

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL NETWORKING BEHAVIORS:
AN INVESTIGATION OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH AFFECTIVE, CONTINUANCE,
AND NORMATIVE COMMITMENT

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Structured Abstract

Internal and External Networking Behavior: An Investigation of Relationships with Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships of internal and external networking behaviors of managers and professionals with their affective, continuance, and normative commitment.

Design/Methodology/Approach – Data were obtained from 335 managers and professionals of a health system who completed a survey on networking behavior and organizational commitment. Correlation analyses and multiple regressions were performed to test our hypotheses.

Findings – Our results showed that networking behavior focused within an individual's organization was positively related with affective commitment and normative commitment. Networking with individuals outside of an individual's organization showed a significant negative relationship with normative commitment. Contrary to expectations, networking externally was not related to affective commitment, and neither internal nor external networking behaviors were related to continuance commitment.

Research Limitations/Implications – Because data were collected at a single point in time, no statements can be made about causality. Future research is needed assessing both internal and external networking behavior and the three types of organizational commitment across time to help determine direction of causality or whether reciprocal relationships exist.

Practical Implications – Organizations that encourage internal networking behaviors may see individuals who are more connected with their colleagues and affectively committed to their organizations. However, encouraging external networking behavior may result in a drop in normative commitment as individuals might identify more with their profession than their employer.

Originality/Value – Although previous research has shown that networking behavior is related to job performance and career success measures, our research extends the literature by investigating whether networking is related to attitudinal variables such as organizational commitment. We explore whether differential relationships exist between internal and external networking behavior with three types of organizational commitment.

Key Words – networking, networking behaviors, organizational commitment

Paper type – Research paper

Internal and External Networking Behavior:

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Networking has been shown to be highly beneficial for careers (King, 2004, Sturges *et al.*, 2010). Networking behaviors help individuals find new jobs (Van Hoye *et al.*, 2009, Wolff and Moser, 2010), predict job performance (Blickle *et al.*, 2012), and are related to compensation, promotions, and career satisfaction (Forret and Dougherty, 2004, Michael and Yukl, 1993, Wolff and Moser, 2009, 2010). Given the above, it appears likely that networking is also related to important attitudes such as organizational commitment. Employee commitment is influenced by supportive organizational actions (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002) but may also be shaped by professional relationships that provide collegiality, advice, support, and influence (Gersick *et al.*, 2000). Obtaining such assistance through relationships developed with colleagues, both from individuals within as well as those external to one's employing organization, is likely to help mold feelings of organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is an important factor for managers to consider, particularly in high-demand industries such as healthcare where retention is a major issue (NSI Nursing Solutions, 2013, PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2013).

As such, the purpose of our study is to investigate how networking internally and externally may be related to the affective, continuance, and normative commitment of managers and professionals. To date, only one study has examined the relationship between organizational commitment and networking behavior (i.e., Sturges *et al.*, 2002), yet this study only examined the association between affective commitment and networking in general. Our research extends the literature by adopting a broader, but also more specific perspective. We investigate the

relationships between both internal and external networking behavior with all three types of organizational commitment. Given the influence of the social context on individuals' attitudes (e.g., Higgins, 2001, Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), the type of resources (i.e., knowledge, support) gleaned from members inside one's organization is likely to be different from that gained from individuals external to the organization. Furthermore, internally-oriented and externally-oriented networking behavior may be related in more nuanced ways to affective, continuance, and normative commitment. In sum, this study explores whether there are differential relationships between internally- and externally-focused networking behaviors with the three types of organizational commitment.

Networking Behavior

Described as a proactive behavior, networking behaviors are attempts to develop and maintain relationships with others for the purpose of mutual benefit in their work or career (Forret and Dougherty, 2001). Research has shown that work and career support can come from multiple individuals within a constellation of relationships, encompassing relationships both inside and outside one's employing organization (Higgins and Kram, 2001, Kram, 1985). Behaviors such as exchanging information and ideas, participating in professional associations or alumni groups, volunteering for organizational task forces, and engaging in community initiatives are representative of various types of networking behaviors (Forret and Dougherty, 2001, Forret and Sullivan, 2002).

Networking scholars emphasize the development of such cooperative relations for the achievement of mutually beneficial outcomes, as opposed to pursuing one's own self-interests (Baker, 2000). Building and maintaining relationships and providing assistance to others helps develop trust that acts as an antecedent to social capital (Kotter, 1999, Thompson, 2005, Wolff

and Moser, 2006). Social capital is the generated goodwill among individuals that facilitates action (Adler and Kwon, 2002, Coleman, 1988). Once trusting relationships are established, they can be drawn upon for information, advice, or support (Wanberg *et al.*, 2000, Wolff and Moser, 2006).

