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Development and validation of a commitment to organizational career scale: At the crossroads of individuals' career aspirations and organizations' needs

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This paper introduces the construct of commitment to organizational career (COC). Conceptualized as a specific form of goal commitment, COC reflects an individual's commitment to the goal of pursuing a long and successful career in an organization. We developed a 5-item measure of COC and examined its validity and reliability in four studies involving employees from diverse organizations and occupations ($Ns = 312, 187, 199, 309$). We explore COC's distinctiveness from related constructs, including organizational commitment components (i.e., affective, normative, and continuance subdimensions) and career commitment, as well as its ability to predict turnover intention and voluntary turnover. Finally, we examine COC's antecedents and specify boundary conditions to its relationship to turnover. Overall, results support the reliability and validity of the COC measure. We discuss how COC contributes to generate promising research avenues for the career and commitment literatures.

Practitioner points

- We introduce the *commitment to organizational career* (COC) construct.
- Four studies provide reliability and validity evidence for a COC measure that can be used in future research.
- COC adds to the career and commitment literatures and directs attention to organizational career goals as a common ground linking individuals' and organizations' interests.
- This common ground may provide a basis for both parties to build mutually beneficial relationships.

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The career landscape is changing. The traditional career, characterized by hierarchical advancement, organizational career management, and low mobility, is giving way to contemporary career approaches (Gubler, Arnold, & Coombs, 2014). The notions of 'boundaryless career' and 'protean career' (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009), for example, illustrate the fact that employees of the 21st century are more self-directed than before. They take responsibility for their career development. However, increased self-direction does not necessarily imply increased mobility across organizations (Rodrigues & Guest, 2010). As pointed out by Gubler *et al.* (2014; see also Hall, 2002), a strong emphasis on self-direction may coexist with low levels of mobility. This would be the case among individuals who are committed to their organizational career.

Drawing from previous research linking identity construction, careers, and goal constructs, we introduce the construct of commitment to organizational career (COC). We define COC as individuals' commitment to the goal of pursuing a long and successful career in an organization. In a nutshell, COC reflects who individuals want to become and what they seek to accomplish in the organization to which they belong. The more the individuals are committed to their organizational career, the more that goal is central to their identity and the more they deploy efforts towards organizational career goal attainment. Thus, we view COC as a specific form of goal commitment that originates from individuals and operates in a particular organizational context.

This paper aims to introduce COC as a meaningful construct and to provide, through four studies, validity and reliability evidence for an empirical measure of the construct. Consistent with Hinkin (1998), Study 1 introduces the COC measure and examines its discriminant validity. COC reflects the extent to which individuals commit to identity-relevant career goals in the organization. Thus, we emphasize how COC relates to and is distinguishable from the components of organizational commitment (i.e., affective, normative, and continuance subdimensions) and career-oriented commitment (hereinafter career commitment). We also examine how COC differs from affective occupational commitment and job embeddedness. Moreover, Study 1 examines COC's predictive validity. We test COC's ability to predict turnover intention, over and above related constructs. We contend that COC should prompt individuals to remain members of a specific organization in the long term, and hence should be associated with reduced turnover intention. Study 2 extends the examination of discriminant validity and predictive validity by demonstrating that COC uniquely predicts voluntary turnover.

Study 3 aims at better understanding who is more likely to experience COC and in which context COC is more likely to flourish. We contend that organization-based self-esteem, supervisory career mentoring, and organizational support for development independently and interactively predict COC. Organization-based self-esteem should positively influence COC because it reflects the extent to which organizational membership is central to individuals' self-view. Supervisory career mentoring and organizational support for development should positively influence COC and strengthen organization-based self-esteem's effect on COC. These direct and moderating effects are expected because supervisory career mentoring and organizational support for development both indicate that the organization provides a context favourable to career goal attainment. Study 3 also examines the test-retest reliability of the COC scale.

Finally, Study 4 aims at better circumscribing the scope of the COC construct. We posit that affective commitment to the supervisor and perceived supervisor networking ability jointly moderate COC's relationship to turnover. We contend that when employees strongly commit to their supervisor, the supervisor may be *willing* to help them attain their organizational career goals. Moreover, when the supervisor is perceived to have a

strong networking ability, the supervisor may be seen as *able* to support employees' career in the organization. Thus, high levels on both moderators should strengthen COC's negative relationship with turnover.

From a practitioner perspective, COC directs attention to organizational career goals as a common ground linking employees' and organizations' interests. This common ground may provide a basis upon which both parties can build mutually beneficial relationships. For employees, pursuing career goals in a specific organization has career advantages. A long-term relationship to a specific organization is a strong driver of career advancement (Bidwell & Mollick, 2015; Koch, Forgues, & Monties, 2017; Ng & Feldman, 2010a) while moving across organizations may sometimes harm individuals' careers (Baruch & Vardi, 2016; Dobrev & Merluzzi, 2018; Fuller, 2008). For organizations, committed employees are critical for attaining organizational goals and, in the longer term, ensuring continuity and growth (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Hoekstra, 2011). Building on COC, organizations can leverage potential synergies between employees' goals and organizational goals and foster employees' willingness to fulfill their career aspirations in the organization. Thus, COC has practical value.

COC: Background and definition

COC stems from the literature on identity, careers, and goals. Identity reflects individuals' sense of who they are. As a 'root construct' (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000; Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008), identity locates individuals in a social space and influences their functioning by providing a basis for motivated behaviour. Identity is dynamic because individuals develop their sense of self over time (Albert *et al.*, 2000; Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Caza, Vough, & Puranik, 2018; Gecas & Burke, 1995). The process of identity construction, sometimes referred to as 'identity work', is quite complex: It is abstract and idiosyncratic, more or less conscious, and not necessarily linear (Caza, Moss, & Vough, 2018; Caza, Vough, *et al.*, 2018). Thus, the boundaries of the identity construction process are fuzzy.

Nevertheless, previous work suggests that people develop their identity throughout their career, that is, the sequence of work-related experiences that span their life (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Hall, 2002). Careers engage individuals in a holistic manner and shape, over time, the meanings embedded in their identity (Grote & Hall, 2013; Savickas *et al.*, 2009). Previous work further suggests that identity construction is bounded by social contexts and structures, including organizations (e.g., Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Caza, Vough, *et al.*, 2018; Gecas & Burke, 1995), and is shaped by the choices individuals make and the goals they commit to over their career (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004; Guichard, Pouyau, de Calan, & Dumora, 2012; Hoekstra, 2011). If we assume that (1) identity construction extends over employees' careers and (2) the organizational context shapes identity construction, we can infer that the organizational career, defined as the work-related experiences that span the duration of one's membership to a particular organization,¹ represents a vehicle for identity construction. If we further assume that (3) goal commitment is a manifestation of identity construction, we can reason that employees build their identity at least partly through a commitment to the goal of pursuing a long and successful career in the organization (i.e., COC).

¹ Note that we refer to organizational careers as careers that take place in the context of specific organizations rather than as careers that are led by organizations (vs. led by individuals) (see Hall & Mirvis, 1995).

COC refers to both employees' aspiration for a long and successful organizational career (i.e., the identity-relevant goal) and to the means developed to reach this goal. It reflects who individuals want to become and what they seek to accomplish in the organization. A successful career in the organization should involve achieving 'desirable work-related outcomes' (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005). However, as what individuals find desirable may vary (Arthur *et al.*, 2005), COC encompasses but is not limited to upward advancement. Organizational career goals may include a promotion to a higher position in the organization (i.e., vertical career progression) or a lateral move to a valued position in a given functional area (i.e., horizontal career progression). It can also refer to broader aspirations such as becoming an important member of the organization. As such, employees with high COC should view their organizational career as a central element of their identity. They should extend efforts towards organizational career goal attainment and persist in the pursuit of that goal over time. In contrast, employees with low COC should not view the organizational career as being self-defining. These employees are not expected to seek career attainment in the organization. Thus, COC goes beyond general goal commitment (i.e., one's determination to reach a goal; Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987; Locke & Latham, 1990): It reflects commitment to a central yet overlooked identity-relevant, career-related goal.

STUDY I: EXAMINING COC'S DISTINCTIVENESS AND ABILITY TO PREDICT INTENDED TURNOVER

Previous research has shown that employees hold multiple commitments and bonds in their career (van Rossenberg *et al.*, 2018). Thus, COC should be examined in connection to, and distinguished from, closely related commitments and bonds. This is necessary to delineate COC's content domain and to demonstrate its discriminant validity. In this study, we first discuss how COC differs from organizational commitment components (affective, normative, and continuance subdimensions) and career commitment, which we view as closest to COC. Indeed, organizational commitment binds individuals to a specific organization while career commitment binds individuals to career goals regardless of the specific organization in which they are currently employed. In between, COC addresses the possibility that individuals may seek career goal attainment in a specific organization. We also distinguish COC from affective occupational commitment and job embeddedness. To examine COC's predictive validity, we then elaborate on how COC should predict turnover intention, over and above organizational commitment components, career commitment, affective occupational commitment, and job embeddedness.

