

# On Becker's Theory of Commitment: An Empirical Verification Among Blue-Collar Workers L'intégration des cols bleus dans l'entreprise

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## Résumé de l'article

Le présent article a pour objet de mesurer le degré d'intégration à l'entreprise parmi les cols bleus à partir d'une enquête effectuée au Canada. L'intégration à l'entreprise se réfère à la nature des relations d'un individu avec l'entreprise considérée dans son sens le plus large en ce qu'il tend à indiquer la volonté ferme d'en faire partie, le désir d'y consacrer de grands efforts, la croyance totale aux valeurs qu'elle véhicule et l'acceptation de ces valeurs. La revue de ce qui s'est écrit sur l'intégration à l'entreprise révèle deux tendances majeures sur lesquelles repose l'étude de cette question. L'une de ces tendances consiste dans la théorie des échanges réciproques de Homan selon laquelle l'engagement dans l'entreprise est perçu comme l'aboutissement d'intercommunications entre le travailleur et l'entreprise. Cette théorie s'appuie sur l'idée que plus les rapports sont avantageux pour l'individu, plus son attachement à l'entreprise s'accroît. La deuxième théorie, celle de Becker, est plus satisfaisante que celle de Homan en ce qu'elle y ajoute un élément de temps et la notion de facteurs divers mais voisins. Selon cette deuxième théorie, l'intégration à l'entreprise apparaît comme un phénomène structurel qui serait à la fois le résultat des rapports d'intercommunication entre l'individu et l'entreprise et de l'influence de ces autres facteurs. L'étude présente est fondée sur la deuxième théorie à cause de son caractère plus étendu comparée à la simple formule d'échanges réciproques. L'analyse des données recueillies sur le sujet permet d'identifier nombre de concordances indiquant que l'attachement à l'entreprise provient, non seulement du réseau d'échanges, mais aussi d'autres facteurs comme la situation démographique, les états de service et les conditions du travail. La présente étude vise à isoler, parmi les facteurs ci-dessus, les variables-clés qui manifestent l'attachement à l'entreprise parmi les cols bleus.

Les répondants, dans l'étude présente, se recrutaient parmi les employés de la production de six entreprises dans une ville de l'Ouest canadien. Il s'agissait de moyennes entreprises dont le nombre de salariés variait de 200 à 600 personnes. Des questionnaires accompagnés d'enveloppes-réponses affranchies furent adressées à 550 cols bleus. Après un rappel, soixante-huit pour cent (377) ont retourné des questionnaires utilisables. Selon les divers colers entreprises, le pourcentage des réponses variait de 42 à 81 pour cent.

Les variables démographiques mesurées comprenaient l'âge du répondant, son sexe, son degré de scolarité, son statut matrimonial, son revenu et le nombre des enfants qui vivaient au foyer. Les variables relatives aux états de service retenues consistaient dans le métier, le quart de travail, la durée de l'emploi au service de l'entreprise, le nombre d'emplois occupés dans l'entreprise, le nombre d'emplois à temps plein au cours de la vie et le nombre d'employeurs pour lesquels le répondant avait travaillé. Les caractéristiques de l'emploi actuel, dont il fut tenu compte au cours de l'enquête, étaient l'occasion de causer avec les compagnons tout en travaillant, la facilité de penser à autre chose pendant l'exécution du travail, la possibilité de détente au travail, l'existence de périodes creuses au cours de la séance de travail, l'occasion de se déplacer en travaillant, la marche au travail, la variété des tâches de l'emploi et l'attention requise pour exécuter la tâche. Toutes les variables précédentes exigeaient de répondre à une seule question. L'intégration à l'entreprise fut mesurée à partir des réponses à douze questions selon le barème à trois degrés de Jamal: soit, d'accord, incertain, en désaccord. Selon la formule Spearman-Brown, l'échelle de l'intégration à l'entreprise s'établissait à un indice 0.85 de véricité interne.

Des analyses de corrélation furent entreprises pour découvrir la nature du rapport entre les facteurs relatifs à la condition démographique, aux états de service et aux caractéristiques de l'emploi d'une part, et l'engagement dans l'entreprise, d'autres part. Parmi les variables démographiques, l'âge fut la seule variable qui s'avéra significative en regard de l'intégration à l'entreprise. Deux variables seulement relatives aux états de service, la durée de service continu dans l'entreprise et le métier démontrent un rapport significatif en regard de l'intégration. Les huit caractéristiques de l'emploi, par ailleurs, indiquaient un rapport significatif avec le degré d'intégration.