However, the type of knowledge and assistance gained from an individual's contacts is likely to vary based on whether or not the contact is a member of the individual's organization. To illustrate, external contacts consist of an individual's outside-work friends, clients, suppliers, members of professional associations, or members of one's local community. These external contacts can provide individuals with knowledge about other organizations, job opportunities, and their value on the job market. In contrast, internal contacts consist of members of an individual's organization that he or she has developed relationships with such as peers, managers, direct reports, and staff members. These internal contacts can provide information and advice on issues such as the organization's culture, how to get work accomplished effectively, and internal job opportunities, along with providing potential sponsorship and support within the organization.

While most research on networking behavior has examined the construct from a unitary perspective (Wolff and Moser, 2010), a few studies have explored the relationship between internally- and externally-focused networking behaviors with career outcomes. For instance, Wolff and Moser (2009) reported internal and external networking behaviors to be related to concurrent salary, but only internal networking behaviors were related to salary growth over time. In regards to promotions, Michael and Yukl (1993) reported that internal networking behavior was significantly related to both of their measures of advancement, but external networking behavior was significantly related to only one advancement measure. More recently,

Wolff and Moser (2010) found that internal, but not external, networking behaviors were related to obtaining promotions, consistent with findings of Forret and Dougherty (2004). However, both internal and external networking behaviors predicted changing employers (Wolff and Moser, 2010). Wolff and Moser (2009) found that internal networking behaviors were related to career satisfaction; however, they did not find a relationship between external networking behaviors and career satisfaction. Overall, the above studies provide evidence for the utility of examining the extent to which individuals participate in networking behaviors with individuals inside, as well as outside, their organizations.

To date, scant attention has been directed to the association between networking behavior and more intrinsic, subjective work-related attitudes such as organizational commitment. Here we adopt a social information processing perspective to argue that networking behavior directed toward internal members or external members of an individual's organization may have implications for organizational commitment. Social information processing theory highlights the role of the social context in shaping or molding attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978). Individuals rely on the information gained from members inside and external to their organization for several reasons. First, information provides cues to form and interpret events. Second, information serves as input regarding the formation of one's attitudes. Third, information from the social context offers a framework by which to assess past attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs and guide norms and expectations for future thoughts and actions (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978). We expect that individuals' attitudes may be shaped differently based on whether they are networking internally or with others outside of their organization's boundaries.

Relationship of Networking Behavior to Organizational Commitment

Employee commitment is recognized by managers as critical for the successful functioning of their organizations. Organizational commitment is defined as employees' perceived psychological bond to their organization which can influence actions taken relevant to their organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990, Klein *et al.*, 2009, Meyer *et al.*, 2006).

Organizational commitment has been found to be significantly related to job performance (Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005, Mathieu and Zajac, 1990, Meyer *et al.*, 2002, Riketta, 2002), attendance and organizational citizenship behaviors (Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005, Meyer *et al.*, 2002), turnover intentions and withdrawal cognitions (Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005, Mathieu and Zajac, 1990, Meyer and Allen, 1991, Pare and Tremblay, 2007, Tett and Meyer, 1993), and employee turnover (Allen and Meyer, 1990, Cooper-Hakim and Viswesvaran, 2005, Griffeth *et al.*, 2000). Viewed as multidimensional, three components of organizational commitment (i.e., affective, continuance, and normative) serve as bonding agents linking the employee with the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990, Meyer and Allen, 1991).

Affective commitment addresses the emotional involvement employees feel toward their organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990, Mowday *et al.*, 1979). Individuals experiencing high affective commitment have an emotional attachment to the organization and relish in organization membership (Allen and Meyer, 1990, Meyer and Allen, 1991). These individuals *want* to stay with their organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Desire to belong develops affective commitment (Johnson *et al.*, 2009, Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001) driving individuals with strong affective commitment to involve themselves in the organization to further its goals and values (Allen and Meyer, 1990, Johnson *et al.*, 2010). Johnson *et al.* (2010) point out that

such self-determined motivation helps to explain the strong relationships found between affective commitment with job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors.

Engaging in internal networking behaviors (e.g., socializing with work colleagues, seeking out colleagues for information or advice) is expected to generate an emotional attachment to an individual's organization. Two studies suggest a link between internal networking behaviors and affective commitment. Examining organizational newcomers' informational and friendship social networks, Morrison (2002) found friendship networks established within the organization to be positively related to affective commitment. As individuals develop close relationships with their colleagues, they may feel greater emotional support and stronger desire to remain an organizational member. Similarly, in his study of intra-organizational network resources, Bozionelos (2008) found expressive network resources (i.e., friends who provide emotional support) to be more strongly related to affective commitment than instrumental network resources (i.e., knowing people in positions of influence).