Beforehand, it is important to mention that several commitment models have been proposed over the years (e.g., Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Klein, Molloy, & Brinsfield, 2012; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Morrow, 1993). Among them, Meyer and Allen's (1991; see also Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001) three-component model is most widely studied (van Rossenberg *et al.*, 2018). This model distinguishes among three components, that is, affective, normative, and continuance (which subsumes perceived sacrifice and few alternatives; Taing, Granger, Groff, Jackson, & Johnson, 2011) and has been applied to various targets such as the organization and the supervisor. As this model is central in the history of commitment research, we mainly refer to this model.

Further, we contend that COC differs from Klein *et al.*' (2012) unidimensional, target-free model of commitment. These authors defined commitment as 'a volitional

psychological bond reflecting dedication to and responsibility for a particular target' (Klein *et al.*, 2012, p. 137). COC differs from this approach in two important ways. First, when individuals commit to organizational career goals, they project themselves into the future, which means that COC cannot be separated from envisioning one's own future in the organization (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). COC is thus more than a psychological bond reflecting dedication and responsibility. Second, conceptually, COC relates to identity construction (Caza, Vough, *et al.*, 2018; Hall, 2002; Savickas *et al.*, 2009), while Klein and colleagues' view of commitment does not incorporate identity building.

COC and organizational commitment components

Affective commitment captures individuals' emotional attachment to the organization. It is the component that shares the most conceptual space with COC notably because, like COC, it is tied to a desire to remain in the organization. However, the two constructs are distinguishable. First, affective commitment is based on, but distinguishable from, identification to the organization (i.e., the perception of oneness or belongingness to the organization; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). In the case of affective commitment, the self and the organization are distinct entities, which means that affectively committed employees feel 'insulated from the organization's fate' (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008, p. 333). In contrast, COC reflects a process of identity construction, suggesting that it helps employees form their identity (Caza, Vough, *et al.*, 2018; Hall, 2002; Savickas *et al.*, 2009). In other words, through COC, employees' long-term contributions to the organization and career development within the organization build their identity. As such, organizational career experiences are intimately tied to the development of employees' sense of self.

Second, as it is a necessary condition to the fulfilment of employees' career aspirations, maintaining a long-term membership in the organization is a defining feature of COC. Hence, individuals who are strongly committed to their organizational career should seek to remain in the organization in the long term. In contrast, remaining in the organization in the long term is not a prerequisite for affective commitment. Indeed, employees of the 21st century do not necessarily consider that long-term employment is part of the psychological contract (Baruch & Vardi, 2016; De Vos, De Stobbeleir, & Meganck, 2009; Rousseau, 1990). This suggests that even when experiencing a strong affective commitment, employees may not expect to be engaged in a long-term relationship with their organization. In sum, high-COC individuals – not necessarily individuals with a strong affective commitment – seek to stay in the organization in the long term. In contrast, employees with a low COC or a low affective commitment likely place little value on organizational membership: those with low COC, because they do not value organizational career goal attainment, and those with low affective commitment, because the organization in itself is not a valued commitment target.

COC should also relate, albeit less strongly, to the normative, perceived sacrifice, and few alternatives commitment components. Normative commitment reflects a sense of moral obligation towards the organization. Perceived sacrifice commitment is based on the perception that investments would be sacrificed if one were to leave the organization. Few alternatives commitment is based on the perception that few alternatives to the current employment are available outside the organization. Like COC, these commitments pertain to a specific organization. However, they underlie different rationales for organizational membership (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Normative commitment motivates individuals to remain because they feel they ought to stay. Perceived sacrifice

and few alternatives commitments, which both reflect calculative motives, make employees more likely to stay because of the cost of leaving. In contrast, COC makes employees remain in the long term because they seek career attainment in the current organization. Hence, COC should be distinguishable from normative, perceived sacrifice, and few alternatives commitments.

COC and career commitment

Career commitment reflects the extent to which people feel committed to the individual goal of advancing their personal careers (Ellemers, de Gilder, & van den Heuvel, 1998). It should be related to COC because both constructs focus on career goal attainment. However, career commitment is directed to a target that potentially encompasses multiple organizations, depending on where the opportunities for career goal attainment emerge and how the individual can seize them (Ellemers *et al.*, 1998). Thus, individuals with high career commitment do not necessarily aim to pursue their career in a specific organization. In contrast, high-COC individuals focus on career attainment in their organization. The work-related activities they undertake in the organization and those they expect to carry out in the future strengthen their sense of self (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Hall, 2002; Savickas *et al.*, 2009). Similarly, individuals with low career commitment do not seek career attainment, while low-COC individuals do not seek to progress specifically in their organizational career. As such, COC should be distinguishable from career commitment.

COC and affective occupational commitment

Affective occupational commitment refers to the individuals' emotional attachment to their occupation (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Most studies on occupational commitment have focused on this form of commitment (Meyer & Espinoza, 2016). As the willingness to pursue a career within an occupation and an organization are often connected (Lee, Carswell, & Allen, 2000; Meyer *et al.*, 1993), COC and affective occupational commitment should share a common ground. However, affective occupational commitment is 'transferable across settings' (Lee *et al.*, 2000, p. 800), as employees with high levels of this commitment can navigate across organizations to pursue their professional development. In contrast, COC binds individuals to their current organization in the long term. Thus, the two constructs should be distinguishable.

COC and job embeddedness

Given its connection to the commitment field (Holtom, 2016), job embeddedness shares conceptual grounds with COC. Research on job embeddedness suggests that on-the-job and off-the-job factors prevent individuals from leaving their jobs (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001). These factors include individuals' links to other individuals, teams, and groups, their perception of fit with the job, organization, and community, and their perception of the cost of material or psychological benefits that would be forfeited by leaving a job (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001). Individuals weigh these different factors and come to develop a global impression of job embeddedness (Crossley, Bennett, Jex, & Burnfield, 2007). Thus, job embeddedness is a reflective construct that captures the extent to which individuals feel entrenched in the organization, regardless of why they

feel that way, how much they like it or whether they have chosen their current situation (Crossley *et al.*, 2007). In contrast, COC focuses on organizational career goal attainment and involves an active orientation towards that goal. The two constructs should thus be distinguishable. Overall, the above development leads to the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: COC is distinguishable from (a) affective commitment, (b) normative commitment, (c) perceived sacrifice commitment, (d) few alternatives commitment, (e) career commitment, (f) affective occupational commitment, and (g) job embeddedness.

Predicting turnover intention

Turnover intention reflects individuals' intent to leave the organization where they are employed. It is a central outcome of COC. Individuals who are committed to their organizational career are expected to view their current experiences and career prospects with the organization as being strongly self-defining (Hall, 2002; Savickas *et al.*, 2009). Thus, these employees' self-views are tied to belonging to the organization on a long-term basis. As a result, COC should lead to reduced turnover intention. Given that COC captures a unique content domain, those identity-based binding mechanisms should explain variance in turnover intention over and above that explained by related constructs (i.e., organizational commitment components, career commitment, affective occupational commitment, and job embeddedness), which were previously found to predict intended turnover (Crossley *et al.*, 2007; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnysky, 2002; Meyer *et al.*, 1993; Vandenberghe & Ok, 2013). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 2: COC negatively predicts turnover intention, over and above organizational commitment components (i.e., affective, normative, perceived sacrifice, and few alternatives), career commitment, affective occupational commitment, and job embeddedness.

Method

Samples and procedure

The study was conducted in Eastern Canada. The participants, all French-speaking, were recruited by using the research team's network. They were contacted via email and asked to participate in a study of job attitudes. The email described the study and contained a link to an online questionnaire including among others, measures of COC, organizational commitment components, career commitment, affective occupational commitment, job embeddedness, turnover intention, and demographics. Participants were employed in a variety of jobs (e.g., clerical work, management, sales) and industries (e.g., finance, manufacturing, real estate). Questionnaires were obtained from 312 individuals. In this sample, average age was 38.93 years ($SD = 10.32$), average organizational tenure was 7.97 years ($SD = 6.51$), and 64.10% of the respondents were women. The respondents were employed in large organizations (> 1,000 employees) (41.6%), mid-sized organizations (101–1,000 employees) (27.4%), or small organizations (< 100 employees) (31.0%).

Measures

When not available in French, the scale items were subjected to translation–back-translation from English. The responses to all measures were provided on 5-point Likert-type scales (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*).