L'analyse de régression graduée fut utilisée pour établir l'importance relative de chacune des variables dans les trois catégories (démographie, états de service, caractéristiques de l'emploi) dans la détermination de l'intégration à l'entreprise et pour en extraire celles qui exigeaient une analyse supplémentaire. Parmi les six variables démographiques retenues comme variables indépendantes, les résultats de régression graduée indiquent que l'âge est de beaucoup la plus importante variable rattachée à l'intégration dans l'entreprise, bien qu'il n'explique que cinq pour cent de variation. Si l'on considère les sept variables relatives aux états de service, retenues également comme variables indépendantes, l'analyse de régression graduée indique que le métier et la durée du service sont les plus importants facteurs de cette catégorie reliés à l'intégration dans l'entreprise et ils expliquent six pour cent de la variation, fin ce qui concerne les caractéristiques de l'emploi retenues comme variables indépendantes, les résultats de l'analyse de régression graduée montrent que cinq d'entre elles, (la variété des tâches, le peu d'activité, la détente, le mouvement et l'attention) parmi les huit caractéristiques, sont reliées à l'intégration dans l'entreprise et comptent pour un modeste deux pour cent de variation dans l'intégration ou l'engagement.

Comme analyse finale, les variables qu'on a trouvées reliées à l'intégration ou l'engagement.

Comme analyse finale, les variables qu'on a trouvées reliées à l'intégration à .01 ou plus (en conformité aux équations de régression) à l'intérieur des trois catégories furent de nouveau soumises à une régression graduée conformément aux analyses antérieures. On a trouvé que huit variables étaient reliées à l'intégration à un taux de .01 ou plus. Lorsque ces variables indépendantes furent utilisées comme variables indépendantes, les résultats de la régression graduée montrent que six de ces huit variables étaient reliées d'une façon significative à l'intégration à l'entreprise. Ces variables, comme l'indique l'équation, sont la variété des tâches, le peu d'activité, l'âge, la possibilité de détente, le mouvement et le degré d'attention requises et elles comptent pour trente-trois pour cent de la variation dans l'intégration à l'entreprise.

# On Becker's Theory of Commitment An Empirical Verification Among Blue-Collar Workers

**Vishwanath V. Baba  
and  
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*The present study attempts to assess the empirical relevance of Becker's theory of commitment to study organizational commitment among blue collar workers. The relative importance of demographic, background and job factors as possible predictors of organizational commitment are examined. The sample is drawn from packaging, power distribution and manufacturing industries in Canada. Stepwise multiple regression analysis is used to isolate the important predictors of organizational commitment.*

Though the concept of organizational commitment has been enjoying wide currency among students of organizational behavior, the number of empirical studies dealing with organizational commitment do not reflect the same enthusiasm. Even among the few published studies a majority deal only with the differences between occupational and organizational commitment (Porter, 1970) and very little is known about the predictors of organizational commitment (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972). A survey of the commitment literature also reveals a lopsided representation of professional and managerial respondents drawn from U.S. samples. Studies on the comparison of U.S. and Canadian attitudes have demonstrated significant differences and cast doubts on the interchangeability of research findings between U.S. and Canada (Porter, 1973; Moore & Thompson, 1975). In the light of the foregoing, the present study is carried out (a) to explore the nature of organizational

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commitment, (b) among blue-collar, (c) drawn from a Canadian sample. The intent primarily is to contribute toward filling the gap found in the literature.

Before proceeding to a brief survey of the literature of organizational commitment a definition of the term is in order. Organizational Commitment (OC) refers to

«the nature of an individual's relationship to an organization, such that a highly committed person will indicate: (1) a strong desire to remain a member of the particular organization, (2) a willingness to exert high levels of effort on behalf of the organization, and (3) a definite belief in and acceptance of the values and goals of the organization» (Porter & Smith, Note 3).

The above definition suggests an active relationship between the individual and the organization in which the individual is willing to contribute in a more than passive way to the welfare of the organization.

A survey of the literature on organizational commitment revealed two major theoretical frameworks on which most studies were based. One is Homan's exchange theory (1958) according to which organizational commitment is seen as the outcome of the exchange relationship between the individual and the organization. The theory suggests as the exchange becomes more favourable from the individual's point of view, his or her commitment to the organization increases. The other theory (Becker, 1960) is an improvement on Homan's idea as it introduces the element of time and the notion of sidebets to the exchange paradigm. According to this theory organizational commitment appears to be a structural phenomenon that occurs as a result of individual-organizational transactions and alterations in sidebets over time.

The present study is based on the latter theoretical framework because of its greater comprehensiveness compared to Homan's exchange paradigm. It must be noted here that the above theories are not seen as mutually exclusive and hence the use of the latter does not preclude an explanation using the former theoretical position. According to Becker's theory, the more one invests his or her time, energy, skill and other personal assets in the organization, the more one has at stake in leaving it. Hence it is natural to expect a greater personal commitment on the part of the individual to an organization as time goes by.

