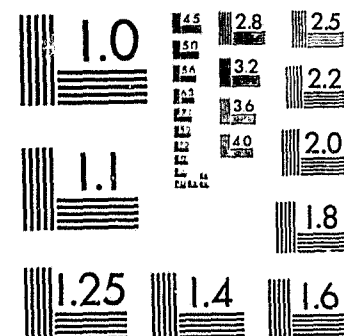


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DEC 2

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES, MORALE, AND  
STAFF TURNOVER 1, 2

ACQUISITIONS

Thomas R. Kane, William G. Saylor and Peter L. Nacci

In July, 1979, a 210 item attitude scale was administered to the staff at the MCC in New York. The scale was prepared by the BOP Research Office; it contains items about employee morale and subordinates' impressions of their superiors' management techniques.

**The Problems:** A study team lead by Warden Charles Young produced a lengthy document that discussed many problems at the MCC. The group was concerned about employee morale, sick-leave abuse and many problems associated with employee turnover. A general theme in the study team report was that, "better management improves pride and morale (and solves other related employee problems), which in turn is associated with greater commitment to the Bureau of Prisons and the MCC (p. 56)." The study group concluded that problems at the MCC are reversible and that a "spirited revitalization" through the effective application of solid management principles would halt the MCC's backslide.

This paper reports tests of the relative impact of the numerous management techniques--as evaluated by MCC staff in the attitude scale--on employee morale and commitment to the Bureau of Prisons. A path analytic statistical procedure is used to assess the strength of relationships between management activities and morale, and between morale and commitment. When a path relationship is found to be statistically significant, a powerful argument can be made that CHANGES IN A COMPONENT ARRANGED EARLIER (TO THE LEFT) IN THE LOGICAL ORDER OF A PATH MODEL PRESENTED IN THIS REPORT SHOULD CAUSE CHANGES IN COMPONENTS ARRANGED LATER IN THE MODEL (Duncan, 1970).

#### Procedure

**Survey Approach.** Many research studies in a variety of industrial settings have demonstrated relationships between employees' statements on attitude surveys (i.e., morale, job satisfaction, perceptions of superiors) and job

- <sup>1</sup> Opinions expressed are the authors and do not necessarily reflect opinions or policies of the Federal Prison System.
- <sup>2</sup> Many have assisted the authors throughout this project and their assistance is gratefully acknowledged. These include Cynthia A. McGrory and Nancy A. Miller.

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performance, commitment, or turnover. Therefore, the survey approach was considered appropriate.

Data Gathering. The procedures are described in an interim research report (Saylor, Kane, McGrory and Nacci, 1979). The survey was anonymous and voluntary and completed on institution time. Over 80% of the employees at the MCC completed surveys.

Factor Analysis. Finding principles that staff believe are important.

Culling management principles from specific management applications assessed in the survey was the initial part of the model construction process. From the viewpoint of staff respondents, particular applications go together because each is a variation of a more general unifying management principle. For example, the items "are you getting enough information to do your job ... well ..." and "do you understand your bosses priorities for your various duties" should be related because they reflect various ways managers control information. A statistical factor analysis tells the researchers which sets of survey items - specific management techniques - cluster together to define the management principles tapped in the attitude scale. Furthermore, the factor analyses confirmed that other clusters of survey items represent various employee attitudes or intentions toward the MCC/FPS, including morale and turnover. After the factor analyses obtained the clusters, the items in each cluster were combined to produce a "factor scale" to represent the principle/concept behind the cluster in the path analysis to follow. These management principles were then examined statistically in a path analytic procedure that was used to test causal models derived by the researchers.

Path Analysis. Finding what relates to what.

Two models are tested; the models are related logically since the final two boxes (really factor scales) in model 1 are the first two boxes in model 2 (see Figures 1 and 2).<sup>3</sup> The models are read from left to right. The individual survey items comprising the factor scales described in the boxes are found in Table 1. The numbers on the path arrows connecting boxes are beta weight coefficients that are used

<sup>3</sup> Although there were 115 surveys included in the analysis, incorporating all 12 factor scales in the same model would greatly restrict the power of the analysis, thus weakening the inferences that could be drawn from results.

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to assess the size of the relationships between factor scales.<sup>4</sup> All paths displayed in the models are significant at the P .05 level.

