

Career Commitment, Competencies, and Citizenship

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Carson and Bedeian's (1994) Career Commitment Measure was used to examine the relationships of career commitment with emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior, which were then examined for relationships with organizational commitment. As predicted, emotional intelligence was positively related to career commitment, but not related to organizational commitment. Both types of commitments were positively related to organizational citizenship behavior and its underlying factor of civic virtue. However, career commitment was related to the sportsmanship and altruism factors, whereas organizational commitment was related to the involvement factor of organizational citizenship behavior. Further insight into these relationships was gained by exploring the three dimensions of the Career Commitment Measure. A respecified model examining emotional intelligence as an antecedent to career commitment with organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior factors as outcomes displayed a good fit to the data.

The concept of career management has historically invited an impressive amount of academic scrutiny in management, developmental psychology, counseling, and sociology literature (e.g., Gunz & Jalland, 1996). Over time, however, the focus has shifted from analyses of individual career choice and life-cycles to more macro-level analyses addressing intraorganizational movement and its effects on organizational performance. A new field of inquiry is now emerging in the career domain. This time, the redirection does not necessarily reflect a refinement or continued advancement of collective career wisdom. Instead, this redirection has the potential to threaten the accumulated career knowledge that has been developed up to this time.

The academic community has been forced to alter its perspective on career management because of popular press headlines proclaiming the end of careers as we know them (e.g., Barley, Meyer, & Gash, 1988). And, whereas

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reports of the death of careers may be exaggerated, radical transformations are certainly occurring. Environmental turbulence caused by such factors as enhanced competition and the flattening of the hierarchy are forcing organizations to break the traditional covenant between employees and employers by abandoning most forms of paternalistic organizational responsibility for individual career management (Brousseau, Driver, Eneroth, & Larsson, 1996).

Indeed, there is a barrage of speculation and information being published on the imminent future of work and careers. Predictions such as “self-directed careers will be the norm,” “employees will have to take more responsibility for learning” (Rhinesmith, 1994, p. 30), and “the organizational career is dead” (Hall, 1996, p.8) are rampant. Notably, this radical transformation of occupational perceptions has been proclaimed as nothing less than “career pandemonium” (Brousseau et al., 1996), which requires a paradigm shift as well as a new lexicon (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

Figure 1 outlines the characteristics of the paradigm shift from the traditional career prototype to the emerging one.

Most notably, individuals rather than institutions are now accountable for career management. With this loss (abandonment) of organizational responsibility comes a need for workers to refashion, redefine, and refine themselves in terms of the competencies they will need to achieve the goal of “psychological fulfillment,” which is the new desired end state in the emerging career paradigm. The emerging paradigm will require successful workers to modify their self-concept from one of a “work self” to a “whole self” (Hall, 1996, p. 9). This can be accomplished through the development of new “Career Metacompetencies”—a term coined by Hall (1996).

Many researchers have attempted, albeit without the benefit of a theoretical framework to guide their efforts, to characterize the emerging body of career metacompetencies. For example, Fletcher (1996) contends that relational growth, which is a prerequisite to career success, demands skillful

	Traditional Career Paradigm	Emerging Career Paradigm
Sphere of Responsibility for Career Management	Institutional Responsibility	Personal Responsibility (“Protean” Career)
Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Contributing to Success	Technical Acuity Job and Firm Specific Competencies	Interpersonal Savvy Pendant for Learning Self-Insight
Definition of Occupational Success	Hierarchical Advancement	Psychological Fulfillment
Self-Concept	“Work-self”	“Whole-self”
Worker Focus	Employing Organization	Occupation

Figure 1. Characteristics of the Career Paradigm Shift.

interdependence and mutuality. Walker (1996) recognizes the importance of learning about oneself, coping, and building relationships. Nicholson (1996) discusses the value of self-appraisal and self-management. And Allred, Snow, and Miles (1996) list self-governance skills and personal traits such as integrity and trustworthiness as being critical. The underlying theme of these career metacompetencies is that career success will be psychologically driven.

