovate or adapt to changing conditions (Randall, 1987). Moreover, the reciprocity rule implies that employers should reciprocate employees' loyalty, which would be costly because employment simply cannot be guaranteed these days (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

From the employees' perspective, there are advantages to being committed. These might range from being able to do challenging work of importance, encountering and exchanging ideas with exciting people, learning and growing as an individual and an employee. Thus, the organization is not only providing incentives in terms of salary and a job to take up time. In that case, being a part of an organization to which an employee could grow committed appears to present benefits.

Nonetheless, everybody knows someone consumed by his work in such a way that there is no time or energy left for anything else outside the work environment, even though it might be important (e.g., family, hobbies). In addition, employees who are too committed, if there is such a thing, may rest on their laurels compromising their chances for a new job (because they neglected the development of new skills, for example) in case of organizational changes or the organization being closed down (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Hence, it appears that there are two sides to commitment whether from the employees' perspective or the employers' perspective. As noted by Meyer and Allen (1997), one can easily portray either facade depending on which case is to be argued. The authors suggested that any attempt to weigh the benefits and costs of commitment should be accompanied by the analysis of the strength of the link between workers' commitment and their willingness to go to the wall for the organization. Moreover, employees' propensity to serve the organization without considering the consequences that might ensue for them, such as being unemployed, should also be investigated. Likewise, the development and consequences of commitment, from the employees' perspective, need to be examined in a manner such that the contributing elements are understood.

Apparently, this line of discussion raises a multitude of questions with respect to commitment such as "Which employees, committed or uncommitted, are better or worse off?" or "Which employees, committed or uncommitted, suffer more when the organization undergoes change?" (Meyer & Allen, 1997). These questions imply the accuracy of the stereotypical notion of commitment; that which conveys loyalty and willingness to fulfill organizational goals according to Meyer and Allen (1997).

Nevertheless, in their opinion, the expression *commitment* carries diverse interpretations, and they illustrated their point through this example:

> Consider, for example, an employee who has been with the same company for more than 20 years, received several early promotions, but failed in recent bids for promotion. It is clear to all that this individual's career has plateaued. Although the motivation that once existed is gone, the employee realizes that no other employer would be likely to provide him or her the same salary and benefits now being received. For all intents and purposes, this person is "committed" to remaining with the company, but it is unlikely that the

consequences of this commitment will be the same as for the commitment we discussed above. It is also important, therefore, that one understand the different forms that commitment can take, the conditions that lead to their development, and their implications for behavior. (p.4).

Much of the recent empirical research has demonstrated a progression in the field of organizational commitment (OC). OC has been defined and measured in different ways. The common theme among various definitions and measures is that OC is considered to be a "bond or linking" of the individual to the organization. Originally, it was defined as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday et al., 1982, p. 27). Commitment defined in this way was most often measured via the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), developed by Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian (1974), which assessed commitment along a single dimension (Cook, Hepworth, Wall, & Warr, 1983). Hence, a unidimensional view of the concept.

Recent efforts at clarifying the meaning of commitment have taken two distinct directions (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer, 1997). The first approach emphasizes that commitment can take different forms; the nature of the commitment (bases of commitment approach) that defines the relationship between an employee and some other entity (e.g., an organization) can vary. The second approach puts forth the distinction among entities (foci of commitment approach) to which an employee becomes committed (e.g., work group, supervisor, and top management). When we refer to someone as being committed, we usually mean or mention specifically that the person is committed to something (e.g., she is committed to her family and friends, he is committed to this particular project). Within the organizational behavior body of literature, much of the

theoretical work on organizational commitment has focused on commitment to the organization.

Traditionally, the nature of commitment approach dominated this field of research (Porter et al., 1974; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Meyer & Allen, 1997), and only recently has the foci of commitment approach been given more attention in the literature (Reichers, 1985, 1986; Becker, 1992; Becker & Billings, 1993; Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996; Vandenberghe, Stinglhamber, Bentein, & Delhaise, 2001). Both approaches contend that OC is multidimensional as opposed to unidimensional like the conventional view of OC. Becker, in 1992, examined the contribution of two concepts to the conventional view (unidimensional view) of commitment: foci of commitment, the individuals and groups to whom an employee is attached, and bases of commitment, the motives engendering attachment. His goal was to determine whether or not the concepts of foci and bases of commitment added substantively to the conventional perspective.

According to Becker (1992), it had not been shown that these concepts contributed to the understanding of organizational commitment beyond what is accounted for in the conventional view. Becker argued that it was a potent issue since:

> if the reconceptualization of commitment, with its complications in theory and measurement, does not more adequately tap employee attachment, the principle of parsimony would suggest that the conventional perspective, with its simpler conceptualization and measurement, was preferable. (1992, p.234).

The results of Becker's (1992) study support the reconceptualization of employee attachment as a phenomenon with multiple foci and bases, as he demonstrated that

commitment to foci other than the organization, and bases of commitment, accounted for variance in key dependent variables above and beyond that accounted for by the OCQ.

The concept of OC has received a great deal of empirical study both as an antecedent and as a consequence of other work-related variables of interest. As an antecedent, OC has been linked to several behaviors such as absenteeism, performance, and turnover for example. As a consequence, OC has been associated to a number of personal variables, role states, and aspects of the work environment from job characteristics to dimensions of organizational structure.

We have chosen, like many others, to consider OC as a multidimensional concept (Becker, 1992; McGee & Ford, 1987; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993; Olivier, 1990; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986) as it will account for more variance (Becker, 1992). Besides, it follows a progressive research current (Becker, 1992; Meyer et al., 1993). In this regard, our study, like Becker's (1992), will focus on four entities (foci): work group, immediate supervisor, top management, and the organization.

Although many studies have been conducted, in light of the literature review, it appears that specific research has rarely been carried out with francophone subjects in a North-American context. Our empirical research will fill this gap, identifying individual and organizational factors exerting a significant influence on OC, and determine its consequences. Hence, OC will be studied both as a dependent and independent variable.

We will also delineate OC from other work related concepts like job involvement, work involvement and occupational commitment. The fine line among the concepts needs to be drawn such that our empirical process will be correctly oriented.

The present study has four main objectives: (a) improve the understanding of OC's process using Lewin's (1943, 1951) theory, (b) design a model of this process using structural equation modeling (EQS; Bentler, 1995) instead of classical multiple regressions, (c) bring about a conceptual contribution to the understanding of OC using Becker's (1992) proposed measure instead of Meyer and Allen's (1991) proposed measure and, (d) provide a conceptual contribution to the understanding of OC by integrating foci of commitment rather than bases of commitment. Aside from a few articles by Becker (1992; Becker & Billings, 1993; Becker et al., 1996), there are few models and empirical research integrating foci of commitment.

In order to attain our objectives, we will analyze results obtained from 22 health establishments. Questionnaires were distributed to personnel and doctors with an active status in each participating establishment according to a proportional stratified probabilistic sampling. Stratums' determination were a function of occupational category, job status and occupational status.

This paper will be divided in four sections. First, we will present a review of the literature pertaining to OC. We will discuss the meaning of commitment, its antecedents, and its consequences. Second, we will introduce our research objectives and present our methods. Third, we will present our analyses and interpret our results in light of our hypotheses. Finally, we will conclude our discussion by a look back and a look ahead.

CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will give an overview of the commitment literature. We will address issues concerning employees' relationships with their organizations as well as how these relationships are established, and how they influence workers' behaviors, well-being and contributions to organizational effectiveness. It will be divided in seven sections. In the first section, we will discuss the importance of OC. In the second section, we will address several definitions to provide a better understanding of the constructs discussed in the commitment literature. In the third section, we will present both unidimensional and multidimensional perspectives. In the fourth section, we will explore the notion of foci of OC and present the model to be tested. In the fifth section, we will examine OC's antecedents and the models stemming from research on this topic. In the sixth section, we will analyze the consequences of OC and a model summarizing key variables. In the final section, we will describe our research objectives.

Importance of Organizational Commitment

OC as a concept is of interest to both the academy and the professionals and it has generated much empirical as well as conceptual research (Griffin & Bateman, 1986; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Meyer and Allen (1997) believe that OC should be studied for the following reasons: First, in a context of rationalization where companies are becoming leaner, a core of people must be maintained who, in fact, are the organization. The flexibility of jobs as a result of organizations becoming smaller, renders those remaining employees even more important. As a matter of fact, those in place will likely be doing different jobs than their predecessors.

Bridges (1994), for example, argued that the job as a fixed collection of tasks and responsibilities is disappearing and being replaced by broader roles that require a greater variety of skills and an ability to adapt to the organizational hierarchy. Employees have much more responsibility resting upon them (decision making and managing their day-to-day activities) as organizational hierarchy flattens and management is reduced. Thus, it is all the more important that organizations be able to trust the employees to do what is right; something that commitment arguably ensures according to Meyer and Allen (1997). Moreover, computer and machinery assume many of the simpler tasks as new technology develops. The remaining tasks for employees require skills and higher-level knowledge. Those employees will have to be trained to perform these tasks which will require substantial financial investment on the part of organizations and, once trained, these employees are likely to be highly marketable.

Second, Meyer and Allen (1997) argued that OC should be further researched because more and more companies contract out work to other organizations or individuals and are concerned about the commitment of these others. It goes without saying that the company's success may depend on it. Admittedly, there might be a difference in the commitment, perhaps being of shorter duration and with a focus on a contract or a project rather than on the organization itself. Therefore, the understanding of commitment is important here as well.

Third, there is a natural aspect to the development of commitment according to Meyer and Allen (1997). Apparently, people need to be committed to something; commitment's opposite, alienation, is unhealthy (Kobasa, Maddi, & Kahn, 1982). Employees may channel their commitment in other directions (e.g., industry, careers, hobbies, volunteer groups) if they become less committed to organizations. The behavioral consequences of these commitments, in addition to being of relevance to the understanding of the individual's well being, may have implications for employees' relationships with their organizations.

To illustrate, employees who are unwilling to develop a commitment to an organization that cannot or will not reciprocate may instead become committed to their occupation or to the industry in which they work. These employees could start to evaluate their skills and experience in terms of their marketability outside the organization, rather than by their implications for their current or future jobs in the organization (The End of Corporate Loyalty, 1986). Meyer and Allen (1997) concluded that, all this being considered, understanding commitment is as important now as ever.

Other researchers have addressed the importance of commitment. For instance, Mottaz (1988) suggested that OC might have important consequences upon organizational performance. Along the same line of reasoning, OC can play a role upon productivity problems (Yankelovich, 1979, 1983; see Ostroff, 1992). Before introducing other constructs, we will now turn to the issue of defining constructs at the core of the field of commitment research as this chapter is intended to recognize the complexity of OC and to achieve a better understanding of the issues related to OC.

Definitions of Constructs

It is a well known fact that, in order to study a phenomenon from a scientific standpoint, a construct, commitment in this case, has to be operationalized, and measures need to be devised such that its development and consequences can be studied methodically. OC's conceptualization has been approached with diversity (Meyer et al., 1993) and the results have led to numerous conclusions. Previous studies demonstrated the multitude of experimental schemas and privileged variables.

It is often the case that elements discussed in one study are omitted voluntarily in another. Staw & Ross (1978) showed that it is difficult to extricate OC from other psychological processes such as motivation, satisfaction and involvement. In addition, many studies attempted to identify potential determinants of OC using bivariate statistics instead of multivariate statistics (Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Morris & Sherman, 1981; Mowday et al., 1982). Therefore, researchers (Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Meyer & Allen, 1984;

Strumpf & Hartman, 1984) have questioned the contribution of OC in terms of understanding behaviors within organizations.

In the past, the scientific literature on commitment offered very little general agreement as to the definition of the concept. It is believed that the meaning of commitment changes through its day-to-day use to the point of being interchangeable with loyalty, attachment and allegiance. Scientists from different fields of study attributed their personal meanings to commitment hence complicating the construct's comprehension, according to Mowday and his colleagues (Mowday et al., 1982). In a effort to achieve a better understanding of the commitment construct and other work-related constructs, we will now turn to their definitions in light of the literature.

<u>Organizational Commitment Construct</u>

The very first definition of commitment provided by Mowday, Porter and Steers (1979) addressed it as "the relative strength of an individual's identification and involvement in a particular organization" (p.27). This initial conception of the construct was characterized by three elements (a) a belief in and acceptance of organizational goals; (b) a willingness to exert effort towards organizational goal accomplishment; and (c) a strong desire to maintain organizational membership.

This conception of commitment dominated the commitment literature for quite some time and gave rise to the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Porter et al., 1974; Mowday et al., 1982; Mowday et al., 1979; Fabi, Martin, Valois & Villeneuve, 2000).

However, both the definition and its measure have been criticized (Becker, 1992; Caldwell, Chatman & O'Reilley, 1990; Olivier, 1990; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

Porter et al.'s (1974) position has been critiqued by researchers for the following reasons. First, these two elements of OC's definition (b) a willingness to exert effort towards organizational goal accomplishment; and (c) a strong desire to maintain organizational membership are as much intended behaviors as presumed extrants of OC according to Ogilvie (1986; Kundi & Saleh, 1993). O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) along with Reichers (1985) proposed that OC's definition should allow for the prediction only of its consequences to avoid conceptual redundancy. Second, Caldwell et al. (1990) mentioned that the OCQ's questionnaire measures intentions, motivations and values.

In Table 1, we provide a sample of the various definitions of commitment that have been suggested while the field of OC grew. These definitions differ and none is more correct or universally accepted than the others. According to Meyer and Allen (1997), the fact that the definitions are so different can only confuse the issue if we refer to commitment without indicating which definition we are using. In 1991, Meyer and Allen noticed that the definitions reflect three broad themes as indicated by the labels in Table 1; that is, OC has been viewed as "reflecting an affective orientation toward the organization, a recognition of costs associated with leaving the organization, and a moral obligation to remain with the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1997, p.11).

Table 1

Trends in definitions of commitment

Affective orientation

The attachment of an individual's fund of affectivity and emotion to the group. (Kanter, 1968, p.507)

A partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of the organization, to one's role in relation to goal and values, and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its purely instrumental worth. (Buchanan, 1974, p.533)

The relative strength of an individual's identification and involvement in a particular organization. (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1979, p.27)

Cost-Based

Profit associated with continued participation and a "cost" associated with leaving. (Kanter, 1968, p.504)

Commitment comes into being when a person, by making a side bet, links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity. (Becker, 1960, p.32)

A structural phenomenon which occurs as a result of individual-organizational transactions and alterations in side bets or investments over time. (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972, p.552)

Table 1

Trends in definitions of commitment

Obligation or moral responsibility

Commitment behaviors are socially accepted behaviors that exceed formal and/or normative expectations relevant to the object of commitment. (Wiener & Gechman, 1977, p.48)

The committed employee considers it morally right to stay in the company, regardless of how much status enhancement or satisfaction the firm gives him or her over the years. (Marsh & Mannari, 1977, p.59)

According to Meyer (1997), improvements in measurement as well as progress with respect to research designs and analytic techniques have brought about a shift in the conceptualization of OC. However, such changes gave rise to a multitude of definitions that cannot be compared objectively as measures and techniques used to analyze the data often differ. The term commitment is employed with such a degree of freedom, as Meyer and Allen (1997) noted, that it is hardly surprising that point of views differ as to whether commitment is good or bad, stable or in decline, and so on. Other constructs are studied and discussed in the literature on organizational commitment. In order to grasp a sense of the relationships between and among OC and these constructs, we will review the following definitions: job satisfaction, job involvement, work involvement and occupational commitment.

<u>Work-Related Constructs</u>

Distinction between Job Satisfaction and Job Involvement

According to Brooke, Russell and Price (1988), the attitudes of job satisfaction (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951; Locke, 1976), job involvement (Kanungo, 1982; Lawler & Hall, 1970; Lodahl & Kejner, 1965; Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977) and organizational commitment (Mowday et al., 1979; Steers, 1977) have generally been considered to represent different constructs (Blau, 1985; Hammer, Landau, & Stern, 1981; Kanungo, 1982; Locke, 1976; Mowday et al., 1982; Siegel & Ruh, 1973; Wiener & Vardi, 1980).

As a positive emotional state reflecting an affective response to the job situation (Locke, 1976), job satisfaction traditionally has been distinguished from job involvement, which is defined as a cognitive belief state reflecting the degree of psychological identification with one's job (Kanungo, 1982; Lawler & Hall, 1970; Locke, 1976; Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977). Brooke et al. (1988) argued that, although both constructs refer to the specific job, distinctions between the emotional state of liking one's job (job satisfaction) and the cognitive belief state of psychological identification with one's job (job involvement) have been advanced for some time (Locke, 1976; Kanungo, 1982).

Evidence of distinctions among job satisfaction, job involvement and OC. Mowday et al. (1982) observed that, with its focus on the organization as a whole instead of the specific job and emphasis on congruence between individual and organizational goals, the attitude of attachment or loyalty to the employing organization represented by OC is conceptually

distinct in its focus and time frame from the job specific attitudes of job satisfaction and job involvement. Similar arguments for a distinction of OC from job satisfaction and job involvement on the basis of their referent objects have also been put forward (Kanungo, 1982; Locke, 1976; Price & Mueller, 1986b; Steers, 1977).

In addition, moderate zero-order correlations in the range of 0.30 and 0.56 among job satisfaction (particularly overall satisfaction or satisfaction with the work itself), job involvement and OC have repeatedly been demonstrated in research that has investigated the relation between these constructs (Cheloha & Farr, 1980; Gechman & Wiener, 1975; Hall & Schneider, 1972; Mowday et al., 1979, 1982; Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977; Weissenberg & Gruenfeld, 1968; Wood, 1974).

In their study on discriminant validation of measures of job satisfaction, job involvement and OC, Brooke et al. (1988) reported evidence that respondents were able to distinguish between the extent to which they liked their job (satisfaction), the degree to which they were absorbed in or preoccupied with their job (involvement), and the degree of attachment or loyalty they felt toward their employing organization (commitment).

Work Involvement

Work involvement refers to a personal code of ethics regarding work in general (normative beliefs) and is distinguished from job involvement, which refers to cognitive beliefs regarding a specific job (Kanungo, 1982, p.116). Brooke et al. (1988) performed a confirmatory factor analysis of the items measuring work involvement and job

involvement, and the researchers were able to replicate findings of Kanungo (1982) concerning the presence of two correlated but distinct factors.