The above commitment comes into being when a person, by making a sidebet, links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity. For instance, a person choosing a career in an organization tends to settle down in that organization and does not always depict the

typical behavior pattern expected of an economic man (Becker, 1960). At least, one does not switch jobs and organizations with the same frequency with which the market conditions change. Becker suggests that the possible reason for such commitment to an organization might be that the person has involved his or her other interests that were originally unrelated to the above organization, as that person continued his stay within the organization. This increases his or her costs of separation or severance as to render other alternatives unattractive. The interests mentioned above can be in the realms of personal values, occupational roles or other background factors. Hence personal, background and job factors are seen as relevant parameters in the verification of Becker's theory of commitment.

A review of the literature on organizational commitment revealed its relationships to demographic factors, background factors and job factors (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972). Among demographic factors, age, sex, education, marital status and income were variously found to be related to organizational commitment (Grusky, 1966; Jamal, 1976; Stone & Porter, 1975; Hrebiniak, Note 2; Alonso, Note 1). Among background factors length of service skill level, mobility orientation, etc. were found to be related to organizational commitment (Stone & Porter, 1975; Dubin, Champoux & Porter, 1975).

Our review therefore suggested a number of correlates of organizational commitment which seem to fit the theoretical framework that views organizational commitment as a structural phenomenon resulting from the nature of the individual-organization exchange with demographic, background and job factors mentioned earlier as possible side-bets. The present study aims at isolating, among the above factors, the key variables which predict organizational commitment among blue collar workers.

## **METHOD**

### **Respondents**

The respondents were 377 blue-collar production workers from six organizations in Vancouver, British Columbia. It was a mixed sample with 68% males. The organizations were medium sized with the number of employees ranging from 200 to 600. There were from the packaging industry, two from power generation and distribution industry and one from the manufacturing industry.

### Measurement

Demographic variables measured in the present research included the respondent's age, sex, educational level, marital status, income and number of children living at home. Information about these variables was collected by means of a structured questionnaire.

Background variables included in the present study were respondent's skill level, shift worked, length of service in the company, number of jobs held in the present company, number of full-time jobs in life, and number of companies worked for. Information was again collected through a structured questionnaire and each variable was measured by one question. Technologically determined characteristics measured in the present study were the same as reported by Kornhauser (1965) and Hedley (1971). Job characteristics included in this study were (1) opportunity to *talk* to fellow workers while working; (2) opportunity to *think* about other things while working; (3) opportunity to get *relief* while working; (4) opportunity to have *slack* periods while working; (5) opportunity to *move* while working; (6) *pacing* on the job; (7) task *variety* in the job; (8) *attention* required to perform the job. These characteristics were assessed by asking for the respondent's perceptions about the extent each characteristic was present in the job. For example, *pacing* was measured in the following manner:

- Does your job require you to work at a certain (fixed) speed ?
- Most of the time
  - Some of the time
  - Hardly ever
  - Never

Opportunity to *think* was measured as follows:

- Can you think about other things than your jobs when you are working ?
- Most of the time
  - Some of the time
  - Hardly ever
  - Never

Organizational commitment was measured with workers' responses to twelve items each on a three-point scale of agree, undecided, and disagree (Jamal, 1976). Commitment as defined earlier consisted of three components namely commitment to the goals of the organization, commitment to put in extra *effort* and a *desire* to stay with the company. Of the twelve items mentioned, four items were devoted to

each of the three components. The scale items are presented as follows:

*Goals*

- (1) The things this company makes are important to Canada.  
(1) Agree                      (2) Undecided                      (3) Disagree
- (2) I find my goals and this company's very similar.
- (3) Often I find it difficult to agree with company's policies on important matters relating to workers.
- (4) I really care about the fate of this company.

*Effort*

- (5) I am willing to work extra hard at my job in order to help this company be successful.
- (6) This company really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.
- (7) I don't mind putting in extra time if the company needs me to.
- (8) It bothers me very much to be absent from work.

*Desire*

- (9) I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this company.
- (10) There is not too much to be gained by sticking with this company indefinitely.
- (11) I would keep working for this company even if I were offered more money to work somewhere else.
- (12) I could just as well be working for a different company as long as the type of work were similar.

Internal consistency reliability of the commitment scale was assessed to be .85 using the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula. Item analysis was conducted to assess the adequacy of each item in the scale. All the twelve items in the commitment scale were found to be correlated with the total scale scores beyond the .001 level of significance.

**Procedure**

Questionnaires were distributed by the investigators along with self-addressed stamped envelopes among 550 production workers in six

companies. With one follow-up 68 percent (377) workers returned usable questionnaires. For individual companies, response rates varied from 42% to 81%.