Before this burgeoning list of metacompetencies grows to unmanageable proportions and leads to further characterization of the careers literature as “fragmented and confused” (Gunz & Jalland, 1996, p. 719), it would be valuable to identify a unifying theory to systematically categorize the metacompetencies. We contend that such a theoretical framework has recently been popularized by Daniel Goleman (1995) in his treatise on “emotional intelligence.”

Development of Hypotheses

Although superior intellect has been identified as an important characteristic in the workplace, Goleman (1995) suggests that emotional intelligence is perhaps more critical to career success than is cognitive intelligence. Individuals high on emotional intelligence are good at handling psychological and social problems. They accurately express their emotions, correctly assess what others are feeling, regulate their own sentiments, and use their emotions to achieve and accomplish their goals (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Goleman (1995) identifies five major dimensions that underlie emotional intelligence: (a) mood regulation—individuals are skilled at regulating their moods, handling their emotions, and bouncing back from feelings of anxiety or depression; (b) internal motivation—individuals are skilled at delaying gratification, stifling impulses, involving themselves fully in their tasks, and sticking to goals; (c) self-awareness—individuals possess psychological insight, recognize their sentiments, and understand how they really feel about personal decisions; (d) empathic response—individuals are attuned to social cues, recognizing and responding to the needs of others; and (e) interpersonal skill—individuals are good with others, relating smoothly, and displaying social competence and interactional effectiveness.

These five dimensions encompass and correspond remarkably well to proposed career metacompetencies being developed in the literature. Because these metacompetencies are being advanced as precursors to occupational success under the new career paradigm, it follows that individuals who possess a high degree of emotional intelligence will be career committed. The logic behind this hypothesis is that individuals tend to develop positive affect for those activities at which they demonstrate mastery and accomplishment (Forsyth, 1987).

Yet, as Figure 1 shows, the new career metacompetencies under the emerging career paradigm are different from those necessary for success under the traditional paradigm, where individuals were reinforced for attachment to their employing institutions. Gouldner (1957) suggested that individuals were either cosmopolitans, identifying with their professions, or locals, identifying with their companies. He further concluded that

individuals committed to their professions would be less likely to be loyal to their organizations. And whereas many researchers have found that workers can be committed to both their careers and their employers (e.g., Aranya & Ferris, 1984; Wallace, 1993), the correlates associated with these two types of loyalties should be different. Indeed, in the case of career competencies, an occupational orientation demands more psychological and fewer technical skills than an organizational one. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: There will be a positive relationship between career commitment and emotional intelligence, but there will be no relationship between organizational commitment and emotional intelligence.

Those who are loyal to their careers and/or their organizations take work seriously in both a cognitive and a behavioral sense. Thus, one might expect that committed individuals would desire to contribute to their workplaces in a constructive manner beyond that which is incumbent upon their positions. Such discretionary prosocial activities, which are beneficial to the organization and promote its effectiveness, have been labeled “organizational citizenship behaviors” (Organ, 1988).

Underlying these organizational citizenship behaviors are a number of conceptually distinct dimensions (Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997). For example, Organ (1988) identified the concept of sportsmanship, which deals with the behavior of tolerating less than desirable situations at work without major complaints. Other dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior include: (a) civic virtue, which deals with keeping up and assessing changes at work; (b) involvement, which includes attending and organizing voluntary functions; (c) consciousness, which involves coming to work on time or coming early if needed; and (d) altruism, which entails volunteering to help others out at work (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993). Because some of these dimensions may contribute to occupational success under the new career paradigm whereas others may facilitate linear career movement up an organization’s hierarchy, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Career commitment and organizational commitment will both be positively related with aspects of citizenship behavior.

One purpose of the present study is to further define the nomological network of career commitment by examining its relationships with emotional intelligence (a potential antecedent) and organizational citizenship behavior (a potential consequence). The other purpose of this study is to contrast correlates between career commitment and organizational commitment using the variables of citizenship behavior (Meyer & Allen, 1984). The aspect of organizational commitment we are concerned with in this study is affective loyalty, which deals with an employee’s attachment to, involvement in, and identification with his/her company (Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdorf, 1994). Understanding the different antecedents and outcomes of career commitment and affective organizational commitment is particularly important in today’s work environment when lifetime employment with a company is no longer guaranteed, inferred, or even valued (Henkoff, 1996).