Relationships between work involvement and job satisfaction, job involvement and OC. In their research, Brooke et al. (1988) also showed positive correlations for work involvement with all three aforementioned variables (job satisfaction, job involvement and OC), but work involvement was much more strongly related to job involvement than to job satisfaction or OC. Apparently, this is consistent with the long tradition that has considered work values resulting from prior socialization into middle class work norms to be a major determinant of job involvement (Kanungo, 1982).

Occupational Commitment

Allen and Meyer (1993) stated that, like the early work on OC, occupational commitment has typically been conceptualized as an affective attachment to the occupation. These researchers noted that the terms occupation, profession and career have been used somewhat interchangeably in the commitment literature. They chose occupation rather than profession (Aranya, Pollock, & Amernic, 1981; Morrow & Wirth, 1989) as they believe that both professionals and nonprofessionals can experience commitment in the work they do. Meyer and his colleague also avoid using the term career commitment (e.g., Arnold, 1990; Blau, 1985) because of the ambiguity in the meaning of career. Career can be defined as a planned pattern of work from entry into the work force to retirement or as involvement in a particular job, organization, occupation, or profession.

Distinctions between occupational commitment and OC. In studying commitment to organizations and occupation, Meyer and Allen (1993) assessed commitment to a particular line of work, which is why they felt the term occupation was more appropriate. Their primary objective was to demonstrate that organizational and occupational commitment are relatively independent constructs and that each contributes uniquely to the understanding of and ability to predict work behavior. Their research provided evidence that organizational and occupational commitment contribute independently to the prediction of important organization-relevant outcome variables (e.g., turnover intention and performance).

As many authors have attempted to define OC since the sixties (Becker, 1960; Buchanan, 1974; Grusky, 1966; Hall, Schneider & Nygun, 1970; Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Kanter, 1968; Salancik, 1977; Sheldon, 1971; Weiner & Gechman, 1977), operational definitions have been proposed to improve OC's construct validity. Studies demonstrate a lack of consensus as to the privileged definition of OC and on the number and nature of the dimensions at the basis of the construct (Dunham et al, 1994; Randall, 1990). This issue is addressed in the following sections.

Conceptualization of Organizational Commitment

The diversity of approaches used to conceptualize the theoretical foundations of OC tends to show two distinct tendencies with respect to the measure of OC. Some scientists (Mowday et al., 1979; 1982) have advocated that OC is a construct that has only one dimension whereas others (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 1993) contend that OC has

multiple facets or dimensions. In the two following sections, we will discuss both conceptual perspectives.

Unidimensional Perspective

Since Becker's work in 1960, a review of the literature allows one to notice the existence of numerous definitions that have been improved over time. Mowday et al. (1982) have identified ten different studies on OC which revealed widely divergent definitions whereas Morrow's (1983) examination of the body of research revealed over 25 commitment related concepts. Within definitions underlining the unidimensional character of OC, Porter's team's definition (Porter et al., 1974) comes to mind: "a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, a definite desire to maintain organizational membership" (p.604). This particular definition of OC does not imply that individuals are committed to more than one entity of the organization. In fact, according to Porter et al.'s (1974) definition, OC would result from commitment expressed by an employee towards the organization as a whole rather than from the sum of commitments towards different entities of the organization.

On the basis of their definition, Porter et al. (1974) developed the OCQ. This 15-item questionnaire was designed to measure the degree to which subjects feel committed to the employing organization. Included in this instrument are items pertaining to the subject's perceptions concerning his loyalty towards the organization, his willingness to exert a great deal of effort to achieve organizational goals, and his acceptance of the organization's values. Research has demonstrated that this unidimensional measure had

reliable internal consistency with coefficient alpha being consistently high ranging from

0.82 to 0.93 with a median of 0.90 (Mowday et al., 1979). There is also evidence for

convergent validity with correlations ranging from 0.63 to 0.74 when compared to the

Sources of Organization Attachment Questionnaire (Mowday et al., 1979).

Multidimensional Perspective

Although there is growing consensus that commitment is a multidimensional construct,

various approaches have been taken to identify its dimensions. As Becker (1992) pointed

out:

> the conventional approach, although the most widely used in both research
> and practice (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), does not in theory or practice
> acknowledge the multiple commitments that employees may have, nor does it
> distinguishes among motives for psychological attachments (p.233).

Part of the difficulty in interpreting the results of studies designed to examine the

development and consequences of OC, according to Meyer (1997), is the fact that

commitment has been defined in many different ways. Meyer and Allen (1997; Meyer,

1997) noted recently that the undertaking of clarifying the concept's meaning has taken

two distinct directions. On the one hand, the efforts made to depict that commitment can

be of diverse types which means that there may be variations in "the nature of the

commitment that defines the relationship between an employee and some other entity"

(p.9). On the other hand, attempts are made to label and make distinctions among the

entities towards which employees' commitment is directed. The research evidence

supporting the latter will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. Let us now examine the literature concerning the former.

Bases of Commitment Approach

In an effort to bring together the numerous definitions, Meyer and Allen introduced, in 1991, a three-component model of OC, in an attempt to reconcile the three forms of commitment (referred to as affective, continuance, and normative commitment) most commonly found in the literature. They identified three common themes to those definitions: commitment as an affective attachment to the organization, commitment as perceived cost associated with leaving the organization, and commitment as an obligation to remain in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 1993).

A three-component model of commitment. To acknowledge that each of three sets of definitions presented in Table 1 represents a legitimate but clearly different conceptualization of the commitment construct, Meyer and Allen proposed a three-component model of OC. Meyer et al. (1993; see Meyer & Allen, 1997) stated that common to these three forms of commitment is "the view that commitment is a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization and (b) has important implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization" (p.539). Hence, it is the nature of the psychological state depicted among definitions that varies. To recognize these differences, the researchers (see Meyer & Allen, 1997) defined their three components of commitment: affective, continuance, and normative as follows:

> Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Employees with a strong affective commitment continue employment with the organization because they want to do so. Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Employees whose primary link to the organization is based on continuance commitment remain because they need to do so. Finally, normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organization. (p. 11).

The authors insisted on the use of the term components of commitment rather than types of commitment because they feel employees can experience varying degrees of each in their bond with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer et al., 1993). According to Meyer and Allen (1997),

> an employee might feel both string attachment to an organization and a sense of obligation to remain. A second employee might enjoy working for the organization but also recognize that leaving would be very difficult from an economic standpoint. Finally, a third employee might experience a considerable degree of desire, need, and obligation to remain with the current employer (p.13).

Therefore, a clearer understanding of an individual's relationship with an organization could be reached by considering the strength of all three forms of commitment together rather than by attempting to classify it as being of a particular type. In addition, this idea that the three components coexist in various degrees at the individual level supports the proposition that OC is a true psychological state impossible to grasp when taking into account only one component (Meyer, & Allen, 1997; Vandenberghe, 1998; Fabi et al., 2000).

Meyer and Allen (1984) first conceptualized a bidimensional commitment instrument tapping what they called affective and continuance commitment. Later, a third dimension

was added, normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The three components gave rise to the elaboration of a 24-item three-dimensional commitment scale that has been empirically tested (Dunham et al., 1994; Moorman, Niehoff, & Organ, 1993; Reilly & Orsak, 1991; Shore & Tetrick, 1991). Recently, evidence has revealed that the OCQ (Porter et al., 1974) captures only the affective component of commitment (Dunham et al., 1994; Vandenberg, Self, & Seo, 1994). Therefore, the OCQ is inadequate for testing the expanded Allen and Meyer perspective (Vandenberghe, 1996). The three-dimensional view of commitment has received consistent support in recent years even though it has not always been operationalized by Allen and Meyer's scales (1990, 1993; Angle & Lawson, 1993; Dunham et al., 1994; Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994; Jaros, Jermier, Koehler & Sincich, 1993; Meyer et al., 1993; Randall, Fedor, & Longenecker, 1990).

Although revealing truly valuable metrological qualities, certain studies suggested the importance of verifying the internal validity of the scale measuring OC based on costs associated with leaving the organization (Fabi et al., 2000). Apparently, this scale measuring OC included in fact two related dimensions; the first reflecting the absence of other job opportunities and the second being a high personal sacrifice (Hackett et al., 1994; Somers, 1993). Other problems were observed regarding the scale measuring affective commitment and normative commitment which are sometimes highly intercorrelated in addition to presenting similar profiles of correlations with some antecedents and some consequences of OC (Hackett et al., 1994; Meyer et al., 1993)

In addition, Randall's (1993) examination of the literature raised concerns about cross-cultural generalizability of the three-component theory as the majority of research on OC is conducted in North America (USA or Canada). In addition, the same observation holds

true for studies pertaining to Allen and Meyer's (1990) scales; only North American samples of employees were used (Vandenderghe, 1996). Vandenberghe (1996) conducted a study in a Belgian context in order to explore the boundary conditions of Allen and Meyer's (1990) three-dimensional OC theory. His research's specific contribution was the cross-validation of Allen and Meyer (1990) scales of commitment in a French-speaking context. Vandenberghe (1996) reported factor intercorrelations much higher than those found in previous research, suggesting that the three main components were strongly intertwined.

Categorizing commitment led to the development of competing theoretical frameworks. Meyer & Allen's (1991) model was elaborated in an attempt to recognize the common themes among existing definitions of commitment. It is important to acknowledge other approaches that have been developed recently in recognizing the multidimensional nature of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997). We will now turn our attention to a somewhat divergent but not incompatible approach.

Other classification schemes. O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) chose a different path and argued that commitment appears to reflect "the individual's psychological attachment to the organization – the psychological bond linking the individual and the organization" (p. 492). Kelman (1958; see O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986) proposed a taxonomy, from which O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) derived theirs, to classify three conceptually different ways in which people welcome influence: i) compliance or exchange, ii) identification or affiliation, and iii) internalization or value congruence.

> Compliance occurs when attitudes and behaviors are adopted not because of shared beliefs but simply to gain specific rewards. In this case, public and

private attitudes may differ. Identification, in Kelman's terms, occurs when an individual accepts influence to establish or maintain a satisfying relationship; that is, an individual may feel proud to be part of a group respecting its values and accomplishments without adopting them as his or her own. Internalization occurs when influence is accepted because the induced attitudes and behaviors are congruent with one's own values; that is, the values of the individual and the group or organization are the same. (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986, p.493).

According to O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), commitment rests upon a psychological attachment of the individual towards the organization "OC is conceived as the psychological attachment felt by the person for the organization; it will reflect the degree to which the individual internalizes or adopts characteristics or perspectives of the organization" (p.493).

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) suggested an individual's psychological attachment could be a result of different combinations of those three independent foundations, which in their classification system are labeled as bases of commitment:

Identification and internalization might be best considered mechanisms by which commitment - particularly affective commitment - develops; that is, employees' affective attachment to their organization might be based on a desire to establish a rewarding relationship with an organization (identification) and/or on congruence in the goals and values held by individuals and the organization (internalization) (Meyer & Allen, 1997, p.15).

Recognition that several forms of commitment exist (Meyer et al., 1993; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Becker, 1992) marked a significant recess with respect to Porter et al.'s (1974) and Mowday, Porter & Steers' position on OC (1979, 1982). Some researchers contend that OC's effects vary according to the individual's bases of attachment (Caldwell, Chatman & O'Reilly, 1990; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

None of the approaches seem flawless, and O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) is no exception to this rule of thumb in research. The behavioral outcomes of these various forms of commitment were expected to differ, just like in the case of Meyer and Allen's model (see Meyer and Allen, 1997). For example, O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) studied the relationships of compliance, identification, and internalization with presumed consequences of commitment such as turnover and prosocial behavior. Both identification and internalization were negatively related to turnover, turnover intention and positively related to prosocial behavior. In addition, some analyses revealed that identification and internalization each contributed uniquely to consequence measures. Compliance also accounted for unique variance with respect to turnover intention.

Despite these encouraging results, there has been concern regarding the distinction between identification and internalization because of high intercorrelations between their measures and with other variables' measures (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991; Vandenberg et al., 1994; Fabi et al., 2000). Recently, O'Reilly and his team formed a new measure of a construct called normative commitment that combines identification and internalization items. Meyer and Allen (1997) argued that this construct is in fact closer to the affective commitment component of their three-component model and should not be mistaken with their use of the term normative commitment.

Meyer and Allen raised the question as to whether compliance can be considered commitment notwithstanding its distinction from identification and internalization. They argued that it seemed to be distinct from other common definitions (see Table 1) and that it is considered by some to be the antithesis of commitment. According to Scholl (1981), commitment contributes to sustain behavior in the absence of reward. Moreover,

compliance correlated positively with employee turnover (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986), while on the contrary, as Mowday and his colleagues (1982) mentioned, commitment is usually assumed to decrease turnover. Hence, Meyer and Allen (1997) argued that the inclusion of compliance as a basis of commitment invites confusion.

Delobbe and Vandenberghe (2000) conducted a study to examine the reliability and validity of four dimensions of OC among Belgian employees. They investigated internalization, compliance, affective and continuance commitment as dimensions of employee commitment and tested whether they represented distinctive dimensions of OC. Their main concern was whether OC splits into two primary dimensions, namely attitudinal commitment (including internalization and affective) and calculative commitment (merging continuance commitment and compliance), or whether it could be conceived as four dimensions. The results revealed that internalization, affective commitment, continuance commitment, and compliance are empirically distinguishable. Delobbe and Vandenberghe (2000) invite caution when interpreting their data, as, despite a clear distinction between compliance and continuance commitment, the meaning of the compliance construct is still imprecise, in their opinion, and would require further research in the future. In addition, affective commitment and internalization were highly correlated which indicates substantial overlap between the dimensions.

Our previous discussion demonstrated that, although numerous differences subsist in the approach to commitment, a central theme that continues to appear is the growing body of evidence supporting a multidimensional view of commitment.

Foci of Organizational Commitment

After considering different classification pertaining to the bases of OC, it seems that the complete multidimensional nature of OC is yet to be fully apprehended. The literature on commitment has typically emphasized the notion of commitment to the organization. Moreover, several researchers have advocated a reconceptualization of the construct of commitment where OC is multidimensional rather than unidimensional (Cohen, 1993; Reichers, 1985, 1986; Hunt & Morgan, 1994).

To illustrate, Reichers (1985) argued that the organization is "typically viewed as a monolithic, undifferentiated entity that elicits an identification and an attachment on the part of the individual" (p.469). Actually, she defined commitment as "a process of identification with the goal of an organization's multiple constituencies" (p.465) which supports the notion that commitment cannot be explained only by considering the organization as a whole.

Therefore, Reichers (1986) suggested that when scientists measure commitment to the organization as an entity, they are most likely measuring employees' commitment to "top management" or to both top management and more local foci (individuals and groups to whom an employee is attached) as proposed by Becker and Billings (1993; see Meyer and Allen, 1997). In effect, being committed implies being committed to something (e.g., she is committed to her spouse; he is committed to the contract).

Reichers proposed top management, unions and customers as constituencies. Hence a more integrative approach is proposed whereby the construct of commitment shifts from being a wide construct focusing on the goals and values of the organization to a construct distinguishing "whose goals and values serve as the foci for multiple commitments" (Reichers, 1985, p.465).

This proposition of a new approach emerged to improve the construct in different ways. First, it accounts for the multiple entities forming an organization. Second, it offers a better picture of the various relationships taking place between employees and the organization itself. Finally, it promotes research questions with respect to the possibility of inconsistencies among the different foci of commitment and its consequences.

Becker (1992) also advocated a multidimensional view of commitment. His regression analyses of global commitment of the employees towards an organization and work groups, supervisors, and top management gave additional support to Reichers' findings. He demonstrated that employees' commitments to top management, supervisor, and work groups contributed significantly in the prediction of job satisfaction, intention to quit, and prosocial organizational behavior. This researcher studied the worth of the distinction between foci and bases of commitment, and his goal was to determine "whether or not the concepts of foci and bases of commitment added substantively to the conventional perspective" (p.233). This distinction needed to be addressed since the parsimony principle called for a resolution of the issue. If the distinction was not worth making then the conventional perspective should be restored as the preferred conceptualization.

In his research, Becker (1992) not only demonstrated that employees' commitments to foci (top management, supervisor, and work groups) contributed significantly, beyond that of commitment to the organization, in the prediction of outcome variables such as job satisfaction, intention to quit, and prosocial organizational behavior; but he showed that bases of commitment as well as commitment to foci other than an organization accounted for "variance in key dependent variables above and beyond that accounted for by the OCQ" (p.242).

Hence, he drew the conclusion from his research that "a greater recognition of the importance of multiple foci and bases of commitment is clearly warranted" (p.242) since his results support the "reconceptualization of employee attachment as a phenomenon with multiple foci and bases". Bases and foci of commitment give rise to the multidimensionality aspect of OC's construct, that, in addition to the fact that they account for variance in key dependant variables, suffice to shift from Porter, Mowday, Steers and Boulian's position (1974; Becker, 1992).

On the basis of a reanalysis of Becker's data, Hunt and Morgan (1994) developed and tested two opposite views of how OC could be reconceptualized to hold both global OC and constituency-specific commitments. In the first view, global OC is one of many independent commitments and in the second view, it is the key mediating construct. The authors proposed the possibility that OC might be the summation of an individual's commitments to all of the organization's possible constituencies such that it refers to the collection of all commitments.

Reichers (1986) tested this belief and found substantial unexplained variance in OC's levels. Hence, Reichers (1986) proposed that commitment in the organization "may perhaps be most accurately understood as a general (global) and a specific (commitments to one or more constituencies) construct" (p.513). In fact, employees may be committed to various constituencies which compose organizations such as top management, supervisors, work groups, occupations, departments, divisions, and unions (Hunt & Morgan, 1994). Research has demonstrated positive significant relationships between global OC and commitment to the aforementioned constituencies.

In an attempt to clarify the role of global OC and constituency-specific commitment, Hunt & Morgan (1994) tested their two views. The first model suggests that global OC and each form of constituency-specific commitment influence outcomes completely independently. As illustrated in Figure 1, global OC is just one of many kinds of commitment that does not impact any constituency-specific commitment. Hence, this view was labeled one of many.