## RESULTS

Table I presents the correlations between demographic, background and job factors and organizational commitment. Among demographic variables, age tends to be the only variable related significantly to organizational commitment. Respondents' sex, education level, marital status, income and number of children living at home either show negligible or no relationship with commitment. Only two background variables, length of service in the company and skill level exhibit significant relationship with commitment. Background variables such as shift time, number of jobs held in the company, number of companies worked for in the past do not seem to affect an individual's commitment to his employing organization. All eight job characteristics tend to be significantly related to commitment. Task variety and the opportunity to move while working are the characteristics which show the highest relationship to commitment.

TABLE 1

**Correlation Between Demographic, Background and Job Factors and Organizational Commitment**

| <i>Demographic Variables</i> | <i>r</i> | <i>Background Variables</i>        | <i>r</i> | <i>Job Factors</i> | <i>r</i> |
|------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
| Age                          | .22*     | Length of service                  | .18*     | Talk               | .11**    |
| Sex                          | .00      | Shift time                         | .03      | Think              | .19*     |
| Education                    | — .08    | Skill level                        | .21*     | Speed              | — .24*   |
| Marital status               | — .09    | Number of jobs held in the company | .03      | Relief             | .26*     |
| Children at home             | .09      | Number of full time jobs held      | .04      | Slack              | .26*     |
| Income                       | .01      | Number of companies worked for     | .01      | Variety            | .38*     |
|                              |          |                                    |          | Move               | .31*     |
|                              |          |                                    |          | Attn.              | — .24*   |

\* Significant at the .001 level

\*\* Significant at the .01 level

Though the above results indicated the nature of association between our predictor variables and organizational commitment, it did not throw much light on the order of their importance as predictors. It has been observed that the literature also is virtually silent on the question of the relative importance of particular experiences for influencing organizational commitment (Buchanan, 1974). Hence, it was decided to assess their relative importance in predicting organizational commitment and pick out the relevant ones for further analysis.

At this point one should realize that the nature of the sample does not exactly satisfy the technical requirements of statistical inference. The reader is cautioned about the limitations such departures impose on the interpretation of the results. However, it is felt that the risk is worth taking considering the substantive importance of the overall theme (Hagood 1969, McGinnis 1958).

Stepwise regression was the statistical technique used to determine the relative importance of our 20 predictor variables. Since the average intercorrelation among the predictor variables was only .15, the problem of multicollinearity was not considered to be a serious one for this study. For each regression table presented, the following notation is used:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| OC = Organizational Com-<br>mitment         | TCW = Total number of com-<br>panies worked for |
| ED = Education                              | TA = Talk                                       |
| MS = Marital Status                         | SP = Speed                                      |
| CH = Children at Home                       | RE = Relief                                     |
| IN = Income                                 | SL = Slack                                      |
| ST = Shift Time                             | VA = Variety                                    |
| TJH = Total Jobs Held                       | MO = Move                                       |
| TH = Think                                  | AT = Attention                                  |
| NJC = Number of Jobs held<br>in the Company | LS = Length of Service                          |

With six demographic variables specified as the independent variables and a sample size of 359, the stepwise regression results are presented in Table 2. The analysis presented in Table 2 confirmed our earlier results derived through bivariate correlational analysis about the relationship between demographic variables and organizational commitment. Age appeared to be the single most important demographic variable related to commitment, although it explained only 5% of the variance.



TABLE 2

**Stepwise Regression Between Demographic variables  
and organizational commitment  
(N = 359)**

| <i>Dependent Variable</i>                      | <i>Independent variables</i>               | <i>R</i> | <i>R<sup>2</sup></i> | <i>f-value</i> |
|--|--|----------|----------------------|----------------|
| Organizational<br>commitment<br>regressed with | AGE  | .217*    | .047                 | 17.40*         |
|  | AGE AND SEX                                | .237*    | .056                 | 10.52*         |
|  | AGE AND SEX AND ED                         | .238*    | .057                 | 7.05*          |
|  | AGE AND SEX AND ED AND MS                  | .239*    | .057                 | 5.23*          |
|  | AGE AND SEX AND ED AND MS<br>AND CH        | .240*    | .058                 | 4.26*          |
|  | AGE AND SEX AND ED AND MS<br>AND CH AND IN | .240*    | .058                 | 4.24*          |

*Regression Equation*

$$\text{Organizational Commitment} = 1.91 + .24 \text{ AGE} + .10 \text{ SEX} + .02 \text{ ED} + .7 \text{ MS} + .15 \text{ CH} + .08 \text{ IN}$$

(F = 15.1) \* (F = 3.5) (F = .14) (F = 0.25) (F = 0.22) (F = 0.02)

\* Significant at the .001 level

\*\* Significant at the .01 level

With seven background variables specified as independent variables and a sample size of 345, regression results are presented in Table 3. Skill level and length of service in the company respectively tended

