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Managerial factors and organisational commitment

A comparative study of police officers and civilian staff

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Keywords *Police, Civilians, Commitment, Motivation*

Abstract *It is estimated that civilian employees comprise 30 per cent of the police workforce in England and Wales, yet their working experiences have largely been ignored in the management literature. This article aims to help fill this void by analysing the antecedents of organisational commitment of 369 civilian support employees and how they compare with those of 1,242 police officers working in a large English police force. The study reveals that how individuals feel they are managed and supported has a strong bearing on organisation commitment, and that this is true for two very different groups of employees – police officers and civilian support staff. The implications for HRM development are discussed. The article concludes by suggesting that the findings could be extrapolated to a wide range of other public sector organisations, since they provide insights into managerial practices that have an impact on commitment regardless of job type.*

Introduction

Whilst there are myriad research investigations that critique organisation and management in public sector agencies, the majority focus on health and local authority environments (Flynn, 1997). There are few scholars outside mainstream criminology and crime management that have developed critical discourses of police management systems and structures (Bayley, 1994; Leishman *et al.*, 1995; 1996; Reiner, 1998; Loveday, 1999; an exception). When we further consider that police services comprise both police officers and civilian administrative roles the research data is even scarcer, with attention largely directed at uniformed personnel. Such a vacuum is unfortunate in that effective police services are now dependent on the successful management of both police officers and civilian police staff (Highmore, 1993).

The police have recently been criticised for failing to develop appropriate management approaches to cope with both the diversity of employees and also the recipients of police services (Posen, 1995; Macpherson, 1999). Indeed, when we theorise about the police role it is usually perceived in terms of community interaction and law enforcement, and not about the broad range of administrative tasks, many of which are undertaken by civilian police staff. Given that the goals of “New Police Management” (Leishman *et al.*, 1995; Cope *et al.*, 1997) focus on cost effective police delivery, and the restructuring of administrative and financial systems, it is surprising that organisation scholars have ignored the working experiences of the growing number of civilian police

employees. Our present study was stimulated by this concern particularly in relation to the nature of organisation commitment, since it is widely agreed that employee commitment contributes to improved organisation effectiveness. The article attempts to help fill a void in the police management literature by reviewing the attitudinal commitment of all police service and administrative hierarchical levels in a large English police force.

Civilians in the police service

There were few civilian support workers in UK police forces up until the end of the 1970s, as police officers were relatively cheap to employ and provided reasonable value for money in respect of the range of administrative tasks that supported the police function (Loveday, 1993). However, large police pay awards in the UK in the 1980s created a changed financial environment in which civilians were much less expensive to employ than police officers. The pace of “civilianisation” of the police was accelerated by the UK government’s refusal to fund increases in establishment if police officers were occupying posts which could properly, and more economically, be filled by civilians (Home office, 1983, 1988). Thus, police forces embraced civilianisation during the 1980s as a means of increasing the total establishment. As a result, by the early 1990s, civilians made up over 30 per cent of the police workforce in England and Wales (Mawby, 1998).

This push for civilianisation has continued into the 1990s, both as a strategy for promoting quality of service, as well as for improving the cost effectiveness of police services (Mawby, 1998). In many forces civilians now staff roles in incident report centres, station reception, scenes of crime, personnel, crime analysis, and management of media relations (Mawby, 1999). These roles were previously performed by uniformed officers and they serve as an illustration of the wide range of tasks that civilians have taken over in police forces. Given the tendency to “civilianise” police duties wherever possible, it is likely that the number of civilian personnel will continue to increase, along with their status and responsibility. Indeed, there is evidence that an increasing number of civilians are being appointed to the senior management teams of police forces. It is even being debated whether police forces should be run by a civilian Chief Executive with the Chief Constable’s role being that of Head of Operations (Wall, 1998). Therefore, the nature of organisational commitment of both civilian and uniform employees is a topical and important issue for police managers (Cope *et al.*, 1997; Loveday, 1999).