In the second view, outcomes are influenced directly by global OC and indirectly influenced by constituency-specific commitments. In fact, constituency-specific commitments exert influence only through their impact on global commitment. In this notion, the central role is played by global OC. Thus, this view was labeled key mediating construct (Figure 2). Both figures use as bases of all forms of commitment: compliance, identification, and internalization (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).
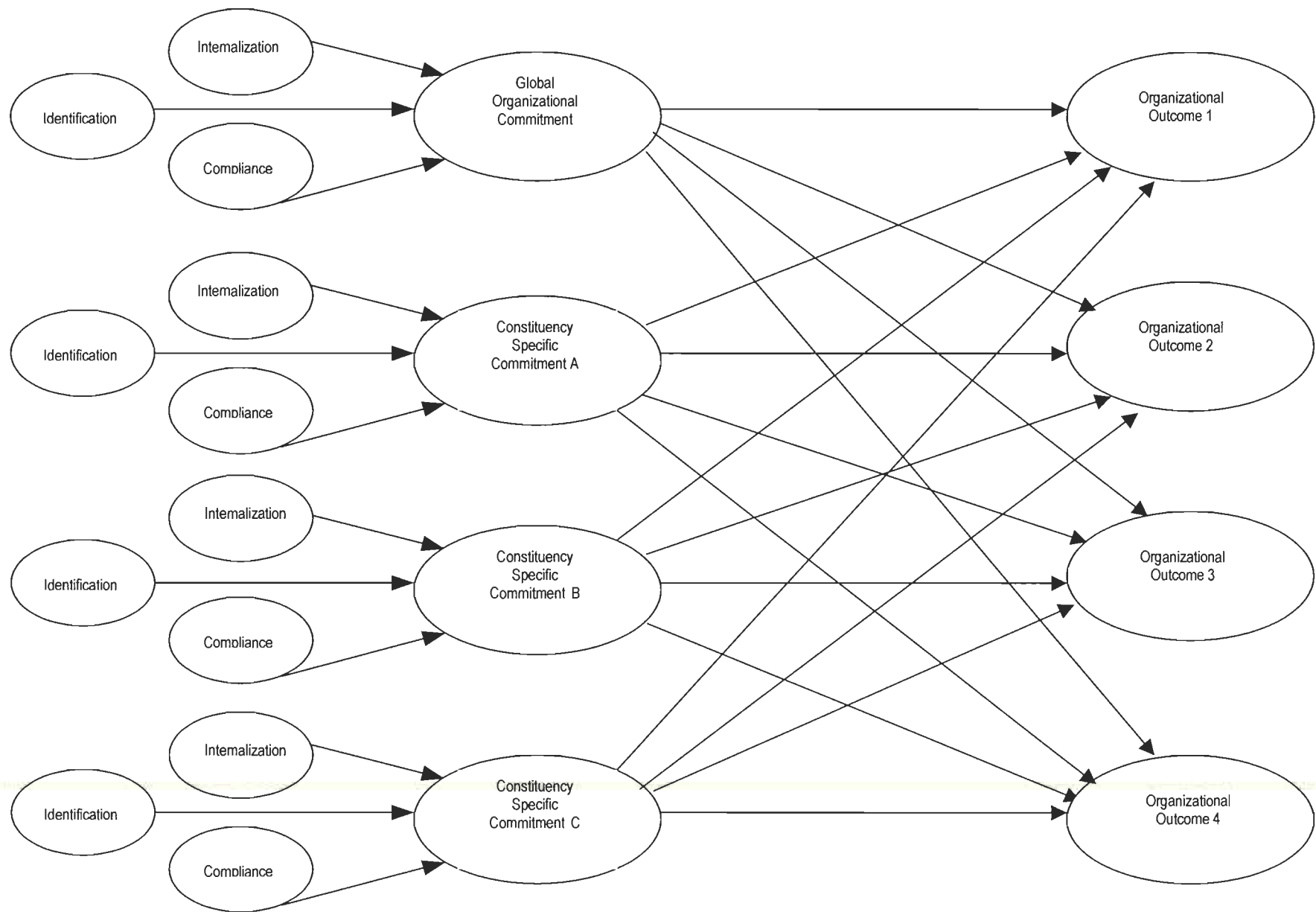
Figure 1.   One of many model of OC (Hunt & Morgan, 1994)

Hunt and Morgan (1994) suggested that, given the prominent role shared values play in both the development of corporate culture (Wiener, 1988) and the development of all forms of commitment, constituency-specific commitments should contribute to global OC. Three hypotheses were formulated by Hunt and Morgan (1994). First, there are direct, positive relationships between all constituency-specific commitments and global OC (hypothesis 1). Second, there are direct relationships between global OC and all organizational outcomes (hypothesis 2). Third, the fit of the key mediating construct model will be superior to that of its rival, the one of many model (hypothesis 3).

Their results in testing demonstrated that commitment to supervisor and commitment to top management appear to contribute to global OC, but commitment to work group does not appear to do so. Also, there were significant direct relationships between global OC and the following organizational outcomes: altruism, conscientiousness, nonidleness, and intent to quit. In addition, the one of many model (Figure 1) showed significant paths from the forms of commitment to these outcomes: commitment to work group to altruism and conscientiousness, commitment to supervisor to altruism, and global OC to nonidleness and intent to quit. Furthermore, nonidleness decreases with commitment to work group and conscientiousness decreases with commitment to top management.

In terms of the key mediating construct model (Figure 2), the paths from global OC to all four outcomes are significant. Hence, when direct paths from the constituency-specific commitments are not allowed, indirect effects through global OC increases the path
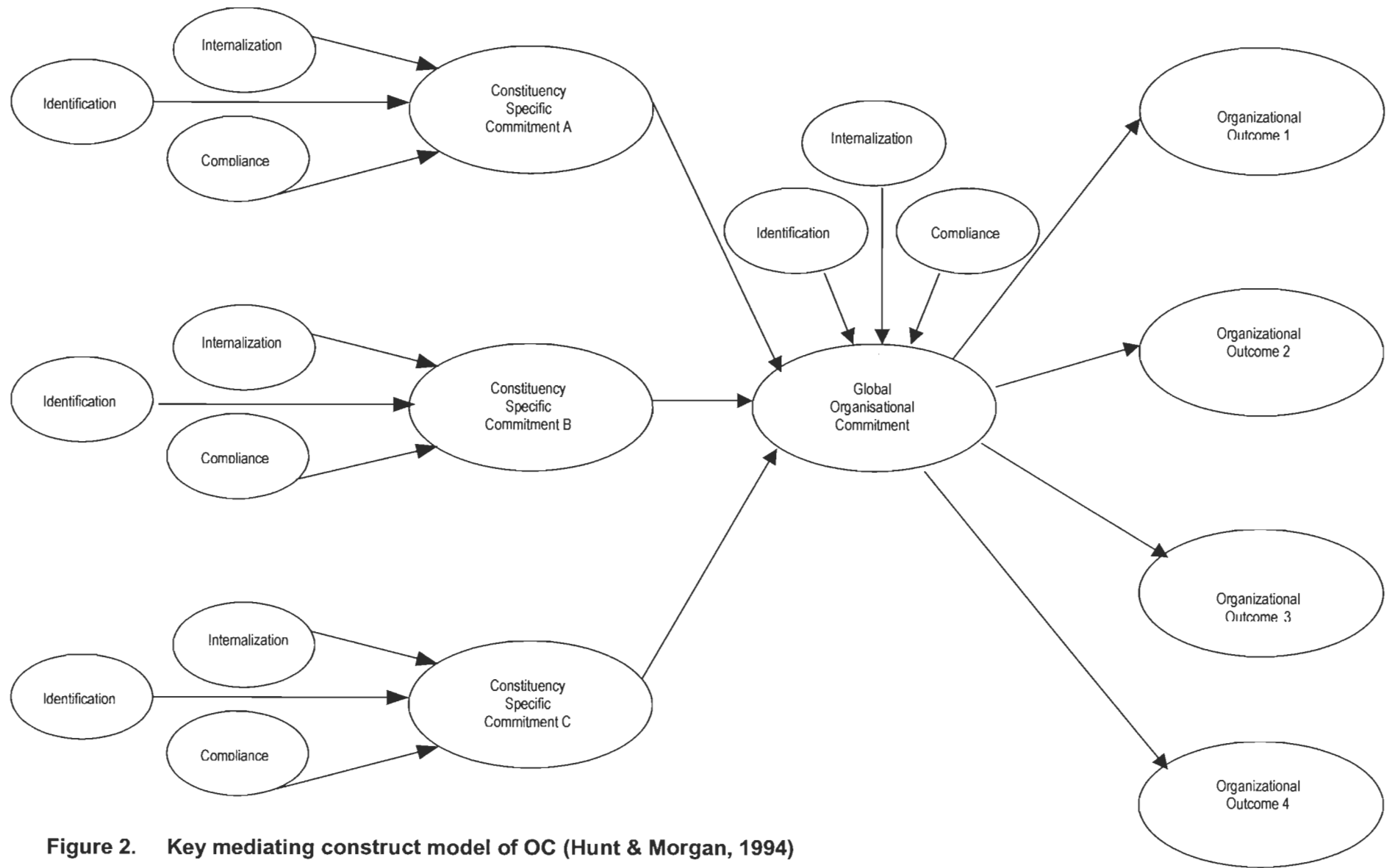
Figure 2.   Key mediating construct model of OC (Hunt & Morgan, 1994)

coefficient of altruism and conscientiousness to significant levels. Moreover, all significant paths have signs consistent with theory and organizational performance. According to Hunt and Morgan (1994), as with the one of many model, the overall fit for the key mediating construct model is good and global OC, the constituency-specific commitments, and their bases explain a large amount of the variance in intentions to quit but little of the variance in organizational behaviors.

Hunt and Morgan (1994) concluded, based on new analyses of Becker's data, that "global OC is a key mediating concept and the constituency-specific commitments are factors that have important outcomes for organizations because they lead to, bring about, or result in global OC" (p.1581). Furthermore, Hunt and Morgan suggested that the strength of global OC's mediating role increased as the constituencies were psychologically closer to the organization (e.g., supervisor, top management).

In summary, their results suggest that "organizations benefit from employee's developing constituency-specific commitments, and that managers should not fear the development of such commitments".

Becker and Billings (1993), based on a reanalysis of Becker's data, used cluster analysis of 440 employees in developing commitment profiles (different constituencies within the organization yield various patterns of commitment). They discovered four dominant profiles:

> (1) Locally committed employees, who are attached to their supervisor and work group, (2) globally committed employees, who are attached to top management and the organization, (3) committed employees, who are

attached to both local and global foci, and (4) uncommitted employees, who are committed to neither local nor global foci. (p.177).

Results of Becker and Billing's study suggested that the highest degree of overall job satisfaction and prosocial behavior were experienced by employees committed to local and global foci at the same time. In addition, these individuals had the least intent to leave. Employees that were locally and globally committed did not differ from each other with respect to general behaviors and attitudes, falling between the committed and uncommitted in every instance. When an assessment of attitudes and prosocial behavior towards the supervisor and work group was made, it was found that attitudes and prosocial behavior were lower among the globally committed than among the locally committed. This particular finding suggests again that the strength of the relationships between behavior and commitment to specific foci (constituencies) will increase when constituency-relevant behavior is examined.

For quite some time now, it has been recognized that employees can be committed to such foci as professions (Gouldner, 1958) and organizations (Mowday et al., 1982). Employees could be differentially committed to occupations, top management, supervisors, co-workers, and customers according to recent studies (Becker, 1992; Meyer et al., 1993, Reichers, 1986). Becker et al. (1996) argued that:

> More recent research has demonstrated that employee OC, as well as work - related attitude, can be predicated upon disparate motives and that distinguishing among individual foci and bases of commitment helps explain variance in key dependent variables above and beyond that explained by commitment to organizations (p.465).

In their study, Becker et al. (1996) hypothesized that employees distinguish among both individual foci and individual bases of commitment (hypothesis 1). They also presumed that, for most individuals, global foci are less psychologically proximal than local foci. The latter are possibly more effective in monitoring, rewarding, and influencing employee behavior than global foci because of their proximity and regular interaction with employees. Proximity and regular interaction also make it easier for employees to seek and receive feedback on actions consistent with the values and goals of local foci.

Meglino, Ravlin, and Adkins' (1989) evidence supported this reasoning as they concluded that "the object of [employee value] congruence did not appear to be the cultural values of the organization, but the value of each worker's supervisor" (p.431). According to Yukl (1989), one of supervision's explicit function is monitoring and improving employee performance. Thus, performance's norms with respect to its creation and promotion are more likely generated through supervisors rather than work groups. Hence, Becker et al. (1996) evaluated commitment to organizations and supervisors. In light of this, they hypothesized that overall commitment to supervisors is possibly related to job performance and is more strongly linked to performance than is overall commitment to organizations (hypothesis 2).

The team of researchers did not expect commitment based on identification to be strongly related to job performance. The reason is that the purpose of identification is to facilitate interpersonal relations, commitment based on identification should predict performance only if interpersonal relationships are contingent upon performance levels (Becker et al., 1996). Granted that most organizational members are unlikely to make their relationship with a particular individual contingent upon performance, commitment based on

identification would not generally be expected to increase performance according to Becker et al. (1996). To the contrary, cornmitment based on internalization of goals and values seems likely to predict performance.

Some studies suggest that commitment to difficult as well as specific goals yields high performance (e.g., Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987; Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981). Apparently, such goals are more likely set by foci that value performance. It is not farfetched to hypothesize that nearly all supervisors and organizations value performance on the employee's part and that many of the former determine performance goals for employees (Becker et al., 1996). Thus, highly committed individuals to both their supervisors and organizations and who internalize values as well as goals of these foci are expected to reach higher levels of performance than less committed individuals. Therefore, commitment based on internalization is positively related to job performance and is more strongly linked to performance than is commitment based on identification (hypothesis 3).

Becker et al. (1996) researched the relationship between the commitment of newcomers (to organization and their direct supervisors) and measures of job performance provided by supervisors ratings. Two measures of commitment were obtained for both constituencies (the organization and immediate supervisors) based on internalization and identification.

Becker et al. (1996) discovered that commitment to the immediate supervisor, especially when based on internalization of the latter's values, was more strongly linked to ratings of performance than was commitment to the organization. The authors suggested that

performance would more likely be predicted by the propensity to become committed to a supervisor. The evidence suggested that "enhancing commitment to a supervisor's goal and values - via leadership training, socialization, and team building, for instance - would affect performance to a greater extent than would increasing commitment to an organization" (p.477).

Moreover, internalization as a base for commitment might be more relevant than commitment based on identification. Commitment to organizations did not mediate the effects of commitment to supervisors. Even after commitment to organizations was partialed from the relationship, performance and commitment to supervisors were related. This pattern of results is inconsistent with Hunt and Morgan's (1994) theory, but consistent with Becker et al.'s (1996) contention that local foci are more proximal to employees and consequently have a greater impact on behavior in organizations.

Thus, Becker et al.'s (1996) results confirm that employees in many organizations distinguish between commitment to supervisors and commitment to the organizations and between identification and internalization as bases of commitment to these two foci. Note that Becker et al. chose not to include compliance as a base for commitment because it does not appear to be an attachment's basis to individuals or groups.

The definition of compliance suggests that individuals scoring high on the construct are attached to potential tangible rewards, not to social entities. Furthermore, empirical evidence has demonstrated that compliance is an across-foci construct and is often uncorrelated with other indexes of commitment. (Becker et al., 1996, p. 468).

Briefly, Becker et al.'s (1996) findings contribute to the already existing claim that commitment's foci within an organization could have an impact on organization-relevant behavior. In addition, the researchers' evidence provides support for the multidimensional view of commitment.

Lawler (1992), like Reichers (1985), observed that multiple subgroups, or collectives composed organizations and that individuals can develop commitments to one or more of these. Lawler (1992) contributed uniquely to this line of reasoning by suggesting that nesting can occur among these collectives. That is, being part of one collective demands being part of another one. "For example, being a member of a specific team requires that one be a member of a particular work unit, division, organization" (p.19). According to Meyer and Allen (1997), this fact has potentially potent implications for the understanding of the shape of an employee's commitment profile.

In summary, preliminary evidence indicates some value in measuring commitments to more specific foci within the organization, even though the multiple-constituency framework has not been studied extensively (Meyer & Allen, 1997). It is worth noting that existing evidence does not negate the value of measuring OC at a global level. We have shown that Becker (1992) found strong correlations among global commitment and job satisfaction, turnover intention, and prosocial organizational behavior. The increase in predictive value contributed by commitment to specific foci was small but significant.

Meyer and Allen (1997) warned researchers that when they measure commitment to organization as a whole, they are likely measuring employees' commitment to top management (Reichers, 1986) or to a combination of top management and more local foci

(Becker & Billings, 1993; Hunt & Morgan, 1994). Meyer and Allen (1997) suggested that when the intention is to use commitment as a means of comprehending or predicting behavior relevant to the organization as a whole (or to top management specifically), it would seem that the purpose could be well served with global measures of OC. However, if the interest is in behavior of relevance to more specific constituencies (e.g., supervisor, work team), better understanding and prediction might be reached through measuring commitment to the relevant constituency.

Integration of the Multidimensional Approaches

We have previously illustrated that commitment can be considered multidimensional both in its forms and focus. Meyer and Allen (1997) argued that these two approaches to conceptualizing commitment are not mutually exclusive. In fact, it is possible to envision a multidimensional framework in the form of a two-dimensional matrix with the different foci of commitment on one axis and the different forms along the other. The various cells within this matrix then reflect the nature of the commitment an employee has toward each individual constituency of relevance to him or her. The authors specified that the matrix should not be used to classify employees but to reflect varying degrees of different forms of commitment to each of the different constituencies. An example of what such a matrix would look like is presented in Figure 3.

Focus of commitment	Nature of Commitment		
	Affective	Continuance	Normative
Organization			
Top management			
Unit			
Unit manager			
Work team			
Team leader			

Figure 3. Integration of the multidimensional approaches.

The top row in Figure 3 represents the commitment model described by Meyer and Allen (1991); that is, employees are viewed as having varying degrees of affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization as a whole. The first column in Figure 3 represents Reicher's (1985) multiple constituency approach. Reichers described commitment primarily as an affective attachment but demonstrated that the attachment can be felt to varying degrees for specific constituencies within (and perhaps beyond) the organization.

Hence, this matrix illustrates the expansion of Meyer and Allen's model to incorporate multiple constituencies and of Reichers' model to include multiple components of commitment. Therefore, Meyer and Allen (1997) argued that, potentially, it should be possible to measure the different forms of commitment to each of the various

constituencies and to enter a value into each cell in the matrix to reflect an employee's multidimensional commitment profile.