TABLE 3

**Stepwise Regression Between Background Variables  
and Organizational Commitment  
(N = 345)**

| <i>Dependent Variable</i>                      | <i>Independent Variables</i>                   | <i>R</i> | <i>R<sup>2</sup></i> | <i>f-value</i> |
|--|--|----------|----------------------|----------------|
| Organizational<br>Commitment<br>regressed with | SKILL  | .214*    | .050                 | 16.92*         |
|  | SKILL AND LS                                   | .252*    | .063                 | 11.98*         |
|  | SKILL AND LS AND TJH                           | .255*    | .065                 | 8.20*          |
|  | SKILL AND LS AND TJH AND ST                    | .256*    | .066                 | 6.16*          |
|  | SKILL AND LS AND TJH AND ST<br>AND NJC         | .257*    | .067                 | 5.53*          |
|  | SKILL AND LS AND TJH AND ST<br>AND NJC AND TCW | .257*    | .067                 | 5.50*          |

*Regression Equation*

$$\text{Organizational Commitment} = 1.85 + .19 \text{ SKILL} + .14 \text{ LS} - .04 \text{ TJH} - .02 \text{ ST} + .01 \text{ NJC} - .00 \text{ TCW}$$

(F = 12.41)\* (F = 6.40)\* (F = 0.64) (F = 0.09) (F = 0.02) (F = 0.00)

\* Significant at the .001 level

\*\* Significant at the .01 level

to be the most important background variables related to commitment. Jointly they explained only 6% of the variance in commitment.

With eight job characteristics specified as independent variables and a sample size of 360, the stepwise regression analysis is presented in Table 4. It was clear from Table 4 that only five of the eight job characteristics were significantly related to commitment. These characteristics, as they appeared in the equation, were variety, slack, relief, move, and think. They altogether accounted for a modest 27% of the variance in commitment. Variety in a worker's job was the most important factor in explaining his commitment accounting for 16% of the variance.

**TABLE 4**

**Stepwise Regression Between Job Factors  
and Organizational Commitment  
(N = 360)**

| <i>Dependent Variable</i>                | <i>Independent Variables</i>                         | <i>R</i> | <i>R<sup>2</sup></i> | <i>F-Value</i> |
|--|--|----------|----------------------|----------------|
| Organizational Commitment Regressed with | VA   | .401*    | .161                 | 67.81*         |
|  | VA AND SL  | .455*    | .207                 | 45.75*         |
|  | VA AND SL AND RE                                     | .489*    | .239                 | 36.75*         |
|  | VA AND SL AND RE AND MO                              | .509*    | .259                 | 30.46*         |
|  | VA AND SL AND RE AND MO AND TH                       |          |                      |                |
|  | VA AND SL AND RE AND MO AND TH AND SP                | .518*    | .267                 | 25.57*         |
|  | VA AND SL AND RE AND MO AND TH AND SP                | .520*    | .271                 | 21.48*         |
|  | VA AND SL AND RE AND MO AND TH AND SP AND TA         | .521*    | .272                 | 18.46*         |
|  | VA AND SL AND RE AND MO AND TH AND SP AND TA         |          |                      |                |
|  | VA AND SL AND RE AND MO AND TH AND SP AND TA AND AT. | .523*    | .273                 | 16.20*         |

*Regression Equation*

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Organizational Commitment} &= 2.74 + .27 \text{ VA} + .15 \text{ SL} + .13 \text{ RE} + .13 \text{ MO} + .11 \text{ TH} - .05 \text{ SP} \\ &\quad - .04 \text{ TA} + .04 \text{ AT} \\ & \quad (F = 28.52)^* (F = 8.67)^* (F = 6.02)^* (F = 6.03)^* (F = 4.54)^* \\ & \quad (F = 0.83) (F = 0.57) (F = 0.55) \end{aligned}$$

\* significant at the .001 level

\*\* significant at the .01 level

For the final analysis variables which were found to be related to commitment at .01 level or better (according to the regression equations) within demographic, background and job variables were again

subjected to stepwise regression. Since it is our intention to identify the important predictors of organizational commitment among blue collar workers, we felt that a low alpha level would achieve that purpose and hence established *a priori* the .01 level of significance.

It should be recalled that according to our previous analyses reported in Tables 2, 3, and 4, eight variables had been found to be related to commitment at .01 level or better. Among these variables, one variable was a demographic variable (i.e., age), two were background variables (i.e., skill and length of service); and five were from job characteristics (i.e., variety, slack, relief, think and move). When these variables were used as independent variables and organizational commitment as a dependent variable for a sample size of 345, the results presented in Table 5 were obtained.