Organisational commitment: theoretical background

Understanding organisational commitment has always been problematic for managers and remains a key interest in organisations today. An increasing number of organisations are devising HRM strategies that attempt to nurture allegiance to an organisation’s goals and values, so understanding the nature of organisational commitment and the factors that affect it has become crucial to

informing HRM strategy (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Mowday, 1998; Baruch, 1998; Singh and Vinnicombe, 2000).

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The focus in this study is on the attitudinal approach to organisational commitment. Mowday *et al.* (1982), defined this type of organisational commitment as the “relative strength of an individual’s identification with, and involvement in, a particular organisation”. Organisational commitment can thus be seen as the extent to which employees identify with their organisation and managerial goals, show a willingness to invest effort, participate in decision making and internalise managerial values (O’Reilly and Chatman, 1986). In this study, managerial dimensions, which can broadly be described as management style and organisation climate, are studied in relationship to their effect on organisational commitment.

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So how will these civilians compare to police service officers (referred to as “uniform staff” hereafter) employees in terms of their commitment? The strong identification expected from a police officer’s focused career choice compared to a civilian support worker’s would suggest that organisational commitment in uniform staff should be higher compared to their civilian counterparts. There are some indicators to suggest that this could be true. Highmore’s (1993) survey of three UK police forces found evidence to suggest that civilians feel they are regarded as second class citizens in the police. He also found that only a third of police officers considered civilian staff as loyal members of the police service.

Since there are no comparable studies with which to frame our research, the following literature review summarises the key antecedents of commitment. We group them under two broad headings. First, individual factors, which includes an individual’s position in the organisation, age and length of service. Second, we review managerial factors, which includes research linking commitment behaviours and attitudes to how an individual is managed and supported in an organisation.

Individual factors and organisational commitment

It would seem reasonable to expect organisational commitment to increase with hierarchical position in an organisation and there is some evidence for this. McCaul *et al.*, (1995) found a relationship between organisational commitment and hierarchical level. Benkhoff (1997a) also found a similar relationship using alternative organisational measures. One would expect this to be replicated strongly in the uniform police with their rigid rank hierarchy, but there is no research available to confirm or deny this.

There appears to be some evidence that years in position and years of experience are positively associated with commitment. Previous studies have indicated that position tenure (Gregersen and Black, 1992; Mottaz, 1988) and organisational tenure (Mathieu and Hamel, 1989; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990) have small but positive effects on commitment. This can be explained as a result of the organisation’s socialisation process. The length of service in an organisation is positively related to the level of internalisation of organisational values, which results in greater commitment from the individual (Allen and

Meyer, 1990; Hellriegel *et al.*, 1995; O'Reilly *et al.*, 1991). However, some studies, for instance Lok and Crawford (1999) and Brewer (1996), have not found this relationship. Although there is evidence (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990) that commitment increases with age, we note the work of Cohen (1993) and Beck and Wilson (2000) which indicates that tenure is the more valid antecedent of commitment than age.

In contrast, the studies of police officers show a negative affect of tenure on organisational commitment. Van Maanen (1975) examined the development trend of organisation commitment over time. He surveyed a group of recruits in a US police force over a period of 30 months during their induction and training. He reported that their organisational commitment decreased with time and experience and attributed this to the “powerful character of the police socialisation process”, as well as their motivation to gain acceptance from their supervisors. Confirmation can be found in Beck and Wilson’s (1997) study of 739 officers in the New South Wales police service that showed an inverse correlation between organisational commitment and length of service (see also Lim and Teo, 1998). They noted the significance of socialisation processes operating within police culture whereby new recruits were often posted into positions where there were older, experienced and more “cynical” officers, whose views had a long-lasting “destructive” effect on new intakes. A further study by Beck and Wilson (2000) also supports the view of the degenerative nature of police commitment. They analysed the career patterns of 479 officers over a period of three years and concluded that tenure was correlated with increasing levels of negative work experiences and thus commitment.

