Data obtained from the 1991 "Work Organizations" module of the General Social Survey (GSS) reveal a small but significant tendency for employed men to display higher organizational commitment (OC) than employed women do. This article examines the gender differences and factors that arguably heighten or dampen it. The authors consider both job models highlighting gender differences on job attributes such as autonomy or rewards, and gender models that stress socialization, family ties, and differential labor market opportunities. They find that the primary explanation for the gender difference is that men are more likely than women to hold jobs with commitment-enhancing features. Gender differences in family ties do little to affect male-female OC difference. When job attributes, career variables, and family ties are simultaneously controlled, the authors find that, if anything, women tend to exhibit slightly greater OC. Contrary to implications of some gender models, the correlates of OC do not appear to be appreciably different for men and women.

Gender Differences in Organizational Commitment

INFLUENCES OF WORK POSITIONS AND FAMILY ROLES

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Organizational commitment is a key construct for examining the match between individuals and organizations. People who are highly committed to their work organizations are willing to devote more effort to the organization, identify more with the values of the employer, and seek to maintain their affiliation with the organization (Steers, 1977). Managers want committed employees because such workers are assumed to have higher levels of effort and performance and lower rates of turnover and absenteeism, with attendant reductions in costs of replacement and training (see Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). From a societal point of view, committed workers may contribute to economic growth and high levels of productivity. High commitment may also be desirable from an individual standpoint, to the extent that committed workers are better compensated or have better career prospects. There may, however, be negative side effects of high organizational commitment for the individual, such as stress, career stagnation, and family strains (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday et al., 1982).[1]

The continuing rise in the rate of labor participation among women (Oppenheimer, 1992) has led to concerns among some that the more extensive family involvements of women might reduce their levels of organizational commitment. Other recent observers (e.g., Koretz, 1992; "Women in Management," 1992) suggest that economic productivity suffers due to a failure to make full use of the potential of committed women. The questions of whether there are differences between men and women in their levels of organizational commitment—and, if such differences are present, why—thus emerge as important research issues for studies of work and family in the 1990s. We will address these issues in this article. Our results demonstrate that overall, there is a weak tendency for men to display higher levels of organizational commitment. This is primarily attributable to the fact that women tend to hold jobs with fewer commitment-enhancing features. Differences between men and women in family ties have relatively little to do with gender differences in organizational commitment (OC). Indeed, once we statistically adjust for job, family, and career factors, our data indicate, if anything, that there is a tendency for women to display slightly higher organizational commitment.

SOURCES OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN COMMITMENT

There is no shortage of ideas about why men and women might differ in levels of organizational commitment; Giele (1988), Marini (1988), and Bielby (1992) review major lines of argument. The various arguments do not always lead in the same direction, however. Our discussion of potential sources of gender differences in OC distinguishes between job and gender perspectives (others drawing such contrasts include de Vaus & McAllister, 1991; Feldberg & Glenn, 1979; Lorence, 1987; Loscocco, 1990). Job models treat the work people do and the settings they do it in as the principle

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explanatory factors structuring employment outcomes, whereas gender models emphasize personal characteristics, sex role socialization, and linkages to family situations—especially in explaining employment outcomes for women.

A job perspective would explain gender differences in OC on the basis of the different kinds of jobs that men and women tend to hold. Such a view is appealing because it is well-known that occupational sex segregation is pervasive, especially at the level of detailed occupations (Bielby & Baron, 1986). To the extent that features of jobs and work situations affect OC, such segregation could lead to gender differences in OC.

Much prior theorizing about OC has emphasized job- and organizational-related factors. Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990, pp. 13-16) argue that organizational structures foster commitment or loyalty and attachment in four ways. By facilitating *participation* through, for example, work redesign or sociotechnical systems, employers can provide workers with a sense of control and partnership. Increased feelings of community and pride are encouraged by structures facilitating *integration*, including cultural symbols and rituals, or programs that help to nurture collegial relations. Structures that facilitate *individual mobility and career development*, such as promotion ladders, build commitment by encouraging employees to have a long-term orientation to an organization,[2] whereas those that create *legitimacy* do so by conferring a sense of citizenship on workers. Lincoln and Kalleberg's empirical analyses of U.S. and Japanese workers support the claim that these features of jobs and organizations are associated with OC, as do results of many other studies (e.g., Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday et al., 1982).

In addition to the design of jobs and work settings, OC may be affected by individual differences in rewards received from work. High earnings and fringe benefits indicate that an employer places high value on an employee, and may be reciprocated by higher commitment levels. Nontransferable fringe benefits such as retirement plans can become "side bets" (Becker, 1960) that keep employees from seeking work elsewhere, whereas promotion experiences may encourage them to think in terms of a career within their organization. Gerson (1985) argues that a woman's choice to commit herself to a career in a workplace as distinct from a "domestic" pathway is strongly affected by experiencing either expanding or blocked workplace opportunity in her early years of employment.

There are well-documented gender differences in most of these aspects of jobs that have been found to be associated with OC. Although male and female jobs differ little in terms of occupational prestige, they differ substantially in income and promotion prospects (Giele, 1988, p. 301). The jobs held by women tend to have fewer of the commitment-enhancing features mentioned above: Women are less likely to be in supervisory positions, for example (Wolf & Fligstein, 1979), and when they are, they tend to have a narrower scope of authority than do men (Reskin & Ross, 1992). Men are more frequently found in jobs that offer high autonomy, that is, self-direction and freedom from close supervision (e.g., Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1990, p. 90). Hence a job perspective would lead us to expect a zero-order gender difference in OC (with men displaying higher levels) that is explained by adjustments for gender differences in job and career variables.