COC

We used a deductive approach to develop the COC measure, which is justified when ‘the theoretical foundation provides enough information to generate the initial set of items’ (Hinkin, 1998, p. 106). As stated above, COC’s content domain lies at the intersection of organizational commitment and career commitment. Thus, we drew upon the definitions of and construct domain associated with organizational commitment and career commitment to develop the COC measure. This process resulted in an initial set of six items. We submitted these items along with the 6-item scales of affective commitment (Bentein, Vandenberg, Vandenberghe, & Stinglhamber, 2005), the organizational commitment component that is most closely related to COC, and career commitment (Ellemers *et al.*, 1998) and the definitions of the three constructs to nine independent experts. We asked the experts to assign each of the items to the relevant construct. The six COC items obtained a percentage of correct assignment ranging from 89% to 100%. These results suggest that the six COC items captured very well COC’s content domain and displayed an adequate content validity (Hinkin, 1998). Then, we pilot tested this 6-item scale on an independent sample of 210 French Canadian employees. The respondents’ age averaged 35.52 years ($SD = 8.45$), and their tenure averaged 7.32 years ($SD = 7.39$). Among respondents, 42.70% were women, 58.60% were employees in non-supervisory positions, and 51.40% worked in the public sector. Organizational size was distributed as follows: 1–100 employees (25.36%), 101–500 employees (22.01%), 501–1,000 employees (8.13%), and 1,000+ employees (44.50%). Using principal axis factoring, one factor explaining 57.24% of the variance among the items was extracted. However, as one item (‘I wouldn’t mind pursuing my career elsewhere’ [reverse coded]) displayed a low loading (.32), we dropped it and re-analysed the data. This resulted in the extraction of one factor (eigenvalue = 3.31) explaining 66.22% of the variance (loadings = 0.78, 0.56, 0.85, 0.78, 0.82; $\alpha = .87$). This five-item scale (Table 1) was used in Study 1 ($\alpha = .91$).

Organizational commitment

To measure organizational commitment components, we used Bentein *et al.*’s (2005) adapted versions of Meyer *et al.* (1993) affective (6 items; e.g., ‘I feel emotionally attached

Table 1. Commitment to organizational career (COC) items

| Item |
|---|
| 1. Having a career within this organization is really important to me |
| 2. I don’t especially care about having a long career within this particular organization (R) |
| 3. Becoming an important member of this organization is one of my deepest aspirations |
| 4. I want to move up as much as possible within this organization |
| 5. Getting a valued position within this organization is one of my greatest challenges |

Note. R = reverse coded.

to this organization'; $\alpha = .88$), normative (6 items; e.g., 'It would not be morally right for me to leave this organization now'; $\alpha = .90$), perceived sacrifice (3 items; e.g., 'I would not leave this organization because of what I would stand to lose'; $\alpha = .66$), and few alternatives (3 items; e.g., 'I have no choice but to stay with this organization'; $\alpha = .78$) commitment scales.

Career commitment

A 6-item scale from Ellemers *et al.* (1998) was used to assess career commitment (e.g., 'The ambitions in life mainly have to do with my career'; $\alpha = .91$).

Affective occupational commitment

Affective occupational commitment was measured using Stinglhamber, Bentein, and Vandenberghe's (2002) 6-item scale. A sample item states, 'My occupation means a lot to me' ($\alpha = .95$).

Job embeddedness

Job embeddedness was measured using the 7-item global, reflective measure developed by Crossley *et al.* (2007). A sample item states, 'I'm too caught up in this organization to leave' ($\alpha = .74$).

Turnover intention

Two items adapted from Hom and Griffeth (1991) were used to measure turnover intention (i.e., 'I intend to look for a job in another organization in the next year' and 'I often think about leaving my organization'; $\alpha = .83$).

Control variables

We controlled for age, gender, and organizational tenure in the analyses predicting turnover intention, as these variables have been found to be related to this outcome in previous research (e.g., Bal, De Cooman, & Mol, 2013; Peltokorpi, Allen, & Froese, 2015).

Results

Hypothesis 1a–g

As in the pilot test, we first ran an exploratory factor analysis with the COC items. This resulted in the extraction of one factor (eigenvalue = 3.68) explaining 73.51% of the variance in the items (loadings = 0.84, 0.79, 0.88, 0.80, 0.78). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of this model through LISREL 8.80 (Jöreskog, Sörbom, Du Toit, & Du Toit, 2001) and maximum-likelihood estimation indicated that a covariance should be added between the errors of items 1 and 2. This was justified as a very similar item wording was used in the two items (Table 1) (Marsh *et al.*, 2013). This model yielded a good fit: $\chi^2(4) = 17.66$, $p < .01$, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.99, non-normed fit index (NNFI) = .97, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.11, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.02. The completely standardized loadings for the

Table 2. Study 1: Confirmatory factor analysis results

| Model | χ^2 | df | CFI | NNFI | RMSEA | SRMR | $\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf) |
|---|-----------|-----|------|------|-------|-------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Hypothesized nine-factor model | 2,032.56* | 866 | 0.96 | 0.95 | 0.079 | 0.074 | – |
| 2. Eight-factor model: combining COC and affective commitment | 2,497.14* | 874 | 0.94 | 0.93 | 0.099 | 0.081 | 464.58* (8) |
| 3. Eight-factor model: combining COC and normative commitment | 2,715.42* | 874 | 0.93 | 0.93 | 0.110 | 0.090 | 682.86* (8) |
| 4. Eight-factor model: combining COC and perceived sacrifice commitment | 2,221.98* | 874 | 0.95 | 0.95 | 0.087 | 0.081 | 189.42* (8) |
| 5. Eight-factor model: combining COC and few alternatives commitment | 2,342.10* | 874 | 0.95 | 0.94 | 0.091 | 0.084 | 309.54* (8) |
| 6. Eight-factor model: combining COC and career commitment | 2,926.73* | 874 | 0.92 | 0.92 | 0.120 | 0.100 | 894.17* (8) |
| 7. Eight-factor model: combining COC and affective occupational commitment | 2,825.53* | 874 | 0.93 | 0.92 | 0.110 | 0.120 | 792.97* (8) |
| 8. Eight-factor model: combining COC and job embeddedness | 2,473.10* | 874 | 0.94 | 0.94 | 0.094 | 0.080 | 440.54* (8) |
| 9. Eight-factor model: combining COC and turnover intention | 2,245.22* | 874 | 0.95 | 0.94 | 0.088 | 0.082 | 212.66* (8) |
| 10. Five-factor model: combining COC and organizational commitment components | 3,533.56* | 892 | 0.90 | 0.90 | 0.130 | 0.100 | 1,501.00* (26) |
| 11. One-factor model | 5,917.40* | 902 | 0.81 | 0.80 | 0.190 | 0.140 | 3,884.84* (36) |

Note. COC = commitment to organizational career; CFI = comparative fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.

* $p < .01$.

items were 0.77, 0.72, 0.91, 0.81, and 0.82, respectively. Then, we conducted a CFA with all constructs. As shown in Table 2, the theorized 9-factor model yielded a good fit to the data, χ^2 (866) = 2,032.56, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.96, NNFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.079, SRMR = 0.074. This model proved superior to 8-factor models in which COC was merged with any other factor ($\Delta\chi^2$ [8] = 189.42 to 894.17, $p < .01$), a 5-factor model combining COC with all organizational commitment components ($\Delta\chi^2$ [26] = 1,501.00, $p < .01$), and a 1-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2$ [36] = 3,884.84, $p < .01$). These results suggest that COC is a distinct construct. Table 3 presents the correlations among the variables. COC was positively correlated with affective ($r = .59$, $p < .01$), normative ($r = .40$, $p < .01$) and perceived sacrifice ($r = .41$, $p < .01$) commitments, but was unrelated to few alternatives commitment ($r = .03$, *ns*). The stronger correlation with affective commitment is consistent with our view that COC shares the most conceptual space with this specific organizational commitment component. Moreover, COC was positively related to, although distinguishable from, career commitment ($r = .32$, $p < .01$), affective occupational commitment ($r = .46$, $p < .01$), and job embeddedness ($r = .59$, $p < .01$). Overall, these correlations provide further evidence that COC is distinguishable from related variables, yielding support to Hypothesis 1a-g.