Managerial factors affecting organisational commitment

Many studies have revealed that the level of organisational and managerial support an employee feels, their involvement in decision making (Porter *et al.*, 1974; Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Beck and Wilson, 1997) and the amount of feedback received about job performance and job role (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990) influence whether a person has high or low organisation commitment. It is also suggested that bureaucratic work practices often result in negative employee commitment, while a supportive work environment could result in greater commitment and involvement among employees (Brewer, 1993).

The relationship between leadership style and commitment has also been examined. Blau (1985) revealed that a consideration leadership style was found to have a greater influence than a concern for structure leadership style (or task-oriented style) on commitment. Confirmation is found in Williams and Hazer’s (1986) study that found consideration leadership style to be one of their antecedents to commitment.

The important role of superiors in aspects of organisational commitment is also shown by Benkhoff (1997a) who found that employees who regard their superiors as competent, trustworthy and having a good management style report, significantly more often, that they share the values of the organisation and feel proud to be members.

What we do not know, due to the paucity of literature on police organisational commitment, is whether the managerial factors discussed above apply, or whether there are other factors specific to being a police officer that will affect their organisational commitment. For instance, it is suggested that uniform police work is like no other work and requires officers to draw on a vast range of cognitive and physical capabilities (Kakar, 1998; Reiner, 1998).

In summary, there is evidence that the practices and behaviour of line managers will affect the level of organisational commitment. Generally, low commitment is indicated where individuals view the organisation as unsupportive, have a limited role in decision making and receive little feedback about their job role and performance. The prevailing management style and practices in organisations may thus serve to affect favourably or adversely organisational commitment along with other work experience determinants.

Our literature review suggests that there is limited empirical research on organisational commitment in the police and what there is covers only police officers. A key weakness we feel is that many police studies have targeted only a sample of the total population, principally at constable level. These studies have not accessed senior ranks, nor have they evaluated the working experiences of the large number of civilian support staff employed within police forces. The present study fills this gap in the research literature by examining the variations in commitment and its antecedents in all occupational and hierarchical levels.

Research approach

The purpose of this study is to examine the levels of organisational commitment and its determinants in a medium sized public sector organisation; a large English County police force. In particular a comparison will be made between civilian and uniform staff to test whether there is a difference in commitment levels, and whether commitment is shaped by similar variables. One of the authors is engaged in a longitudinal research/consultancy partnership with this organisation to explore the relationship between HRM strategies and organisational performance. This permitted the authors access to the total police population. To help formulate the questionnaire design, semi-structured interviews were held with a cross sample of operational and executive staff and this assisted in the identification of managerial and organisational themes. The questionnaire sought to evaluate a broad range of management and employee relationships, with a specific concern to identify performance improvement behaviours. In addition, a key aim was to uncover the extent to which employees were aware of the strategic goals and values of the organisation. Our commitment measure thus emerged from our analysis of questions that represent relevant managerial concerns to public sector HRM practitioners. Interestingly, this reflects the explorative work of Singh and Vinnicombe (2000) that sought to unravel what managers mean by commitment. They found that commitment was conceptualised in terms of an

individual's willingness to support innovation and performance improvement in an organisation.

Our conceptual model of commitment thus embraces recent research themes (Benkhoff, 1997a; 1997b; Iverson and Buttigrieg, 1999; Singh and Vinnicombe, 2000) on the nature and dynamics of commitment. These include: the extent to which employees will engage and contribute to improving performance, and how far employees identify and understand the organisation's strategic objectives. The value of this measure is that it represents the organisation and HRM agendas that inform police management and policy development.

The following propositions, derived from the literature, guided the construction of the research instrument and our subsequent coding and analysis:

- P1:* Organisational commitment will be higher in uniform staff than civilians.
- P2:* Organisational commitment will increase with rank/grade seniority for both uniform and civilians.
- P3:* Organisational commitment will increase with service length in civilians but will reduce with service length in uniform staff.
- P4:* Managerial factors that affect organisational commitment will differ between civilian and uniform staff.