When considering Meyer and Allen's (1991) and Reicher's (1985) conceptualization alone, one "might conclude that values entered into each cell of the two-dimensional matrix are independent of one another" (Meyer & Allen, 1997, p.20). Nevertheless, many dependencies among the cells exist as proposed by Lawler's (1992) nested collective perspective. Moreover, according to Lawler's logic, an interesting situation could be created if a lower level of attachment to the organization were paired with strong affective attachments to nested subgroups within the organizations.

In fact, to keep their membership in the smaller unit, employees have to remain within a larger organization despite lower levels of affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997). This need to stay with the organization may reflect the continuance commitment concept put forward by Allen and Meyer (1990b; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Thus, across both form and focus of commitment, there may be dependencies (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Yoon, Baker, and Ko's (1994) findings did not provide strong support for Lawler's theory, they also proposed a complex set of relations among commitments.

Hence, Figure 3 demonstrates that Meyer and Allen (1991) and Reichers (1986) conceptualizations are incomplete. The combination of the two approaches gives rise to a complex multidimensional model of commitment that is almost impossible to verify empirically or use in its entirety. Meyer and Allen (1997) presented this model to acknowledge OC's multidimensional nature within the organization and to increase awareness with respect to framing precise research questions.

In their extensive study of the topic of OC, Meyer and Allen (1997) noticed that more attention has been given to "distinguishing among different forms, or components, of commitment than to distinguishing among the foci (targets) of commitment, both within and outside the organization" (p.111). Most recently, Vandenberghe et al. (2001) have addressed this issue by designing a study where they examined the invariance of a commitment model across a set of cultures. Moreover, instead of investigating a single focus of commitment (i.e., the organization), Vandenberghe et al. (2001) studied commitment to different foci within and outside the organization.

According to many researchers in the field of work related commitment (Vandenberghe et al., 2001; Becker, 1992; Becker & Billings, 1993; Becker et al., 1996; Ellemers, de Gilder, & Van Den Heuvel, 1998; Irving, Coleman, & Cooper, 1997; Meyer et al., 1993; Reichers, 1986), the variety of foci needs to be taken into consideration to achieve a more complete understanding of work behavior. Vandenberghe et al. (2001) underlined that foci may differ from one organizational setting to another since the organizations' structure and way of operating may render some foci more salient than others. The team of researchers chose four foci for their study: organization, occupation, work group, and Europe.

In addition, Vandenberghe et al. (2001) mentioned the importance of considering the different bases for, or components of, commitment. The researchers used the three-dimensional model of Allen and Meyer (1990), which comprises affective, normative, and continuance components of commitment. Participants belonged to 12 European nationalities and responded to a French or an English version of the questionnaire which included measures of affective and normative commitment to the organization, the

occupation, the work group, and Europe; continuance commitment to the organization and the occupation; and intent to quit.

Findings demonstrated that (i) for normative and continuance commitment, the organizational and occupational foci were not empirically distinguishable and that (ii) both the commitment model and the relations between commitment components and intent to quit were culturally invariant. On the other hand, results also emphasized the importance of considering multiple commitment components in predicting intent to quit. Vandenberghe et al.'s (2001) study contributed to highlighting the importance of considering multiple foci of commitment in the prediction of intent to quit. Nonetheless, most determinants of intent to quit were affective in nature.

Furthermore, Vandenberghe et al. (2001) reported that the effects of affective components were not always in the same direction. Even though organizational and occupational affective commitments, were, as hypothesized, negatively related to intent to quit, affective commitment to Europe was positively associated with intent to quit. Results also demonstrated that affective commitment to the work group also displayed marginally but significant positive effect on intent to quit, but only for a dimension of cultural moderators. Altogether, these findings showed that the independent effect of commitment components on turnover intentions may in some cases be positive.

In our study, Becker's (1992) position is privileged as it integrates both the bases of commitment (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986) and the foci of commitment (Reichers, 1985). According to Becker (1992), the combination of both operational perspectives would allow for a better understanding of OC's constructs. However, according to Yoon, Baker and Ko

(1994), while combining both operational perspectives of OC (bases and foci), one increases as much the chance that the measuring instrument become laborious to use and; consequently, it becomes difficult for individuals to extract useful information from a managerial point of view. Nevertheless, the recognition of a more complex multidimensional structure is interesting as it may generate a better understanding of OC's construct.

Our discussion in the following section will focus on the differentiation among antecedents and consequences of commitment in an effort to achieve a better comprehension of OC's process.

Antecedents of Organizational Commitment

According to Reichers (1985), there is a large body of evidence for the antecedents of commitment, from which originated categories of variables. Among the variables Mathieu and Zajac (1990) classified as antecedents of OC were those reflecting personal characteristics, job characteristics, organizational characteristics, and role states. We will address those same categories of antecedents. Moderators operating on the relationships will also be discussed.

In Mathieu & Zajac's (1990) experiment, the strongest correlations were observed for job characteristics, especially job scope (enrichment). Aside from perceived personal competence, personal characteristics yielded weak relationships with OC. Apparently, sex - as a personal characteristic - and OC were unrelated. This result was recently

corroborated by Aven, Parker, and McEvoy (1993) while conducting a meta-analysis based on a larger set of studies. Meyer (1997) stated that few studies have focused on the links between commitment and organizational characteristics and that, from those studies, emerged weak correlations. In addition, there appears to be no significant relationships between role states (ambiguity, conflict, overload) and commitment.

Personal Characteristics

It seems plausible to believe that, through the course of an association between an individual and an organization, personal attributes could be an important source of commitment (Pierce & Durham, 1987) and exert an influence on their ulterior adaptation at work (Chatman, 1989; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Cohen (1993a) pursued research in the commitment field and examined the relationships between age and tenure and commitment within different career stages. His findings demonstrated that the relation between age and commitment was stronger among younger employees (those under 30) than it was for the other age groups. In opposition, the relationship between commitment and tenure was greater among senior employees (those with more than nine years of experience). According to Meyer (1997), the results would indicate that the relationships involving age and tenure might not be linear and may help to explain the relatively weak correlations reported by Mathieu and Zajac (1990).

When considering individuals' attributional processes, locus of control constitutes an important variable to consider (Luthans, Baack, & Taylor, 1987). Locus of control is

presumed to be a rather stable attribute of an individual when confronted to different situations (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Luthans et al., 1987; Rotter, 1966). In fact, a number of studies have found significant correlations between locus of control and OC (Furnham, Brewin, & O'Kelly, 1994; Kinicki & Vecchio, 1994; Luthans et al., 1987). Apparently, individuals with internal locus of control tended to be more committed to the organization than individuals with external locus of control. Even though studies revealed this continual relation, they also point to modest correlations between OC and locus of control (Coleman & Irving, 1997; Fabi et al., 2000).

We will also consider two other personal characteristics; work involvement and job involvement, which in past studies have demonstrated significant relations with OC (Brooke et al., 1988; Mathieu & Farr, 1991; Fabi et al., 2000). Analysis of previous research demonstrated the interchangeability of the two concepts of work involvement and job involvement (Elloy & Tarpening, 1992). However, the concept of work involvement is more general and complex than job involvement. Kanungo (1982) defined the distinctions existing between the two constructs. He conceptualized work commitment as a general cognitive state of psychological identification with work whereas job involvement refers to a general cognitive state of psychological identification with a specific job.

Job involvement, more stable than OC, is influenced by personal characteristics like occupational commitment (Brooke et al., 1988; Rabinowitz, Hall, & Goodale, 1977; Fabi et al., 2000). Despite the fact that the two concepts of job and work involvement are related, the relationship is not automatic. The constructs remain distinct (Kanungo, 1982; Fabi et

al., 2000). In fact, if an individual cannot fulfill his needs through a particular job, the relationship will not be established (Elloy & Tarpening, 1992).

Job Characteristics

Individuals' behaviors could be influenced by the acceptance of group norms because of the proximity and regularity of interactions among employees, work group and supervisor (Becker et al., 1996). According to these researchers, commitment towards one's immediate supervisor would exert a greater influence on the individuals' behavior within the organization. In addition, OC based on internalization of values of the organization and immediate supervisor is believed to be associated with performance. Hence, leadership from the immediate supervisor might exert a significant proximal influence on OC (Fabi et al., 2000).

A leader is presumed to play a significant role in the process of identifying with an organization and in the reciprocity process (Kundi & Saleh, 1993) such that he could positively influence emotional commitment from the individuals through his behavior (Bateman & Strasser, 1984; Ismal, Kernan, & Bruning, 1992; Morris & Sheman, 1981; Ogilvie, 1986). Other researchers have noticed that the structure's initiation (Baba & Knoop, 1987; Bateman & Stasser, 1984; Luthans et al., 1987; Pierce & Durham, 1987; Salancik, 1977) as well as behaving respectfully is associated to OC (Baba & Knoop, 1987; Ogilvie, 1986; Pierce & Durham, 1987).

According to Meyer (1997), there has been no consensus on whether, or how, job satisfaction and commitment are causally related although meta-analytic findings indicate that the two variables are highly connected. Mixed results arose from earlier attempts to study the issue. Two researchers (Mathieu, 1991; Lance, 1991) conducted cross-sectional studies testing for both recursive and non-recursive effects. In fact, commitment and satisfaction were found to exert effects on each other; however, the effect of satisfaction on commitment was greater than the effect of commitment on satisfaction (Meyer, 1997).

A longitudinal study conducted by Farkas and Tetrick (1989) using structural equation modeling procedures, yielded results suggesting that the causal ordering of commitment and satisfaction reverses over time, conceivably reflecting either cyclical or reciprocal effects. Vandenberg and Lance (1992) also compiled longitudinal data but tested only for causal effects within-time. Their results provided the strongest support for a commitment-cause-satisfaction model (Meyer, 1997).

Meyer (1997) suggested the findings from this research demonstrates the potential complexity of the relationship between job satisfaction and commitment. He argued that we may never be able to determine the causal ordering of the two variables. However, Meyer proposed that it might not be a crucial issue from the standpoint of understanding how OC develops. Nevertheless, he mentioned it might be potent in the issue of how satisfaction and commitment are linked to behavior.

Organizational Characteristics

Fundamentally, the cohesion between employees and the organization constitutes a necessary condition for OC. Thus, the organization has to meet the needs and expectations of its members in order to foster commitment towards both organizational goals and values (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987). Following this line of reasoning, organizational climate constitutes an important factor to nurture OC's emergence and development (Fabi et al., 2000).

Globally, the majority of studies suggest that a democratic managing style favorably influences employees' attitudes and behaviors (Darden, Hampton, & Howell, 1989). In fact, when an employee actively participates in the decision-making process, he takes on, to a greater extent, the responsibility for his actions. Thus, there is a positive relationship between the perception of participation in decision making and affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; DeCotiis & Summers, 1987).

Inversely, DeCotiis & Summers (1987) suggested the centralization of power through control mechanisms decreased participation in decision making via formalized procedures that downplayed commitment to the organization. Superiors and subordinates established relationships based on power where everyone is looking to gain something (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977). It has been noted that employees who had a sense of autonomy in their work took up more favorable attitudes than those evolving through traditional structures (Cordery, Mueller, & Smith, 1997). It appears that perception of freedom to determine

work procedures (autonomy) has a direct effect on individual commitment (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987) and on the general level of OC (Steers, 1977).

In addition, decision-making processes play an important role with respect to OC (Allen & Meyer, 1990; DeCotiis & Summers, 1987). According to Ismal et al. (1992), OC can be influenced through a decision-making process where individuals participate thereby decreasing role conflict and role ambiguity. It has been observed that the modification of supervisors' behaviors can have major effects on OC's level and the level of organizational performance (Ismal et al., 1992; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

The contribution of communication within the organizational dynamic has to be taken into account. Communication's centrality within diverse organizational processes justifies our examination of the concept (Putti, Aryee, & Phua, 1990; Fabi et al., 2000). Satisfaction towards transmitted information from the organization and the hierarchical leader could promote OC by increasing identification with organizational goals and values (Fabi et al., 2000). Therefore, one can hypothesize that communication activities on the top management's part are important in promoting the blossoming of OC through the diffusion of the values system and the recognition of the employees' importance (Putti et al., 1990).

Vandenberghe and Peiro (1999) hypothesized that organizational value systems may have profound effects on work attitudes and behavior. Their research, using Meyer and Allen's (1991) bases of commitment: affective, continuance and normative commitment, demonstrated that affective commitment was positively predicted by organizational support values and organizational goal-innovation values. Also, organizational support values were negatively related to continuance commitment and positively related to

normative commitment. In addition, the rules-preference variable was positively related to continuance commitment.

Vandenberghe and Peiro (1999) proposed that it might indicate that employees who lack some flexibility are more prone to recognize poor alternatives to their job and/or perceive high costs associated with departure (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The findings suggested that employees' reactions were mainly explained by organizational values per se and by value preferences (especially in predictions of commitment variables).

Role States

Globally, role perceptions seem to be related to OC (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Stevens, Beyer, & Trice, 1978). The individual's psychological proximity towards perceptions of his role supports the idea that the latter exerts a proximal influence.

We have chosen to consider two variables stemming from Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman's (1970) work on role ambiguity and role conflict, considering that many empirical verifications have demonstrated a significant link with OC. Fisher and Gitelson (1983) concluded, in their meta-analysis, to a negative relationship among, on one hand, role ambiguity and role conflict and, on the other hand, OC. Mathieu and Farr (1991), just as Brooke et al. (1998), concluded to a strong negative relationship between stress related to role and OC.

Cohen (1992) showed that commitment and role ambiguity were more strongly related among non-professionals, whereas communication and autonomy were more strongly connected to commitment among professionals. According to Meyer (1997), these latter findings suggest that among members of these broad occupational groups, the needs and preferences contrast. In addition, the commitment they experience changes in accordance with whether these needs and preferences are fulfilled in their working environment.

Moderators

A series of meta-analyses were conducted by Cohen and his colleagues to examine more specific antecedent-commitment relationships and possible moderating effects. Findings from studies conducted to test Becker's side-bet theory of commitment were reexamined by Cohen and Lowenberg (1990). Becker (1960) introduced the idea that side-bets or sunk costs impacted the commitment experienced by long-term employees. Becker argued that commitment increases as individuals make side-bets, or investments, that would be lost if they were to terminate their employment. Other researchers found evidence to support this contention (Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972).

However, Cohen and Lowenberg (1990) found weak correlations between 11 side-bet variables (e.g., age, tenure, gender) and commitment which led them to reach the conclusion that there is little evidence to support side-bet theory. They cautioned, though, that the side-bet and commitment measures used in the research included in their

analyses may not have been appropriate for testing side-bet theory (cf. Meyer & Allen, 1984).

In 1992, Cohen tested for the moderating effect of occupation on the correlations between different personal and organizational antecedents variables and commitment. His results demonstrated that commitment was more strongly connected to personal characteristics (e.g., tenure, education, marital status, gender, and motivation) for employees in blue-collar and non-professional white-collar occupations than for professionals. Also, the relationship between commitment and organizational characteristics changed across occupational groups but the pattern was less consistent.

In order to study the issue of OC further, Cohen and Gattiker (1994) used meta-analysis to explore the relationship between OC and rewards that are operationalized as actual income and pay satisfaction. In all the research, commitment was more significantly linked to pay satisfaction than to actual income. Nevertheless, structural characteristics moderated the relationships to some extent. Specifically, pay satisfaction and commitment were less correlated in the public sector compared to the private sector, and the link between actual income and commitment was more significant for professionals than for clerical employees.

Recently, Meyer and Smith (2000) tested a mediation model using human resources management (HRM) practices (performance appraisal, benefits, training, and career development) as antecedents of commitment and perceptions of procedural justice and organizational support as moderators. In the past, researchers have shown some evidence of a relationship between HRM practices and commitment (Gaertner & Nollen,

1989; Kinicki, Carson, & Bohlander, 1992; Ogilvie, 1986). Although, results suggested a link between HRM practices and employee commitment, some researchers have noted that these relationships are not necessarily direct or unconditional.

In an effort to shed light on the relations between HRM practices and commitment, Meyer and Smith (2000) formulated and tested two hypotheses. First, they expected that employees' commitment to the organization, as well as their perceptions of procedural justice (fairness of the procedures used in determining outcomes) and organizational support within their organization, could be predicted from their evaluations of HRM practices. Second, they hypothesized that the relationships between employees' evaluation of HRM practices and their affective and normative commitment to the organization would be mediated by their perceptions of procedural justice and organizational support. Organizational support and procedural justice were not expected to mediate the relationships between continuance commitment and HRM practices. Meyer and Smith (2000) argued that to the extent that these relations existed, they were expected to be direct (within the system of variables examined in their research).

Meyer and Smith's (2000) results were generally consistent with findings from previous research (e.g., Gaertner & Nollen, 1989; Koys, 1988, 1991; Ogilvie, 1986) in showing links between organizational HRM practices and employees' affective commitment and normative commitment. The authors argued their findings were an extension of previous evidence in that they illustrated that the relations between these HRM practices and affective commitment are mediated by perceptions of organizational support and, to a lesser extent, procedural justice.

The authors proposed that "HRM practices might serve as one means by which organizations can demonstrate their support for, or commitment to, their employees and, in turn, foster reciprocal attachment by employees"(p.327). Their data suggested that HRM practices are related, albeit indirectly, to affective and normative commitment which, in turn, have been found to be related to desirable work behavior (e.g., performance, attendance, citizenship: see Allen & Meyer, 1996). In terms of continuance commitment, the HRM evaluation measures did not contribute significantly to the prediction of continuance commitment. As for the moderators, the evidence was strongest for organizational support.

Briefly, Meyer and Smith's results add to the existing evidence suggesting that employees' OC is related to their perceptions and evaluations of HRM policies and practices of the organization. Then again, these relationships are neither direct nor unconditional. The results of their study suggested that the perception of organizational support especially may play an important mediating role. One has to be cautious as firm conclusions regarding causality cannot be drawn; however, their findings combined with those of previous research, proposed that HRM practices may only contribute to employees' affective commitment if they are viewed by the employees as proof of the organization's commitment to them.

We have highlighted some of the studies that have attempted to establish the linkage between variables believed to be involved in the process of OC as its antecedents. We will examine the empirical evidence examining the ordering of the antecedents of OC.