Method

The Career Commitment Measure

Although psychometrically sound assessments of organizational commitment have long been available to social scientists, measuring career loyalty has been impeded by the lack of a reliable and valid multidimensional measure. Recently, Carson and Bedeian (1994) developed and validated a three-dimensional measure of affective career commitment. Following Blau (1985), "career" was defined by Carson and Bedeian (1994) as having the same meaning as vocation, occupation, or profession. "Commitment" referred to one's motivation to work in a particular vocation (Hall, 1971). The measure was developed with three underlying dimensions: (a) career identity, (b) career planning, and (c) career resilience (cf. London, 1983). Career identity deals with an emotional attachment to the vocation (Blau, 1985); career planning considers the energizing component of commitment (London, 1985); and career resilience taps steadfastness in the face of adversity (Lydon & Zanna, 1990). One of the benefits of the three-dimensional definition of career commitment is that it is possible to examine theoretically relevant relations that might otherwise be masked (Carson & Bedeian, 1994).

As part of the field study in their measure development, Carson and Bedeian (1994) reported that occupational groups with higher professional characteristics indicate higher career commitment. Since the development of the measure, Carson and his colleagues have used the career commitment instrument to help define the construct's nomological network. As examples, they found that emergency service technicians with high organization-based self-esteem also have high career commitment (Carson, Carson, Langford, & Roe, 1997). Based on a sample of academic librarians, they reported that career identity was curvilinear over the worklife, peaking as librarians approached 50 years of age (Phillips, Carson, & Carson, 1994). With medical librarians, they indicated that there was a positive relationship between empowerment and career commitment (Carson, Phillips, Hanebury, & Carson, 1996).

To further investigate the career commitment construct, the following methodology was used.

Sampling Procedure

Respondents were nursing department employees in a small rural hospital in a southeastern state. There were a total of 75 usable surveys (response rate = 49.3%) from nurses (RNs and LPNs), nurse aides, technicians, and unit clerks. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents were female; the remaining 13% were male. The average chronological age was 37 years with an average organization tenure of more than 6 years. Sixty-two percent of the respondents were married, and 89% were Caucasian. The other 11% were African American or Hispanic.

Surveys were accompanied by a cover letter assuring confidentiality. One section asked respondents about their line of work or career field, which was defined to mean the same as occupation, profession, or vocation. Another section provided a number of statements about their personal

feelings. Other sections contained questions tapping perceptions about their employing hospital and jobs/roles. Responses were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). The final section of the survey requested demographic information.

Measures

Career Commitment

Career Commitment was gauged using a short version of the measure ($\alpha = .82$; Carson & Bedeian, 1994). Three items were used to tap each of the three dimensions. The statements for Career Identity were: "My line of work/career field is an important part of who I am," "This line of work/career field has a great deal of personal meaning to me," and "I strongly identify with my chosen line of work/career field." For Career Planning, the statements were "I have created a plan for my development in this line of work/career field," "I do not have a strategy for achieving my goals in this line of work/career field" (reverse scored), and "I do not identify specific goals for my development in this line of work/career field" (reverse scored). For Career Resilience the statements were "Given the problems I encounter in this line of work/career field, I sometimes wonder if I get enough out of it" (reverse scored), "Given the problems in this line of work/career field, I sometimes wonder if the personal burden is worth it" (reverse scored), "The discomforts associated with my line of work/career field sometimes seem too great" (reverse scored).

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment ($\alpha = .89$), an established 8-item measure developed by Meyer and Allen (1984), was used to assess identification with an organization. A sample item is "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me."