Methodology

The survey population

The questionnaire was administered to the total police population of 2,898 police officers and 930 civilian staff. A 43 per cent return rate was obtained from police officers and a 42 per cent rate from civilian employees. An analysis of the profile of the returns shows that it closely matches the whole population's rank/grade profile with the exception of special constables (part-time police officers). Table AI in the Appendix gives full details of the population, questionnaire returns, and demographic data. The large number of questionnaires returned allows us to include a comparison that includes managerial staff, something which previous studies, due to their smaller sample size, have been unable to do (Cohen, 1988).

Development of an item pool to form an organisational commitment measurement

Our measure of commitment supports recent theoretical developments which question traditional organisational commitment instruments (Benkhoff 1997a, b; Siegal and Sisaye, 1997; Singh and Vinnicombe, 2000). Our commitment measure highlights the importance of an individual's identification with the organisation's goals and value systems. This psychological state mirrors Meyer and Allen's (1997) definition of affective commitment. This involves the internalisation of the strategic objectives and values, and can be considered a prime motivator towards goal accomplishment and performance improvement

since individuals who closely identify themselves with their employer are more likely to take on a diverse range of challenging work activities. They are thus motivated to direct their efforts towards organisational objectives. Consequently, to measure organisational commitment we posed questions designed to assess pride in the force, understanding of strategic direction, and employee involvement and contributions to service and quality improvements. In all, 18 questions were posed on a five-point Likert scale.

Development of an item pool for the independent variables

Our independent variables pool was influenced by previous studies which have assessed the level of organisational and management support, the feedback given about role requirements and job performance (Mathieu and Zajak, 1990), and the level of participation in decision making (Porter *et al.*, 1974; Beck and Wilson, 1997). A total of 19 questions were posed for the potential variables on a five-point Likert scale.

Factor structure and reliability

The questionnaire was factor analysed using a principal component analysis with a Varimax rotation that produced a five-factor model. Overall, 54 per cent of the variance can be explained by the five factors. Three of the factors loaded predominantly on questions from the pool of 18 organisational commitment items, so these factors are readily identified as components of organisational commitment, while the remaining two factors loaded on items associated with supportive line management and organisational support. Full details of the factor analysis of questionnaire items loading on variables that are components of organisational commitment can be found in the Appendix, Table AII. Details of the factor analysis of questionnaire items relating to the independent variables management support and organisation support can be found in the Appendix, Table AIII.

The factor we describe as management support is heavily influenced by the effectiveness of the respondent's supervisor or line manager's listening and communication skills. The factor we describe as organisational support is strongly influenced by whether there is a blame or supportive organisational culture. The themes that emerge in this organisational support factor have similarities with Jones and James's (1979) dimensions of organisational climate, in particular their leadership facilitation and support, and mutual trust dimensions.

Reliability testing of the internal consistency of the components of these additive scales using Cronbach's Alpha results in coefficients exceeding 0.7 (full details of the coefficients can be found in the Appendix, Tables AI and AII) which are regarded as indicating a robust measure (Nunnally, 1978).

Research results

Although there is no direct comparability between employees who are on the civilian support grade (grade bands are identical to those of the County

Council) and the ranks of uniform staff, we can make broad comparisons by their relative hierarchical positions and views on their responsibilities. Our interviews indicated general agreement that grades of Chief Inspector and above had a significant management content and that this was true of civilians with Senior Officer grades. These are classed as managerial in our findings and can be viewed as broadly comparable. Although there was a consensus that most Sergeants and Inspectors' roles involved supervision responsibilities, it was not so apparent which civilian grade band could be equated with similar responsibilities. Some staff in the upper part of the 3-6 scale had such responsibilities, but some did not. Overall, staff in the 3-6 band were viewed as having some decision-making scope and might be viewed as the closest match for Constables. Support staff on the lowest scale band 1-2 had no comparative equivalent in the uniform ranks.