Causal Ordering of Antecedents

Several studies were conducted by Mathieu and his colleagues (Mathieu, 1988, 1991; Mathieu & Hamel, 1989) to determine the causal ordering of antecedent variables. According to Meyer (1997), these studies, based on self-report data collected once, differed from previous research in their use of path analysis to test theory-based causal models. Lewin's (1943) field theory served as a basis in the models to determine the causal ordering priority of variables believed to be antecedent to commitment.

In accordance with Lewin's (1943,1951) theoretical framework, employees' reactions to their working environment, in this case OC, should primarily be a function of their perceptions of, and reactions to, proximal elements such as their experiences at work. More distal causes include environmental and personal characteristics, which are likely to exert their influence on commitment indirectly through more proximal causes. In fact, these personal characteristics should indirectly influence OC through proximal factors which constitute dimensions of the individuals' work situation (Fabi et al., 2000; Meyer & Allen, 1997; O'Reilly et al., 1991).

In a military training context, Mathieu (1988) tested a model of the development process. Four broad categories of antecedent variables (i.e., personal characteristics, role states, job characteristics and work experiences) identified in previous research were measured and causally ordered in accordance with field theory predictions. For instance, role states and personal characteristics were hypothesized to exert their influence indirectly through

perceptions of, and reactions to, the training experience (i.e., training characteristics and satisfaction with training, respectively).

Although, Mathieu's original model proved to fit the data reasonably well, he found that a revised model better fitted the data. As expected, training characteristics continued to have the strongest direct effect on commitment; however, some of the variables expected initially to have only indirect effects (e.g., achievement motivation, role strain) proved to have direct effects as well. In 1991, Mathieu conducted similar research with a greater sample and his findings demonstrated that "general job satisfaction, when measured in place of satisfaction with training, had the strongest direct effect on commitment, and that all other variables, with the exception of achievement motivation, had only indirect effects" (Meyer, 1997, p.189).

A causal model was developed by Mathieu and Hamel (1989) which was to be tested in a non-military context. The researchers collected their data in two government agencies and a state university. The sampling contained professionals as well as non-professionals. Their results showed that, in general, job satisfaction and mental health were the two most proximal causes of OC. In fact, personal and job characteristics (and their interactions), role strain and organizational characteristics were discovered to exert their effects indirectly through the more proximal causes. Nevertheless, the strength of some of the indirect effects was found to differ between professionals and non-professionals.

Apparently, Mathieu and his colleagues argued that some of their findings may have been unique to their peculiar samples (i.e., military and government). In addition, the

researchers have overlooked other important antecedent variables and mediating and moderating effects.

To our knowledge, one study (Fabi et al., 2000) researched the effects of different antecedents on O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) bases of commitment. Their study attempted to propose the elaboration and validation, with the help of structural equations, of a model integrating antecedent variables of diverse nature: personal characteristics, job characteristics, organizational characteristics and role states (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday et al., 1982). Following the steps of other researchers (Cohen, 1992; Mathieu & Hamel, 1989), Fabi et al. (2000) verified the moderating effect of occupational category on the relationships between these antecedents and the three bases of OC.

In addition to a better understanding of OC (Meyer, 1997), such an approach could help explain previous correlational results which were apparently contradictory. These objectives of clarification were attained through a model based on a causal ordering of antecedents stemming from Lewin's work (1943, 1951). This theoretical logic implied the presence of proximal variables with an influence on OC's bases and distal variables having an indirect influence on the latter through proximal variables.

Among the proximal and distal antecedents, one can postulate that the factors psychologically closer to the workforce are susceptible to exert a greater impact on behavior within the organization (Becker et al., 1996). In light of these authors' results, it can be hypothesized that elements of the working environment such as job characteristics and job involvement should exert a greater influence on OC than organizational

characteristics such as organizational communication and control mechanisms (Vandenberghe, 1998).

Fabi et al. (2000) proposed a more contingent model which allowed a better understanding of mitigated and contradictory results of previous studies based on correlational analyses typically putting only one antecedent in relation with OC's degree (Aven et al., 1993; Fabi, Martin & Valois, 1998; Meyer, 1997). To address the understanding of OC's process, it appeared necessary, in light of previous studies, to use more sophisticated analyses. It seemed appropriate to use structural equation analyses to study the relationships among the model's variables. Even though the use of this path is confronting, like bivariate statistics, to the limits of covariance, this path allowed for advanced analyses of the relations among variables of the general model (Meyer, 1997).

The model proposed by Fabi et al. (2000) is presented in Figure 4. Their results globally confirmed the ordering suggested in light of Lewin's theory (1943, 1951). Their model integrates a structure where the influence of two distal variables (i.e., work involvement and locus of control) on O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) three bases of OC (internalization, identification, compliance) are exerted totally through proximal variables (i.e., perception of role at work, perception of immediate supervisor's leadership, job involvement and perceptions of organizational characteristics). Their findings appear to confirm the contention that, to achieve a better understanding of OC's process, it is crucial to recognize mediating mechanisms (Meyer, 1997).
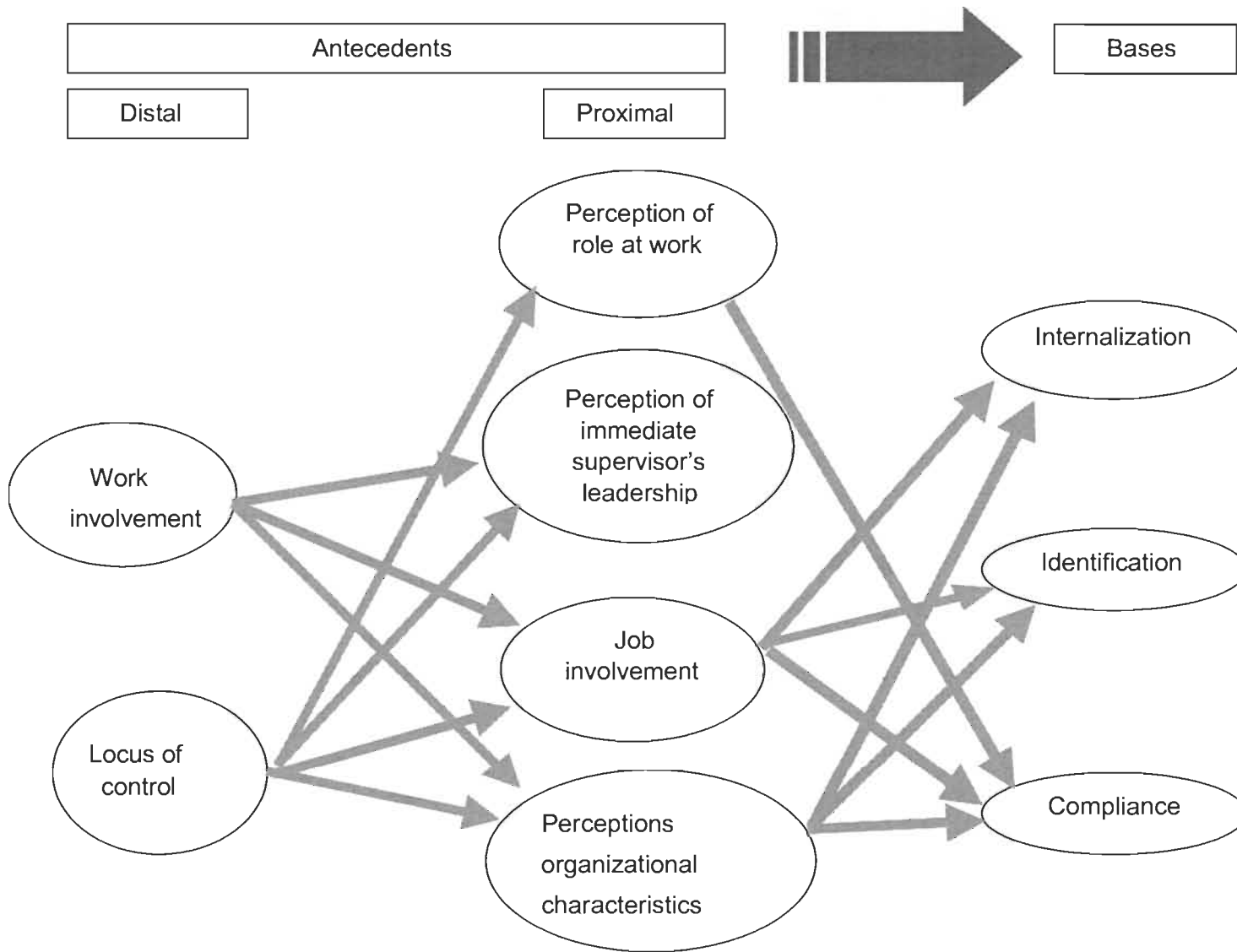
Figure 4.   Multidimensional model of OC (Fabi et al., 2000)

Fabi et al. (2000) argued that their results did not invalidate the potency of personal characteristics since their findings showed that individuals with internal locus of control, in opposition to those with external locus of control, have a tendency to positively perceive their role at work, their immediate supervisor and organizational characteristics; it is the same for employees more involved in their work. The authors wanted to put in perspective the importance of personal characteristics in the understanding of OC. This importance is reflected for instance in the relatively modest correlations previously denoted between OC and characteristics like locus of control (Coleman & Irving, 1997).

These results (Fabi et al., 2000) follow a contemporary tendency in the research suggesting that experiences at work are more determinant in OC's development than certain personal characteristics of individuals (Meyer, 1997; Meyer, Irving & Allen, 1998; Vandenberghe, 1998).

In our introduction, we have briefly touched upon the advantages and disadvantages of having a committed workforce. We will now turn to the empirical evidence linking commitment to various forms of employee behavior.

Consequences of Organizational Commitment

According to Meyer (1997), the most comprehensive and widely cited meta-analytic review of the OC literature was conducted by Mathieu and Zajac (1990). These researchers included in their consequence category: job performance, perceived job alternatives, intention to search, intention to leave, attendance, lateness, and turnover.

Their findings demonstrated a positive correlation between OC and attendance and a negative correlation with lateness as well as with turnover. Their meta-analysis showed a strong relationship between commitment and i) intention to search for job alternatives and ii) intention to leave one's job.

Withdrawal Behaviors

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) observed disappointingly low correlations with the other outcome variables. However, intention to search, intention to leave, and actual turnover, were the most widely investigated outcomes and those yielding the strongest correlations with commitment. Therefore, as hypothesized, OC correlated significantly with both intentions, and these links were among the strongest observed in the meta-analyses and were higher than that obtained with actual turnover. Meyer (1997) admitted it was not surprising, considering the construct's nature, that those turnover-linked intentions represented the strongest correlations in addition to being the most researched outcomes.

Mowday et al. (1982) hypothesized that the strongest and most predictable behavioral consequence of employee commitment should be lower turnover rates. Mathieu and Zajac's (1990) meta-analysis supported Mowday et al.'s contention. Nevertheless, the magnitude of the relationship was lower than those noticed between several affective responses and commitment. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) reported that over 88% of the between-study variance remained unaccounted for after corrections for artifacts.

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) argued that even though OC and turnover are unmistakably related, the mediators at work are less clear. Recent research has demonstrated that the link is mediated by several cognitions and behavioral intentions (Arnold & Feldman, 1982; Bluedorn, 1982; Michaels & Spector, 1982; Mowday, Koberg, & McArthur, 1984; Stumpf & Hartman, 1984).

According to Mathieu and Zajac (1990), the most popular theory of turnover process has been a model outlined by Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, and Meglino (1979). Their model proposed that various elements of the work environment (e.g., supervision practices and job content factors) play a role in individuals' affective responses (e.g., job satisfaction and OC), which in turn may initiate withdrawal cognitions and decision processes that are linked directly to an employee's likelihood of turnover. In addition, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) argued that even though Mobley et al.'s model incorporated different types of behavioral intentions and withdrawal cognitions, "only perceived job alternatives, intention to search for job alternatives, and the intention to leave the organization have been reported frequently enough to permit meta-analyses" (p.185).

Randall (1990) found similar patterns of results in her meta-analysis of studies examining the relations between commitment and various work outcomes. The researcher's findings closely paralleled those of Mathieu and Zajac (1990). She noticed that global correlations were slightly stronger (when studying methodological moderator effects) when a) using a cross-sectional design, b) the sample is constituted of white-collar workers, c) the measurement is done by OCQ and d) self-report measures are privileged. Randall (1990) concluded that the methodological perspective cannot explain the overall weak correlations between commitment and behavior .

<div align="center">Performance</div>

In 1982, Mowday et al. reached the conclusion that the least encouraging finding in the OC literature regards the weak relationship OC demonstrated with job performance. The findings of meta-analyses using others' (primarily supervisor's) ratings of performance and performance measures as performance criteria support their conclusions (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Moreover, a certain amount of between-study variance remained unaccounted for in both instances following corrections for artifacts.

According to Mathieu and Zajac (1990), few researchers made the prediction that OC's levels would play a role in performance, as most correlations stemmed from research conducted to investigate other relationships. Apparently, the subgroup analysis failed to demonstrate that commitment type moderated the nature of these results. In opposition, Petty, McGee, and Cavender (1984) observed an average correlation between job satisfaction and performance. Even though higher levels of commitment might be linked to job performance in some situations (e.g., Larson & Fukami, 1984), the findings suggested that commitment has little direct influence on performance in most instances (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

<div align="center">Moderators</div>

Regarding moderators, Cohen (1991) paid attention to the influence of career stage on the relationship of commitment with its outcomes. His results demonstrated that age, taken as an indicator of career stage, played a role in the strength of the correlation

between commitment and turnover (whether it is actual or intended). In addition, performance and absenteeism were influenced by tenure, which was considered to be a career stage indicator. Cohen drew a conclusion regarding the results. The correlations obtained demonstrated a greater relationship for subjects in their late career stage compared to those in their early or middle career stage. The author argued, from his pattern of results, that all career stages lead to commitment to the organization but the benefits' nature (retention and performance for example) may be different.

A few years later, the researcher (Cohen, 1993b) further studied the relationship between commitment and turnover by examining two potential moderators' interaction in i) the time lapse between measures and ii) career stage. The results showed a significant interaction when age, and not tenure, defined career stage. The evidence demonstrated that the strength of the relationship between commitment and turnover varied for younger and older employees according to the time lapse between measures. Commitment predicted turnover more accurately when the time lapse between measures was short for younger employees and when the interval was longer for older employees.

Cohen justified this pattern by speculating that commitment is volatile in the younger crew; consequently, when the interval is longer, the more likely it is to be altered. On the other hand, commitment is believed to be more stable among older personnel. However, employees with feeble commitment may experience difficulty upon their departure because of structural bonds and lack of alternatives, for example. Despite these impediments, it is more likely that an uncommitted staff will overcome them the longer the time lapse in measurement (Meyer, 1997).

Job Satisfaction

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) contend that, in the OC literature, the effects of job satisfaction as a construct and its constituents are among the most extensively studied subject matter. The evidence showed a positive relationship between OC and job satisfaction.

Summary

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) concluded that the relationships between OC and employees' behaviors have not yielded many large correlations. The authors argued that their findings suggest that these relations are likely to be mediated or moderated by other factors. They also proposed that the relationship between performance and commitment is unlikely direct or straightforward. OC demonstrated relatively strong correlations with behavioral intentions even though its link with actual withdrawal behaviors has, at best, been only modest. This hinted that the influence of OC on behaviors was mediated by behavioral intentions.

Steel and Ovalle (1984) conducted a meta-analysis demonstrating that a correlation between intention to quit and actual turnover. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) contend that those findings, combined with their results, suggested that OC serves as a summary index of work-related experiences and influences behavioral intentions directly. In turn, individuals' intentions, perhaps combined with perceived job alternatives and nonwork influences, have more immediate impact on behaviors. The authors suggested the

likelihood that the link between OC and withdrawal behaviors is moderated as well as mediated (cf. Baron & Kenny, 1986).

In a longitudinal analysis of the antecedents of commitment, Bateman and Strasser (1984) found their study variables (e.g., OC, job characteristics, centralization, need for achievement, job satisfaction) to be better causal predictors of job satisfaction than subsequent commitment. The evidence suggested that the commitment construct might neither be simultaneous with job satisfaction nor a result of it. The authors then concluded that "OC appears to be one of the many causes of satisfaction" (1984, p.109). While we know that OC and job satisfaction are highly related, Meyer (1997) argued that there has been no consensus about whether, or how, job satisfaction and OC are causally connected. Earlier attempts to address the issue have yielded mixed results.

Lance (1991) and Mathieu (1991) tested for both non-recursive and recursive effects through cross-sectional studies. Both researchers found evidence for an asymmetrical reciprocal relation between satisfaction and commitment. Commitment and satisfaction were found to exert effects on each other. However, the effect of satisfaction on commitment was greater than the effect of commitment on satisfaction. Meyer (1997) suggested that the results of the studies can be explained by the complexity of the relation between OC and satisfaction. He further argued that the determination of which , if either, is causally prior, may never be doable.

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) advocated the need for causal processes models based on theory. Meyer (1997), in turn, argued for the necessity to further explore the relations between OC and reaction measures because of their robust relationship. Recently,

Wallace (1993) conducted a meta-analysis that purported to examine the relationship (correlation) between professional commitment and OC. Mathieu and Zajac's meta-analysis did not include professional commitment as a variable. The evidence showed that "commitment to an organization and a profession are not necessarily incompatible " (Meyer, 1997, p.179).

Meyer (1997) commented this positive relationship by warning that it does not exclude the potentiality of discrepancy in absolute levels of commitment, organizational and professional. Also, it does not eliminate the likelihood that friction might occur. Wallace's results suggested that there were moderators at play. The evidence showed that the degree of professionalization in an occupation and position in the employing organization influenced the relationship between professional and OC with respect to the magnitude of the correlation.

In addition, the conceptualization and measures (e.g., career, occupational, professional commitment, or career salience) used regarding professional commitment had an effect on the correlations (Wallace, 1993). Morrow (1993) shared concerns with respect to "the conceptualization and measurements of work commitments " (Meyer, 1997, p.179) which are consistent with Wallace's findings mentioned above. Considering the nature of the commitment construct, the general consensus now is that OC is a multidimensional construct. In Figure 5, we present Meyer and Allen's (1997) multidimensional model of OC, its antecedents, and its consequences.