In discussing gender models, we can consider both those arguments that would lead to general differences between men and women in *levels* of OC and those that imply gender-specific differences in the *strength with which factors are associated with* OC. Gender models are based on a heterogeneous set of factors said to differ between men and women. Among these are family roles and socialization, as well as varying labor market opportunities.

Family affiliations arguably affect commitment in both general and gender-specific ways. It is intuitive to posit that attachments to one collectivity compete with those to another—and therefore that persons who have extensive ties to groups other than their employees may have lower levels of OC. This notion is sometimes used to motivate examination of possible conflict between professional and organizational commitments (e.g., Mueller, Wallace, & Price, 1992). In the present study, we treat employers and families as competitors for an individual's loyalty. From this standpoint, extensive family ties—marriage, children—should lower OC among both men and women. To the extent that women are more likely to have such ties, for example, because they are more often single parents, the "competing affiliations" strand of the family ties argument would imply lower commitment levels among women.

The traditional breadwinner/homemaker division of family roles also leads to an expectation that men will exhibit higher commitment levels. This could be either the result of gender socialization practices[3] or of human capital investment decisions by husbands and wives that seek to maximize returns to the family unit (see discussion in Huber, 1986). Either way, this leads to the presumption that women are less committed to their organizations than are men, and (among other things) that they can be expected to leave their jobs at higher rates than men. Indeed, the practice of "statistical discrimination" is predicated on such gender stereotypes (Bielby & Baron, 1986; see also Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980). If this line of reasoning is accurate, any overall gender differences in OC will not vanish after adjustments for male-female differences in features of jobs.

Arguments based on a traditional household division of labor also suggest that family ties may have *different*, gender-specific, effects on the commit-

ment of men and women. For example, marriage and children may heighten organizational commitment among men but lowering it among women, if sex roles dictate that men should provide for the family, whereas women should maintain and nurture it.

Some gender arguments revolve around claims that men and women have different psychological traits that predispose them toward different levels of commitment. For example, it has been argued that women have more extensive social and affiliative interests than men do (see Giele, 1988, p. 311), perhaps as a result of gender socialization practices. The evidence for such gender differences is, however, at most equivocal (Block, 1976; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974).[4] Such differences might lead to higher commitment on the part of women. We are unable to measure psychological traits directly in our study, however, so if such differences exist and are associated with commitment, they are pooled with other unmeasured differences between men and women in the empirical results presented below.

A different consideration suggesting that women will display higher levels of commitment focuses on the more limited choices that women face within the labor market. Sources of such limitations include structural barriers to entry into male-dominated occupations and family ties that prevent women from searching for jobs beyond the geographic area in which they reside. In light of these limited alternatives, it is argued that dissonance-reduction processes lead women to place greater value on the positions they hold than would men in comparable circumstances. Kalleberg and Griffin (1978) and de Vaus and McAllister (1991) suggest that employees place less importance on rewards when they view those rewards as unattainable. Thus Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990, p. 154) reason that employed women displayed higher commitment levels than comparable men. Similarly, Hodson (1989) accounts for higher-than-expected levels of job satisfaction among women by positing that men and women use different comparison groups in evaluating their jobs. (See also Bielby & Bielby [1988, pp. 1034-1035] on work effort.)

A final line of reasoning has to do with selectivity. Different analysts suggest that women may have more choice than men as to whether or not to be employed;[5] if so, it is not implausible to argue that decisions by women to seek employment might reflect a predisposition toward commitment to work and employers. Hakim (1991) argues that there are two latent types of working women, one oriented toward a "homemaker career" and the other "committed to work as a central life goal" (p. 101), which suggests that the low-commitment group may move into and out of the work force as circumstances demand. Fiorentine (1988, p. 247) argues that homemaking and family activities constitute a "normative alternative" to occupational success for women, but not for men: "Women have fewer disincentives to change or lower their career goals when faced with doubts about their ability or when the career pursuit becomes personally unsatisfying." Gerson (1985) more specifically distinguishes between domestic and nondomestic pathways for women, documenting the way in which choices between these are patterned by life-course contingencies. Following from such observations, one would expect that those women in the labor force are more likely to display high commitment levels than otherwise comparable male labor force participants.

The considerable body of theorizing about how job and gender factors may affect OC does not provide us with any one clear expectation about how men and women differ in OC. We next turn to a review of the available empirical evidence.

PRIOR RESEARCH

The literature on organizational commitment is vast, with many studies considering numerous explanatory factors, including gender. We focus here on those studies that have explicitly examined gender differences in OC. The literature review in Mowday et al. (1982) cites several studies in support of the claim that "women as a group were found to be more committed than men" (p. 31). Among these are Grusky's (1966) study of managers in a large public utility, which found that women displayed higher levels of commitment than men; Grusky relates this to the higher barriers that women must overcome, a variant on the dissonance argument discussed above. Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972) studied teachers and nurses, finding women less likely to leave their employers. Finally, Angle and Perry (1981) found that female bus drivers were more committed than male ones.