Table 3. Study 1: Descriptive statistics and correlations

| Variable | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|-------|--------|--------|--------|----|
| 1. Age (years) | 38.93 | 10.32 | — | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Gender (0 = male, 1 = female) | 0.64 | 0.48 | .07 | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Organizational tenure (years) | 7.97 | 6.51 | .52** | -.09 | — | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Affective commitment | 3.30 | 0.89 | .10 | .01 | .13* | — | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Normative commitment | 2.49 | 1.02 | .04 | .14* | -.06 | .47** | — | | | | | | | |
| 6. Perceived sacrifice commitment | 3.08 | 0.95 | .04 | .00 | .16* | .34** | .34** | — | | | | | | |
| 7. Few alternatives commitment | 2.36 | 1.02 | .09 | .05 | .15* | -.10 | .06 | .34** | — | | | | | |
| 8. Career commitment | 3.04 | 0.92 | -.10 | .02 | .00 | .18** | .13* | -.01 | .13* | — | | | | |
| 9. Affective occupational commitment | 3.61 | 0.99 | .14* | .00 | .06 | .47** | .23** | .13* | -.09 | .32** | — | | | |
| 10. Job embeddedness | 2.81 | 0.72 | .17** | .05 | .18** | .73** | .57** | .44** | .02 | .16** | .35** | — | | |
| 11. COC | 2.95 | 1.11 | .11 | -.03 | .17** | .59** | .40** | .41** | .03 | .32** | .46** | .59** | — | |
| 12. Turnover intention | 2.45 | 1.31 | -.21** | -.04 | -.22** | -.48** | -.33** | -.52** | .09 | .10 | -.25** | -.47** | -.52** | — |

Note. COC = commitment to organizational career; M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Ns = 228–312.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients are reported in parentheses along the diagonal.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 4. Study 1: Results of the OLS regression analyses for turnover intention

| Variable | Model 1 | | Model 2 | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-----|----------|-----|
| | β | SE | β | SE |
| Age | -.13* | .01 | -.12* | .01 |
| Gender (0 = male, 1 = female) | .06 | .14 | .06 | .13 |
| Organizational tenure | -.08 | .01 | -.06 | .01 |
| Affective commitment | -.23** | .12 | -.18* | .11 |
| Normative commitment | -.05 | .08 | -.04 | .08 |
| Perceived sacrifice commitment | -.50*** | .08 | -.41*** | .08 |
| Few alternatives commitment | .23*** | .07 | .20*** | .07 |
| Career commitment | .12* | .08 | .18*** | .08 |
| Affective occupational commitment | -.05 | .08 | .02 | .08 |
| Job embeddedness | -.02 | .15 | .07 | .15 |
| COC | | | -.33*** | .08 |
| R ² | .49 | | .54 | |
| Adj. R ² | .47 | | .52 | |
| Overall F | 20.66*** | | 22.80*** | |
| ΔR^2 | | | .05*** | |

Note. COC = commitment to organizational career; SE = standard error.

N = 227.

Standardized regression coefficients are reported.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 2

As shown in Table 3, COC was negatively related to turnover intention ($r = -.52$, $p < .01$). To further examine this relationship, we performed an OLS regression analysis in which demographics (age, gender, and organizational tenure) and substantive variables (excepting COC) were entered in Model 1, and COC was added in Model 2. As seen from Table 4, COC negatively predicted turnover intention in Model 2 ($\beta = -.33$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.²

STUDY 2: FURTHER ASSESSMENT OF COC'S DISTINCTIVENESS AND PREDICTION OF TURNOVER

Study 2 aims to further explore COC's discriminant and predictive validity. We examine whether COC can predict voluntary turnover, over and above organizational commitment components and career commitment. A significant (negative) relationship, not only to turnover intention, but to actual turnover would support the idea that COC binds employees to the organization in the long term. Indeed, intended and actual turnover, while representing important outcomes of the withdrawal process, are not interchangeable (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Showing that COC reduces actual turnover would suggest that COC contributes to bind employees to the organization in the long term. As we suggested before, employees' career experiences in the organization should also contribute to build their identity. Moreover, it is important to demonstrate that the effect of COC goes beyond the effect of

²COC remained significant when control variables (age, gender, and organizational tenure) were dropped from the model ($\beta = -.32$, $p < .001$).

organizational commitment components and career commitment (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Vandenberghe & Ok, 2013). Indeed, as COC involves the fulfilment of career goals in a specific organization, controlling for the organization and the career as commitment targets is relevant. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 3: COC negatively predicts voluntary turnover, over and above organizational commitment components (i.e., affective, normative, perceived sacrifice, and few alternatives) and career commitment.

Method

Sample and procedure

As part of a larger study of newcomers conducted in France, we surveyed university alumni who had recently entered the labour market. Participants were business or engineering graduates from various French universities. They received an email inviting them to complete an online survey about job attitudes. The survey addressed COC, organizational commitment components, career commitment, and demographics, among other variables. Among the 262 individuals contacted, 217 provided responses. One year later, turnover data were obtained from 187 individuals, for a response rate of 71.37%. In this sample, average age was 25.91 years ($SD = 3.90$), average tenure was 9.82 months ($SD = 3.14$), and 58.82% of the respondents were male. Of the participants, 84.49% were managers while 11.23% were employees in non-supervisory positions (4.28% did not report their position). Participants worked in various industries such as manufacturing, finance, and aerospace. In terms of organizational size, 57.22% worked in large organizations (> 500 employees), 23.53% in mid-size organizations (50–500 employees), and 19.25% in small organizations (< 50 employees).

Measures

Except for turnover, responses were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*).

COC

We used the five items retained in Study 1 to measure COC ($\alpha = .93$).

Organizational commitment

The four scales from Bentein *et al.* (2005) (see Study 1) were used to measure organizational commitment components (i.e., affective [6 items; $\alpha = .92$], normative [6 items; $\alpha = .94$], perceived sacrifice [3 items; $\alpha = .70$], and few alternatives [3 items, $\alpha = .77$] commitment).

Career commitment

As in Study 1, we used the 6-item scale from Ellemers *et al.* (1998) to measure career commitment ($\alpha = .92$).

Table 5. Study 2: Confirmatory factor analysis results

| Model | χ^2 | df | CFI | NNFI | RMSEA | SRMR | $\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf) |
|---|----------|-----|-----|------|-------|------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Hypothesized six-factor model | 689.64 | 362 | .97 | .97 | .071 | .063 | – |
| 2. Five-factor model: combining COC and affective commitment | 1,098.15 | 367 | .93 | .92 | .130 | .079 | 408.51* (5) |
| 3. Five-factor model: combining COC and normative commitment | 1,405.60 | 367 | .90 | .89 | .150 | .130 | 715.96* (5) |
| 4. Five-factor model: combining COC and perceived sacrifice commitment | 807.84 | 367 | .96 | .95 | .084 | .080 | 118.20* (5) |
| 5. Five-factor model: combining COC and few alternatives commitment | 857.48 | 367 | .95 | .95 | .089 | .079 | 167.84* (5) |
| 6. Five-factor model: combining COC and career commitment | 1,279.22 | 367 | .91 | .90 | .150 | .110 | 589.58* (5) |
| 7. Two-factor model: combining COC and organizational commitment components | 1,963.89 | 376 | .85 | .84 | .190 | .120 | 1,274.25* (14) |
| 8. One-factor model | 2,577.22 | 377 | .79 | .77 | .230 | .150 | 1,887.58* (15) |

Note. CFI = comparative fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.

* $p < .01$.

Voluntary turnover

Turnover data were collected 1 year after Time 1. Stayers were coded 0 while voluntary leavers were coded 1. The voluntary turnover rate was 16%.

Control variables

As previous work suggests age, gender, and/or organizational tenure may correlate with actual turnover (e.g., Bal *et al.*, 2013; Griffeth *et al.*, 2000; Ng & Feldman, 2009), these variables were controlled for in the analyses.

Results

We first conducted a series of CFAs through LISREL 8.80 (Jöreskog *et al.*, 2001) and maximum-likelihood estimation. As shown in Table 5, the 6-factor model displayed a good fit to the data: χ^2 (362) = 689.64, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.97, NNFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.071, SRMR = 0.063. This model outperformed 5-factor models merging COC with any other factor ($\Delta\chi^2$ [5] = 118.20 to 715.96, $p < .01$), a 2-factor model combining COC with organizational commitment components ($\Delta\chi^2$ [14] = 1,274.25, $p < .01$), and a 1-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2$ [15] = 1,887.58, $p < .01$). Thus, COC appears distinguishable from the other commitment variables. As shown in Table 6, COC was positively related to affective ($r = .60, p < .01$), normative ($r = .44, p < .01$), and perceived sacrifice ($r = .53, p < .01$) commitments but unrelated to few alternatives commitment ($r = -.07, ns$). This pattern of correlations again supports the view that COC shares the most conceptual space with affective commitment. COC was also positively related to career commitment ($r = .45,$

Table 6. Study 2: Descriptive statistics and correlations

| Variable | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|-------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| 1. Age (years) | 25.91 | 3.90 | — | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Gender (0 = male, 1 = female) | 0.41 | 0.49 | .07 | — | | | | | | | |
| 3. Organizational tenure (months) | 9.71 | 3.37 | .11 | -.15* | — | | | | | | |
| 4. Affective commitment | 3.01 | 0.94 | .00 | .06 | .04 | (.92) | | | | | |
| 5. Normative commitment | 2.83 | 1.08 | .02 | -.02 | -.16* | .59** | (.94) | | | | |
| 6. Perceived sacrifice commitment | 2.88 | 0.94 | .07 | .10 | -.06 | .45** | .48** | (.70) | | | |
| 7. Few alternatives commitment | 2.10 | 0.97 | .11 | .07 | -.06 | -.11 | .06 | .18** | (.77) | | |
| 8. Career commitment | 3.09 | 0.92 | .02 | .11 | -.02 | .38** | .21** | .09 | .01 | (.92) | |
| 9. COC | 2.71 | 1.12 | .01 | .01 | -.05 | .60** | .44** | .53** | -.07 | .45** | (.93) |
| 10. Voluntary turnover (0 = stayer, 1 = leaver) | 0.16 | 0.36 | -.06 | .06 | -.02 | -.18* | -.24** | -.40** | -.03 | .02 | -.35** |

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

COC = commitment to organizational career.