Organisational commitment for civilian grades and uniform ranks

The means for organisational commitment for civilian and uniform police staff are compared by grade/rank in Table I. The findings show that constables have an average level of commitment (49.5) similar to that of non-managerial civilian grades (scale 1-2 = 49.0, scale 3-6 = 48.1). This is notable since it suggests that the strong identification expected from a constable's focused career choice is not the strong variable that one might expect. It contradicts the research that suggests commitment is higher in police officers than in comparable public professions (Van Maanen, 1975). In line with the prediction of other research, (McCaul *et al.*, 1995; Benkhoff, 1997a), we observe that both civilian (56.0) and uniform managers (61.2) have commitment levels considerably higher than the staff they control.

Grade-rank	Cases	Commitment mean	Std dev.
<i>Civilian^a</i>			
Scale 1-2	108	49.0	7.0
Scale 3-6	183	48.1	8.0
Managerial grades	39	56.0	7.9
<i>Uniform^b</i>			
Constables	796	49.5	6.8
Sergeants and Inspectors	287	53.9	6.5
Managerial ranks	44	61.2	5.2

Table I.

Organisation commitment for civilian grades and uniform ranks

Notes: Organisation commitment scale mid-point = 45;

^a Civilian grades equate to the former County Council scales. Grade 1-2 is the lower band and 3-6 the higher band;

^b Uniform table omits cadets and special constables for clarity, our findings show that they have similar levels of commitment to constables

Organisational commitment – civilian and uniform staff causal variables

Strong correlations are shown in Table II for both the causal factors, indicating that receiving management support and organisational support are universally applicable as factors that affect organisation commitment, regardless of whether employed as a civilian or police officer. (Civilian staff correlations are above the italicized diagonal in Table II and uniform staff correlations are below the italicized diagonal). However, there are differences in emphasis. It appears that civilian organisational commitment is more influenced by management support (correlation 0.63, $p < 0.01$) than for police officers (correlation 0.55, $p < 0.01$), while both have a similar emphasis on the organisational support experienced (civilian 0.64, $p < 0.01$; uniform 0.61, $p < 0.01$).

The correlations seen between organisational commitment and grade/rank seniority for civilians and uniform staff confirm the earlier conclusions of a link between organisational commitment and seniority for police officers (correlation 0.31, $p < 0.01$), but we see that the overall effect for civilians is very weak and not statistically significant (correlation 0.06, $p > 0.05$).

Time served in the force is seen to influence organisational commitment weakly for uniform staff (correlation 0.14, $p < 0.01$) and has an even weaker effect on civilians that is not statistically significant (correlation 0.06, $p > 0.05$).

Antecedents of organisation commitment for civilian and uniform staff

To investigate if there are differences in how the variables affect organisational commitment, we undertook separate regression analyses for civilian and uniform respondents. In this regression we have included gender to ascertain whether the predominance of men in the police sample and women in the civilian sample have any influence on organisational commitment. Checks for assumption of linearity and homogeneity were satisfactory and the overall test for goodness of fit for the regression equations is highly significant for both civilian and uniform groups (significance $F = 0.000$) indicating that the regression equation is most unlikely to have occurred by chance.

The analysis shows that the regression equation accounts for over 50 per cent of the variance in organisation commitment in both groups (civilian $R^2 = 0.502$,

Variable	OC	Man.	Org.	Grade	Time
Organisation commitment	<i>1.00</i>	0.63*	0.64*	0.06	0.08
Management support	0.55*	<i>1.00</i>	0.72*	-0.03	-0.04
Organisational support	0.61*	0.59*	<i>1.00</i>	-0.11**	-0.07
Grade/rank seniority	0.31*	0.06	0.14*	<i>1.00</i>	0.13**
Time served	0.14*	-0.09	-0.01	0.46*	<i>1.00</i>

Notes:

Spearman's correlation coefficient is significant at the: * 0.01 level; ** 0.05 level, two tailed

Table II.
Correlation of
organisation
commitment,
independent variables,
grade/rank seniority
and time served
(civilian staff
correlations are above
the diagonal (italics)
and uniform staff
below the diagonal)

uniform $R^2 = 0.497$). Overall, these are very strong findings given that only 54 per cent of the data (i.e. residing in the five factors) was incorporated into the regression equation.