To our knowledge, only one study has examined the relationship between networking behaviors and affective commitment. Sturges *et al.* (2002) conducted a longitudinal survey of 212 early career recruits in the United Kingdom. In contrast to our rationale, they theorized that higher affective commitment will cause individuals to invest in career self-management behaviors, and their results showed that affective commitment predicted networking. However, Sturges *et al.* (2010) measured affective commitment only and their networking measure did not distinguish between internal and external networking behavior, which might have confounded differential relationships between these types of networking behaviors and commitment. Further, as discussed above, we believe that it is also plausible that internal networking behavior may serve to integrate individuals into their organization and enhance their affective commitment.

According to social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), interactions with work colleagues where individuals feel supported should positively influence their attitudes. For similar reasoning, see Mitchell *et al.* (2001) on the effect of social relationships on embeddedness and turnover. As such, in light of the general lack of research on the relationship between networking behavior and affective commitment, additional research appears warranted.

Hypothesis 1: Internal networking behaviors will be positively related to affective commitment.

External networking behavior involves developing beneficial relationships with individuals outside of one's own organization. Gaining exposure to a variety of individuals from several organizations gives individuals a broader perspective as to different opportunities, organizational cultures, working conditions, or initiatives that others are pursuing. Individuals are better able to make social comparisons about their job and organization with members of other companies. These external networking behaviors may lead to feelings that the "grass is greener" in other organizations and subsequently result in lower affective commitment. Individuals may become less appreciative of their own organizations, and through their external networking behavior start considering other employment opportunities they hear about from their external contacts. For example, in their study of respondents from 28 countries who reported how they located their present jobs, Franzen and Hangartner's (2006) results showed a widespread use of personal contacts to find jobs. According to social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), the process of making social comparisons with external contacts or being asked to consider new employment opportunities may make individuals reevaluate their affective attachment to their organizations. Overall, we believe that individuals

who participate in external networking behavior will have lower affective commitment as they have more opportunities to learn about and be recruited for employment opportunities elsewhere.

Hypothesis 2: External networking behaviors will be negatively related to affective commitment.

Continuance commitment occurs as a person weighs the benefits associated with staying at an organization against the costs of leaving (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Continuance commitment reflects a *need* to stay with the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Two issues have been examined the most in relation to continuance commitment: side bets and alternative employment opportunities (e.g., Meyer and Allen, 1991, Powell and Meyer, 2004, Vandenberghe *et al.*, 2007). First, side bets represent elements lost if an individual were to leave his or her organization (Becker, 1960). For instance, loss of health insurance benefits, retirement funds, or tuition benefits represent side bets or costs associated with terminating an employment relationship. Second, those with few employment alternatives (e.g., due to lack of demand for skill sets or lack of employers in the area) are likely to have greater continuance commitment due to their lack of mobility. Johnson *et al.* (2010) highlight compliance motivation underlying continuance commitment as side bets and few alternatives result in the fear of losing investments and the inability to find other alternatives.

Internal networking behaviors are expected to be negatively related to continuance commitment. Networking can enhance an individual's 'knowing-whom competency' which Inkson and Arthur (2001) describe as important for career mobility. Contacts in the organization may offer stretch assignments and challenging job opportunities (Inkson and Arthur, 2001) which may mitigate the feeling that one's career has plateaued and that he or she is bound to the organization. Related research on network resources provides some support that internal

networking behaviors will be negatively related to continuance commitment. Bozionelos (2008) found that instrumental intra-organizational network resources, such as access to influential decision-makers, were negatively related to continuance commitment. Influential others may be helpful for promoting one's career within the organization and instilling confidence such that individuals feel they have career options outside the organization as well. Moreover, internal networking behaviors have been shown to be related to changing employers (Wolff and Moser, 2010), and Sturges *et al.* (2002) found their unidimensional measure of networking to predict mobility-oriented behavior. Networking internally not only may offer access to employment opportunities in other divisions of the organization resulting in individuals feeling less resigned to their current positions, but also may help them learn about other job opportunities in their profession or industry. Social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978) suggests that internal contacts may provide more alternatives to individuals and hence, reduce feelings of stagnation. As such, we anticipate internal networking behaviors to be negatively related to continuance commitment.

Hypothesis 3: Internal networking behaviors will be negatively related to continuance commitment.