Two recent meta-analyses of the literature seek to summarize systematically the results of correlational studies on the link between gender and OC.[6] Mathieu and Zajac (1990) located 14 samples that had examined the gender-OC relationship. These found, on average, that women displayed slightly higher commitment: Across the studies, the mean correlations between a dummy variable identifying men and OC was –.145. There was substantial variation around this, however; Mathieu and Zajac (1990) report a standard deviation of 0.165, and conclude that "there appears to be nonconsistent relationship between sex and levels of OC" (p. 177). Similar conclusions follow from Cohen and Lowenberg's (1990) examination of 10 samples in which the gender-OC correlation was studied. They report (p. 1022) a mean correlation of .035 and a 95% confidence interval ranging from –.174 to .245; on this basis Cohen and Lowenberg decide that they cannot draw any conclusion about a significant relationship between gender and OC.

Most extant studies are based on highly clustered samples. For example, Aryee and Heng (1990) report a correlation of .44 between sex and OC among supervisors in a Singapore manufacturing company; the relationship was not significant among shopfloor workers, however. Chelte and Tausky (1986) examined the gender-OC link separately for three occupational groups in a university, finding no consistent pattern. In a study of employees in one plant of a Fortune 100 firm, Gaertner and Nollen (1989) found no relationship between gender and OC once indicators of the firm's employment practices and employee career experiences were controlled.

Some studies do use evidence obtained from employees of several organizations. For example, Mottaz (1988) found a zero-order gender difference in OC in a sample of employees from six moderate-size organizations in a single community, but this difference disappeared when measures of work rewards were controlled. In broader samples of workers from manufacturing plants in the United States and Japan, however, Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990, p. 134) found that women displayed higher OC levels, after adjustments for a variety of position, task, reward, and value indicators.

In sum, prior research reveals inconsistent conclusions. The broad majority of the studies available have been conducted using samples drawn from single work organizations. None, to our knowledge, are based on a nationally representative sample of the labor force. Given that there are wide organizational variations in gender composition and employment practices, it seems quite hazardous to generalize from any given study—a caution that is accentuated by the conclusions of the two meta-analyses cited above. Moreover, many prior studies examine bivariate correlations only—they do not control measures of job attributes or family roles when estimating gender differences in OC. In the research reported below, we study the relationship between gender and commitment in a nationally representative sample, with ample control variables. This is responsive to Mathieu and Zajac's (1990, p. 191) call for more cross-organizational studies, and should provide a firmer basis than most extant research for generalizations about how gender and commitment are associated.

THE 1991 GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY "WORK ORGANIZATION" MODULE

The data base for our study is the 1991 General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is a nearly annual multitopic survey administered to an area probability sample of roughly 1,500 adult, English-speaking Americans (for an introduction to the GSS, see Davis & Smith, 1992). The 1991 study surveyed 1,517 respondents. The study includes a wealth of sociodemographic data on the background and current status of respondents, as well as many attitudinal data.

The 1991 GSS included a topical model focused on work organizations. Included in this were questions on organizational commitment, fringe benefits, work autonomy, supervisory duties, and sources of information used to locate jobs, among other topics. Together with the data gathered on work positions and work attitudes as part of the replicating core of the GSS, this module provides a rich source of information on the correlates of OC.

The fact that the GSS is conducted with a representative national sample is notable. As mentioned above, much research on organizational commitment has used samples clustered within work organizations, and it is difficult to know how far a set of results based on a given organization might be generalized beyond that setting. Of course, we are unable to study within-organization variations, because GSS respondents work for different employers. Despite this limitation, the GSS sample allows us to generalize our findings to the U.S. labor force with much more confidence than the employer samples used in other research.

Our analysis focuses on 912 respondents who were employed in full- or part-time jobs at the time of the interview, or who had jobs but were not at work because of illness, vacation, or strike. Of those respondents in the labor work force who were interviewed, 120 (14%) are self-employed. Because most research on OC is concerned with predicting employee behaviors such as absenteeism and tardiness, it is not clear that self-employed persons should be included in our analysis. Moreover, questions about loyalty to an employer may well mean something different when the respondent *is* the employer. Still, inclusion of the self-employed is of interest because, by design, they have been excluded from prior studies of OC; including them makes the sample representative of employed people in the United States. As a result of these conflicting considerations, we present many results below separately for the entire sample and for the employee and self-employed subsamples.

MEASURING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

The dependent variable in our analysis is an organizational commitment scale based on six questions included in the Work Organization module in the GSS. The interview items used in constructing the OC scale we analyze appear in Table 1. The wording of these items corresponds to that used in the Indianapolis/Tokyo Work Commitment Study (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1990, p. 75).[7] Items 1 to 5 bear a close resemblance to items 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 (respectively) of the 15-item Organizational Commitment Questionnaire

TABLE 1: Items Included in the Organizational Commitment (OC) Scale

Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Would you say that you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?

1. I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help this organization succeed.
2. I feel very little loyalty to this organization. [reverse-coded]
3. I would take almost any job to keep working for this organization.
4. I find that my values and the organization's are very similar.
5. I am proud to be working for this organization.
6. I would turn down another job for more pay in order to stay with this organization.