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence was tapped using 14 items ($\alpha = .79$) which were developed by the authors (Carson, Carson, & Phillips, 1997). The construct consists of five dimensions: Mood Regulation, Internal Motivation, Self-Awareness, Empathic Response, and Interpersonal Skill (Goleman, 1995). Samples of the items tapping the respective dimensions are: "My feelings are so intense that I often feel overwhelmed" (reverse scored), "I am almost always enthusiastic about pursuing my goals," "Sometimes I'm in a foul mood and don't even know it" (reversed scored), "I am gifted at sensing what others around me are feeling," and "I have good people skills."

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational Citizenship Behavior was gauged with a 13-item measure ($\alpha = .60$) adapted from Niehoff & Moorman (1993). The five dimensions of the construct with a sample item for each follow: (a) Sportsmanship—"You will rarely see me blow problems out of proportion," (b) Civic Virtue—"I keep up with changes at the hospital," (c) Involvement—"I typically attend

voluntary meetings,” (d) Consciousness—“I come to work early if needed,” and (e) Altruism—“I often help others with workloads.”

Analyses

Multiple regression analyses were performed on the study variables and their dimensions. Also, the intercorrelations among the constructs were examined. Finally, structural equations modeling was conducted.

Results

Hypothesis 1 was tested using multiple regression analyses with emotional intelligence dimensions as the independent variables. As shown in Table 1, the regression equation with career commitment as the dependent variable was significant ($F = 6.90, p \leq .01, R^2 = .35$). However, the regression equation with organizational commitment as a dependent variable was not significant ($F = .41, ns, R^2 = .03$).

Table 1
Multiple Regression Results for Emotional Intelligence Dimensions as the Independent Variables

Dependent variable	Independent variable(s)	β weights	F equation	R^2
Career commitment	Interpersonal skill	-.10		
	Mood regulation	.22**		
	Empathic response	.10		
	Self-awareness	.15		
	Internal motivation	.39***	6.90***	.35
Organizational commitment	Interpersonal skill	.08		
	Mood regulation	-.04		
	Empathic response	.08		
	Self-awareness	.22		
	Internal motivation	-.31	.41	.03

** $p \leq .05$. *** $p \leq .01$.

Correlations among selected constructs are shown in Table 2. The positive relationship between emotional intelligence and career commitment ($r = .51, p \leq .01$) and the nonsignificant relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment ($r = .02, ns$) lend additional support for Hypothesis 1.

There is support for Hypothesis 2 as both career commitment and organizational commitment are positively correlated with organizational citizenship behavior ($r = .39, p \leq .01$, and $r = .31, p \leq .01$, respectively). However, the dimensions are differentially correlated. Both the involvement

Table 2
Organizational Commitment and Career Commitment Correlations With Selected Variables

Factors/Dimensions	Organizational commitment	Career commitment	Career identity dimension	Career planning dimension	Career resilience dimension
1. Emotional intelligence	.02	.51	.35	.47	.38
2. Self-awareness dimension	.10	.41	.18	.31	.46
3. Mood regulation dimension	-.01	.36	.16	.32	.33
4. Empathic response dimension	.02	.29	.33	.30	.12
5. Internal motivation dimension	-.07	.46	.43	.44	.25
6. Interpersonal skill dimension	-.01	.19	.11	.20	.16
7. Organizational citizenship behavior	.31	.39	.36	.33	.24
8. Altruism dimension	-.02	.27	.23	.23	.15
9. Conscientiousness dimension	-.18	.12	.14	.08	.12
10. Sportsmanship dimension	.04	.28	.17	.24	.28
11. Involvement dimension	.46	.08	.08	.04	.04
12. Civic virtue dimension	.25	.34	.41	.33	.09

Note. $N = 75$. Correlations at or above $\pm .24$, $p \leq .05$; at or above $\pm .30$, $p \leq .01$.

and civic virtue dimensions are positively correlated with organizational commitment ($r = .46, p \leq .01$, and $r = .25, p \leq .05$, respectively), whereas the altruism, sportsmanship, and civic virtue dimensions are positively correlated with career commitment ($r = .27, p \leq .05$, $r = .28, p \leq .05$, and $r = .34, p < .01$, respectively). In addition, career commitment and organizational commitment are also correlated ($r = .30, p \leq .01$).