Similarly, by participating in external networking behaviors individuals may receive more information about their value in the marketplace from their social contacts, which may serve to lower an individual's feelings of continuance commitment to his or her employer. In addition, external networking behaviors may help generate other employment opportunities. Personal contacts external to one's organization can provide valuable access to job alternatives (Franzen and Hangartner, 2006). For example, a survey of over 2000 U.S. employees showed that networking was the most common method used to obtain their current jobs (Hudson, 2007),

and a poll by the Society for Human Resource Management (2002) found that personal contacts/networking was considered the most effective job search tactic. Plus, individuals should receive more complete information about job opportunities in the form of realistic job previews (Wanous, 1980) from their trusted contacts, further reducing the perceived costs of leaving. External networking behavior has been shown to be related to changing employers (Wolff and Moser, 2010), supporting early research by Granovetter (1973) on the strength of weak ties for obtaining information about jobs. These studies provide some evidence for the anticipated negative relationship between external networking behaviors and continuance commitment given the additional information employees receive from their external contacts (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978) of their value in the marketplace and job opportunities at other organizations.

Hypothesis 4: External networking behaviors will be negatively related to continuance commitment.

Normative commitment represents an individual's perceived sense of obligation to engage in actions that will benefit the organization and its goals (Allen and Meyer, 1990, Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). The underlying motivation of normative commitment is obligation as employees believe they *ought* to stay with the organization. Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) and Meyer and Parfyonova (2010) highlight two aspects underlying the development of normative commitment: a person's internalization of norms and expected behaviors (i.e., moral duty), and a person's need to reciprocate as a result of received benefits (i.e., sense of indebtedness). Socialized pressures serve to reinforce the norms of the organization. Meyer and Allen (1991) theorized that organizational socialization, investments made to one's job or organization, and rewards in advance of work completed form the basis of normative commitment. Limited research attention has been afforded normative commitment (Johnson *et al.*, 2010, Meyer and

Parfyonova, 2010), especially since normative and affective commitment have been found to be correlated (Meyer *et al.*, 2002) and therefore perceived as similar constructs. However, Johnson *et al.* (2010) argued that these two components differ in several respects. They purport normative commitment to be subject to cultural socialization and one's broader beliefs about employment whereas affective commitment is subject to organization-specific experiences. Further, they suggest that normative commitment can exist prior to joining an organization while affective commitment arises from one's time within the organization. Moreover, the underlying motivations differ, as obligation and reciprocity result in the development of normative commitment while desire results in the development of affective commitment.

Networking internally may enhance feelings of normative commitment. Involvement in relationships is a means to integrate into a community (Cohen and Prusak, 2001). According to social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), this community may help individuals identify with, understand, and adopt organizational norms and values. Internal networking behaviors may also perpetuate a sense of obligation. This could result through reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) built up within the organization, restricting a person's perceived ability to leave due to outstanding 'favors' still owed to others as well as unclaimed 'favors' owed to oneself. Furthermore, individuals may feel subtle pressure to stay with an organization as leaving would result in failing to meet outstanding obligations of their colleagues. As a result, internal networking behaviors are anticipated to have a positive relationship with normative commitment.

Hypothesis 5: Internal networking behaviors will be positively related to normative commitment.

On the other hand, participating in external networking behaviors may serve to lure individuals away from an organization by providing information about and access to other employment opportunities. Association with outsiders might encourage individuals to explore other career options. According to social information processing theory (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), the information obtained from their external contacts may influence individuals' attitudes such that they feel less connection with their employer and thus experience lower normative commitment. For example, individuals might value connections to peers within their profession developed through their external networking behavior more highly than their organizational colleagues. Individuals may be more likely to identify with and hold the values of members of their profession as opposed to members of their organization (Kerr *et al.*, 1977). For instance, Chang *et al.* (2008) found that R&D professionals who held more of a cosmopolitan career orientation (i.e., a strong commitment to one's profession) were more likely to leave their organization. Possessing stronger relationships with professional peers may reduce an individual's sense of normative commitment to an organization. Hence, we expect that external networking behaviors will have a negative relationship with normative commitment.

Hypothesis 6: External networking behaviors will be negatively related to normative commitment.

Method

Survey Methods and Sample

We surveyed 350 middle- to upper-level leaders of a large privately-owned Midwest health system. A health system, as defined by the American Hospital Association (2007), consists of multiple hospitals and/or auxiliary facilities under the ownership and/or management control of a single corporate body. Given the high demand and job mobility for health care

professionals (NSI Nursing Solutions, 2013, PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2013), and the interactive nature of the profession, they appear to be a good sample in which to examine networking behavior and organizational commitment. The survey instrument was distributed to each health system leader attending one of two leadership development retreat sessions. A 30-minute block of time was allotted during the retreat for survey completion.