SOURCE: Davis and Smith (1991), pp. 468-469.
NOTE: Responses (except for the reverse-coded item) were scored as follows: *strongly agree* (4), *agree* (3), *disagree* (2), *strongly disagree* (1). For all respondents in the labor force, the organizational commitment (OC) scale averaging the six items has a mean of 2.87 and a standard deviation of 0.54. Its estimated reliability (Cronbach's α) is .78. For the employee subsample, the scale has a mean of 2.79, a standard deviation of 0.49, and a reliability of .74.

(OCQ) of Mowday et al. (1982, p. 221). The items here capture the major aspects of work commitment measured by the OCQ (see Mowday et al., 1982, p. 27); Item 1 reflects willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization; Items 2, 4, and 5 concern the belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values; whereas Items 3 and 6 measure the desire to maintain membership in the organization.

Respondents were assigned the mean of their scores on the six items as their score on the commitment scale.[8] For all respondents in the labor force, the scale has an internal consistency reliability of .78;[9] in the employee subsample, it has a lower but still acceptable reliability of .74.

ZERO-ORDER GENDER DIFFERENCES

Table 2 displays the mean levels of commitment for men and women found in the 1991 GSS data. Among all working respondents—both employees and self-employed persons—men score significantly higher (about .10 units, or .19 standard deviations) on the commitment scale than do women. The zero-order correlation between a dummy variable identifying men and the organizational commitment scale is .092, a result well within the bounds found in the meta-analyses mentioned above.

When the 120 self-employed persons interviewed by the GSS are omitted from the analysis, the gender difference in OC falls to .03 (.06 standard deviations) and becomes statistically insignificant. As shown by contrasting the second and third columns of Table 2, self-employed people have substantially higher OC scores than employees; the gender difference in the first

TABLE 2: Zero-Order Gender Differences in Organizational Commitment

	Mean Commitment Scores		
Gender	*All Employed Respondents*	*Employees Only*	*Self-Employed Respondents*
Female	2.82 (443)	2.77 (407)	3.35 (35)
Male	2.92 (450)	2.80 (365)	3.40 (85)
Total	2.87 (893)	2.79 (772)	3.38 (120)
t statistic	2.77	0.86	0.47

NOTE: One female respondent did not answer the question that asked whether she was an employee or was self-employed.

column is in large part a result of the fact that men are more often self-employed than are women (see correlation in Table 3).

FURTHER EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCES

The findings displayed in Table 2 do not demonstrate how levels of OC differ between men and women holding comparable jobs or with comparable family affiliations. We developed measures for many of the commitment-related features discussed earlier—including, in particular, job/career factors and family roles—in an effort to better understand the gender difference. We discuss these sets of indicators briefly in the following paragraphs; the appendix includes a more complete discussion of the measures, with their means and standard deviations.[10]

JOB ATTITUDES AND CAREER EXPERIENCES

We used several variables in our attempt to capture gender differences in work roles and career patterns. Several of our indicators of work positions are individual-level measures of the commitment-enhancing structures identified by Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990). Autonomy is our most direct indicator of participation, but this concept is also partially captured by our measure of the respondent's position in an authority structure. Integration is tapped by a variable assessing the quality of workplace relations, whereas opportunities for mobility and careers are measured by an indicator of the presence of regular promotion procedures. An employee's perception of the degree to which nonmerit criteria are used in awarding pay raises and promotions serves to measure one aspect of legitimacy. A final indicator of work position, organization size (natural log) does not correspond directly with any of these features, but it is arguably associated with several of them (career opportu-

TABLE 3: Zero-Order Correlations of Gender and Organizational Commitment With Variables Measuring Work Positions and Other Affiliations (All Employed Respondents)

Variables	*Correlation With Gender (male)*	*Correlation With Organizational Commitment*
Gender (male)	—	.092**
Work position		
Position in authority hierarchy	.205**	.342**
Autonomy	.132**	.427**
Perceived quality workplace relations	.011	.415**
Promotion procedures (dummy)	.081**	.012
Nonmerit reward criteria	−.153**	−.228**
Workplace size (log)	−.027	−.175**
Self-employment (dummy)	.145**	.360**
Career experiences		
Years with employer	.091**	.161**
Advances with this employer	.152**	.146**
Hours worked last week (or typical)	.259**	.126**
Full-time worker	.186**	.079**
Compensation		
Annual earnings (log)	.313**	.131**
Number of fringe benefits	.048†	.029
Family affiliations		
Currently married (dummy)	.087**	.074*
Number of persons aged 12 or less in household	−.032	−.104**
Frequency of job-home conflict	−.064*	−.124**
Sex role nontraditionalism	−.206**	−.033
Sociodemographic controls		
White (dummy)	.068*	.030
Years education	.018	.010

†$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

nities and formal rules, for example, are more often present in larger organizations). In analyses that use the entire employed sample, we also include a dummy variable distinguishing self-employed persons from employees.

To measure compensation, we included a measure of (logged) annual earnings, and a measure of the availability of fringe benefits. We also included two indicators of career experiences: the length of the employee's tenure with the employer, and the respondent's assessment of his or her past rate of advancement in the organization.

In the upper panels of Table 3, we show the simple correlations between these explanatory measures and gender and OC, computed for the entire employed GSS sample. Six variables describing work positions are associated with commitment in the manner expected; the correlations for autonomy and the quality of workplace relations are largest among these. Because there are also significant gender differences for five of the work position variables, the prospect that controlling them will affect the gender differences in OC is good. To a lesser degree this is also true of the career and compensation variables, notably the pace of advance and earnings.