Ns = 187–217 due to missing data on voluntary turnover.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients are reported in parentheses along the diagonal.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

$p < .01$). These correlations indicate meaningful associations between COC and the other variables; however, none are indicative of a redundancy issue.

Hypothesis 3

Table 6 indicates that COC was negatively related to voluntary turnover ($r = -.35$, $p < .01$). Table 7 reports the results of the logistic regression analysis for turnover. Demographics, organizational commitment components, and career commitment were entered in Model 1 while COC was added in Model 2. COC negatively predicted turnover in Model 2 ($B = -1.03$, $p < .01$; Δ Nagelkerke $R^2 = .06$). The odds ratio associated with COC in Model 2 was .36, indicating that for a one-unit increase in COC the likelihood of turnover was multiplied by a factor of .36. Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported.³

STUDY 3: EXAMINING ANTECEDENTS TO COC

This study examines organization-based self-esteem, supervisory career mentoring, and organizational support for development as independent and interactive predictors of COC.

Organization-based self-esteem

Organization-based self-esteem reflects the degree to which individuals believe they are capable, significant, and worthy as organizational members (Bowling, Eschleman, Wang, Kirkendall, & Alarcon, 2010; Pierce & Gardner, 2004). As such, it represents how employees view themselves as organizational members. Organization-based self-esteem

Table 7. Study 2: Results of the logistic regression analysis for voluntary turnover

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-----|---------|-------------|-----|---------|
| | B | SE | Exp (B) | B | SE | Exp (B) |
| Age | -0.12 | .09 | 0.89 | -0.14 | .09 | 0.87 |
| Gender (0 = male, 1 = female) | 0.51 | .50 | 1.66 | 0.32 | .53 | 1.38 |
| Organizational tenure | -0.04 | .08 | 0.96 | -0.01 | .08 | 0.99 |
| Affective commitment | 0.07 | .31 | 1.08 | 0.44 | .35 | 1.55 |
| Normative commitment | -0.21 | .28 | 0.81 | -0.30 | .30 | 0.74 |
| Perceived sacrifice commitment | -1.54** | .37 | 0.21 | -1.01** | .39 | 0.36 |
| Few alternatives commitment | 0.03 | .24 | 1.03 | 0.03 | .25 | 1.03 |
| Career commitment | 0.24 | .29 | 1.28 | 0.52 | .30 | 1.68 |
| COC | | | | -1.03** | .37 | 0.36 |
| χ^2 (df) | 38.35 (8)** | | | 46.90 (9)** | | |
| Nagelkerke R^2 | .32 | | | .38 | | |
| Δ Nagelkerke R^2 | | | | .06** | | |

Note. $N = 187$. $B =$ log odds; $SE =$ standard error; $Exp (B) =$ odds ratio; $df =$ degrees of freedom; COC = commitment to organizational career.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

³ COC remained significant when control variables (age, gender, and organizational tenure) were dropped from the model ($B = -1.01$, $p < .01$).

serves a self-regulatory function: Individuals who hold a positive self-view generally demonstrate attitudes and behaviours that are consistent with or reinforce their self-view (Pierce & Gardner, 2004). We posit that employees with a strong organization-based self-esteem are more likely to commit to organizational career goals because reaching such goals would make them more valuable members of the organization and help them contribute to its well-being. Thus, organization-based self-esteem should be positively related to COC.

Supervisory career mentoring

Career mentoring refers to a developmental relationship whereby a mentor counsels a mentee on how to develop and pursue his or her career (Viator & Scandura, 1991). In this study, we focus on career mentoring provided by supervisors, that is, supervisory career mentoring, because this form of mentoring has a greater influence on attitudinal and career outcomes than mentoring provided by mentors (Scandura & Williams, 2004). When the supervisor takes care of employees' careers, employees should feel that the supervisor is striving to make them competent and satisfied members of the organization in the long term (Scandura & Williams, 2004). Employees benefiting from supervisory career mentoring should also experience greater control over their career and hold positive expectations about organizational career goal attainment (Scandura & Williams, 2004). Thus, supervisory career mentoring should be positively related to COC.

Organizational support for development

Organizational support for development captures employees' perception that the organization provides programmes and opportunities that help them develop their functional skills and managerial capabilities (Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne, Liden, & Bravo, 2011). Such support shows that resources are dedicated to employees' development and that opportunities are available in the organization to put their skills into practice (Kraimer *et al.*, 2011). From employees' perspective, these practices should facilitate progress towards identity-relevant organizational career goals, thereby enhancing COC (Jung & Takeuchi, 2018). Thus, organizational support for development should be positively related to COC. Based on the above discussion regarding the antecedents of COC, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 4: Organization-based self-esteem (a), supervisory career mentoring (b), and organizational support for development (c) are positively related to COC.

Interactions among COC's antecedents

Supervisory career mentoring and organizational support for development should moderate the relationship between organization-based self-esteem and COC. The former constructs are contextual variables related to career development. High levels of supervisory career mentoring and organizational support for development should act as external validation cues for the employees' identity. Specifically, when employees perceive that their supervisor provides them with career advice or that the organization offers developmental opportunities, the relationship between organization-based self-esteem and COC should be strengthened. This is because employees who feel valued as organizational members may perceive that the availability of supervisors for career advice

and the existence of development programmes could help them pursue a career in the organization. In these circumstances, organization-based self-esteem and COC should be more intertwined (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009; Pierce & Gardner, 2004). In contrast, when supervisory career mentoring or organizational support for development is low, the work context makes it less likely that one's organization-based self-esteem will result in COC. In such a context, the supervisor and the organization offer little advice and support for development. As a result, employees who feel valued as members may not expect it to be easy to make a career in the organization, due to a lack of resources. This leads to the following hypotheses.

- Hypothesis 5:* Supervisory career mentoring moderates the relationship between organization-based self-esteem and COC such that this relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) when supervisory career mentoring is high (vs. low).
- Hypothesis 6:* Organizational support for development moderates the relationship between organization-based self-esteem and COC such that this relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) when organizational support for development is high (vs. low).

Method

Sample and procedure

Seven public organizations located in Western Canada and operating in the arts, history, and culture industry participated in this study. We obtained approval from the managers and union representatives of these organizations to administer paper-and-pencil surveys to employees. Participants filled in two surveys at a 3-week interval. Surveys included measures of organization-based self-esteem, supervisory career mentoring, and organizational support for development at Time 1 and COC at Times 1 and 2. Among the 235 employees contacted, 231 completed the first survey. Of these, 199 provided responses at Time 2, for an overall response rate of 84.68%. Average age was 39.59 years ($SD = 13.49$), average organizational tenure was 7.97 years ($SD = 8.23$), average tenure with the supervisor was 3.58 years ($SD = 3.46$), and 33.7% of the respondents were male. The participants worked in small organizations (< 100 employees) and held a range of administrative (e.g., archivist), customer service (e.g., recreation clerk), manual (e.g., plumber), and managerial (e.g., events operation manager) occupations.

Measures

All responses were provided in English and rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*).

Organization-based self-esteem

Organization-based self-esteem was measured using the 10-item scale from Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, and Dunham (1989; e.g., 'I count around here'; $\alpha = .90$).

Supervisory career mentoring

To measure supervisory career mentoring, we adapted Viator and Scandura's (1991) 6-item career mentoring scale by replacing the word 'mentor' with 'supervisor' (e.g., 'My supervisor takes a personal interest in my career'; $\alpha = .91$).

Organizational support for development

Kraimer *et al.* (2011) 6-item scale was used to measure organizational support for development (e.g., 'My organization has programmes and policies that help employees to advance in their functional specialization'; $\alpha = .93$).

COC

We used the five items retained in Study 1 to measure COC (α s = .78 and .77).

Control variables

We controlled for age, gender, organizational tenure, and tenure with the supervisor because these variables may influence the relationships between the antecedent variables and COC.

Results

First, we conducted a series of CFAs using LISREL 8.80 (Jöreskog *et al.*, 2001) and maximum-likelihood estimation. To maintain a favourable sample-to-parameter ratio, we created five indicators for organization-based self-esteem by combining high- and low-loading items (Landis, Beal, & Tesluk, 2000) and tested the other constructs at the item level. This resulted in a 22-indicator/item covariance matrix representing 4 latent variables at Time 1 (i.e., 50 parameters, sample size-to-parameter ratio: 6.14). The 4-factor model displayed a reasonably good fit to the data: $\chi^2(203) = 662.92$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.93, NNFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.10, SRMR = 0.079, and was superior to 3-factor models that merged COC with (1) organization-based self-esteem, $\chi^2(206) = 858.94$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.91, NNFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.130, SRMR = 0.110 ($\Delta\chi^2 [3] = 196.02$, $p < .01$); (2) supervisory career mentoring $\chi^2(206) = 863.97$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.91, NNFI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.130, SRMR = 0.100 ($\Delta\chi^2 [3] = 201.05$, $p < .01$); or (3) organizational support for development, $\chi^2(206) = 947.20$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.89, NNFI = 0.88, RMSEA = 0.140, SRMR = 0.130 ($\Delta\chi^2 [3] = 284.28$, $p < .01$); and a one-factor model, $\chi^2(209) = 1,884.40$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.76, NNFI = 0.73, RMSEA = 0.250, SRMR = 0.150 ($\Delta\chi^2 [6] = 1,221.48$, $p < .01$). These results again confirm the distinctiveness of COC. As shown in Table 8, organization-based self-esteem, supervisory career mentoring, and organizational support for development positively correlated with COC at Time 2 (r s = .47, .48, .35, respectively, all $p < .001$). Moreover, the correlation between Time 1 COC and Time 2 COC was .80 ($p < .001$), indicating good test–retest reliability.