Of the 350 leaders in attendance, 335 completed and returned the survey for a response rate of 96%. Of the respondents, 259 (79%) were female and 67 (21%) were male. The average age of the respondents was 48, and 83% of the participants reported being married or partnered. Over 63% of the respondents had completed a 4-year college degree or post-graduate studies. Participants represented two job functional areas: 184 (56%) were clinical (e.g., nursing, occupational therapy, and home health); and 142 (44%) were non-clinical (e.g., finance, human resources, and marketing). The organizational levels of the respondents ranged from vice president/director (36, 11%), manager/assistant manager (87, 27%), supervisor (94, 29%), charge nurse/lead person (85, 26%), and other/technical positions (22, 7%). Respondents reported working an average of 45 hours per week. In addition, respondents averaged 15 years of tenure with the health system and 24 years of full-time work experience. In terms of career history, respondents indicated working for an average of three organizations on a full-time basis during their careers.

Independent Variables

Internal and external networking behaviors. The Wolff and Moser (2006) scale (see also Wolff *et al.*, 2011) was used to examine networking behaviors focused within and outside the organization. The scale is comprised of 22 items measuring internal networking behaviors and 22 items measuring external networking behaviors. Internal networking behavior items inquire

about individuals' interaction patterns with colleagues within their organization. A sample of these questions include "I catch up with colleagues from other departments about what they are working on," "At informal occasions, I exchange professional tips and hints with colleagues from other departments," and "When I need answers to sensitive questions, I turn to reliable colleagues to find out more about the matter." External networking behavior items examine individuals' behavior patterns directed towards acquaintances from other organizations. A sample of these questions include "I take part in professional association meetings," "For business purposes I keep in contact with former colleagues," and "When I hear of an interesting job opening in another company, I contact business acquaintances for more information." A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, to 5 = almost always was used. The coefficient alpha was .89 for the internal and .93 for the external networking behavior scales.

Dependent Variables

Organizational commitment. Affective, continuance, and normative commitment were measured with the 24 item scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). The three types of commitment were each measured with eight items. Sample items include: "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization" (affective); "It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to" (continuance); and "I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organization" (normative). A Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree was used. Coefficient alphas were .88, .80, and .78 for affective, continuance, and normative commitment, respectively.

To examine the construct validity of the independent and dependent measures, we conducted several confirmatory factor analyses using cutoff criteria suggested by Hu and Bentler

(1999), i.e., RMSEA close to .06, CFI close to 0.95, SRMR close to 0.08. First, a single factor model did not fit the data well ($\text{Chi}^2(2210) = 12842.9$; RMSEA = 0.13; CFI = 0.83; SRMR = 0.12). Also, a two-factor model with all networking items loading on one factor and all organizational commitment items loading on one factor did not fit the data well ($\text{Chi}^2(2209) = 8391.6$; RMSEA = 0.10; CFI = 0.89; SRMR = 0.10). Only a five factor model with all items loading on their assigned scale provided satisfactory fit ($\text{Chi}^2(2200) = 5353.5$; RMSEA = 0.07; CFI = 0.92; SRMR = 0.08) and fitted significantly better than the two factor model ($\text{Chi}^2(9) = 3038.1$; $p < .001$). These findings suggest that the latent constructs relate meaningfully to their respective items and also provide support for the discriminant validity of the five constructs.

Control Variables

In their meta-analysis, Meyer *et al.* (2002) found some evidence for demographic variables (e.g., age) and investments (e.g., organizational tenure, education) individuals make in their career as antecedents of organizational commitment. As such, we included demographic (age, gender, and marital status) and human capital variables (education, organization level, number of previous employers, organizational tenure, and hours worked per week) as control variables to rule out alternative explanations for our findings.

Age. Respondents reported their current age in number of years.

Gender. Coded responses to gender were 0 for male and 1 for female.

Marital status. Marital status was coded 0 for single and 1 for married/partnered.

Education. Participants indicated their highest degree obtained on a scale of 1 = high school graduate, 2 = some college, 3 = two year college/technical school, 4 = four year college, 5 = some postgraduate work, and 6 = postgraduate degree.

Organization level. Respondents indicated their level in the organization on a 5-point scale coded as 1 = Other/Technical Position, 2 = Charge Nurse or Lead Person, 3= Supervisor, 4 = Manager/Assistant Manager, and 5 = Vice President/Director. These professional levels were used by the participating health system.

Previous employers. Participants indicated the number of organizations they have worked for on a full-time basis during their careers.

