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This paper reports the findings a 2-wave longitudinally study investigating relationships between organizational and individualcareermanagement activities and organizational commitment in the early years of graduate careers. Several hypotheses are tested and receive mixed support. High organizational commitment predicts the practice of career management activities by graduates to further their career within the organization while low commitment is closely associated with behavior aimed at furthering the career outside the organization.

Graduates who manage their own careers also receive more career management help from their employer. This suggests that there may be the potential for employers to create a " virtuous circle" of career management in which individual and organizational activities complement each other. Summary This paper reports the findings of a two-wave longitudinal study investigating relationships between organizational and individual career management activities and organizational commitment in the early years of graduate careers.

Several hypotheses are tested and receive mixed support. High organizational commitment predicts the practice of career management activities by graduates to further their career within the organization while low commitment is closely associated with behaviour aimed at furthering the career outside the organization. Graduates who manage their own careers also receive more career management help from their employer.

This suggests that there may be the potential for employers to create a 'virtuous circle' of career management in which individual and organizational activities complement each other. Copyright (c) 2002 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Introduction Over the years there has been extensive research on the nature, antecedents and consequences of organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

One reason for recent interest in the topic has been a concern that changes in organizations make it less feasible to sustain commitment by offering the traditional career advancement and other inducements that might encourage talented employees to remain with an organization (Gratton & Hope Hailey, 1999; Herriot & Pemberton, 1995). It is also suggested that employees are changing their values and priorities, are more willing to take control of their own careers and welcome the idea of the boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

Many large organizations in the UK, the USA and other highly industrialized countries continue the practice of carefully recruiting and developing an elite cadre of university graduates in the hope that they will form the futureleadershipof the organization. However, concerns about the returns from a long-term investment in career development have led some organizations to question whether a traditional emphasis on the management of graduate recruits' careers should be maintained (Gratton ; Hope Hailey, 1999). This presents employers with a dilemma.

Should they encourage career selfmanagement, even though it may result in employees 'managing themselves' out of the organization; or should they maintain their more traditional systems of career management and run the risk that afailureto deliver implicit promises may result in disaffection with the organization, reduced commitment and increased propensity to quit? Equally, there is an issue for graduates who have to decide whether to engage in career self-management or whether to trust the organization to look after them.

In this context, the role of organizational commitment may be crucial both in shaping reactions to corporate career development practices and in serving as a key indicator of the impact of such practices. Yet little research to date has specifically investigated the effects of career management practices on organizational commitment, despite evidence that they seem likely to make an important contribution to it (Arnold ; Mackenzie Davey, 1999). Furthermore, most research on career management and organizational commitment is cross-sectional.

This paper reports the findings of a study of young UK graduates which examines the relationships between specific kinds of career management activities and organizational commitment. The study adds to the career management and organizational commitment literature by utilizing a longitudinal panel design which allows analysis of career management influence on organizational commitment and vice versa. The Relationship Between Organizational and Individual Career Management Activities and Organizational Commitment Career management has been defined as 'attempts made to influence the career development of one of more people' (Arnold, 1997, p.

19) and may take the form of a range of more or less formal activities ranging from training courses and assessment centres to mentoring and careers advice. A key characteristic of what can be termed 'organizational career management' is that it is largely planned and managed by the organization. In contrast, career self-management is under the control of the individual and consists of gathering 'information and plans for career problem solving and decision-making. It involves two main behaviors: one relating to continuous improvement in one's current job . . .

and the other related to movement-job mobility preparedness' (Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, & Demarr, 1998, p. 938). Organizational career management and career self-management are not mutually exclusive; indeed the former may help to promote the latter. Organizational commitment can be conceived of as having several dimensions (Meyer & Allen, 1997). However, the focus of this paper is on the core dimension of affective commitment, defined by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) as 'the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization'.

It is this dimension of commitment which has been the most extensively researched in terms of its antecedents and consequences. Antecedents of organizational commitment can be broadly grouped into three categories concerned with characteristics of the organization and of the individual and work experiences (Meyer ; Allen, 1997). Work experiences that have been found to be particularly important in explaining variations in organizational commitment include job scope (Mathieu ; Zajac, 1990), organizational support (Eisenberger, Fasolo, ; Davis-LaMastro, 1990) and fairness of treatment (Konovsky ; Cropanzano, 1991).

A number of studies have emphasized the importance of early experiences in the organization (e. g. Louis, 1980), including, in particular, aspects of socialization (Ashforth ; Saks, 1996) and provision of training and development (Arnold ; Mackenzie Davey, 1999; Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, ; Cannon-Bowers, 1991), for the establishment of organizational commitment. Organizational career management activities constitute a further form of work experience.

Graduates are a key employee group in most large organizations, yet the cost of investing in their development raises important issues for employers. While organizations, acknowledging the analyses of writers such as Handy (1989) and Bridges (1995), may no longer wish to promise a long-term career, they will normally wish to retain a majority of their graduate recruits for a number of years. Yet many UK graduates change jobs after only a short period of time with their first employer (Sturges ; Guest, 1999).

There is evidence, at least in the UK, that perceptions of good career opportunities within an organization and the provision of developmental activities remain important predictors of organizational commitment (Morris, Lydka, ; Fenton-O'Creevy, 1993; Arnold & Mackenzie Davey, 1999). Other research indicates that met expectations have a strong influence on commitment (Irving & Meyer, 1994; Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Shannon Davis, 1992; DeCotiis & Summers, 1987); moreover, graduates' expectations of the training and development which they will receive when they start work have traditionally been high (Mabey, 1986; Keenan ; Newton, 1986).

This suggests that experience of organizational career management will continue to have a positive impact on graduates' organizational commitment. Hypothesis 1: Graduates who experience career management help from their employer will be more likely to report higher levels of organizational commitment.