FAMILY ROLES

We examined family roles using four indicators. Current family status was measured by marital status and the number of children aged 12 or younger in the household.[11] A scale reflecting acceptance of nontraditional roles for women was included to measure sex role orientation, which arguably should enhance organizational commitment, especially among women. Finally, we included an assessment of the perceived frequency of conflict between responsibilities at home and on the job.

We see in Table 3 that the correlations of these indicators with gender and OC are modest. Male respondents are slightly more likely to be currently married, and married people are a little more likely to be high on OC. People living in households with many children tend to display somewhat lower commitment. Respondents who say that job and home are often in conflict display significantly lower levels of organizational commitment, as expected; such conflicts are slightly more common among women. Finally, although women have a tendency to hold more nontraditional sex role conceptions, those holding such views do not differ appreciably from "traditionals" in their levels of OC.[12]

SELECTIVE INCLUSION IN THE LABOR FORCE

As noted, virtually all studies of OC have been conducted using employee samples clustered within a relatively small number of work organizations. Likewise, the GSS commitment items were asked only of currently employed persons. To the degree that decisions about entry into the labor force are related to predispositions toward OC, this raises the possibility of sample selection bias in correlations and regression coefficients (Berk, 1983).

The criterion for selection into our sample is based on employment status or labor supplied. Two indicators reflecting this are available in the GSS: whether the respondent described his or her employment status as full-time or part-time, and the number of hours worked per week. We see in Table 3 that men tend to supply somewhat more labor; that is, they tend to be full-time employees and tend to work more hours than employed women. Those

supplying more labor, in turn, tend to be somewhat more committed to their employers. Because the associations involving hours worked are somewhat stronger than those that use the full-time/part-time distinction, we use the hours worked measure as our control for potential selectivity in subsequent analyses.[13]

MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

To examine the ways in which the independent variables identified above affect the gender difference in OC, we conducted several multiple regression analyses using subsets of the independent variables. The results of our most comprehensive analyses, in which gender differences are estimated after controlling a set of 17 explanatory variables, are summarized in Table 4.[14] We present these results separately for the employee and self-employed subsamples (columns 2 and 3) as well as for all employee respondents (column 1).[15] Of special interest to us are the partial regression coefficients for gender in the first line of this table.

The results of these analyses are straightforward: Gender differences in OC are shaped most by differences in the kinds of jobs that men and women have. This conclusion holds for employed respondents, for the employee subsample, and even for the small self-employed subsample. In Table 4, we see that variables that measure attributes of work positions are the major features that have net effects on OC. We know from Table 3 that there are significant gender differences for most of the positional variables.

Gender differences in family roles do little to shape male-female differences in OC. When only the three family variables were included as predictors (results not shown) we found that higher OC was associated with marriage and the absence of young children, but that the male-female difference on OC from Table 2 remained largely intact. In Table 4, we see that family roles have no net influence on OC, once we adjust for differences in work positions and compensation.

Once all of the explanatory variables are controlled, we observe that the partial coefficient for gender becomes negative; indeed, it is statistically significant at the .10 level for the employee subsample. This indicates that levels of OC are, if anything, higher among women than among comparable men. As discussed above, there are several possible explanations for this difference, which is net of job/career variables and family affiliations; unfortunately, we do not have sufficient data to decide among these.

In this article we focus on gender differences, but we will comment briefly on some of the other results presented in Table 4. The coefficients for many

TABLE 4: Multiple Regressions of Organizational Commitment on Gender and Variables Measuring Features of Work Positions and Other Affiliations

	Regression Coefficients		
Explanatory Variables	*All Employed Respondents*	*Employees Only*	*Self-Employed Respondents*
Gender (male)	−.057	−.060†	−.053
Work position			
Position in authority hierarchy	.049**	.029	.193**
Autonomy	.149**	.140**	.388*
Perceived quality workplace relations	.168**	.179**	.144
Promotion procedures (dummy)	.061†	.074*	−.094
Nonmerit reward criteria	−.067**	−.064**	−.014
Workplace size (log)	−.002	−.004	.086†
Self-employment (dummy)	.318**	—	—
Career experiences			
Years with employer	.009	.004	.039
Advances with this employer	.042†	.033	.074
Hours worked last week (or typical)	.001	.002	.000
Compensation			
Annual earnings (log)	.003	.009	−.056
Number of fringe benefits	.018*	.016*	−.019
Family affiliations			
Currently married (dummy)	.045	.037	.040
Number of persons aged 12 or less in household	−.011	−.008	−.029
Frequency of job-home conflict	−.029	−.022	−.041
Sociodemographic controls			
White (dummy)	−.042	−.020	−.307
Years education	−.004	−.003	.005
Constant	1.567**	1.504**	.887
R^2	.345	.269	.416
N	735	656	79

†$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

of the explanatory variables are consistent with those reported in the prior literature on OC; job-related features are the strongest correlates of commitment among those studied. Commitment is especially heightened by autonomy and positive workplace relationships, but dampened when an employee perceives that nonmerit criteria influence the allocation of raises or promotions. The findings suggest that generous fringe benefits are more important than high wages in shaping commitment to an employer, and, as suggested by Table 2, that the OC scores of self-employed people are substantially

larger than those of employees. Overall, we account for more than a third of the variance in the OC measure for the entire sample, and more than a quarter of it within the employee subsample.