### Results

#### The Strategy.

Model 1 has as its final point of analysis two factor scales that are manifested as particular problems at the MCC. The study team noted that among the majority of staff at the MCC, there was a general belief that working at the MCC would hurt chances for career advancement -- hence, a sense of non-belonging. This is represented in model 1 as the factor scale labeled "COHESION" (refer to items 33 to 36 on Table 1). A second problem that the team observed consistently was a general erosion of subordinate's confidence in management to act in the best interest of the MCC and its employees. These concerns are indicated in survey items like, "Management is trying to build the organization and make it successful," and "I have confidence in the fairness and honesty of managers." In model 1 these concerns are represented by the component labeled, "TRUST IN MANAGEMENT" (refer to items 30 to 32 in Table 1).

The researchers have assessed whether changes in management principles (factor scales found to the left in the model: relevant items listed in Table 1) produce positive changes in these two problem areas (and if so, which management techniques seem more likely to produce the changes).

#### Getting There from Here!

The researchers have not interpreted the model in detail for this presentation but have summarized the findings in a few sentences.

In exercising good management principles, managers do:

- . actively exchange information with employees (GATE KEEPING principle)
- . ensure that information is transmitted smoothly vertically (CHAIN-of-COMMAND principle)

<sup>4</sup> The axiom "correlation does not mean causation" is true. However, the reader should be informed that while the path (beta) coefficients have the appearance of simple correlation coefficients they are not the same. The multiple regression statistic provides greater statistical control (power) and thus affords much stronger inferences about the relationships being assessed.

- . giving employees input into decision making (INPUT principle)

will induce the following perceptions in subordinates:

- . bosses are fair and accurate in evaluating subordinates (EVALUATION by SUPERVISOR)
- . bosses are concerned about the well being of subordinates (CONCERN)
- . bosses give employees believable information (INFORMATION BELIEVABILITY)

#### What about the Two Problems?

The model shows that positive changes in management principles called "INPUT," "CHAIN of COMMAND," and "GATE KEEPING" (thus, convincing employees that managers are concerned, and are providing accurate/fair evaluations and believable information) will eventually produce positive effects on the problem behaviors subsumed in factor scales "COHESION" and "TRUST." These influences are largely mediated (trace the path arrows) by a potent scale comprised of items about supervisor CONCERN. In other words,

- . A GOOD WAY TO SHOW EMPLOYEES THAT MANAGERS ARE FAIR, HONEST AND INTERESTED IN MAKING THE MCC SUCCEED (TRUST)
- . A GOOD WAY TO SHOW EMPLOYEES THAT THE MCC WILL HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THEIR CAREER AND TO INDUCE A SENSE OF BELONGINGNESS (COHESION)

is to

- . DEMONSTRATE CONCERN FOR THE WELL BEING OF THE EMPLOYEES BY EXERCISING THE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES.

#### What about Morale?

Model 2 picks up where model 1 left off. The study team was confident in management's ability to solve internal problems. What if management eliminates or reduces the problems exposed in factor scales "COHESION" and "TRUST"? We can test to see if there are probable consequences of enhanced "COHESION" and "TRUST" for employee morale (indicated in model 2 as having separate BOP, JOB and MCC components after earlier presentations on staff morale by these authors). The model questions one final link--a test to see if intentions to find a non-BOP position, "GONE," can be modified



by improved morale. The model reveals that,

- . if employees have confidence in management to act in the best interest of employees ("TRUST in MANAGEMENT")

the probable effects are:

- . greater sense of belonging and cooperation, and confidence that working at the MCC will not jeopardize one's career (COHESION)
- . more positive attitudes about the BOP
- . more positive attitudes about the MCC.

The organizational factors tested in this model ("TRUST in MANAGEMENT" and "COHESION") did not induce MCC employees to rate their jobs more positively. This could be because JOB morale at the MCC was not low (see Task Force Report page 55). This counter-intuitive finding is interesting and highlights the value of the present technique; not every intuition researchers have about the data is substantiated. In fact, many of the potential relationships in the models were tested but not displayed with path arrows because they failed to reach statistical significance. The pattern here seems to indicate that many MCC employees like their jobs; how they feel about managers or their chances for success does not influence that evaluation. Among the employees who do feel especially good about their jobs, there is a greater likelihood that they are more positive about the entire BOP system.

An additional finding in model 2 is the relationship between "COHESION" and satisfaction with the MCC. If staff indicate a greater sense of belonging and internal cooperation, and an assurance that their careers are not jeopardized because they are stationed at the MCC, then they show a greater satisfaction on the MCC morale items (e.g., "...this institution is run very well" and "I would rather be stationed at this institution than any other...").