Organizational tenure. Participants indicated the number of years and months they worked for the health system. Data obtained were converted into months.

Hours worked. Respondents were asked to estimate their average hours worked per week.

Results

Table 1 presents the correlations, means, and standard deviations for the variables used in this study. The respondents engaged in more internal networking behaviors ($M = 3.42$) than external networking behaviors ($M = 2.66$). Perhaps not surprisingly in light of their nature as proactive behaviors, albeit with a different focus or target of their efforts (i.e., organizational members or outsiders), internal and external networking behaviors were correlated at $r = .63$. The respondents rated affective commitment ($M = 5.20$) higher than normative commitment ($M = 4.37$) and continuance commitment ($M = 4.29$). Internal networking behavior was significantly correlated with affective commitment ($r = .29$) and continuance commitment ($r = -.13$) in the expected direction; although no relationship with normative commitment was found. As anticipated, external networking behavior was negatively correlated with continuance commitment ($r = -.18$); but there was no relationship with normative commitment. Contrary to expectations, external networking behavior was positively correlated with affective commitment ($r = .15$).

To perform a more stringent test of our hypotheses, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed with the demographic control variables entered first, the human capital control variables entered second, and the internal and external networking behaviors entered third. The results of the regression analyses are shown in Table 2. Results showed support for Hypothesis 1, in that internal networking behaviors were positively related to affective commitment ($\beta = .32$). However, there was no relationship between external networking behaviors and affective commitment, providing no support for Hypothesis 2. Hypotheses 3 and 4 explored whether internal and external networking behaviors were negatively related to continuance commitment. While the correlation results supported these two hypotheses, the regression coefficients were not significant. As such, Hypotheses 3 and 4 were not supported. Support was obtained for Hypothesis 5. Internal networking behaviors were positively related to normative commitment ($\beta = .21$). Finally, Hypothesis 6 proposed that external networking behaviors would be negatively related to normative commitment, and the regression analysis supported this hypothesis ($\beta = -.18$).

Overall, the calculated regression equations were found to be significant for all of the dependent variables, although the R^2 values were relatively small. The unique change to R^2 accounted for by internal and external networking behaviors was significant for affective and normative commitment but not for continuance commitment. Although not hypothesized, we examined whether there might be a possible interaction between internal and external networking behaviors. We computed an interaction term, and reanalyzed the regression equations predicting affective, continuance, and normative commitment. The analyses showed no significant interactions in the data.

Discussion

The increased focus on adaptability (Hall, 2002) and the pursuit of boundaryless careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996, Sullivan and Arthur, 2006) has elevated the importance of developing mutually beneficial relationships with others, both inside and outside one's organization (Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). This study makes a unique contribution to the field by considering the relationship of internal and external networking behaviors to the affective, continuance, and normative commitment of managers and professionals. While some previous research has shown differential relationships between internal and external networking behaviors with career success measures (Michael and Yukl, 1993, Wolff and Moser, 2009, 2010), we add to the literature by providing evidence for differential relationships between networking behaviors and organizational commitment. Furthermore, our findings illustrate that social context is an important consideration, in that results varied based on whether networking was focused within or outside an individual's organization.

Networking within the organization was positively related to affective commitment, whereas external networking behaviors showed no relationship in the regression analysis. Affective commitment reflects the emotional involvement an individual feels toward the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990, Mowday *et al.*, 1979). Trusting and cooperative relationships developed through internal networking behaviors may serve to heighten a person's sense of membership in the organization and subsequent level of enjoyment resulting from that membership. Engaging in internal networking behaviors may also increase one's access to support and resources, resulting in feelings of wanting to stay with the organization.

Contrary to expectations, no support was found for the anticipated negative relationship between external networking behavior and affective commitment. Information as to how

individuals compare their situations with those external to their organizations would be helpful for examining affective commitment. Based on the type of information obtained from external contacts, individuals may feel “the grass is greener” at another company, or may believe that “the devil you know is better than the one you don’t” and decide that the situation at their current organization is better than what might be found at another company. Either adage might apply, and serve to cancel out any relationship between external networking and affective commitment. Future research should explore the amount of self-disclosure of individuals’ feelings toward their organizations when networking with others and whether the information disclosed tends to be of a more positive or negative nature. Given that effective networking relationships are based on trust (Baker, 2000, Cross *et al.*, 2001), it may be that initially individuals external to one’s organization may only present their company in a positive light, but as trust is developed, external contacts may be more forthcoming about the challenges they face. As individuals realize the extent of difficulties confronted in other organizations, one’s own situation may seem better by comparison.