It is clear from Table 5 that six out of eight variables are related significantly to commitment. These variables, as they appeared in the

**TABLE 5**

**Stepwise Regression Between Eight Selected Demographic,  
Background, and Job Factors and Organizational Commitment  
(n = 345)**

| <i>Dependent Variable</i>                      | <i>Independent Variable</i>                                | <i>R</i>   | <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> | <i>F-value</i> |  |
|--|--|--|-----------------------|----------------|--|
| Organizational<br>Commitment<br>regressed with | VA   | .411*  | .169                  | 69.79*         |  |
|  | VA AND SL  | .454*  | .215                  | 46.94*         |  |
|  | VA AND SL AND AGE  | .502*  | .252                  | 38.32*         |  |
|  | VA AND SL AND AGE AND RE                                   | .549*  | .302                  | 36.77*         |  |
|  | VA AND SL AND AGE AND RE<br>AND MO                         | .564*  | .318                  | 31.57*         |  |
|  | VA AND SL AND AGE AND RE<br>AND MO AND TH                  | .577*  | .333                  | 28.15*         |  |
|  | VA AND SL AND AGE AND RE<br>AND MO AND TH AND SK           | .583*  | .340                  | 21.69          |  |
|  | VA AND SL AND AGE AND RE<br>AND MO AND TH AND SK<br>AND LS | .584*  | .341                  | 19.27*         |  |
|  | <i>Regression Equation</i>                                 |  |                       |                |  |
|  | Organizational<br>Commitment                               | 2.09 + .23 VA + .19 SL + .29 AGE + .17 RE + .14 MO + .12 TH<br>+ .05 SK + -.03 LS<br>(F = 19.5)* (F = 15.9)* (F = 23.7)* (F = 12.5)* (F = 7.7)* (F = 6.3)*<br>(F = 0.96) (F = 0.2) |                       |                |  |

\* significant at the .001 level

\*\* significant at the .01 level

equation, were variety, slack, age, relief, move and think. They, altogether, explained over 33% of the variance in commitment. Five of the six variables belong to job characteristics in category and the sixth is a demographic variable. Variety and slack appeared to be the two most important variables and they alone explained over 21% of the variance in commitment. In addition, the regression equation in Table 5 indicated that the two background variables (i.e., skill level and length of service) which were previously found to be related to commitment were not significantly related to commitment when combined with demographic and job factors.

## DISCUSSION

The results obtained seemed to be consistent with Becker's theory of commitment. The positive relationship of age to organizational commitment suggested an accrual of investments for the individual in the organization resulting in increased commitment to it. Advancing age could also render a person less attractive to other organizations thus curtailing his or her mobility. In such a situation, there is the likelihood of the individual developing a commitment to the organization in an attempt to reduce his or her dissonance. The preliminary analysis where the demographic, background and job factors were regressed separately with organizational commitment showed significant results for age among demographic factors, skill level and seniority among background factors and all except attention, talk and speed of the job factors.

In the final analysis, skill level and seniority became insignificant predictors of organizational commitment while all the five job factors continued to be significant. It has been suggested in the literature that job factors affect individual attitudes towards work and the work organization (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Stone & Porter, 1975). The reason for this can be readily seen from the perspective of exchange theory. Jobs serve as the linking mechanism between the individual and the organization. The individual is likely to exchange his or her loyalty or commitment to the organization for certain valued outcomes such as variety, slack periods, relief facility, etc. in a blue-collar job. The more he or she finds such factors in one's job, the more likely his or her commitment would be to the organization which provides such factors. Table 5 also indicated such job factors to be the dominant predictors of organizational commitment.

The question still remains as to how one would explain the statistically insignificant coefficients obtained for seniority and skill level as

predictors of organizational commitment. There are two alternatives one can take in such a situation. The first and simpler one is to accept the null hypothesis on the basis that the significant relationships these variables exhibited in the earlier analysis might be spurious. The other alternative is to examine the soundness of the theoretical explanation and judge the significance on that basis. As for seniority and skill level the theory would suggest that time invested becomes a valued asset in itself, while the privileges associated with seniority, and skills make it easier to derive additional rewards from the organization (Buchanan, 1974; Grusky, 1966; Hrebiniak and Alutto, 1972). Thus there is a strong theoretical reason to reject the null hypotheses here. Wonnacott and Wonnacott (1970) would argue

« while it is true that our regression coefficient is not 'statistically significant', this does *not* prove there is no relationship between the independent and the dependent variable.<sup>1</sup> It is easy to see why. Suppose that we have a strong theoretical ground for believing that the dependent variable is positively related to the independent variable (pp. 65) ».

In the regression equation in Table 5, this belief is confirmed. The independent variables namely, skill level and seniority are related to organizational commitment in the direction predicted by the theory.