Because no prior studies examine OC for self-employed people, we make some passing observations about the results in the third column of Table 4. Although the number of self-employed people is small and the results therefore only suggestive, it appears that the scope of authority is a major factor in shaping OC among the self-employed. This is shown by the significant coefficients for authority, autonomy, and workplace size. The gender difference among the self-employed is estimated to be nearly the same as that among employees.

ARE CORRELATES OF COMMITMENT GENDER-SPECIFIC?

The final analyses that we report here examine the possibility that there may be gender differences in the processes leading to organizational commitment. If family roles compete more strongly with work roles among women than among men, for example, then we should expect some interactions of such variables with gender in their effects on commitment. There are reasons to expect other coefficients to differ by gender as well. Loscocco (1989, p. 387), for example, finds that the relationship between authority and the related attitude of work commitment is positive for men, but negative for women. She argues that this reflects differences in the nature of the authority attached to male and female supervisory positions. Lorence (1987) finds that the way in which age, autonomy, and occupational status are associated with job involvement differs between men and women.

We estimated a model including interaction terms between gender and each of the 17 independent variables included in the analyses reported in Table 4. The results appear in Table 5; we present gender-specific regression coefficients for ease of interpretation.[16] Table 5 gives results for the entire sample; findings based on the employee subsample are quite similar.[17]

Overall, Table 5 provides, at most, weak evidence of differences between men and women in the factors associated with OC; the sets of coefficients in the male and female equations do not differ significantly.[18] Three tests for gender differences in specific coefficients are significant at the nominal level of .05, however.[19] Thus the correlates of OC appear to be largely similar among males and females.

With these caveats in mind, we briefly discuss the gender differences that are suggested by Table 5. Two family affiliations have coefficients that differ by gender. Being married appears to raise commitment among men, but not

TABLE 5: Gender-Specific Regressions for Organizational Commitment (All Employed Respondents)

	Regression Coefficients		
Explanatory Variables	*Women*		*Men*
Work position			
Position in authority hierarchy	.015		.075**
Autonomy	.159**		.135**
Perceived quality workplace relations	.191**		.142**
Promotion procedures (dummy)	.072		.035
Nonmerit reward criteria	−.010	***	−.135**
Workplace size (log)	.002		−.012
Self-employed (dummy)	.314**		.273**
Career experiences			
Years with employer	.018		.012
Advances with this employer	.042		.053
Hours worked last week (or typical)	.001		.000
Compensation			
Annual earnings (log)	.023		−.040
Number of fringe benefits	.011		.026*
Family affiliations			
Currently married (dummy)	−.011	***	.145**
Number of persons aged 12 or less in household	.027	***	−.050†
Frequency of job-home conflict	−.056*		−.009
Sociodemographic controls			
White (dummy)	.044		−.120†
Years education	−.009		.004
Constant	1.450**		1.704**
R^2	.355		.365
N	369		366

NOTE: The gender-specific equations presented here are derived from an equation that includes interaction terms between gender and all other variables; R^2 for that equation is .364. *F* statistic for test of the hypothesis that there are no gender differences between equations is 1.218 on 17 and 699 degrees of freedom, $p > .10$.
†$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; *** *t* statistic for gender difference in coefficients exceeds 2.0.

among women. This finding is broadly consistent with a gender model placing emphasis on a man's responsibility as a provider. The homemaker counterpart of such a model is not supported, though, because married and unmarried women do not differ in OC. The presence of younger children in the household has a more negative coefficient among men than among women, a finding inconsistent with the claim that there is stronger competition of family and work roles among women.[20]

We do not have a ready interpretation for the other difference suggested by Table 5. We find that among men, perceptions that nonmerit criteria are

used in allocating rewards appear to reduce OC; this does not hold among women. We stress, however, that all three of the gender differences in regression coefficients identified in Table 5 are of borderline significance (see Note 19).

DISCUSSION

We can summarize our results concisely: Men tend to have slightly higher overall levels of organizational commitment than women, a difference primarily attributable to gender differences in commitment-related jobs and career attitudes. Women may be slightly more committed to their employers than are men in comparable positions, however. We find little evidence to suggest that gender differences in OC are a product of differences between men and women in family roles, or that the relationships of such roles to organizational commitment differ appreciably by gender. Because it has been shown that OC is related to turnover (e.g., Mowday et al., 1982; Randall, 1990), it is notable that these findings are quite consistent with those from studies of gender differences in quit rates (Blau & Kahn, 1981; Viscusi, 1980). Likewise, they are compatible with Bielby and Bielby's (1988) results for male-female differences in work effort.

We are left with the impression that gender differences in this area are quite modest. This is consistent with Marini's (1988, p. 376) observation that in general, gender differences are believed to be larger than they in fact are. As we have noted, there exist rationales for presuming that both men and women will display greater organizational commitment, but the results of our analyses lead us to the conclusion that the difference in OC between men and women is far smaller than within-gender variation. Moreover, the principal factors enhancing or reducing this form of attachment to an organization have far less to do with characteristics of persons than with attributes of positions.

The fact that OC is enhanced most by job-related variables suggests that employers seeking to increase the level of OC among female employees should be attentive to the same features that increase it for male employees: their working conditions and opportunities (see Bielby, 1992, p. 290). Our analysis finds that a positive interpersonal climate and the opportunity to work autonomously are of special relevance to OC.[21] Other pertinent organizational factors include the availability of regular promotion procedures and the perception that nonmerit criteria do not play a part in the allocation of rewards. Employers would do well, then, to foster an atmosphere of legitimacy within the workplace.