As continuance commitment reflects a feeling of being tied to an organization as a result of weighing the benefits of staying versus the costs of leaving (Allen and Meyer, 1990), a negative association between networking behaviors and continuance commitment was anticipated. We expected that knowledge gained about internal job openings and external job opportunities discovered through networking with internal and external contacts would result in individuals feeling less stagnant in their current positions. Surprisingly, although the correlation analysis supported our hypotheses, the results (although in the predicted direction) were not significant in the regression equations. It appears that benefits derived from internal networking behaviors do not have enough potency to offset feelings of continuance commitment. Future

research should examine perceptions of mobility within one's organization, and how that may influence continuance commitment. Likewise, while networking externally may offer better information about and greater access to employment opportunities, the increased availability of realistic alternatives may not be enough to offset the perceived costs (e.g., health care benefits, seniority, tuition reimbursement) of leaving one's current employer. Moreover, greater awareness of employment alternatives may result in the realization that one's current position is better than other employment options and that few viable jobs exist.

Study findings supported the anticipated associations between internal and external networking behaviors with normative commitment. Internal networking behaviors were found to have a positive relationship to beliefs that individuals ought to stay with the organization. One explanation for this finding may be the result of built-up social capital generated from engaging in internal networking behaviors where individuals are able to call upon others for needed assistance. In light of the trusting relationships characterized by give-and-take that can develop between colleagues over time, individuals may also feel they ought to stay with their organization in order to fulfill their obligations. In contrast, external networking behaviors showed a negative relationship to normative commitment. Individuals who engage in external networking behaviors may place more value on their connections to peers and colleagues outside the organization, which may weaken their relationships within the organization and reduce their normative commitment.

Implications for Managers

For organizations struggling to recruit and retain highly skilled employees, as is the case in the healthcare field (NSI Nursing Solutions, 2013, PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2013) and others, understanding the role that networking behaviors may play in organizational commitment offers

an additional means to potentially offset such labor costs. Collins and Clark (2003) showed that human resource practices (e.g., reward systems) can encourage building internal and external networks, which can be beneficial for the effective functioning of organizations. This study offers insight on the importance of networking behaviors for managers. Specifically, this study's results indicate that internal networking behaviors are related to affective as well as normative commitment. Organizations that encourage internal networking behaviors may see gains as individuals who are more connected with their colleagues experience more commitment to their organizations. The more individuals want and feel they ought to stay with their employer, the less likely they are to seek out job opportunities elsewhere (Griffeth *et al.*, 2000). In addition, fostering internal networking behaviors may help organizations realize productivity and quality improvements through promoting more cooperative relationships among employees.

Our results showed that external networking behaviors were negatively related only with normative commitment. Connections to external others, such as professional peers and colleagues, may result in individuals identifying more with their profession than with their employer (Chang *et al.*, 2008, Kerr *et al.*, 1977). Individuals experiencing lower normative commitment may be more likely to engage in psychological withdrawal from their organizations and perceive their relationship with the organization as more transactional than relational in nature. However, external contacts can provide managers and professionals with valuable ideas and information, and can be strategically important for organizational learning and the development of interorganizational agreements and alliances. As such, more research is needed to explore how strong identification with external peers and colleagues may influence, positively or negatively, individuals' attitudes and behaviors in their organization.

Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

Our study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, although a 96% response rate was obtained, the data were collected on a single survey instrument, which poses the threat of common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). However, we believe that common method bias as an alternative explanation for our results is unlikely for two reasons. First, the confirmatory factor analyses show that our measures form meaningful, distinct constructs, indicating that method bias is not the main source of variation in our data, which would have resulted in a single factor or lack of model fit (note that according to recent simulations by Richardson *et al.*, 2009, further statistical remedies are of limited practical value). Second, the pattern of our results provides evidence against method bias in this study in that differential relationships were found based on internal and external networking behavior. Although internal and external networking behaviors were highly correlated, as hypothesized and shown in the regression equations, they were related to affective and normative commitment in opposing directions. Common method bias is not a viable explanation for the differential relationships obtained. However, future research should attempt to track the growth of participants' networking behaviors over time to offer greater insight as to their internal and external networking behaviors, especially as opportunities and obstacles are encountered during their careers.

Second, no statements can be made about causality. For instance, although we can argue that internal networking behaviors serve to integrate members into an organization and result in higher affective commitment, being more emotionally attached to the organization may facilitate networking internally. That is, positive attitudes toward the organization may encourage individuals to participate in more internal networking behaviors. Longitudinal research is needed

assessing both internal and external networking behavior and the three types of organizational commitment to help determine direction of causality or whether reciprocal relationships exist. Third, this study obtained self-reported networking behaviors which rely on individuals' memories for accuracy. Using observations of networking behavior and collecting peer ratings would provide additional methods to help gain a more accurate assessment of networking behavior.