The findings in Table III show the beta weights for civilian and uniform staff. The beta weights signify the relative contribution of each of the factors to the overall change in organisational commitment of employees. We can see that for both civilian and uniform staff the dominant factors affecting organisational commitment are organisational support (civilian beta 0.440; uniform beta 0.421) followed by management support (civilian beta 0.313; uniform beta 0.298). We note that rank seniority has a moderate bearing on organisational commitment for police officers (beta 0.201) but very little for civilians (beta 0.037). Next in strength of influence, we see that time served does have a small effect on organisational commitment for civilians (beta 0.118) and a weaker one on uniform staff (beta 0.068). This is surprising since it is the reverse of the order suggested by the correlations. Finally, we see that gender has only very weak effects on organisational commitment but they are not statistically significant (civilian beta 0.069, uniform beta 0.019).

Discussion of results

We summarise the findings and relate this to other research by revisiting the four research propositions:

P1: Organisational commitment will be higher in uniform staff than civilians.

No evidence has been found to support this proposition. Organisational commitment levels were found to be similar in comparable uniform and civilian grades, and not much above the midpoint of the scale for the majority of employees. This may be indicative of the negative effect of a command and control ethos (Loveday, 1999; Blau, 1985) on both civilian and uniform staff:

P2: Organisational commitment will increase with rank/grade seniority for both uniform and civilians.

Independent variable	Beta weight	
	Civilian	Uniform
Organisation support	0.440 ^a	0.421 ^a
Management support	0.313 ^a	0.298 ^a
Grade/rank seniority	0.037 ^{ns}	0.201 ^a
Time served	0.118 ^a	0.068 ^a
Gender	0.069 ^{ns}	0.019 ^{ns}
Per cent of organisational commitment explained	50	50

Notes:

^a *t*-tests are significant at the 0.005 level; ^{ns} *t*-tests are not significant at the 0.05 level

Table III.
Regression analysis:
organisation
commitment for
civilian and uniform
police staff

We have found that seniority of grade or rank has an influence on the level of organisational commitment of police officers but not on their civilian equivalents. This may be due to perceptions that rewards do not adequately reflect the level of education, knowledge, and skills (DeCotiis and Summers, 1987; Mowday *et al.*, 1982) of the large number of civilians in the middle grade band. At the time of the study, pay for support staff in the middle grade band was 28 per cent to 32 per cent lower than the most likely internal comparison with uniform staff.

However, at the managerial level we note that civilians, like uniform managers, do have much higher levels of organisational commitment than the staff they control. Although we would expect managerial levels to demonstrate a higher level of organisational commitment, what is surprising is the large differential between the different levels in the hierarchy. The data suggests that the employees' work role is more positively experienced the higher the position in the organisation hierarchy. Benkhoff (1997a) suggests this could be due to greater ties to the organisation. However, police agencies have a unique organisational culture that emphasises commitment to the profession itself as well as support for hierarchical rank and status. Based on our observations of the service under analysis we would argue that it is more likely that the differences in commitment are attributable to inappropriate selection and promotion procedures that leads to the perpetuation of a command and control management style that has a negative effect on the organisation commitment of subordinates (Loveday, 1999; Blau, 1985):

P3: Organisational commitment will increase with service length in civilians but will reduce with service length in uniform staff.

Organisational commitment, as predicted, does increase with tenure in civilian staff but the effect is not a strong one. It would seem that the internalisation of organisational values over time, which normally leads to an increased level of commitment (Allen and Mayer, 1990; O'Reilly *et al.*, 1991; Hellriegel *et al.*, 1995) is at work here.

However, uniform staff's organisational commitment has not been found to decrease with length of service. We have found the opposite to be true, organisational commitment increases with tenure but the effect is a very weak one. This contradicts previous research that suggests that commitment decreases with tenure in police officers (Van Maanen, 1975; Beck and Wilson, 1997, 2000).

P4: Managerial factors that affect organisational commitment will differ between civilian and uniform staff.

Overall, we find no evidence to support this proposition. It would seem that organisational support or lack of it and management support have very similar levels of importance for both civilians and uniform staff in determining their

organisational commitment. The implications of this finding are discussed in the conclusions.