#### What about Employee Turnover?

Turnover rate at the MCC may not appear to be problematic based on the 32% annual rate quoted on probationers. However, statistics produced by the study team indicated that separations among more seasoned employees may be high relative to the other MCCs (see pages 30-31), and consequently, the team concluded that the problem of retaining line staff at the MCC was not an insignificant one. Data in this research report confirm that there are significant influences of "TRUST in MANAGEMENT" and "COHESION" on "MORALE" and, in turn, of employee "MORALE"

on reduced turnover (intention to quit or look for non-BOP employment). More specifically,

- . positive impressions of employees "JOB" produce more positive evaluations of the "BOP"
- . and positive impressions of either the "BOP" or the "MCC" reduce intent to look for a non-BOP position (or to quit).

The critical function of "MORALE" in model 2, like that of "CONCERN," "INFORMATION..." and "EVALUATION..." in model 1, is mediation. Tracing the paths in Figure 2 we see that intentions to quit/look for other employment ("GONE") are influenced by "TRUST in MANAGEMENT" through attitudes about the "BOP" and the "MCC," and by "JOB" satisfaction through "BOP" morale.

#### Conclusions

Warden Young's team was concerned about employee-management communication. The report pointed out that personal observation, interviews and survey findings all revealed that "communication is a problem for the MCC and disturbances exist at all levels within the MCC and between the MCC and the Region" (page 15). An apparent reason for the breakdown was poor visibility and accessibility of managers, especially since, "employees who cannot see their supervisors cannot be seen either (and effectively evaluated)" (page 60).

The present analysis supports the intuitions and findings of the study team, and adds weight to their conclusions: model 1 indicates that the effect of improved management techniques is improved organizational relations--"TRUST in MANAGEMENT" and staff "COHESION"; in turn, model 2 reveals that to enhance these organizational factors ("TRUST..." or "COHESION") is ultimately to weaken employees' consideration of quitting and their search for alternative employment.

Suggestions: 1) that the managers of the MCC meet and discuss the individual items subsumed in these factor scales and develop ways to reduce these specific employee concerns. 2) that the Dallas Training Center considers addition of this and ensuing reports of this nature to the curriculum for management training in upcoming seminars.

November 1979

TABLE 1\*

FACTOR SCALES: Member Survey Items  
and Their Weight of Importance

FACTOR SCALE NAME	ITEM WEIGHTS	SURVEY ITEMS WHICH FORM EACH FACTOR SCALE
GATEKEEPING	1. .74	My boss really tries to get our ideas about things.
	2. .72	Superiors encourage us to make suggestions for improvements here.
	3. .69	Management ignores our suggestions and complaints.
	4. .69	Do you receive enough information to do your job as well as you should?
	5. .69	Management tells employees about company plans and developments.
	6. .62	My boss lets us know exactly what is expected of us.
	7. .55	Indicate how clearly you understand your supervisor's priorities for the various duties you are expected to perform.
CHAIN of COMMAND	8. .80	How frequently do you receive conflicting information from your supervisors?
	9. .72	Management keeps us in the dark about things we ought to know.
	10. .70	How often does information get transmitted down to you smoothly through your immediate supervisor?
	11. .70	Management fails to give clear-cut orders and instructions.
	12. .67	You can get fired around here without much cause.
	13. .64	How frequently do you receive orders from too many people?
	14. .47	Are your supervisors usually aware of your other immediate responsibilities when they give you orders?

\*For each cluster of items the factor analysis reveals how strongly each item contributes to its cluster and to the principle it helps to define. For each cluster the analysis assigns member items with scaled numerical weights (from 0 to 1.0); when the researchers combine the items to form a factor scale the member items are weighted accordingly.