Hypotheses 4a–c, 5, and 6

To examine Hypotheses 4a–c, 5, and 6, we conducted an OLS regression analysis, in which demographics were entered in Model 1, centred predictors in Model 2 (see Aiken & West, 1991), and all possible 2-way interactions in Model 3. As seen in Table 9 (Model 2), organization-based self-esteem and supervisory career mentoring were positively related to COC (β s = .30 and .31, respectively, both $p < .001$), while organizational support for development was unrelated to it ($\beta = .10$, *ns*). Thus, Hypothesis 4a and 4b is supported, while Hypothesis 4c is not. Moreover, the interaction between organization-based self-esteem and supervisory career mentoring was significant in Model 3 ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$,

Table 8. Study 3: Descriptive statistics and correlations

| Variable | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|-------|-------|---------|------|---------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1. Age (years) | 39.59 | 13.49 | — | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Gender (0 = male, 1 = female) | 0.66 | 0.47 | .09 | — | | | | | | | |
| 3. Organizational tenure (years) | 7.97 | 8.23 | .69*** | .09 | — | | | | | | |
| 4. Tenure with supervisor (years) | 3.58 | 3.46 | .43*** | .14 | .56*** | — | | | | | |
| 5. OBSE | 4.21 | 0.59 | -.19** | -.11 | -.22** | -.12 | (.90) | | | | |
| 6. Supervisory career mentoring | 3.11 | 1.08 | -.31*** | -.10 | -.33*** | -.16* | .42*** | (.91) | | | |
| 7. Organizational support for development | 2.80 | 1.07 | -.15* | .02 | -.08 | -.02 | .28*** | .52*** | (.93) | | |
| 8. Time 1 COC | 3.23 | 0.90 | -.12 | .08 | -.13 | -.06 | .46*** | .46*** | .35*** | (.78) | |
| 9. Time 2 COC | 3.24 | 0.88 | -.21** | -.00 | -.19** | -.17* | .47*** | .48*** | .35*** | .80*** | (.77) |

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Ns = 197–199. OBSE = organization-based self-esteem; COC = commitment to organizational career.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients are reported in parentheses along the diagonal.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 9. Study 3: Results of the OLS regression analyses for time 2 COC

| Variable | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | |
|--|---------|-----|----------|-----|----------|-----|
| | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE |
| Age | -.15 | .01 | -.06 | .01 | -.08 | .01 |
| Gender (0 = male, 1 = female) | .02 | .13 | .07 | .11 | .08 | .11 |
| Organizational tenure | -.04 | .01 | .08 | .01 | .08 | .01 |
| Tenure with supervisor | -.08 | .02 | -.11 | .02 | -.14* | .02 |
| OBSE (A) | | | .30*** | .10 | .33*** | .10 |
| Supervisory career mentoring (B) | | | .31*** | .06 | .27** | .07 |
| Organizational support for development (C) | | | .10 | .06 | .13 | .06 |
| A × B | | | | | .15* | .10 |
| A × C | | | | | .05 | .10 |
| B × C | | | | | -.09 | .05 |
| R ² | .05 | | .34 | | .37 | |
| Adj. R ² | .03 | | .32 | | .34 | |
| Overall F | 2.66* | | 13.93*** | | 10.99*** | |
| ΔR^2 | | | .29*** | | .03* | |

Note. COC = commitment to organizational career; OBSE = organization-based self-esteem; SE = standard error.

N = 197. Standardized regression coefficients are reported.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

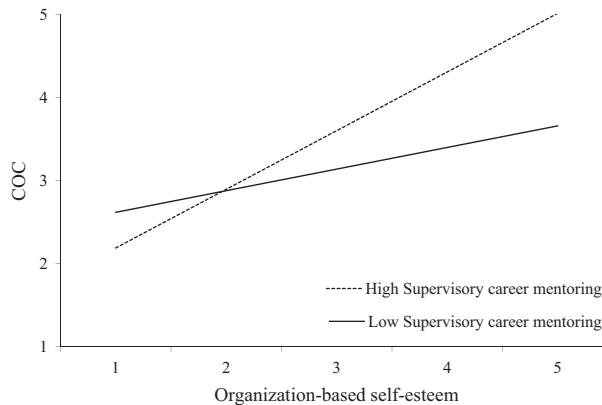


Figure 1. Study 3 effect of organization-based self-esteem on COC at high and low values of supervisory career mentoring (i.e., one SD above and below the mean).

$\Delta R^2 = .03$). Simple slope analyses showed that organization-based self-esteem was significantly and positively related to COC at high levels of supervisory career mentoring ($t [197] = 4.58, p < .05$) but unrelated to it at low levels of it ($t [197] = 1.87, ns$) (Figure 1). These regression lines significantly differed from one another ($t [197] = 2.07, p < .05$). Note, however, that there was some variation in the level of significance associated with the organization-based self-esteem × supervisory career mentoring interaction, as a function of which control variables were included. When all controls were excluded, this interaction was marginally significant ($\beta = .12, p < .10$). When only tenure with the supervisor was kept as a control, the interaction remained significant ($\beta = .15, p < .05$),

and the effect of tenure with the supervisor was also significant ($\beta = -.13, p < .05$). Note that tenure with the supervisor was also significant in Model 3 ($\beta = -.14, p < .05$). Thus, tenure with the supervisor exerts an important, negative effect on COC: The longer the tenure with the supervisor, the lesser the employees commit to an organizational career. This effect must be controlled for in order for supervisory career mentoring to significantly moderate the organization-based self-esteem–COC relationship. Finally, the interaction between organization-based self-esteem and organizational support for development was not significant ($\beta = .05, ns$). Hypothesis 5 is supported, while Hypothesis 6 is not.

STUDY 4: SPECIFYING BOUNDARY CONDITIONS TO COC'S RELATION TO VOLUNTARY TURNOVER

Study 4 examines affective commitment to the supervisor and perceived supervisor networking ability as boundary conditions to COC's relationship to voluntary turnover.

Affective commitment to the supervisor and perceived supervisor networking ability

Affective commitment to the supervisor refers to employees' emotional attachment to the supervisor (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). When employees experience affective commitment to their supervisor, they are likely to benefit from his or her guidance. Indeed, this commitment arises when the supervisor makes resources accessible to employees (Vandenberghe, Bentein, & Stinglhamber, 2004). Thus, employees who report high affective commitment to their supervisor should view him or her as being willing to share the resources that make organizational membership attractive (i.e., future career opportunities in the organization). However, to fully benefit from organizational career opportunities, employees' affective commitment should target a supervisor that is perceived to have a high networking ability. Networking ability is an aspect of political skill by which individuals develop social relationships they can use to their advantage (Ferris *et al.*, 2005). Supervisors that are perceived to have a high networking ability should be viewed as being well positioned within the social network of the organization (Ng & Feldman, 2010b; Venkataramani, Green, & Schleicher, 2010). Thus, when the supervisor is perceived to have a high networking ability, employees should perceive him or her as being able to mobilize resources (e.g., information, influence, alliances; Ferris *et al.*, 2005; see also Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001) that will facilitate career attainment in the organization.

COC should exert a stronger influence on voluntary turnover when both affective commitment to the supervisor and perceived supervisor networking ability are high. In these conditions, the supervisor would be both *willing* and *able* to mobilize the resources necessary for employees to access career opportunities in the organization. Hence, it is in these circumstances that employees should perceive they are most likely to attain their (i.e., identity-relevant) goals. When affective commitment to the supervisor is high, but perceived supervisor networking ability is low (or vice versa), the supervisor would be perceived as *willing* but not necessarily as *able* (or vice versa) to help them with career attainment. When both of these conditions are low, employees should perceive that the supervisor provides minimal support for organizational career attainment. Therefore, the relationship of COC to voluntary turnover should be weaker when affective commitment to the supervisor or

perceived supervisor networking ability or both are low, than when both moderators are high. This reasoning is summarized in the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 7: Affective commitment to the supervisor and perceived supervisor networking ability jointly moderate the negative relationship between COC and voluntary turnover (i.e., a 3-way interaction) such that this relationship is strongest when affective commitment to the supervisor and perceived supervisor networking ability are high, and weaker when either one of the two conditions or both of these conditions are low.