Antecedents → Process → Commitment → Consequences

Distal   Proximal   Nature   Forms

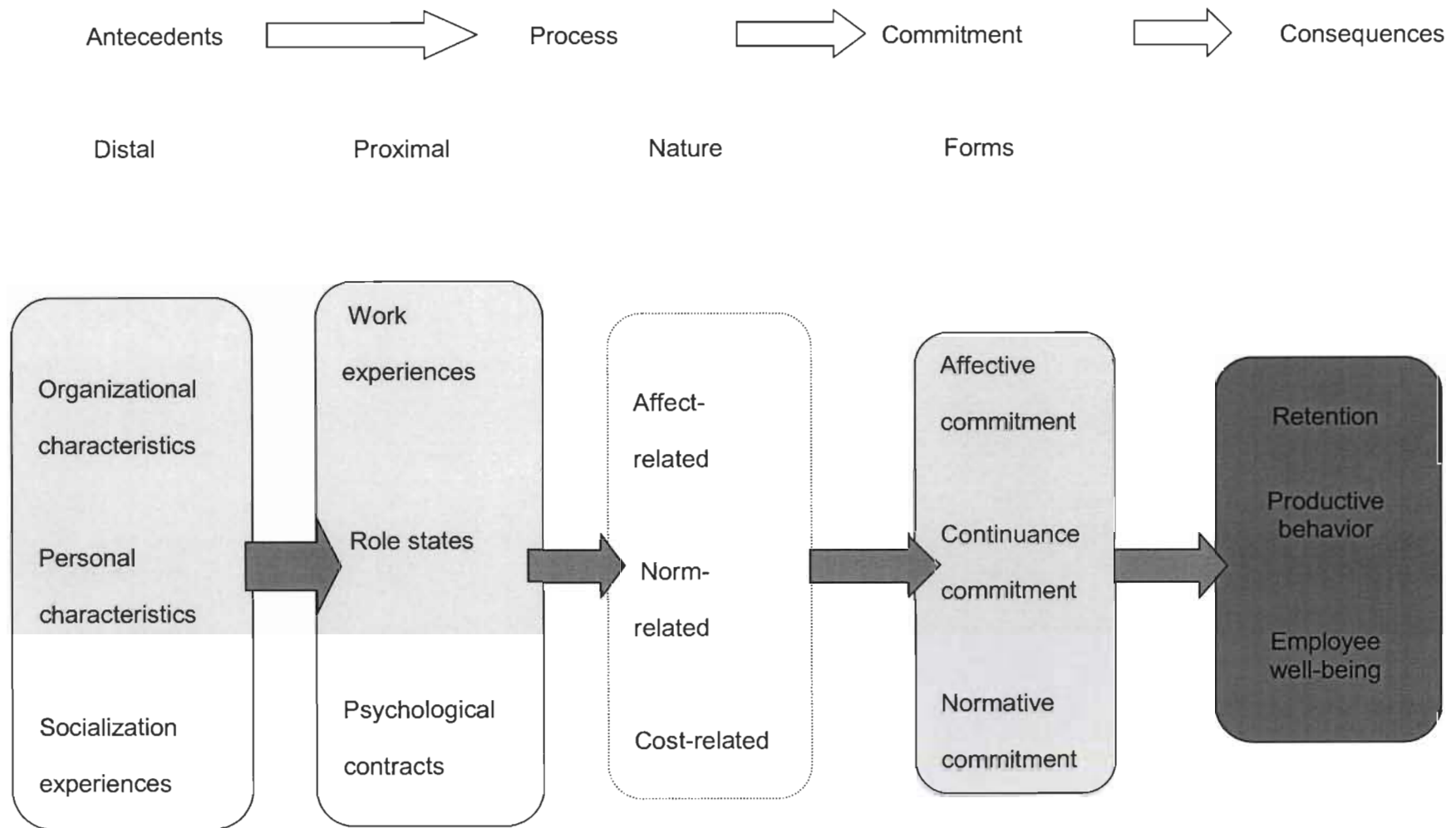|				
Organizational characteristics	Work experiences	Affect-related	Affective commitment	Retention
Personal characteristics	Role states	Norm-related	Continuance commitment	Productive behavior
Socialization experiences	Psychological contracts	Cost-related	Normative commitment	Employee well-being

Figure 5.   Multidimensional model of OC: its antecedents, its consequences (Meyer & Allen, 1997)

Looking at the left portion of Figure 5, we take note of the many elements implicated in the development of commitment. Distinctions are made between distal and proximal causes of commitment, as we have already discussed. Among the more proximal causes are individuals' work experiences, their role states, and the psychological contract defining their exchange relationship with the organization. The more distal causes include organizational characteristics, personal characteristics of the individual, preentry socialization experiences, management practices, and environmental conditions. These distal causes exert their influence on cornmitment through their influence on more proximal causes (cf. Mathieu, 1988; Mathieu & Hamel, 1989).

In the middle of Figure 5, Meyer and Allen (1997) referred to the process variables which are "mechanisms through which the antecedents are presumed to operate" (p.109.). According to the researchers, little is known at this point about many of these mechanisms. Some of the variables included as processes operating in the development of affective commitment have long been presumed to operate but have not or cannot be studied empirically according to Meyer and Allen (1997). The authors suggested that, although they chose to describe these variables as process variables, some may argue that they are merely mediators (even more proximal causes) or moderators (necessary conditions for effects) of what Meyer and Allen (1997) listed as proximal antecedents. Meyer and Allen (1997) mentioned that it was not the position they argued. They mentioned the potency to recognize that these variables play an important role in helping the understanding of the reasons why other variables are correlated with commitment.

Meyer and Allen (1997) contended that we know even less about the mechanisms implicated in the development of normative and continuance commitments than we do

about those involved in the development of affective commitment. The right part of Figure 5, shows the desirable outcomes believed to result from the complex process of commitment. According to Meyer and Allen, "some links among the variables involved in this process have been reasonably well established and can serve as a guide to those who are interested primarily in application. Others are based more on speculation than on evidence at this point" (p.111).

Meyer and Allen (1997) argue that "commitment can take different forms and can be directed at different constituencies within the organization. The importance of distinguishing among these different forms and foci of commitments is illustrated by the evidence that they relate somewhat differently to behavior" (p.107).

Research Objectives

An overview of the commitment literature highlighted that OC has been conceptualized and measured in many different ways. Our study and hypothetical model follows Fabi et al.'s (2000) work (Figure 4) on distal and proximal antecedents of three organizational bases that were assessed with a scale developed by Becker (1992): internalization, identification, and compliance (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). Becker (1992) argued that the theory underlying the multiple commitments literature (Reichers, 1985) proposes

> that an individual's attitudinal commitment to a workplace cannot be adequately explained by commitment to the organization alone because the coalitional nature of organizations leads employee commitment to be multidimensional. If this is true, commitment to foci other than an organization should help explain variance in key dependent variables. (p. 234).

In an effort to shed light on the role of foci of commitment, we propose to test a specific multidimensional model of OC (Figure 6) which will take into account both the antecedents and consequences of commitment foci. The causal ordering of the antecedents will follow Lewin's (1943, 1951) theoretical framework which has already been discussed.

In a contingent perspective, as the one proposed in the model to be verified in the present study, we anticipate a modest relationship to be maintained between OC and locus of control, as the latter is introduced as a distal personal characteristic exerting an indirect influence on OC through more proximal variables associated to one's job, role states, and the organization. We postulate that work involvement will exert a distal influence on OC, which will be mediated by job involvement and other proximal variables within the model.

Because of the proximity and regularity of interactions among the employee, the work group, and the supervisor, the individual's behaviors may be influenced via the integration of group norms (Becker et al., 1996). According to these authors, commitment to the immediate supervisor would exert a great influence on individuals' behaviors within the organization. Hence, the immediate supervisor's leadership is believed to exert a significant proximal influence on OC.

Fundamentally, according to Fabi et al. (2000), the cohesion between individuals and the organization constitutes a necessary condition for OC. The organization must respond to the needs and expectations of its members to foster their commitment to organizational goals and values (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987).
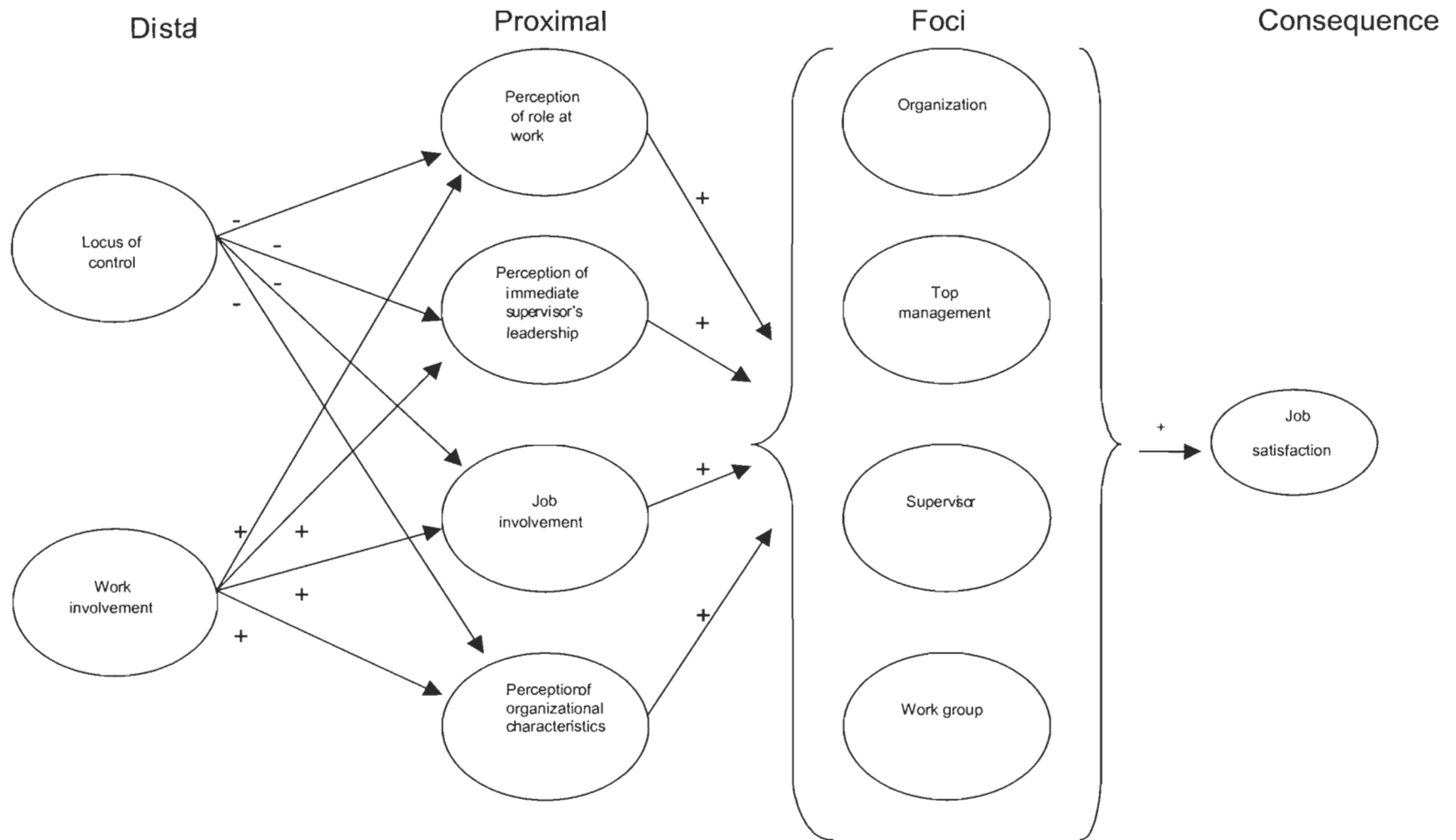
Figure 6.   **Specific multidimensional model of OC : foci's antecedents and foci's consequence**

Thus, organizational climate is an important factor in fostering the emergence and development of OC. We have considered four dimensions constituting organizatior l climate (Brunet, 1982; Likert, 1967): superiors' behaviors, control mechanisms, decision-making process and organizational communication.

A majority of studies have suggested that a democratic managing style positively influences attitudes and behaviors of employees (Darden, Hampton, & Howell, 1989). In fact, when an employee actively participates in decision-making, he is more likely to take responsibility for his actions (Salancik, 1977). Inversely, the centralization of power through control mechanisms reduces participation in decision-making because of formalized procedures that attenuate involvement within the organization (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987).

It has been observed that employees who can be autonomous in their work express more favorable attitudes than those employees evolving within traditional structures (Cordery et al., 1991). The perception of freedom to determine work procedures (autonomy) would have a direct effect on individual commitment (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987) and on OC's general level. In fact, decisional process plays an important role for OC (Allen & Meyer, 1990; DeCotiis & Summers, 1987). It can affect OC by reducing role conflict and role ambiguity (Ismal et al., 1992). Changes in supervisors' behaviors can have major effects on OC's degree and organizational performance (Ismal et al., 1992; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

In addition, just like the previous variables, communication's contribution in the organizational dynamic must be looked at. The centrality of communication in diverse

organizational processes justifies the exploration of this dimension (Putti et al., 1990). Satisfaction with respect to information transmitted by the organization and the hierarchical person in charge could contribute significantly to promoting OC by increasing possession sense and identification to values and goals of the organization. Thus, perhaps communication activities of top management are important to promote OC's blooming through the diffusion of the values' system and the recognition of the importance of workers (Putti et al., 1990).

Globally, role perceptions seem related to OC (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972; Stevens, Beyer, & Trice, 1978). The psychological proximity of the individual towards the perceptions of his role within the organization supports the idea that the latter exerts a proximal influence (Fabi et al., 2000). We have chosen to consider two variables ensuing from Rizzo, House and Lirtzman's (1970) work on role ambiguity and role conflict considering results from many empirical verifications having demonstrated a significant link with OC. Fisher and Gitelson (1983), in their meta-analysis, concluded to a consistent negative relationship between, on the one hand, role ambiguity and role conflict and, on the other hand, OC. In addition, Mathieu and Farr (1991), like Brooke et al., (1988), concluded to a strong negative relationship between stress related to role and OC.

We have described above the variables that we will be considering as antecedents of commitment. In terms of consequences of commitment, we have chosen job satisfaction as it is a central dependent variable in the commitment literature (Becker, 1992). Mounting evidence shows that high levels of commitment generally have positive implications for organizational outcomes (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Randall, 1990) such that

strong commitment to any focus should be positively related to satisfaction (Becker, 1992).

The present study has four main objectives: (a) improve the understanding of OC's process using Lewin's (1943, 1951) theory, (b) design a model of this process using structural equation modeling (EQS; Bentler, 1995) instead of classical multiple regressions, (c) bring about a conceptual contribution to the understanding of OC using Becker's (1992) proposed measure instead of Meyer and Allen's (1991) proposed measure and (d) provide a conceptual contribution to the understanding of OC by integrating foci of commitment rather than bases of commitment.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Our survey of the literature on organizational commitment demonstrates that considerable attention has been given to the topic of bases of commitment whereas foci of commitment is a rather new domain that needs further investigation. As mentioned before, our research will attempt to fill some of the literature gap, which brings us to our research methodology. This chapter will be divided in four sections. First, we will describe the selected sample. Second, we will address the measurement instruments. Third, we will present the data collection procedure. Fourth, we will explain our data analyses.

Participants

The targeted population for this research is constituted from human resources working throughout the entire health system within the Quebec territory. There are about 218 health establishments divided into three types of organizations: 124 short-term hospitals, 77 long-term, and 77 specializing in psychiatry (Martin, 1995). Of those, there are 33 private institutions where 27 are long term and 6 short term. However, those 33 private establishments have not been retained, as they are not members of l'Association des Hôpitaux du Québec (AHQ), the organism through which hospitals were contacted. Therefore, only 185 health establishments were eligible to become part of the sample.

The general sampling plan was built from a sample of 22 health establishments selected on the basis of their interest in participating in the research. The proportional stratified sampling method was the privileged method. In order to optimize the entire population's representation and to explain most of the variance, three factors were selected: occupational category (i.e., clinical, nursing and nonclinical personnel), occupational status (i.e., managers, possibility of belonging to a union non-unionized employees, unionized employees), and job status (i.e., employees working full time, part time and those without a position). In order to better understand the nature of those stratification factors, they will be defined in the following paragraphs.

In the "occupational category" stratum, clinical personnel refers to employees with a college or university degree, including pharmacists but excluding doctors and dentists, carrying out duties related to activities covered by that degree and directly related to health services, social services, research or teaching. This category also includes people carrying out nursing activities or auxiliary nursing activities within the establishment. Nurses carrying out their professional duties for the establishment are considered nursing personnel. Nonclinical personnel comprise any other person working for the establishment.

When considering "occupational status", a manager refers to a person occupying a regular position of supervision either full time or part time and whose function is recognized by the minister to be at either a level of general management / superior management or middle management. With regard to the status of employees with the possibility of belonging to a union non-unionized, those are people exercising a function within the establishment who have an accreditation certificate. Any employee covered by

an accreditation certificate in force within the establishment refers to the unionized employee status.

Finally, when considering "job status", an employee is considered full time when occupying a position full time. As for the part time job status, it refers to a person occupying a part time position. Employees whose function is to occupy a position temporarily for a limited amount of time, with the exception of stand in or flying team, are considered to be without a position.

The complete methodology can be found in Martin (1995).

Measures

Dependent variable

Job satisfaction

Employees' satisfaction toward their job has been considered a mediating variable with respect to OC. It has been measured on a 7-point scale going from totally dissatisfied to satisfied from 20 of the 68 items of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967). This particular tool has the advantage of explicitly identifying two dimensions of job satisfaction: intrinsic and extrinsic. Studies have shown the consistency and validity of the instrument (Cook, Hepworth, Wall, & Warr, 1983). In fact, internal consistency coefficients of the order of .84 to .91 have been reported for the

intrinsic factors and between .77 and .82 for the extrinsic factors. In terms of general satisfaction, which includes the two dimensions, alpha coefficients oscillate between .87 and .90 (Cook et al., 1983). Becker (1992) showed test-retest correlations of .89 for a temporal space of one week and of .70 for a year. Pierce, Durham, and Blackburn (1979) obtained a test-retest coefficient of .50 for the intrinsic factors and of .63 for the extrinsic factors when the measures are taken a month apart. In our study, an alpha coefficient of .90 was found for general satisfaction, and .87 for intrinsic factors and .82 for extrinsic factors.