Multiple regression results using the three career commitment dimensions as the dependent variables and the emotional intelligence dimensions as the independent variables are presented in Table 3. All regression equations were significant.

Table 3
Multiple Regression Results for Career Commitment
Dimensions as Dependent Variables

Dependent variable	Independent variable(s)	β weights	F equation	R^2
Career identity	Interpersonal skill	-.21*	4.76***	.27
	Mood regulation	.08		
	Empathic response	.14		
	Self-awareness	-.04		
	Internal motivation	.51***		
Career planning	Interpersonal skill	-.09	5.32***	.29
	Mood regulation	.27*		
	Empathic response	.15		
	Self-awareness	.07		
	Internal motivation	.51***		
Career resilience	Interpersonal skill	-.01	4.12***	.24
	Mood regulation	.32		
	Empathic response	.02		
	Self-awareness	.42**		
	Internal motivation	.14		

* $p \leq .10$. ** $p \leq .05$. *** $p \leq .01$.

The correlation matrix (see Table 2) indicates a positive relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and career identity, career planning, and career resilience ($r = .36, p \leq .01$, $r = .33, p \leq .01$, and $r = .24, p \leq .05$, respectively). With regard to the dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior, career identity was significantly correlated with civic virtue ($r = .41, p \leq .01$); career planning was significantly correlated with sportsmanship ($r = .24, p \leq .05$) and civic virtue ($r = .33, p \leq .01$); and career resilience was significantly correlated with sportsmanship ($r = .28, p \leq .05$).

In addition to regression analyses, structural equations modeling was conducted using LISREL VIII (see Figure 2; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). As recommended by Bollen and Long (1993), several goodness-of-fit indices were used for this assessment: Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI; Bentler & Bonett, 1980), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler, 1990). These indices are optimal when their values are greater than .90 (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1992). Following the initial results from LISREL VIII, the path between career commitment and altruism was dropped. Maximum likelihood estimates for the paths of the respecified model are shown in Figure 2. The indices indicate that the model is a good fit to the data: $\chi^2(9) = 5.12$, GFI = .98, AGFI = .95, NFI = .93, and CFI = 1.00.

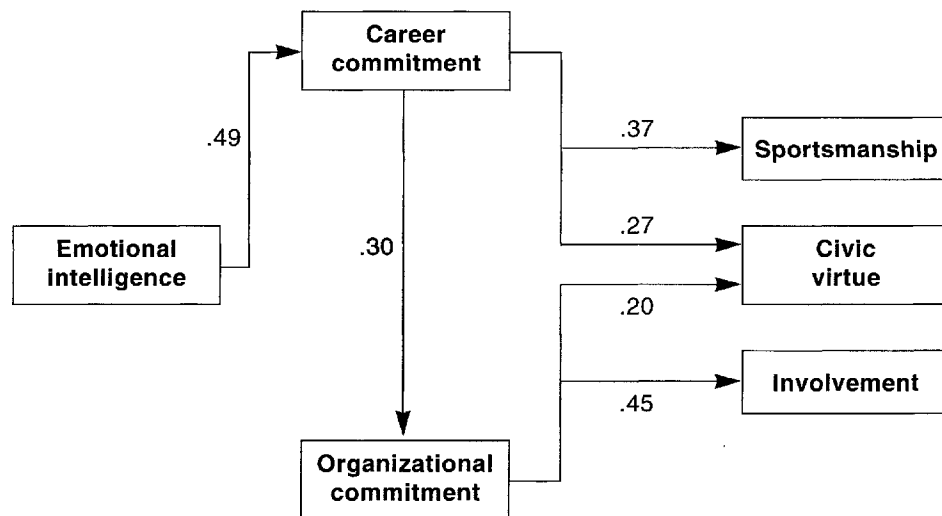


Figure 2. A model of career commitment, emotional intelligence, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior dimensions of sportsmanship, civic virtue, and involvement.