There is no suggestion in the data we have examined that policies aimed at alleviating work-family conflict would have a greater effect on OC among women than among men. The availability of child care assistance and benefits, for instance, is as strongly associated with OC among male as it is among female employees.[22]

Further studies of the interplay of work and family in shaping organizational commitment could include more detailed measures of household variables. It is possible that inclusion of more specific measures of the division of labor in the household or of amounts of time devoted to household management tasks would reveal stronger associations with OC than those isolated with the measures available to us. Such associations would not, however, be inconsistent with this study's finding that overall, gender differences in OC are limited; instead, they would further explain why some women and men are more committed than others to their employers.

APPENDIX
Measures of Independent Variables

Gender

Mean, 0.50; standard deviation, 0.50. Dummy variable identifying men.

Work Position

Position in authority hierarchy (mean, 0.98; standard deviation, 1.10). An indicator of a respondent's structural position in a network of supervisory relations. The measure was obtained by summing four dummy variables identifying respondents who (a) directly supervise others as part of their official duties, (b) indirectly supervise others because their subordinates have supervisory authority, (c) are not indirectly supervised because their supervisor has no superior, and (d) are not directly supervised.

Autonomy (mean, 2.95; standard deviation, 0.81). A four-item scale, the mean of items measuring the extent to which a respondent says that he or she can work independently, has a lot of say over what happens on the job, is allowed to take part in making decisions, and is not closely supervised. Reliability (Cronbach's α) is .834.

Perceived quality of workplace relations (mean, 4.09; standard deviation, 0.78). Mean of two items asking respondents to "describe relations in your workplace between management and employees" and "between co-workers and colleagues"; responses range from "very bad" (1) to "very good" (5).

Promotion procedures (mean, 0.45; standard deviation, 0.50). Dummy variable identifying jobs in which there are regular features for promoting people to a higher level.

Nonmerit reward criteria (mean, 0.51; standard deviation, 0.72). Sum of the three dummy variables indicating whether respondent believes that he or she is disadvantaged because of his or her race or sex, and whether he or she believes that raises are given to those workers who "have some favored relationship with the boss."

Workplace size (mean, 4.13; standard deviations, 2.08). Natural logarithm of respondent's estimate of the number of persons employed at the site where he or she works; calculated after assigning midpoints to response categories offered.

continued

Self-employment (mean, 0.14; standard deviation, 0.35). Dummy variable identifying self-employed respondents.

Career Experiences

Years with employer (mean, 1.29; standard deviation, 1.42). Natural logarithm of respondent's report of length of service with current employer.

Advances with this employer (mean, 2.51; standard deviation, 0.70). Respondent's assessment of pace at which he or she has advanced with the current employer, from "lost some ground" (coded 1) to "advanced rapidly" (coded 4).

Hours worked last week (mean, 40.21; standard deviation, 14. 93). Respondent's report of the number of hours worked in the week prior to the interview; a report of hours worked in a typical week was substituted if respondent is employed but was not at work in the prior week.

Full-time worker (mean, 0.80; standard deviation, 0.40). Dummy variable identifying those who are employed full-time.

Compensation

Annual earnings (mean, 2.82; standard deviation, 0.98). Natural logarithm of respondent's own income from employment in 1990; calculated after assigning midpoints (in thousands of dollars) to response categories offered.

Number of fringe benefits (mean, 4.67; standard deviation, 2.76). Number of benefits, out of 10, for which a person in a job like respondent's is eligible. Benefits include pensions, medical insurance, dental benefits, paid sick leave, life insurance, profit sharing/stock options, performance- or merit-based bonuses, paid maternity/paternity benefits, assistance with child care, and flextime scheduling.

Family Affiliations

Currently married (mean, 0.55; standard deviation, 0.50). Dummy variable identifying currently married respondents.

Number of persons 12 years of age or less in household (mean, 0.57; standard deviation, 0.91). Number of persons 12 years of age or less in respondent's household.

Frequency of job-home conflict (mean, 1.82; standard deviation, 0.88). Respondent's assessment of the frequency with which family and household responsibilities make it difficult to devote full attention to work, from "never" (scored 1) to "frequently" (scored 4).

Sex role nontraditionalism (mean, 3.03; standard deviation, 0.46). An eight-item scale, the mean of items measuring respondent's acceptance of three statements favoring nontraditional roles for women (would vote for a qualified woman president, approves of a married woman working, feels that a working mother can have as warm a relationship with her children as can a nonworking mother), and rejection of five statements favoring traditional roles (a woman should help her husband's career rather than having her own, preschool children suffer if mother works, men should achieve outside the home while women care for home and family, men are better suited than women for politics, women should take care of running their homes and leave the running of the country to men). Cronbach's $\alpha = .777$.

Sociodemographic Controls

White (mean, 0.85; standard deviation, 0.36). Dummy variable identifying White respondents.

Education (mean, 13.58; standard deviation, 2.74). Highest year of education completed.

NOTE: Means and standard deviations given are for all employed respondents.

NOTES

1. We recognize and acknowledge the differences between organizational commitment (OC) and related, but conceptually and empirically distinct, attitudes such as work, career, or occupational commitment (Mueller, Wallace, & Price, 1992).