Mediatory variables (mediating variables and non–moderating variables)

Organizational commitment foci

The questionnaire is based on 17 questions repeated four times and adapted to measure the degree of OC towards each of the foci (total number of items then is 68). For example, item 1 of the question block concerning the degree of commitment towards immediate supervisor was "J'éprouverais moins d'attachement à l'égard de mon supérieur immédiat si ces valeurs étaient différentes" , whereas item 1 of the question block revolving around commitment towards management committee was "J'éprouverais moins d'attachement à l'égard du comité de gestion si ces valeurs étaient différentes".

Once the participants had been made aware of the objective of the questionnaire and were familiar with the definitions of words or expressions "organization", "management

committee", "immediate supervisor", and "work group", they had to answer the 68 items of OC's scale. In order to do that, they had to indicate their answers on a scale analogous to Likert's scale in seven points going from totally agree (+1) to totally disagree (+7). In our study, the scale's alpha coefficient is .95.

Perception of role at work

Six statements stemming from Rizzo et al. (1970) and House and Rizzo (1972) were used to measure perception of role at work. Participants had to answer to each item (e.g., "Je dois aller à l'encontre d'un règlement ou d'une politique dans le but d'exécuter mon travail") on a scale from totally disagree (+1) to totally agree (+6). This scale's alpha coefficient is .64 in our research, which reasonably compares to values reported in other studies (Mathieu & Farr, 1991; Mathieu, 1991).

Perception of immediate supervisor's leadership

Stogdill (1963) elaborated the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ), which was revised by Schriesheim and Kerr (1974) and served to measure immediate supervisor's leadership. This tool allows the measurement of two distinct dimensions: structure initiation (five statements: e.g., "Les comportements qu'il adopte sont bien compris par le groupe") and considerate behavior (three statements: e.g., "Il refuse d'expliquer ses actes") on a Likert type scale going from totally disagree (+1) to totally agree (+7). In our study, the two scales demonstrate quite satisfactory internal

consistency: .85 for the structure initiation scale and .73 for the considerate behavior scale.

Job involvement

To measure job involvement (i.e., cognitive beliefs regarding a specific job), 10 statements from Kanungo's (1982) scale were used. Participants indicated, on a scale from totally disagree (+1) to totally agree (+6), to which degree the statements (e.g., "Les choses les plus importantes qui m'arrivent concernent mon emploi actuel") correspond or not to the perception of their role at work. This scale's alpha coefficient is .87 in our research.

Perception of organizational characteristics

We have measured organizational climate through the perceptive measure of organizational attributes. In order to do that, we have used 14 of the 18 statements of the scale developed by Brunet (1982), which is largely inspired from the Likert Organizational Profile (LOP) elaborated by Likert (1967). Those 14 questions (e.g., "Jusqu'à quel point le travail de coopération existe-t-il?") are devised to measure four perceptual attributes of the organization which are: superiors' behaviors, control mechanisms, decision-making processes, and organizational communication. The chosen statements are submitted to the participants on a Likert scale in 20 points adapted to each statement. In our study, this scale's alpha coefficient is .86.

Independent variables

Locus of control

Locus of control was measured using Rotter's (1966) scale. This questionnaire is composed of 23 item pairs (without false utterances) where each pair is composed of an assertion corresponding more to an internal type of individual (e.g., "Les malheurs des gens viennent des erreurs qu'ils commettent") and of an assertion corresponding more to an external type of individual (e.g., "Beaucoup d'événements malheureux qui surviennent dans la vie des gens sont dus à la malchance"). Participants had to indicate which one of the two assertions was more closely related to their own opinion. A score of two is attributed to participants endorsing an assertion reflecting an external personality trait and a score of one to those endorsing an assertion reflecting an internal personality trait. In our study, the internal consistency coefficient of the scale is .71.

Work involvement

In order to measure work involvement (i.e., a personal code of ethics regarding work in general (normative beliefs)), we have retained six of the eight statements of Kanungo's (1982) scale. Participants indicated, on a Likert-type scale from totally disagree (+1) to totally agree (+6), to which degree the statements (e.g., "Les gens devraient être engagés dans leur travail la plupart du temps") corresponded or not to the perception they had of their role at work. This scale's alpha coefficient is .73 in our research.

Data Collection Procedure

The required number of questionnaires was distributed across 22 health establishments of the province of Quebec. Each participating center had the responsibility to administer a battery of tests to the selected employees, in accordance with the administration guide (see Martin, 1995). This battery of tests involved seven scales measuring different concepts related to OC. However, for the purpose of this study's scope, only the OC questionnaire will be addressed.

Two different ways of administering the questionnaire were offered to the establishment. On the one hand, the questionnaire could be administered through collective meetings. On the other hand, it could be administered individually. The former proposed the gathering of respondents in the same area during office hours for the questionnaire's administration. This process offered many advantages such as the standardization of instructions, a higher response rate, a lower level of non-response and allowing for support to participants while completing the questionnaire. In addition, this option reduced significantly the time required to carry out the investigation. The latter, individual administration was done via mail or through the hospital, person-to-person, with a health establishment representative.

Totally, 5,295 questionnaires were distributed and the process allowed the gathering of 3,037 questionnaires (completed and returned) for a response rate of 60.8%. Subjects mean age was 39.9 years (75.5% women and 24.5% men) and they have worked for an average of 14 years within the organization. Moreover, 89.8% are unionized and the

others hold jobs with a possibility of belonging to a union but are non-unionized (3.2%) or managers' jobs (7%).

Data Analysis

The plausibility of our hypothetical model of OC (figure 6) will be tested using structural equation modeling procedures (version 5,6 of EQS software; Bentler, 1995), based on the analysis of covariance structures, in order to identify potentially meaningful theoretical relationships and provide additional support to the already existing literature. This methodology is a confirmatory rather than an explanatory technique such that an *a priori* specification of a model stemming from theory and/or empirical research is needed. A description of the hypothesized model to be tested was previously presented (figure 6).

Structural equations analyses were performed on 11 latent variables -factors having two or more indicators- and 28 observed variables or indicators. Twelve items from Becker's (1992) scale served as indicators for the four foci of commitment; 4 items allowed the definition of each foci of commitment. The other latent variables were measured through grouping of items (teslet). It has been shown that grouping items as indicators of latent variables is as effective as using individual items to estimate the adequacy of theoretical models (see Marsch, Hau, & Balla, 1997 for further details on this topic). This method offers the advantage of reducing the number of parameters to estimate and, while doing so, avoiding the problem of iterative convergence.

Consequently, means of even and uneven items were used as indicators of the following latent variables: Locus of Control, Work Involvement, Perception of role at work, and Job involvement. Finally, means of items related to the two dimensions of Perception of immediate supervisor's leadership and those of the four dimensions of Perception of organizational characteristics have allowed the operationalization of these two latent variables.

Thus, the variance/covariance matrix among the 28 indexes having served to operationalize the model's variables served as a basis for the analyses and maximum likelihood was employed as the estimation method. In fact, a number of studies have demonstrated that this method is valid when the sample is sufficiently large and the data normally distributed (Chou & Bentler, 1995). Our study follows these two guidelines as our sample is constituted of 3 037 participants and for overall variables, the skewness and kurtosis indexes vary between −1 and + 1 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996).

Assessment of model fit was based on multiple criteria that reflected both theoretical and empirical estimates: (a) the Chi-square likelihood ratio statistic (χ^2), (b) the ratio of Chi-square to the corresponding degrees of freedom (χ^2/dl), (c) the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), (d) Goodness-of-Fit index (GFI), (e) the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit index corrected for the number of degrees of freedom (AGFI), (f) the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (Steiger, 1990; RMSEA).

A χ^2 statistic is computed based upon the function minimum when the solution has converged. It is evaluated with degrees of freedom equal to the difference between the

total number of degrees of freedom and the number of parameters estimated. In structural equation modeling, the degrees of freedom are equal to the amount of unique information in the sample variance/covariance matrix (variances/covariances) minus the number of parameters in the model to be estimated (regression coefficients and variances and covariances of independent variables). A χ^2 statistic allows for the verification of the null hypothesis such that the variance/covariance matrix stemming from the model's restrictions and the original or empirical matrix are equal.

Since our purpose is to elaborate a model that fits the data, a nonsignificant chi square is desired. A nonsignificant χ^2 indicates that the hypothetical model demonstrates an adequate representation of the data of the sample (Bentler, 1995). Statistically, a significant χ^2 reveals an inadequate model for the studied sample. Inversely, a nonsignificant χ^2 prevents rejection of the model on a statistical basis as it constitutes a cogent representation of the data.

However, chi-square values are influenced by sample sizes (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988) such that a significant χ^2 does not necessarily indicate an inadequate representation of the sample data. In fact, the probability of a positive χ^2 increases as sample size increases. However, the ratio of chi-square to the corresponding degrees of freedom (χ^2/dl) allows to correct, in part, for this problem (Hayduk, 1987). A value of χ^2/dl smaller than 5 usually means that observed data are fit to the theoretical model (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). The CFI has also been used. This index varies between 0 and 1 and stems from the comparison between the proposed model and the null model (within which no relationship is postulated among the variables).

Models with a CFI index greater than .90 are generally considered adequate (Shumacker & Lomax, 1996). We have also used the root mean square error of approximation (Steiger, 1990). According to Brown and Cudeck (1993), a RMSEA value smaller than .05 presupposes an adequate model, but a value smaller than .08 is acceptable.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 2. Our model suggests a causal structure where the influence of the two distal variables (Locus of control and Work involvement) on the four foci of OC is exerted through the four mediator variables (Perception of role at work, Perception of immediate supervisor's leadership, Job involvement and Perception of organizational characteristics) and that the four foci of commitment impact on Job satisfaction.

The hypothesized model was tested and support was found for the hypothesized model. However, the hypothesized positive relationships between Work involvement and Perception of role at work and between Job involvement and Top management were not significant. Therefore, the final model does not take these two relationships into account. The fit indices (shown in Table 3) obtained for our final model suggest an adequate causal structure. More specifically, the CFI, GFI, AGFI, and RMSEA indices associated with the model meet criteria for a good data fit (CFI = .828; GFI = .820; AGFI = .773; RMSEA = .089).

Table 2

Descriptive statistics

Indicators	Mean	Standard deviation
Locus of control	0.4588	0.1901
Locus of control	0.4468	0.1856
Work involvement	2.9429	0.8465
Work involvement	3.3505	0.8742
Perception of role at work	4.8984	1.2650
Perception of role at work	5.8776	0.8444
Perception of immediate supervisor's leadership	4.8382	1.2106
Perception of immediate supervisor's leadership	4.8490	1.1030
Job involvement	3.7588	0.8908
Job involvement	3.2357	0.9394
Perception of organizational characteristics	9.3340	3.2843
Perception of organizational characteristics	10.0318	3.7425
Perception of organizational characteristics	9.9994	3.0727
Perception of organizational characteristics	11.5389	2.8062
Organization (internalization)	4.2994	1.1775
Organization (compliance)	4.2692	0.7418
Organization (identification)	4.1568	1.2044
Top management (internalization)	3.7658	1.1324
Top management (compliance)	3.9098	0.7687
Top management (identification)	3.0150	1.1157
Supervisor (internalization)	4.3632	1.2985
Supervisor (compliance)	4.2408	0.7891
Supervisor (identification)	3.6706	1.2325
Work group (internalization)	4.9792	1.0756
Work group (compliance)	4.6320	0.8540
Work group (identification)	5.2262	1.0249
Job satisfaction (internal)	5.2061	0.9758
Job satisfaction (external)	4.3584	1.1405

Table 3

Overall fit indices

Model	χ^2	dl	χ^2/dl	CFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA
Final model	8071.096	322	25.065	0.828	0.820	0.773	0.089

The final model, including significant coefficients, is illustrated in Figure 7. The results reveal no significant correlations among the variables of the model. Analysis of coefficients associated with residual variables shows that Work involvement and Locus of control explain only 2,8% of the variance of Perception of role at work, 7% of the variance of the Perception of immediate supervisor's leadership, but 47,8% and 18,3% of the variance respectively for Job involvement and Perception of organizational characteristics.

Examination of thresholds of significance test (Z-test) associated to each structural estimate of parameters (β) reveals that the external-type individuals have a tendency to perceive their role at work less positively ($\beta = -.161$, $p < .05$), to perceive their immediate supervisor less positively ($\beta = -.184$, $p < .05$), to feel less involved in their job ($\beta = -.121$, $p < .05$), and to have a more negative perception of organizational characteristics ($\beta = -.293$, $p < .05$) than internal-type individuals. It can also be noted that individuals more involved in their work have a better perception of their immediate supervisor ($\beta = .179$, $p < .05$), organizational characteristics ($\beta = .295$, $p < .05$), and are more involved in their actual job ($\beta = .674$, $p < .05$) than those individuals less involved in their work.
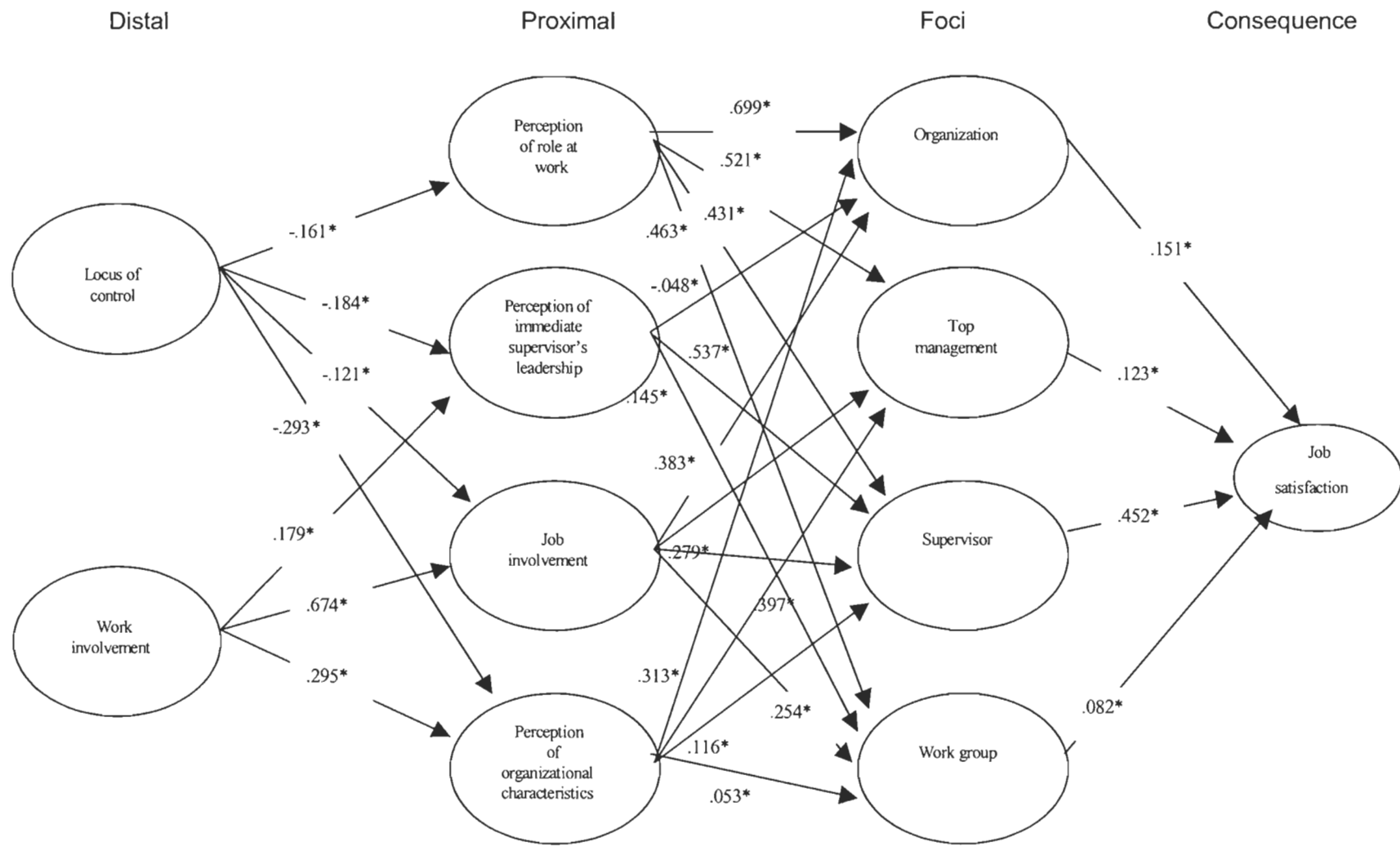
Figure 7. Final multidimensional model of OC : foci's antecedents and foci's consequence

Figure 7 also demonstrates that the final model allows for prediction of 83%, 67%, 67%, and 34% respectively of the variance of the Organization, Top management, Supervisor, and Work group foci. More specifically, the results show that the more the individuals are involved in their job (β = .383, p < .05), and the more they have a positive perception of organizational characteristics (β = .313, p < .05) and their role at work (β = .699, p < .05), the more they are committed to the Organization as a whole. However, the more positively they perceive their immediate supervisor's leadership (β = -.048, p < .05), the less they are committed to the Organization. The data suggests that the more the individuals are involved in their job (β = .363, p < .05), and positively perceive their role in the organization (β = .521, p < .05) and organizational characteristics (β = .397, p < .05), the more they are positively committed to Top management.

In addition, the analysis reveals that the more the individuals are involved in their job (β = .279, p < .05), the more positively they view organizational characteristics (β = .116, p < .05) and their role at work (β = .431, p < .05), the more positively they perceive their immediate supervisor's leadership (β = .537, p < .05), the more committed they are to their Supervisor. Moreover, the better the individuals perceive their role at work (β = .463, p < .05), their immediate supervisor's leadership (β = .145, p < .05) and organizational characteristics (β = .053, p < .05) in addition to being involved in their job (β = .254, p < .05), the more they are committed to the Work group.

Finally, job satisfaction increases as individuals are positively committed to the Organization (β = .151, p < .05), Top management (β = .123, p < .05), their Supervisor (β = .452, p < .05) and to the Work group (β = .082, p < .05).