Conclusions

The objectives of this paper were to explore the antecedents of police commitment in both civilian and uniform staff and consider any implications the findings may have for HRM policy development. In addition to being one of the rare published studies to capture the total police population, one of the major differences in this study is the use of a methodology that was guided and supported by police managers themselves. Our data reveal that there are few differences in commitment levels between police officers and civilian personnel. This is a significant finding because it contradicts the view held by many police officers that civilians are less committed to the police force than sworn officers.

The importance of unravelling the antecedents of police commitment cannot be underestimated, since the Home Office and leading police representative bodies, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), and the Police Federation are currently involved in critical debates about what constitutes police performance and are trying to define systems to measure and improve performance and accountability (Reiner, 1998; Loveday, 1999).

Acknowledging that committed employees are more likely to be concerned with improving individual performance (Benkhoff, 1997b) our data provide valuable empirical evidence to assist future police operations and human resource strategy. Our findings uncover some of the complex relational dynamics that shape police commitment and reveal that how individuals feel they are managed and supported has a strong bearing on organisation commitment. Significantly our data reveal that these variables apply equally to civilian support staff and police officers.

In terms of individual characteristics, we have found that gender has no bearing on commitment, while length of service does. We have found that commitment increases slightly with tenure for police officers. This contradicts previous research that showed commitment decreasing with tenure (Van Maanen, 1975; Beck and Wilson, 1997; 2000). For civilians, organisational commitment also increases with tenure but the effect is stronger than for uniform staff.

A key area of concern for police managers is the substantial gap, whether civilian or uniform, between the levels of commitment of managerial ranks and the employees they manage. Significantly, the majority of operational level personnel show low levels of organisation commitment. This suggests that management is weak in a broad range of management skills, including: encouraging teamwork; supporting personal development; providing feedback on performance, as well as communication and listening skills. Organisational support factors indicate that this management style is encouraged since there is a strong belief that there is little openness and honesty between ranks, thus fostering a defensive work climate.

Beck and Wilson's (1997) study revealed similar weaknesses in management skills, and suggested that commitment could be increased by appropriate management development training. We would support this recommendation but would also add the requirement to including an HR strategy specialist in top level decision making.

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These findings obviously have implications for both individual and organisational well-being since the management behaviours in this police force go against the collaborative and supportive work environments that new employment relations systems are trying hard to encourage (Millward, 1994). This is significant because the application of HRM policies is implemented via line managers who are responsible for "managing commitment" (Meyer and Allen, 1997). What is clear from our study is that our antecedents of commitment strongly relate to the way individuals are managed or, in other words, the "perception of HRM practices".

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Meyer and Allen (1997) concluded that work experiences are critical to the development of commitment and that there may be a set of work experiences that are important for all employees. Our findings give support to this proposition. They suggest that there is a "universal appeal" for a work climate that supports employees, treats them fairly, and ensures that employees feel that they make important contributions. Our results strongly support this argument since lower level respondents largely viewed the management style and organisational climate as unsupportive regardless of whether they were civilian or uniform staff.

We are not suggesting that the antecedents of commitment identified in our research are exhaustive, indeed only half of the variation in commitment that we have observed is explained by the antecedents we have examined. We would agree with Meyer and Allen (1997) that what is needed is to examine "the impact of entire HRM systems". In view of the increasing trend towards civilianisation in police agencies, we would argue there is a need to recognise the extent to which civilian and uniform employees are united in terms of their overall work experiences, and suggest that future assessment of policy development should consider the similarities amongst police personnel rather than assume difference in work attitudes and commitment behaviour. Indeed, the process of civilianisation emphasises the importance of treating police organisations as a unified public sector agency. Thus, future research on police and commitment should consider the nature, variety, and differentiation between HRM systems and explore how they influence management behaviour and commitment attitudes of all police staff.