2. See, for example, Gaertner and Nollen's (1989) argument that an employee's commitment is affected by employment practices that involve investments by employers in workers, such as promotion from within or company-provided training.

3. In this regard, Bielby and Bielby (1984) report for a sample of college women that "insulation from traditional role expectations, positive socialization experiences, and academic success all lead to greater work commitment" (p. 242).

4. Moreover, even if such differences did exist at one time (it is notable that studies cited by Block [1976, p. 285] in support of such differences date from the 1950s and 1960s), they may be changing as socialization patterns change. See Coser's (1986) discussion of gender differences in visual-spatial and mathematical abilities.

5. This is not to deny that most women, like men, work out of economic necessity.

6. An additional meta-analysis presented by Randall (1990) deals only with the consequences of OC (performance, attendance, turnover, and tardiness).

7. Lincoln and Kalleberg, however, used a 5-point response scale (including a middle-position alternative of "neither agree nor disagree") rather than the 4-point scale used in the General Social Survey (GSS).

8. If a respondent gave substantive responses to four or five of the six items, values for nonsubstantive (don't know, no answer) responses to other items were regression imputed (Little & Rubin, 1987). That is, missing responses were predicted via linear regression of one item on the others (using coefficients estimated from cases with data on all items). No score on the scale was assigned to those respondents who answered three or fewer questions. Only 19 respondents were excluded from the analysis because of missing values for OC.

9. Although one can draw conceptual distinctions between "affective" and "continuance" aspects of OC, or between willingness to exert effort, belief in organizational values and goals, and intent to stay (see, e.g., Mueller et al., 1992), the use of a unidimensional scale is appropriate to our purposes in this article. Moreover, a factor analysis of the six items reveals only one factor with an eigenvalue in excess of 1.0. This is also true of the longer Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ): See Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982, pp. 223-224).

10. Correlations between these measures and our focal variables (gender and OC) are displayed in Table 3 for the entire sample. Subsample results, and correlations among the measures themselves, are available from the authors on request.

11. The GSS data file does not include information on the ages of respondent's own children, although it does measure the number of children ever born. Our measure, though, refers to children in the household, regardless of whether they are the respondent's own children.

12. Because sex role nontraditionalism is uncorrelated with OC, and because its inclusion results in a substantial increase in missing data (the items in the nontraditionalism scale are asked of a random two thirds of GSS respondents; see Davis & Smith [1992]), this variable is not included in multivariate analyses reported subsequently.

13. Potential sample selection bias arises when observations are chosen on the basis of a dependent variable. In this study, *explicit* selection would involve sampling employees on the basis of their OC scores. The potential selectivity problem here is instead one of *implicit* selection: By studying only labor force participants, we may indirectly select people with high levels of commitment—to the extent that entry into the labor force is sensitive to potential OC. A number of sophisticated statistical methods of adjusting for potential selection bias have been

proposed (Winship & Mare, 1992). If, however, the threshold for inclusion in a sample is based on one of the independent variables in an analysis, no selectivity problem is present (Berk, 1983, p. 389). Because the criterion used in selecting our study sample from the entire GSS sample is based explicitly on current employment status or (equivalently) labor supplied (see interviewer instruction in Davis & Smith, 1991, p. 449), controlling measures of these selection criteria serves to adjust for potential selectivity.

14. Regression coefficients presented in Table 4 were estimated for the 735 respondents providing data on all 19 variables. The principal source of missing data was refusal to answer the question on earnings.

15. Differences between the equations for employees and self-employed persons are not significant ($F = 1.40$ on 17 and 699 degrees of freedom, $p > .10$). We report the results separately because most prior interest in OC has been confined to employees. Note that the small number of self-employed people in the GSS means that our ability to detect differences between employees and the self-employed is limited.

16. The results were estimated in an overall equation that added 17 cross product terms (one for the product of gender with each of the other independent variables) to the regression reported in the first column of Table 4. This permits easy tests of hypotheses about gender differences in regression coefficients (see results reported between the columns of coefficients in Table 5). The coefficients of cross product terms are not always easy to interpret, however, so we have presented the equivalent sets of gender specific regression coefficients in Table 5.

17. Results for the employee subsample are available from the authors on request.

18. The null hypothesis that the 17 independent variables have identical coefficients for men and women cannot be rejected even at the .10 level.

19. None of these, however, remain significant at the more demanding .0029 level that takes into account the multiple tests conducted here. The level of .0029 is obtained via a Bonferroni procedure that controls the Type I error rate in situations involving post hoc multiple comparisons. It is obtained by dividing the nominal (.05) significance level by the number of tests made (17); see, for example, Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan (1990, p. 28).

20. Family affiliations may, however, affect entry into the labor force quite differently for men and women. We examined a log-linear model for the cross-classification of employment status, gender, and number of children in the household, for those GSS respondents aged 65 and under. The three-way interaction in that model is significant at the .001 level; estimated parameters indicate a positive association of employment and number of children among men, but a negative association of roughly equal magnitude among women.

21. The two largest standardized regression coefficients corresponding to the results given in Table 4 are (for the complete sample) for the quality of workplace relations ($\beta = .257$) and autonomy ($\beta = .225$).

22. In the employee subsample, correlations of availability of employer-provided child care information and OC are .074 (women) and .130 (men); the respective correlations between child care assistance and OC are .057 and .055.

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