Discussion

Those individuals most likely to become career committed tend to be emotionally intelligent, which translates into being a self-starter, controlling one's emotions, being insightful about personal decision-making processes, understanding and empathizing with the psychological needs of others, and networking. Although these skills appear requisite to the emergence of career commitment, it seems as though they are not necessary for organizational commitment. Hence, "locals" may have less need for these attributes, but at the same time they may be more vulnerable to changes in the workplace than "cosmopolitans." Allegiance to an employer at the expense of one's own career development is a risky strategy at best.

The emotional intelligence dimensions most predictive of career commitment were mood regulation and internal motivation, which ironically have not been emphasized nearly as much as the other three (interpersonal skill, empathic response, and self-awareness) in the extant literature on metacompetencies. Examining the dimensions of career commitment reveals that self-awareness, highly touted as an important competency, does predict career resilience.

Resilience as a dimension of career commitment has not yet been subject to as much academic scrutiny as have the other two dimensions, career planning and career identity, hence making this finding all the more noteworthy. Indeed, the antecedent to resilience, defined as the willingness to persist in the face of adversity, is bound to become increasingly significant under the new career paradigm. Sportsmanship was similarly related to career resilience. As sportsmanship reflects a tolerance for less than perfect situations, intuitively this finding makes sense and leads to questions worthy of future investigation such as whether there is a resilient personality that pervades one's response to adversity across all settings, and, if this is the case, whether resilience is likely to be more strongly related to attitudinal outcomes than to performance or behavioral ones?

There was also a significant correlation between self-awareness and career planning, but regression analysis results show this dimension of the Career Commitment Measure is predicted by the emotional intelligence factors of internal motivation and mood regulation. Those who engage in career planning set career goals. Obviously, planning requires self-motivation, but our results suggest that mood regulation is also important. Those actively absorbed in planning must be able to face frustrations and overcome setbacks. They also have to regulate their moods so that their emotions do not overwhelm them.

Turning to the consequences of career commitment, results suggest that to increase organizational citizenship behavior, managers may want to foster employees who are committed both to their careers and to the organization. In this way, employers can facilitate employees' keeping up with changes and developments in the workplace, volunteering to do extra work around the organization, tolerating less than ideal situations, and being agreeable towards management and the institution. If employers help individuals with their career development, these individuals may become more committed to the organization, as the structural equations results suggest. Additional evidence of this prediction is offered by the significant positive correlation ($r = .27$) between altruism and career commitment.

Although this survey study is limited somewhat by its small sample size and common method variance, results further suggest that it makes sense for those active in their careers to engage in extra-role behaviors within the organization. Correlational analyses reveal that career identity and career planning are most strongly related to civic virtue. This is logical because those who are involved in their careers will be vigilant about monitoring and responding to organizational changes that may affect their occupational success. Career planning was also related to sportsmanship, as was career

resilience (discussed earlier), implying that those who are proactive toward their career development seem more inclined and prepared to sustain setbacks encountered at work.

Continuing this line of research, the Carson and Bedeian (1994) Career Commitment Measure can be useful in further untangling the antecedents and outcomes of occupational loyalty. For example, although we propose that emotional intelligence is a precursor to career commitment, longitudinal analyses may reveal a reciprocal relationship between these two constructs. That is, whereas emotional intelligence may lead to career commitment, stronger loyalties may, over time, enhance emotional intelligence. Supporting this proposition, Brousseau (1983) suggests that career experiences may affect personality in that some vocations may promote self-direction and identity (Kohn & Schooler, 1982).

From an organizational vantage, if employers could link career-metacompetencies to enhanced performance, then efforts aimed at enhancing workers' emotional intelligence would mutually benefit both employers and employees. This study offers preliminary encouragement for organizations in that respondents who rated higher in emotional intelligence also indicated that they believed their peers would evaluate them as higher performers ($r = .25, p \leq .01$).

Another potential research focus would be the direct examination of the "career metacompetencies → career commitment → career success" linkage. Such an inquiry, defining career success as either hierarchical advancement consistent with the traditional career paradigm or as psychological fulfillment consistent with the new paradigm, might verify that emotionally intelligent individuals not only develop more favorable attitudes toward their vocations but also objectively achieve more.

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