TABLE 1, CONTINUED

- 3 -

FACTOR SCALE NAME	ITEM WEIGHTS	SURVEY ITEMS WHICH FORM EACH FACTOR SCALE
TRUST in MANAGEMENT	30. .90	Management here is really trying to build the organization and make it successful.
	31. .87	I have confidence in the fairness and honesty of management.
	32. .85	Management is doing its best to give us good working conditions.
COHESION	33. .84	I really feel a part of this organization.
	34. .77	The longer you work for this institution the more you feel you belong.
	35. .76	How do you think working at this institution is effecting or will effect your career potential in the BOP?
	36. .71	How would you evaluate the degree of cooperation among departments here?
JOB MORALE	37. .87	I believe the BOP has placed me in a job that suits me very well.
	38. .76	My BOP job is usually interesting to me.
	39. .76	I believe my BOP job is usually worthwhile.
	40. .70	If I have a chance, I will change to some other job at the same rate of pay at this institution.
	41. .63	I would be more satisfied with some other job at this institution than I am with my usual job.
BOP MORALE	42. .85	I am usually dissatisfied with the BOP.
	43. .83	I have a poor opinion of the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) most of the time.
	44. .77	Most of the time the BOP is not run very well.
	45. .70	If I remain in correctional services I would prefer to remain in the BOP.
	46. .65	The BOP is better than any of the other correctional services (e.g., states).

TABLE 1, CONTINUED

- 4 -

FACTOR SCALE NAME	ITEM WEIGHTS	SURVEY ITEMS WHICH FORM EACH FACTOR SCALE
MCC MORALE	47. .84	This institution is the best in the whole BOP.
	48. .82	In general, this institution is run very well.
	49. .76	I would like to continue working at this institution.
	50. .73	I would rather be stationed at this institution than any others I know about.
	51. .58	I am usually dissatisfied with this institution.
GONE		Use the items below to show how frequently or infrequently <u>you</u> do the following:
	52. .91	consider quitting
	53. .91	consider looking for another non- BOP position