Future research including potential mediator variables such as perceived organizational support (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002) may also be helpful for further explaining the relationship between networking behaviors and outcomes such as affective and normative commitment. For instance, internal networking behavior may lead to greater perceptions of perceived organizational support and ultimately higher affective and normative commitment. Additional research on the type of resources gained through an individual's networking efforts (Ibarra and Hunter, 2007) from both internal and external contacts would also be useful for ascertaining the support received. For instance, it would be helpful to know whether the purpose of the networking behavior was to obtain knowledge or resources that would benefit the organization, or whether the purpose was to further one's own career (e.g., information about potential job opportunities), or whether the purpose was to gain needed social support that might benefit an individual from a personal standpoint. Depending on the purpose of the interactions (i.e., primarily to assist the organization or the individual's career), the behaviors may be differentially related to the types of organizational commitment. However, it is recognized that information received that enables individuals to perform their jobs better not only helps the organization but also serves a career-enhancement function.

Although existing studies have provided insights into the role networking behaviors play in fostering career success (e.g., Forret and Dougherty, 2004, Michael and Yukl, 1993, Wolff and Moser, 2009, 2010), little prior research has examined the relationship between networking behaviors and important attitudinal measures such as organizational commitment. Our results show that networking behavior focused within the organization has differential relationships with organizational commitment than networking behavior focused externally. Given the significance of organizational commitment for a wide variety of work-related outcomes such as employee engagement, performance, and turnover, examining how managers can enhance organizational commitment through encouraging and supporting relationship-building is needed. Organizational benefits accrued through relational activities include better knowledge sharing and organizational learning (Cross *et al.*, 2001), which may be obtained from networking with individuals within and external to one's organization. Methods to facilitate individuals' abilities to develop effective relationships with others are particularly important in today's knowledge-based economy (Cohen and Prusak, 2001) where collaborative relationships with others can help provide companies with a competitive advantage.

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Table 1

Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Study Variables (N = 317)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Internal networking	3.42	.51	(.89)												
2. External networking	2.66	.70	.63**	(.93)											
3. Affective commitment	5.20	1.12	.29**	.15**	(.88)										
4. Continuance commitment	4.29	.99	-.13*	-.18**	-.03	(.80)									
5. Normative commitment	4.37	.97	.07	-.09	.53**	.17**	(.78)								
6. Age	47.87	8.84	.07	.03	.06	-.02	.03	—							
7. Gender	.79	.41	.02	-.11	-.08	.10	.00	.01	—						
8. Marital Status	.83	.38	.02	.01	.02	-.12*	-.01	.01	-.05	—					
9. Education	4.12	1.40	.37**	.43**	.11	-.12*	-.09	.01	-.04	.01	—				
10. Organization level	3.10	1.13	.22**	.33**	.18**	-.14*	.04	.18**	-.26**	-.12*	.27**	—			
11. Previous employers	3.18	2.00	.04	.18**	-.09	-.11	-.12*	.20**	-.18**	.01	.00	.22**	—		
12. Organizational tenure	178.07	118.42	.02	-.13*	.06	.15**	.05	.42**	.20**	-.02	-.05	-.10	-.38**	—	
13. Hours worked	45.26	8.58	.27**	.34**	.08	-.10	-.01	.12*	-.22**	.01	.21**	.53**	.17**	.01	—

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

Note. The numbers on the diagonal represent coefficient alphas for the scale.

Table 2

Regression Analyses for Organizational Commitment

Predictors	Affective commitment	Unique ΔR^2	Continuance commitment	Unique ΔR^2	Normative commitment	Unique ΔR^2
Demographic variables:						
Age	.04		-.06		.06	
Gender	-.09		.04		-.02	
Marital status	.03	.01	-.13*	.02	.00	.00
Human capital variables:						
Education	-.02		-.04		-.12	
Organizational level	.19**		-.08		.11	
Previous employers	-.13*		.00		-.15*	
Organizational tenure	.02		.15*		-.05	
Hours worked	-.08	.05**	.01	.04*	-.03	.03
Independent variables:						
Internal networking	.32**		-.04		.21**	
External networking	-.07	.07**	-.09	.01	-.18*	.03*
R ²	.13**		.08**		.06*	
Adjusted R ²	.10		.05		.03	
<i>N</i>	317		317		317	

Note. The regression coefficients shown are standardized. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.