Method

Sample and procedure

We contacted 1,765 alumni from a business school located in France and who were employed in private organizations. The alumni, all French-speaking, were mailed a package containing a cover letter, a questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope. The Time 1 questionnaire included measures of affective organizational commitment, COC, affective commitment to the supervisor, perceived supervisor networking ability, and demographics, among others. We collected turnover data 15 months after Time 1.⁴ A total of 325 alumni provided returns at Time 1 (18.4%), and of these, 309 (95.1%) also responded at Time 2. This final sample had an average age of 32.73 years ($SD = 6.76$), an average organizational tenure of 5.29 years ($SD = 4.93$), and an average tenure with the supervisor of 2.62 years ($SD = 2.68$) at Time 1. Fifty-two per cent of the participants were male. The respondents worked in diverse industries, the most common of which were consulting (25%), transportation and communication (21%), and banking and insurance (21%). They were mostly employed in marketing/sales (45%) and finance/accounting/banking (22%). Sixty-two per cent of the respondents worked in large organizations (> 500 employees), 22% in mid-size organizations (50–500 employees), and 16% in small organizations (< 50 employees).

Measures

Except for turnover, responses were obtained using 5-point Likert-type scales (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*).

COC

We used the same 5-item scale as in previous studies to measure COC ($\alpha = .86$).

Affective commitment to the supervisor

A 6-item scale developed by Vandenberghe *et al.* (2004) was used to measure affective commitment to the supervisor (e.g., 'I feel proud to work with my supervisor'; $\alpha = .95$).

⁴ Although we initially intended to collect turnover data 1 year after Time 1, most of the respondents would have been contacted during the summer season for that survey, a time when many are on vacation. The Time 2 survey was thus delayed to 15 months.

Perceived supervisor networking ability

We adapted the 6-item networking ability scale from Ferris *et al.* (2005) Political Skill Inventory to assess perceived supervisor networking ability (e.g., ‘My supervisor spends a lot of time and effort at work networking with others’; $\alpha = .90$).

Voluntary turnover

Voluntary turnover was coded 0 for stayers and 1 for voluntary leavers. The voluntary turnover rate was 18.45%.

Control variables

As in Study 2, we controlled for age, gender, and organizational tenure in analyses predicting turnover. We also controlled for tenure with the supervisor as it can influence the quality of supervisor–subordinate relationships (Harris, Kacmar, & Carlson, 2006). Finally, we controlled for affective organizational commitment as the variable that is most closely related to COC, using the 6-item scale from Bentein *et al.* (2005) ($\alpha = .88$).

Results

We first conducted a series of CFAs using LISREL 8.80 (Jöreskog *et al.*, 2001) and maximum-likelihood estimation. The theorized 4-factor CFA model yielded a good fit to the data, $\chi^2(224) = 653.76$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.96, NNFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.081, SRMR = 0.056. This model improved over 3-factor models that combined COC with (1) affective organizational commitment, $\chi^2(227) = 1,034.48$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.93, NNFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.120, SRMR = 0.074 ($\Delta\chi^2[3] = 380.72$, $p < .01$); (2) affective commitment to the supervisor, $\chi^2(227) = 1,376.89$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.91, NNFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.150, SRMR = 0.130 ($\Delta\chi^2[3] = 723.13$, $p < .01$); and (3) perceived supervisor networking ability, $\chi^2(227) = 1,441.73$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.90, NNFI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.150, SRMR = 0.150 ($\Delta\chi^2[3] = 787.97$, $p < .01$); and a 1-factor model, $\chi^2(230) = 2,900.10$, $p < .01$, CFI = 0.78, NNFI = 0.76, RMSEA = 0.250, SRMR = 0.170 ($\Delta\chi^2[6] = 2,246.34$, $p < .01$). These results again support the distinctiveness of COC. As shown in Table 10, COC correlated significantly with affective organizational commitment, affective commitment to the supervisor, and perceived supervisor networking ability ($r_s = .58, .34, .22$, respectively, all $p < .01$). Affective organizational commitment and COC were negatively related to turnover ($r = -.31$, $p < .01$, and $r = -.35$, $p < .01$, respectively).

Hypothesis 7

Table 11 presents the results of the logistic regression analysis used for testing Hypothesis 7. The demographics and affective organizational commitment were entered in Model 1. COC, affective commitment to the supervisor, and perceived supervisor networking ability were entered as centred predictors (Jaccard, 2001) in Model 2. The three 2-way interactions were introduced in Model 3. Finally, the 3-way interaction was added in Model 4. COC was negatively related to turnover in Model 2 ($B = -1.03$, $p < .01$). Among the 2-way interactions, only the interaction between affective commitment to the supervisor and perceived supervisor networking ability was significant in Model 3

Table 10. Study 4: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

| Variable | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|--|-------|------|--------|-------|--------|------|--------|--------|-------|-------|
| 1. Age (years) | 32.73 | 6.76 | — | | | | | | | |
| 2. Gender (0 = male, 1 = female) | 0.48 | 0.50 | -.12* | — | | | | | | |
| 3. Organizational tenure (years) | 5.29 | 4.93 | .67** | -.03 | — | | | | | |
| 4. Tenure with supervisor (years) | 2.62 | 2.68 | .44** | .01 | .41** | — | | | | |
| 5. Affective organizational commitment | 3.30 | 0.83 | .04 | -.05 | .10 | .11 | (.88) | | | |
| 6. COC | 3.27 | 0.94 | .00 | -.10 | .00 | -.07 | .58** | (.86) | | |
| 7. Affective commitment to supervisor | 3.21 | 1.00 | -.09 | .01 | -.13* | .07 | .49** | .34** | (.95) | |
| 8. Perceived supervisor networking ability | 3.39 | 0.91 | .00 | .00 | -.03 | .04 | .29** | .22** | .42** | (.90) |
| 9. Voluntary turnover (0 = stayer, 1 = leaver) | 0.18 | 0.39 | -.19** | .15** | -.23** | -.07 | -.31** | -.35** | -.04 | .02 |

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

COC = commitment to organizational career.

N = 309.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients are reported in parentheses along the diagonal.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 1. Study 4: Results of the moderated logistic regression analysis for voluntary turnover

| Variable | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | | Model 4 | | |
|---|-------------|-----|---------|-------------|-----|---------|--------------|-----|---------|---------------|-----|---------|
| | B | SE | Exp (B) | B | SE | Exp (B) | B | SE | Exp (B) | B | SE | Exp (B) |
| Age (years) | -0.03 | .04 | 0.97 | -0.04 | .04 | 0.96 | -0.04 | .04 | 0.96 | -0.04 | .04 | 0.96 |
| Gender (0 = male, 1 = female) | 0.87* | .34 | 2.38 | 0.88* | .36 | 2.42 | 0.86* | .38 | 2.37 | 1.00* | .40 | 2.72 |
| Organizational tenure (years) | -0.28** | .08 | 0.75 | -0.33** | .10 | 0.72 | -0.34** | .10 | 0.71 | -0.42** | .12 | 0.66 |
| Tenure with supervisor (years) | 0.17* | .09 | 1.19 | 0.14 | .10 | 1.15 | 0.11 | .11 | 1.11 | 0.11 | .12 | 1.12 |
| Affective organizational commitment | -1.01** | .20 | 0.36 | -0.74* | .29 | 0.48 | -0.81** | .30 | 0.44 | -0.88** | .32 | 0.41 |
| COC (A) | | | | -1.03** | .25 | 0.36 | -1.18** | .26 | 0.31 | -1.08** | .27 | 0.34 |
| Affective commitment to supervisor (B) | | | | 0.34 | .21 | 1.41 | 0.41 | .27 | 1.51 | 0.43 | .25 | 1.53 |
| Perceived supervisor networking ability (C) | | | | 0.42 | .21 | 1.52 | 0.48 | .29 | 1.61 | 0.76** | .29 | 2.15 |
| A × B | | | | | | | -0.05 | .22 | 0.95 | -0.15 | .21 | 0.86 |
| A × C | | | | | | | -0.40 | .27 | 0.67 | -0.62* | .28 | 0.54 |
| B × C | | | | | | | 0.58** | .19 | 1.78 | 0.44 | .23 | 1.56 |
| A × B × C | | | | | | | | | | -0.64** | .20 | 0.53 |
| χ^2 (df) | 61.30 (5)** | | | 86.85 (8)** | | | 96.93 (11)** | | | 108.64 (12)** | | |
| Nagelkerke R ² | .29 | | | .40 | | | .44 | | | .48 | | |
| Δ Nagelkerke R ² | | | | .11** | | | .04* | | | 0.04** | | |

Note. N = 309. B = log odds; SE = standard error; Exp (B) = odds ratio; df = degrees of freedom. COC = commitment to organizational career. *p < .05; **p < .01.