FIGURE 1  
MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

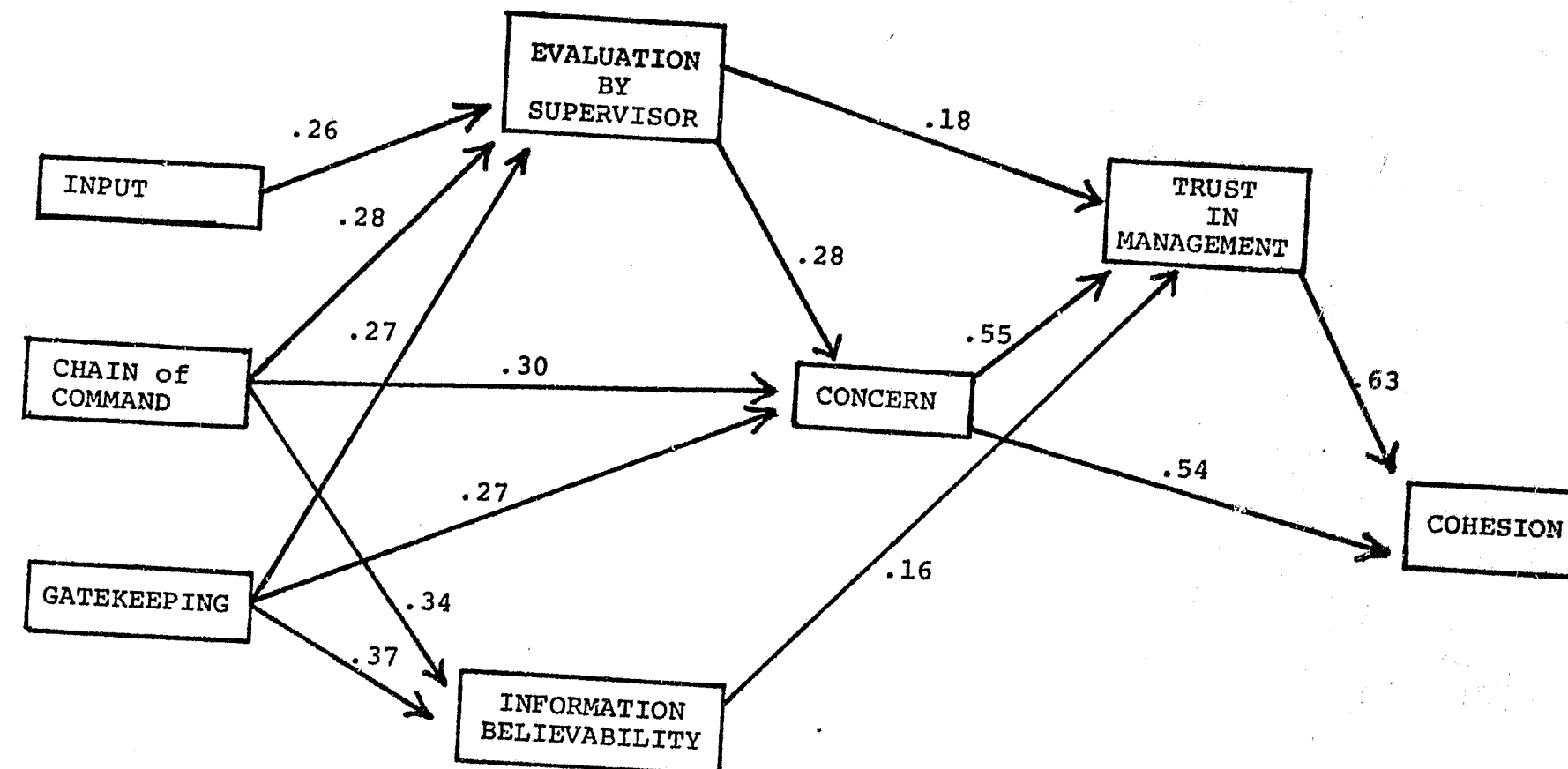
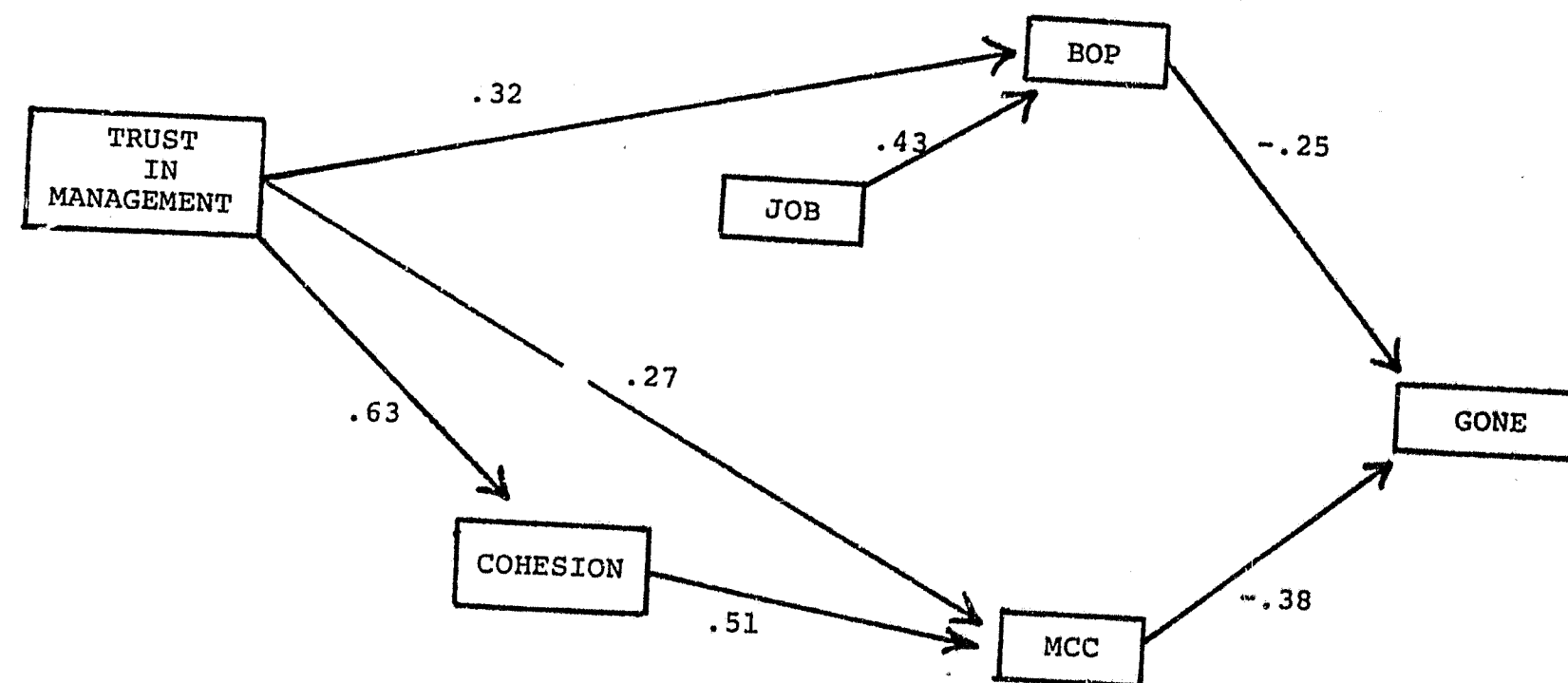


FIGURE 2  
MORALE AND TURNOVER





**END**