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Our research had four main goals. First, improving the understanding of OC's process using Lewin's (1943, 1951) theory. Second, designing a model of this process using structural equation modeling (EQS; Bentler, 1995) instead of classical multiple regressions. Third, bringing about a conceptual contribution to the understanding of OC using Becker's (1992) proposed measure instead of Meyer and Allen's (1991) proposed measure. Finally, providing a conceptual contribution to the understanding of OC by integrating foci of cornrnitment rather than bases of commitment. In order to reach these goals, we hypothesized a model based on theory and empirical research.

The findings from our study allowed us to propose and verify the first model, through structural equation modeling, of OC's foci's antecedents and consequences. We measured foci of OC via Becker's scale (1992). The antecedents that were examined integrated personal characteristics, other characteristics related to their job, the organization and roles associated with their job (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday et al., 1986). The ordering of variables followed Lewin's (1943, 1951) theory suggesting that employees' reactions to their work environment, in this case OC, are a function of their perception of moderators like job characteristics and work experiences. Personal characteristics are considered to be distal predictors likely to influence OC indirectly through the mediating variables.

As a matter of fact, our results show that our hypothesized model confirms the causal ordering in light of Lewin's theory (1943, 1951). It seems that our model integrates a structure where the influence of the two distal variables (Locus of control and Work involvement) on the four foci of commitment is exerted through the mediating variables (Perception of role at work, Perception of immediate supervisor's leadership, Job involvement, and Perception of organizational characteristics). Such results seem to confirm that a better understanding of OC's development process can be reached through the recognition of the importance of mediating mechanisms (Meyer, 1997).

The point is not to ignore the potency of personal characteristics as our results show that internal-type individuals, as opposed to external-type individuals, have a tendency to perceive more positively their role at work, their immediate supervisor's leadership and organizational characteristics, the same holds true for individuals more involved in their work. Rather, the importance of individual characteristics has to be relativized in the comprehension of OC, this limited importance being reflected in the relatively modest correlations previously noted between OC and personal characteristics such as Locus of control (Coleman & Irving, 1997; Fabi et al., 2000).

Instead, our results reveal that, to achieve a strong level of OC, a development strategy should be fostered by developing enriched jobs to nurture employees' involvement and through the presence of organizational characteristics facilitating decentralization and participation in the decision-making process, autonomy at work, cooperation with colleagues and the immediate supervisor, and transparency and effective organizational communication mechanisms. If a few of those attributes are deficient within the organization, chances are that even internal-type individuals will eventually demonstrate a

weak level of OC. Thus, our results follow a contemporary tendency where characteristics of the job and work situation are more determinant in the development of OC than some personal characteristics of the individuals (Meyer, 1997; Meyer et al., 1998; Vanderberghe, 1998).

In this respect, analysis of the final model clearly reveals that the two proximal variables having the most influence on the foci of commitment are Job involvement and Perception of role at work. Despite the strong relationship between Work involvement and Job involvement, our results demonstrate that the former distal variable exerts an indirect influence on the four foci of commitment through the mediating effect of Job involvement. These results seem to follow those of authors like Elloy and Tarpening (1992) who claimed that Work involvement is a stable personal trait whereas Job involvement is not only a function of Work involvement but also a possibility for the individual to satisfy certain dominant needs within his job. In practice, an individual can consider work as an important value in his life and show a weak level of Job involvement if, for example, real conditions related to his work do not allow him to satisfy dominant needs (Kanungo, 1982).

The major influence of Job involvement on the four foci of commitment, especially the Organization and Top management foci, confirms the pertinence of fostering conditions allowing for the emergence of such involvement from the employees. Hence, it is of the utmost importance that managers favor a work organization using more human intelligence and creativity (Serieyx, 1987, 1993).

Along the same line of reasoning, Perception of role at work has strong positive significant relationships with the four foci of commitment. Our measure of Perception of role at work took two factors into account: role ambiguity and role conflict (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970) as results of many studies have shown a significant link with OC. Our interpretation is that the less ambiguity regarding one's role at work and the less role conflict one experiments at work, the more one is committed towards the Organization, Top management, Supervisor and Work group. Our study in terms of Perception of role at work extends previous findings where a negative relationship was shown between stress related to role and OC (Brooke et al., 1988; Jamal, 1990; Mathieu & Farr, 1991). In addition, the strength of the relationships among Perception of role at work and OC's foci is greater than among Job involvement and the latter.

Our final model demonstrates that Perception of immediate supervisor's leadership has a major influence on the Supervisor foci of commitment which confirms the relevance of fostering conditions allowing for such leadership within the organization by making room for flexibility and creativity for example. Our analyses yielded a significant negative albeit small relationship between Perception of immediate supervisor's leadership and the Organization foci of commitment. The more favorably one perceives the immediate supervisor, the lesser one is inclined to be committed to the Organization as a whole. These findings extend previous findings by Becker et al. (1996; Becker, 1992) which confirmed that employees in many organizations distinguish between commitment to the organizations and commitment to supervisors. Hence, "an individual attitudinal commitment to a workplace cannot be adequately explained by commitment to the organization alone because the coalitional nature of organizations leads employee commitment to be multidimentional" (Becker, 1992, p.234).

It appears from our results that Perception of organizational characteristics is also a mediating antecedent explaining quite a large proportion of variance. Our results reveal that Perception of organizational characteristics has positive relationships with the four foci of OC, especially strong with the Top management and the Organization foci. Thus, the perception of a participative type of organizational climate (Brunet, 1982; Likert, 1967) has a positive effect on employees' OC. Remember that our organizational climate measure took four organizational characteristics into account: control mechanisms, organizational communication, decision-making processes, and supervisors' behaviors. Results from other analyses have allowed the following observation: the last two dimensions had, as predicted, a dominant effect on participants' OC (Fabi et al., 1998).

Each foci presents a proper pattern of relationships with the proximal antecedents. The organization foci shows similar links with Job involvement and Perception of organizational characteristics. The organization, supervisor, and work group foci each have a link to each proximal antecedent. The organization foci demonstrates the strongest link of all links (between proximal antecedents and foci) with Perception of role at work. The supervisor foci shows the second strongest link to a proximal antecedent with Perception of immediate supervisor's leadership. Only the organization foci has a significant, albeit small, negative relationship with a proximal antecedent (Perception of immediate supervisor's leadership). The work group foci has different links the four proximal antecedents. These different sets of relationship between foci of commitment and their proximal antecedents provide additional support for the notion that employees do differentiate among entities to which they grow committed.

Regarding our conceptual contribution to the understanding of OC, our results converge with previous studies showing the possibility of confusion between the organization and top management foci of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Reichers, 1986; Becker & Billings, 1993) as our results reveal a moderate intercorrelation between the organization and top management foci's measures. Actually, Meyer and Allen (1997) warned researchers that when they measure commitment to organization as a whole, they are likely measuring employees' commitment to top management (Reichers, 1986) or to a combination of top management and more local foci (Becker & Billings, 1993; Hunt & Morgan, 1994).

However, if this were the case, one would expect the relationships between the proximal antecedents and both organization and top management foci to be similar. But, while the organization foci has relationships with the four proximal antecedents (Perception of role at work, Perception of immediate supervisor's leadership, Job involvement and Perception of organizational characteristics), the top management foci presents relationships with three proximal antecedents (Perception of role at work, Job involvement and Perception of organizational characteristics) according to our findings. Hence, it can be derived that individuals differentiate among foci of commitment. These results extend previous findings (Becker, 1993; Becker et al., 1996) where it has been argued that employees distinguish between commitment to different entities. Our model and the results of our research propose that organizations would benefit from employees' development of commitment to different entities and that managers should not dread the development of such commitments (Hunt & Morgan, 1994) but encourage it.

Our findings validate the multidimensional view of commitment. As Becker (1992) pointed out, by showing that comrnitment to foci other than the organization accounts for variance in a key dependent variable, our results support the "reconceptualization of employee attachment as a phenomenon with multiple foci" (p. 242).

Our study was designed to bring about a conceptual contribution to the understanding of OC using Becker's (1992) proposed measure instead of Meyer and Allen's (1991) proposed measure and provide a conceptual contribution to the understanding of OC by integrating foci of commitment rather than bases of commitment. In this respect, our results converge with those of previous research demonstrating that foci of commitment contribute to the understanding of OC (Becker, 1992; Becker et al., 1996). Our findings suggest that being committed to the Supervisor is more significantly related to Job satisfaction than being committed to the Organization, which in turn is more significantly related to Job satisfaction than being committed to Top management, which in turn is more significantly related to Job satisfaction than being committed to the Work group.

These findings are generally consistent with those of previous studies (e.g., Meglino et al., 1989; Yukl, 1989; Becker et al., 1996) in demonstrating links between certain commitment foci and a desirable outcome, which in our study is Job satisfaction. Our results reveal that 45,8% of the variance of Job satisfaction is explained by the four foci of commitment and that the strongest relationship is with the Supervisor foci. Thus, managers and human resources professionals concerned with employee job satisfaction should focus their efforts on commitment to supervisors rather than on that to organizations, to top management or to work groups.

Becker (1992) provided support for the multiple constituency approach by showing that employee's commitments to Top management, Supervisor, and Work group contributed significantly in the prediction of job satisfaction. Becker et al. (1996) hypothesized that, for most employees, local foci (Supervisor and Work group) are psychologically more proximal than global foci such that overall commitment to supervisors would be positively related to job performance and more strongly linked to performance than overall commitment to organizations. They were able to confirm their hypothesis with their data thereby contradicting Hunt and Morgan's (1994) theory that overall commitment to organizations is a key mediating concept. Our results extend those of Becker et al's (1996) as we were able to demonstrate a strong link between the Supervisor foci and our outcome measure (Job satisfaction) consistent with their theory that local foci are psychologically more proximal to employees and, therefore, have a greater impact.

It seems clear from our findings that the supervisor plays a key role in the development process of OC and ultimately in Job satisfaction, so organizations should capitalize on that. Enhancing commitment to a supervisor's goals and values through measures like leadership training, socialization, and team building (Becker et al., 1996) could affect job satisfaction to a greater extent than would increasing commitment to an organization as a whole. Clear direction, structured tasks, norms favorable to good decision-making and having an organizational context that provides support in terms of rewards or information are all elements that could lead to commitment. Supervisors should engender trust by consistently adhering to their goals and by exuding a charismatic self-confidence that kindles allegiance.

Another important consideration while attempting to foster commitment through the proximal variables mentioned in our study has to do with *perception*, perception being more important than reality. Employees could be reacting to conditions as they perceive them rather than as they are (Meyer & Allen, 1997) so one has to be careful when trying to enhance perception of immediate supervisor's leadership, for example, as some situations or practices may lead to unexpected and possibly undesirable outcomes. Iles, Mabey and Robertson (1990) provided two good examples of this. First, Sadri, Cooper, and Allison (1989) conducted a research and found that the introduction of stress counseling for postal workers was associated with a reduction in commitment. Similarly, Iles, Robertson, and Rout (1989) found that the employees who participated in development of centers designed to help them in career planning and development reported less clear career goals and strategies and were more likely to be thinking of leaving their career field following participation. It is argued that in both instances, the unexpected outcomes might have resulted from the fact that employees' perceptions were influenced in ways that were quite different from what was intended. Participation in stress counseling might have made employees aware that the organization was a major contributor to the stress they were experiencing, for example (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Similarly, participation in developmental assessment centers might have increased employees' awareness that they were in the wrong career path (Iles et al., 1990).

Be that as it may, these results confirm the importance of the decision-making processes to encourage members to participate in the organizational objectives (Stumpf & Hartman, 1984). Such results call out to practitioners in as much as they can bring out the critical role played by supervisors in OC's development among employees. As a matter of fact, DeCotiis and Summers (1987) concluded that high levels of OC are fostered by a work

environment characterized by participating in decision-making processes and clear communication regarding activities and performance. This is an additional hint at how significant it is to proceed to work reorganization while stressing power decentralization, increasing autonomy, flexibility and responsibility (Fabi & Jacob, 1994; Sérieyx, 1993). In the same stride as other researchers, our results seem to justify the intensification of continuing training processes for immediate supervisors in order to better equip them to give employees feedback, to recognize their contributions, to fix clear and accessible objectives, and to successfully sustain teamwork.

Based on structural equation modeling, we were able to demonstrate that our hypothesized model is supported by the data. In order to determine our hypothesized model's value, not only should fit indices be taken into account but also the level of variance explained by our constructs. Although our fit indices are a little below .90, the variance predicted by the proximal antecedents and the foci of commitment is over 45% in all but one instance (commitment to work group) which is quite acceptable in both social and organizational psychology fields.

Our final objective was to integrate the foci of commitment rather than the bases of commitment as the latter have been extensively studied in previous research (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 1993; Fabi et al., 2000). The specific contribution of this research was to put forward and confirm a comprehensive model of OC with its distal and proximal antecedents and consequences while using four commitment foci (Organization, Top management, Supervisor, and Work group) according to Becker's (1992; Becker & Billings, 1993; Becker et al., 1996) scale to

measure commitment rather than use than the bases of commitment (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Meyer & Allen, 1991) as a measure for OC.

The findings from our research support Fabi et al's. (2000) results regarding mechanisms between distal and proximal antecedents of commitment. However, how these antecedents affect commitment cannot be compared as they used a bases of commitment approach. Clearly, more research is needed in terms of identifying and confirming the role and causal ordering of antecedents of commitment in developing OC using a foci of commitment approach, to replicate recent findings on this topic. In order to validate our findings, they will have to be compared with future research using the same instrumentation and analytic techniques more contemporary and more comparable.

This study has limitations that should be acknowledged. There is a concern regarding external validity. The sample, even though it includes quite a large number of French speaking employees of all hierarchical levels and from all occupational categories, was taken in a specific network of organization of the Quebec public sector. Such results then can be generalized only with extreme caution to private organizations in other countries or other types of organizations that have different characteristics of cultural environment, bureaucratization, union membership, and professional segments. In addition, although this study constitutes the first model of antecedents and consequences of OC using Becker's (1992) tool, it remains a transversal study within which certain causal links can only be inferred.

Improving our understanding of the concept, measure and process of OC calls for more research. Such studies should integrate antecedents in models recognizing the

importance of moderators and mediating mechanisms, which would exclude the use of classical correlational analyses and rather demand that structural equation analyses techniques be used. Experimental models should be elaborated to take into account a tendency stemming from recent studies done on OC's process: a more contingent approach is emerging where individuals' personal characteristics exert an indirect influence on OC through mediating variables like job characteristics, day-to-day work environment, and the quality of relationships with immediate supervisors.

Also, further investigating the foci of commitment approach would require that attention be directed to replicating and/or validating Hunt and Morgan's (1994) theory of global organizational commitment and constituency-specific commitments and Becker and Billing's (1993; Becker et al., 1996) notion of global and local foci.

In order to address those important research questions, it would seem appropriate to envision longitudinal studies or quasi-experimental designs allowing for a better comprehension of the development process and the effect of diverse management practices on OC. Manipulation and evaluation of antecedents in such studies would permit the improvement of the causal relationships' inferences' validity. Another area of research in need of additional investigation concerns the conceptualization of OC in itself. Even in the most recent multidimensional propositions, there remains ambiguities regarding the number, nature and measure of commitment's foci and their interrelation.

Finally, most of the empirical research conducted on OC has been done in industrialized occidental countries, mainly in North America. Evaluation and validity of our models within different cultural environments could be done through comparative studies where

the potential influence of sociological and cultural variables in OC's process would be controlled. These studies would be significant whithin a context of globalization where certain phenomenon like downsizing, mergers, and acquisitions will most likely have an effect on OC for many employees evolving in organizations scattered around the globe.

CONCLUSION

Confronted with the new challenges of our society, our way of doing business must evolve, as we have discussed in our introduction. Managers must pay attention to their organizations' greatest asset, their human resources. In order to address problems related to organizational commitment, managers need to target the source of the problems, to diminish or eliminate them. The general consensus in the literature is that commitment is a multidimensional construct which can take many different forms and can be directed towards different entities within the organization while research on the latter has been neglected until recently. The importance of distinguishing between both different forms and foci of commitment is illustrated by the empirical evidence that they relate, to some extent, differently to behavior.

Much more attention has been given to the different forms of commitment in the commitment literature such that our research's main contribution was to introduce a model, based on structural equation modeling, integrating the foci of commitment and we were able to demonstrate not only that commitment is indeed directed at different constituencies but that it is multidimensional. We took advantage of structural equation modeling techniques to investigate causal connections on both the antecedent and consequence sides in response to Meyer's (1997) concerns regarding the choice of analytical techniques. Despite the fact that these procedures still rely on patterns of covariance to infer causality, they allow complex relationships to be examined.

Despite the fact that our findings contribute to the understanding of OC and open doors for new research, it raises interesting questions like: Among various foci of commitment, what defines the boundaries? What determines which constituency an individual becomes committed to? Under what conditions commitment to different entities is likely to be compatible or to conflict? How do these multiple commitments combine to shape employees' behaviors?

We showed that many factors are involved in the development of OC, and we distinguished between distal and proximal causes of commitment based on previous research. More efforts are needed to examine the causal ordering of variables in the development process, as well as to determine conditions that might moderate the relations between antecedent variables and commitment. In addition, we examined the consequence of being committed to different foci of commitment in the form of job satisfaction and found that all four foci of commitment had a significant positive impact on job satisfaction which leads us to believe that nurturing commitment to those entities would have benefits.

Our results give rise to management implications. We proposed that our results follow the contemporary tendency where work experiences are more determinant in the development of OC than certain individual characteristics. While some organizations may have spent thousand of dollars screening applicants through psychological testing and extensive interviews to tap into an individual's characteristics, it would appear that organizations should spend money and effort creating stimulating working environments for employees. It can also be derived that it might be more productive to capitalize on work experiences as it is perhaps easier to control and eventually change as the

environment evolves than controlling or changing individual's personality traits or characteristics. In addition, we suggested that efforts to foster commitment could be done through the supervisor via leadership training, socialization and team building as our study shows that commitment to the Supervisor leads to a desirable outcome.

Finally, while pondering what our study means in the changing world of work, where people, supervisors, and top management do not remain in an organization forever, we believe that commitment will be as important if not even more important than in the past. In addition, increased global competition, reengineering, and downsizing affect organizations which are likely to employ fewer people but those remaining will have to do more and be more responsible. Perhaps, this is why understanding *why* commitment develops will have to be given much more attention. Commitment will matter, it may be how we conceptualize it and study it that will have to adapt to the changing world of work.

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