($B = 0.58, p < .01$). The 3-way interaction was significant in Model 4 ($B = -0.64, p < .01$). To probe this interaction, we conducted simple slope tests for the relationship between COC and turnover at the various combinations of high and low values (i.e., 1 *SD* above vs. below the mean) of the moderators (Figure 2) (Dawson & Richter, 2006). The relationship of COC to turnover was significantly negative when both affective commitment to the supervisor and perceived supervisor networking ability were high, $t(296) = -2.39, p < .01$ (CI: $-3.44, -1.34$), and when both were low, $t(296) = -0.94, p < .05$ (CI: $-1.69, -0.18$). When the two moderators were high, the slope of COC's relationship to turnover was steeper than in any other combination of values of the moderators: $t(296) = -3.42, p < .001$ (vs. high–low), $t(296) = -2.37, p < .05$ (vs. low–high), and $t(296) = -2.23, p < .05$ (vs. low–low). Therefore, Hypothesis 7 is supported.⁵

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present research introduced COC as a singular commitment construct reflecting the goal of pursuing a long and successful career in one's current organization. Through four studies, we provided reliability and validity evidence for a 5-item scale of COC. We now summarize these findings and discuss theoretical implications and future research directions in relation to the career and commitment literatures.

Summary of findings

COC appeared distinguishable from organizational commitment components and career commitment, as well as from other related constructs. This suggests that individuals can commit to identity-relevant career goals in the organization. Moreover, COC predicted intended and actual turnover over and above related constructs. COC makes employees

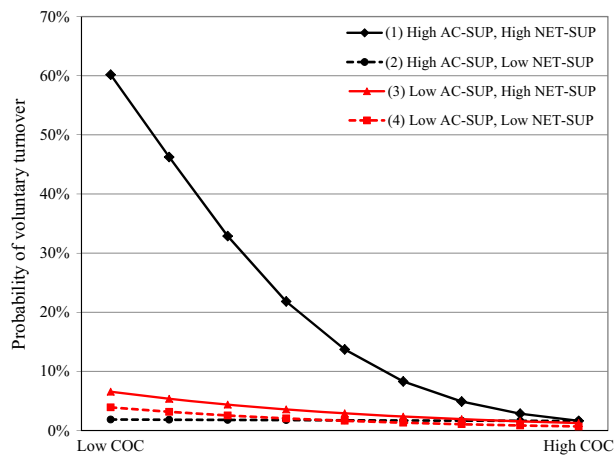


Figure 2. Study 4 Interaction of COC, affective commitment to supervisor (AC-SUP), and perceived supervisor networking ability (NET-SUP) in predicting turnover probability.

⁵ The interaction between COC, affective commitment to the supervisor, and perceived supervisor networking ability remained significant ($B = -.37, p < .05$) when the control variables (age, gender, organizational tenure, and tenure with the supervisor) were excluded from the model, and the conditional effects of COC on turnover remained essentially unchanged.

less likely to think about quitting, and less likely to actually leave the organization, regardless of the extent to which they experience, among other things, affective commitment to the organization. Thus, the findings support COC's discriminant and predictive validity. Regarding the antecedents of COC, the findings indicate that organization-based self-esteem and supervisory career mentoring independently and interactively predict COC. The more the employees see themselves as valuable organizational members and the more they perceive that their supervisor provides career advice, the more they commit to their organizational career. Organization-based self-esteem has a stronger effect on COC when supervisory career mentoring is high, presumably because supervisory career mentoring provides a context of career support that allows employees with high organization-based self-esteem to be confident in their ability to pursue an organizational career. Although it was positively correlated with COC, organizational support for development did not predict COC and did not interact with organization-based self-esteem to predict COC. One possibility is that support for development must be associated with concrete career opportunities in the organization to affect COC (Kraimer *et al.*, 2011).

COC exerted a stronger effect on turnover when both affective commitment to the supervisor and perceived supervisor networking ability were high. In contrast, its effect was weaker when affective commitment to the supervisor, perceived supervisor networking ability, or both were low. These findings suggest that, together, high affective commitment to the supervisor and high perceived supervisor networking ability create an ideal context for COC to reduce turnover. It is worth noting, however, that when affective commitment to the supervisor and perceived supervisor networking ability were high and COC was low, turnover was markedly higher than in other situations (Figure 2). Thus, being committed to a supervisor who is perceived to have a strong networking ability may increase turnover if at the same time one has low COC. We can speculate that in such a case, the employee, not being interested in making a career in the organization, may get help from his or her supervisor to seek career opportunities outside of the organization.

COC and the career and commitment literatures

COC and identity

In the commitment literature, identity is generally discussed through the notion of identification as the latter serves as a basis for affective commitment (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). COC relates to identity construction rather than identification. For example, Study 3 found that organization-based self-esteem, that is, the view that individuals have of themselves as organizational members, contributes to build COC. We also posited that employees who commit to organizational career goals project themselves into the future and envision their career progress in the organization (Austin & Vancouver, 1996). Thus, COC is likely tied to individuals' future self-view or future work self; that is, their representation of themselves in the future that reflects their hopes and aspirations in relation to work (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012). Employees who see themselves in the future occupying, for example, a top-management position in the organization and for whom this future self is salient, should commit to becoming an important leader in the organization (i.e., as an organizational career goal) and dedicate efforts to bring about this desired future state (Strauss *et al.*, 2012). Future research might explore this idea to better grasp the connections between identity construction and COC.

COC and change

Commitment, although viewed as relatively stable once formed, can be sensitive to environmental changes such as psychological contract breach events (Solinger, Hofmans, Bal, & Jansen, 2016). Similarly, although COC should be fairly stable, it is also susceptible to change. Future research should examine whether COC changes in situations such as organizational entry, role transitions (e.g., being successful or not in a first leadership role), or in response to career shocks (e.g., getting an early promotion or going through an unexpected organizational change). These situations should result in changes in COC because they affect organizational career goal progress and potentially destabilize the self (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008; Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Caza, Vough, *et al.*, 2018). Future research should examine these ideas.

COC and career-related outcomes

Beyond its influence on turnover intention and voluntary turnover, COC likely shapes individuals' career paths within organizations and, in the longer term, across organizations. For example, employees with high COC should seek to develop strong bonds with organizational members because these bonds are stepping stones for social capital (Seibert *et al.*, 2001), and hence should contribute to organizational career goal attainment. Ultimately, COC should relate to objective (e.g., salary increases and promotions) and subjective (e.g., satisfaction) indicators of organizational career success (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). More broadly, COC should influence career decision-making, especially in connection with external (vs. internal) career opportunities, and contribute to explain boomerang employees' decision to return, particularly if the decision is motivated by career prospects in the organization (Shipp, Furst-Holloway, Harris, & Rosen, 2014).

COC and context

COC may have different implications depending on the context in which individuals evolve. For instance, the relationship of COC to organizational career success may be particularly strong among individuals working in the military (vs. the civilian) sector. Indeed, military careers are unique in that they are, among other things, governed by strong norms, codes, and values and are punctuated by a series of hardships (Blass & Ferris, 2007; Offstein & Dufresne, 2007). Succeeding in such a context is therefore likely to require a high degree of persistence and therefore strong COC. Future research should determine whether COC remains a unique predictor of career success in the military compared to organizational commitment, which may be salient in this context as well (Godlewski & Kline, 2012). Examining COC in cultural groups where careers are assigned at birth and advancement mainly depends on family influence could also be of interest (Thomas & Inkson, 2007). In such contexts, COC may be a stronger predictor of subjective (vs. objective) career success (Ng *et al.*, 2005). Indeed, if promotions, for example, are determined by external factors, then individuals' COC, even if it is high, should have little influence.

Limitations and future directions

More work is needed to explore the reliability and validity of the COC scale. First, the present findings should be replicated in other samples (Hinkin, 1998) particularly because the samples used in Studies 2 and 3 were somewhat limited in size ($N_s = 187$ and 199,

respectively). Moreover, our samples included French- and English-speaking employees and were drawn from North American or European organizations. Data should be collected among a wider variety of groups and settings to ensure generalizability. Moreover, the turnover intention scale used in Study 1 included only two items, which may have affected its content validity. Similarly, other scales capturing different aspects of the withdrawal process (i.e., thoughts of quitting, intention to search) should be explored in future research on the outcomes of COC. In addition, future research should examine other potential correlates of COC such as career motivation (London & Noe, 1997). The relationship of COC to career-related outcomes should also be examined. Finally, future research should assess how COC mediates the relationships between theoretically meaningful antecedents (e.g., organization-based self-esteem) and outcomes (e.g., turnover).

Implications for career and human resource management practices

This research indicates that COC leads to reduced turnover intention and actual turnover. Findings also suggest that the supervisor plays an important role in predicting COC and shaping its effects on turnover. Thus, organizations should encourage supervisors to support the development of a strong COC among employees. Supervisors should seek to create strong bonds with employees, promote organizational career goals among them, and clarify the support they can provide for attaining these goals. Supervisors should also actively contribute to employees' organizational career development. The above strategies could be combined with the identification of high potentials, or target top performers, who are critical assets for the success of organizations.

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