In conclusion, this study has shown that antecedents of commitment strongly relate to the way individuals are managed and that this is true for two very different groups of employees – police officers and civilian support staff. The implication is that our findings could be extrapolated to a wide range of other public sector organisations, since they provide insights into managerial factors that have an impact on commitment levels, regardless of job type.

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Appendix

	In service	Returns	Uniform (%)	Civilian (%)
<i>Rank/grade</i>				
Cadet	10	5 (50)		
Special constable	579	74 (13)		
Constable	1,771	816 (46)		
Sergeant/Inspector	462	292 (63)		
Special supervision	16	10 (63)		
Chief Inspector or above	60	45 (75)		
Uniform total	2,898	1,242 (43)		
Manual	69	18 (26)		
Scale 1-2	300	114 (38)		
Scale 3-6	498	197 (40)		
SO 1 and above	63	40 (63)		
Civilian total	930	369 (40)		
Force total	3,828	1,611 (42)		
<i>Demographic data</i>				
<i>Gender</i>				
Female			20	70
Male			80	30
<i>Tenure (years)</i>				
< 2			11	17
2-5			15	21
6-9			16	21
10-14			17	19
15-19			17	11
20 or more			24	11

Table AI.

Sample characteristics

Notes: Numbers in parentheses are percentages

Item	Factor loading
<i>Organisational commitment (combined items from Pride, Goals and Involvement: reliability 0.85)</i>	
<i>Pride factor (proportion of variance 10 per cent: reliability 0.80)</i>	
I am proud to be working for ForceCo	0.76
I hold ForceCo in high regard	0.72
The quality of the work within my division/department is excellent	0.61
I'm not really interested in ForceCo, it's just a job ^a	0.60
My role is considered important within ForceCo	0.59
Generally my division/department is taking action to improve the quality of its work	0.55
<i>Goals factor (proportion of variance 9 per cent: reliability 0.87)</i>	
I understand the links between the Police Authority's annual plan and the priorities of "Forward Together"	0.86
I am aware of the goals in "Forward Together"	0.84
I understand the links between the Police Authority's annual plan and my division/dept plan	0.78
I am aware of the priorities and strategic direction of ForceCo	0.78
<i>Involvement factor (proportion of variance 8 per cent: reliability 0.73)</i>	
Please indicate your level of involvement in improving your division/dept quality/work standards	0.73
Please indicate your level of involvement in developing objectives for your division/dept	0.69
Please indicate your level of involvement in negotiating your own work objectives	0.67
I contribute to decisions that affect my work	0.58
I have considerable freedom in negotiating my work priorities	0.57
Note: ^a Reverse coded items	

Police officers
and civilian
staff

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Table AII.
Factor analysis of
questionnaire items
loading on variables
that are components of
organisational
commitment

Item	Factor loading
<i>Management support factor (proportion of variance 18 per cent: reliability 0.92)</i>	
My supervisor/manager does a good job of negotiating clear objectives	0.82
My supervisor/manager is good at encouraging teamwork	0.81
My supervisor/manager provides the right information for me to do my job properly	0.80
My supervisor/manager does an effective job in keeping me informed about matters affecting me	0.79
Personal development is encouraged by my supervisor/manager	0.75
My supervisor/manager holds back information on things I should know about ^a	0.71
My supervisor/manager is usually receptive to suggestions for change	0.70
I get regular feedback from my supervisor/manager regarding my performance	0.62
In my division/dept the supervisor/manager is very interested in listening to what I have to say	0.61
In my division/dept there is not enough opportunity to let supervisor/manager know how you feel about things that affect you ^a	0.50
<i>Organisational support factor (proportion of variance 9 per cent: reliability 0.79)</i>	
I have confidence in the decisions made by the executive team of ForceCo	0.60
Most of the time you can say what you think without it being held against you	0.61
If I make a mistake it would be treated as a learning opportunity	0.66
There is openness and honesty between different grades	0.69
I regularly spend time on dealing with issues that have arisen due to inadequate communication ^a	0.43
How do you rate the management style you have experienced?	0.47
Note: ^a Reverse coded items	

Table AIII.
Factor analysis of
questionnaire items
relating to independent
variables