« Thus our statistical evidence is consistent with our prior belief even though it is not as strong a confirmation as we might like. To accept the null hypothesis and conclude that the independent variables do not affect the dependent variable would be in direct contradiction to both our prior belief and the statistical evidence » (Wonnacott & Wonnacott, 1970, pp. 65-66).

Hence one should keep in mind that statistical theory provides only incomplete grounds for accepting the null hypothesis; acceptance must be based also on extra-statistical judgment, with prior belief playing a key role (Wonnacott & Wonnacott, 1970). In the light of the foregoing the second alternative sounds more plausible.

Here the authors would like to elaborate on how Becker's theoretical notions of sidebets assume an empirical relevance in the case of blue collar workers. Becker (1960) argued that the existence of « generalized cultural expectations » would impose certain penalties on the worker who violates them. For instance, the society is less tolerant of the older worker than the younger one on the issue of « job hopping ». As one grows older he or she is expected to behave in a more « res-

<sup>1</sup> The terms 'independent variable' and 'dependent variable' are substituted for algebraic terms in the original to make the quote relevant to the context.

possible» manner. Here responsible behavior is equated to not straying from job to job. The above societal expectation coupled with the fact that an older worker is less attractive to other employing organizations mentioned at the beginning of this section renders that person to be more committed to his organization. This line of reasoning is supported empirically by our results. Becker (1960) also suggests that «impersonal bureaucratic arrangements» might make sidebets for the individual thereby making the proposition of leaving the organization less attractive. For instance, private pension plans in Canada are often vested and impose a certain financial penalty for leaving the organization. The other side of the coin is that the older worker who has accrued seniority in an organization and acquired certain skills from experience is likely to value the monetary benefits they bring to that person as a result of his or her continued membership in their organization. The above theoretical predictions are borne out by the empirical evidence in this study. Another of Becker's social mechanisms was what he called the process of «individual adjustment to social positions». According to the above process, a worker might get so used to the characteristics of his or her job that he or she would not view any move in a favorable light. In so doing the worker had staked the ease of performance in the position on remaining where he or she was (Becker 1960). Such a commitment would be stronger especially if those job characteristics are intrinsically desirable. In other words, Becker's theory would suggest that job characteristics might influence commitment such that the workers had bet the ease of performance of their job on remaining where they were and in this sense were committed to stay. The results obtained bear testimony to the above fact. Hence it is fair to argue that Becker's theory of commitment offers some insight in understanding the phenomenon of organizational commitment on an empirical basis and enable us to isolate the possible predictors that may be relevant at the blue collar level.

In conclusion one can say that job factors play a dominant role in determining organizational commitment compared to demographic and background factors. Among the job factors, variety, presence of slack periods, relief facility, facility to move about and the possibility to think about other things seemed to be the key predictors of organizational commitment. Skill level and seniority were the background variables found related to organizational commitment though the relationships were not very strong. Age was the only demographic predictor of organizational commitment. Future research is called for validating these findings and to examine the interaction effects of the demographic, background and job factors on organizational commitment.

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## L'intégration des cols bleus dans l'entreprise

Le présent article a pour objet de mesurer le degré d'intégration à l'entreprise parmi les cols bleus à partir d'une enquête effectuée au Canada. L'intégration à l'entreprise se réfère à la nature des relations d'un individu avec l'entreprise considérée dans son sens le plus large en ce qu'il tend à indiquer la volonté ferme d'en faire partie, le désir d'y consacrer de grands efforts, la croyance totale aux valeurs qu'elle véhicule et l'acceptation de ces valeurs. La revue de ce qui s'est écrit sur l'intégration à l'entreprise révèle deux tendances majeures sur lesquelles repose l'étude de cette question. L'une de ces tendances consiste dans la théorie des échanges réciproques de Homan selon laquelle l'engagement dans l'entreprise est perçu comme l'aboutissement d'intercommunications entre le travailleur et l'entreprise. Cette théorie s'appuie sur l'idée que plus les rapports sont avantageux pour l'individu, plus son attachement à l'entreprise s'accroît. La deuxième théorie, celle de Becker, est plus satisfaisante que celle de Homan en ce qu'elle y ajoute un élément de temps et la notion de facteurs divers mais voisins. Selon cette deuxième théorie, l'intégration à l'entreprise apparaît comme un phénomène structurel qui serait à la fois le résultat des rapports d'intercommunication entre l'individu et l'entreprise et de l'influence de ces autres facteurs. L'étude présente est fondée sur la deuxième théorie à cause de son caractère plus étendu comparée à la simple formule d'échanges réciproques. L'analyse des données recueillies sur le sujet permet d'identifier nombre de concordances indiquant que l'attachement à l'entreprise provient, non seulement du réseau d'échanges, mais aussi d'autres facteurs comme la situation démographique, les états de service et les conditions du travail. La présente étude vise à isoler, parmi les facteurs ci-dessus, les variables-clés qui manifestent l'attachement à l'entreprise parmi les cols bleus.

Les répondants, dans l'étude présente, se recrutaient parmi les employés de la production de six entreprises dans une ville de l'Ouest canadien. Il s'agissait de moyennes entreprises dont le nombre de salariés variait de 200 à 600 personnes. Des questionnaires accompagnés d'enveloppes-réponses affranchies furent adressées à 550 cols bleus. Après un rappel, soixante-huit pour cent (377) ont retourné des questionnaires utilisables. Selon les diverses entreprises, le pourcentage des réponses variait de 42 à 81 pour cent.

Les variables démographiques mesurées comprenaient l'âge du répondant, son sexe, son degré de scolarité, son statut matrimonial, son revenu et le nombre des enfants qui vivaient au foyer. Les variables relatives aux états de



service retenues consistaient dans le métier, le quart de travail, la durée de l'emploi au service de l'entreprise, le nombre d'emplois occupés dans l'entreprise, le nombre d'emplois à temps plein au cours de la vie et le nombre d'employeurs pour lesquels le répondant avait travaillé. Les caractéristiques de l'emploi actuel, dont il fut tenu compte au cours de l'enquête, étaient l'occasion de causer avec les compagnons tout en travaillant, la facilité de penser à autre chose pendant l'exécution du travail, la possibilité de détente au travail, l'existence de périodes creuses au cours de la séance de travail, l'occasion de se déplacer en travaillant, la marche au travail, la variété des tâches de l'emploi et l'attention requise pour exécuter la tâche. Toutes les variables précédentes exigeaient de répondre à une seule question. L'intégration à l'entreprise fut mesurée à partir des réponses à douze questions selon le barème à trois degrés de Jamal: soit, d'accord, incertain, en désaccord. Selon la formule Spearman-Brown, l'échelle de l'intégration à l'entreprise s'établissait à un indice 0.85 de véracité interne.

Des analyses de corrélation furent entreprises pour découvrir la nature du rapport entre les facteurs relatifs à la condition démographique, aux états de service et aux caractéristiques de l'emploi d'une part, et l'engagement dans l'entreprise, d'autres part. Parmi les variables démographiques, l'âge fut la seule variable qui s'avéra significative en regard de l'intégration à l'entreprise. Deux variables seulement relatives aux états de service, la durée de service continu dans l'entreprise et le métier démontre un rapport significatif en regard de l'intégration. Les huit caractéristiques de l'emploi, par ailleurs, indiquaient un rapport significatif avec le degré d'intégration.

L'analyse de régression graduée fut utilisée pour établir l'importance relative de chacune des variables dans les trois catégories (démographie, états de service, caractéristiques de l'emploi) dans la détermination de l'intégration à l'entreprise et pour en extraire celles qui exigeaient une analyse supplémentaire. Parmi les six variables démographiques retenues comme variables indépendantes, les résultats de régression graduée indiquent que l'âge est de beaucoup la plus importante variable rattachée à l'intégration dans l'entreprise, bien qu'il n'explique que cinq pour cent de variation. Si l'on considère les sept variables relatives aux états de service, retenues également comme variables indépendantes, l'analyse de régression graduée indique que le métier et la durée du service sont les plus importants facteurs de cette catégorie reliés à l'intégration dans l'entreprise et ils expliquent six pour cent de la variation. En ce qui concerne les caractéristiques de l'emploi retenues comme variables indépendantes, les résultats de l'analyse de régression graduée montrent que cinq d'entre elles, (la variété des tâches, le peu d'activité, la détente, le mouvement et l'attention) parmi les huit caractéristiques, sont reliées à l'intégration dans l'entreprise et comptent pour un modeste deux pour cent de variation dans l'intégration ou l'engagement.

Comme analyse finale, les variables qu'on a trouvées reliées à l'intégration ou l'engagement.

Comme analyse finale, les variables qu'on a trouvées reliées à l'intégration à .01 ou plus (en conformité aux équations de régression) à l'intérieur des trois catégories furent de nouveau soumises à une régression graduée conformément aux analyses antérieures. On a trouvé que huit variables étaient reliées

à l'intégration à un taux de .01 ou plus. Lorsque ces variables indépendantes furent utilisées comme variables indépendantes, les résultats de la régression graduée montrent que six de ces huit variables étaient reliées d'une façon significative à l'intégration à l'entreprise. Ces variables, comme l'indique l'équation, sont la variété des tâches, le peu d'activité, l'âge, la possibilité de détente, le mouvement et le degré d'attention requis et elles comptent pour trente-trois pour cent de la variation dans l'intégration à l'entreprise.

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