

**The Relationship Between Toxic Leadership, Organizational Citizenship, and  
Turnover Behaviors Among San Diego Nonprofit Paid Staff**

by

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TITLE OF  
DISSERTATION:


THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOXIC  
LEADERSHIP, ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP, AND  
TURNOVER BEHAVIORS AMONG SAN DIEGO NONPROFIT  
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## **Abstract**

Toxic leadership is associated with a number of negative consequences to the long-term health and welfare of people in organizations. Destructive leader styles redirect employee efforts from mission accomplishment to self-protection and survival behaviors, undermining the organization. Increased demand and decreased funding are characteristic of the nonprofit sector. Therefore, successful nonprofit organizations tend to rely on creativity and innovation to ensure their communities are appropriately and sufficiently sustained. Supportive, not toxic, leadership helps foster organizational environments that encourage prudent risk-taking and innovation.

This concurrent mixed methods study explored the relationship between toxic leadership and organizational citizenship and turnover behaviors among 471 survey respondents from a sample of San Diego nonprofit paid staff, and considered the influence commitment has on those relationships. An open ended question for those who reported experiencing toxic leadership provided additional context and depth as to why employees stayed in an organization in spite of abusive supervision. The findings of the study are of interest to leaders and managers of nonprofit organizations to develop policies and training processes as they strive to recruit, retain and develop talented employees.

Toxic supervision was found to exist in San Diego nonprofit organizations. However, its effect on organizational citizenship (OCB) and turnover behaviors was inconclusive, as was the influencing effect of commitment, in this study. However, both commitment and OCB-like ideas emerged as stated reasons that participants did not leave the organization, as did career, resilience and opportunity concepts. These identified variables suggest complex relationships that act in concert to influence staff retention indicating possible important opportunities for future research.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>xiii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>xv</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Background .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	3
Purpose of the Study .....	4
Significance of the Study .....	4
Research Objectives and Questions .....	5
Conceptual Framework .....	5
Demographic Measures .....	6
Measures of Organizational Success .....	6
Commitment .....	8
Summary.....	8
Study Design .....	9
<b>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Introduction .....	10



Nonprofit Organizations.....	10
Organizational Success Measures .....	14
Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).....	15
Turnover .....	16
Commitment.....	17
Toxic Leadership.....	18
Background.....	18
Toxic Leadership.....	20
Impact.....	23
Summary .....	23
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES .....</b>	<b>25</b>
Research Objectives and Questions .....	25
Design.....	25
Population and Sample.....	26
Measurement Methods .....	29
Data Collection Process.....	30
Instrumentation.....	32
Analysis.....	35
Conclusion.....	41
<b>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS .....</b>	<b>42</b>

Data Collection.....	42
Sample.....	43
Challenges to Sampling.....	46
Data Collection and Preparation .....	47
Coding of Quantitative Data Scale Scores .....	47
Research Questions .....	51
Research Question 1 .....	51
Demographics of Respondents Experiencing Toxicity .....	52
Destructive Leader Questionnaire (DLQ) Items .....	57
Summary Research Question 1 .....	60
Research Question 2.....	61
Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).....	61
Turnover .....	65
Summary Research Question 2 .....	66
Research Question 3.....	67
Moderation .....	68
Mediation.....	70
Summary Research Question 3 .....	72
Research Question 4.....	73
Data Collection.....	73

Data Preparation .....	73
Analysis .....	74
Quality and Integrity.....	74
Categories and Themes.....	76
Summary Research Question 4 .....	87
Summary of Results .....	88
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>90</b>
Statement of the Problem .....	90
Purpose of the Study .....	90
Review of the Methodology .....	91
Findings.....	92
Research Question 1 .....	92
Research Question 2 .....	94
Research Question 3 .....	98
Research Question 4 .....	99
Limitations .....	102
Implications .....	104
Recommendations for Future Research .....	105
Conclusions .....	108
<b>References .....</b>	<b>110</b>

<b>Appendix A Complete List of national Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) Major Groups.....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Appendix B Survey Layout.....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Appendix C Open-ended Question Codes and Frequencies.....</b>	<b>131</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Organizational Types for NTEE major group (12).....	13
Table 2: Variables – Type and Measurement .....	30
Table 3: Scale and Subscale Reliability Scores for Instruments Used in the Survey .....	34
Table 4: Survey Instrument Question Group Sequence.....	35
Table 5: San Diego Sector Comparison with Respondents’ Organizations .....	45
Table 6: Comparison of Staff Level and Type of Organization by Agency and Sample ..	46
Table 7: Total Gender and Gender Experiencing Toxic Supervision.....	53
Table 8: Respondents Who Worked for a Toxic Supervisor by Race/Ethnic Group .....	54
Table 9: Highest Education Attainment of Respondents Who Worked for a Toxic Supervisor .....	55
Table 10: Position Held While Working for a Toxic Supervisor .....	56
Table 11: Comparison of San Diego Organization Categories with Total Agency Clients and Respondents Working for a Toxic Supervisor .....	57
Table 12: Toxic Supervision Scale Variable Items, Response Totals and Means.....	58
Table 13: Cronbach’s Alpha Values for Toxic Supervision, OCB Scale and Subscale Variables .....	63
Table 14: Significant Models for the Outcome Variable OCB, OCB Subscales, and Predictors Toxic Supervision and Toxic Subscales .....	64
Table 15: Results of the Moderation Regressions for the OCB Dependent Variable .....	70

Table 16: Manifest Category Frequencies and Codes .....	77
Table 17: Job Search Category Illustrative Comments.....	79
Table 18: Compensation Category Illustrative Comments.....	80
Table 19: Career Management Category Illustrative Comments .....	81
Table 20: Latent Category Frequencies and Codes .....	83
Table 21: Resilience and Lost Confidence Categories Illustrative Comments.....	85
Table 22: Commitment Category Illustrative Comments.....	86
Table 23: Organizational Citizenship Behavior Category Illustrative Comments .....	87

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Relationship Map .....	9
Figure 2: Commitment Analysis Path.....	40
Figure 3: Toxic Supervision Variable Data Histogram from SPSS Output.....	49
Figure 4: Organizational Citizenship Behavior Variable Data Histogram from SPSS Output .....	50
Figure 5: Commitment Variable Data Histogram from SPSS Output.....	51
Figure 6: Revised Relationship Map.....	109

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Nonprofit organizations support communities in myriad ways. During times of recession, like the 2008 downturn, these organizations see an increase in demand for services as well as a fall in funding from private, individual, government and investment sources (Head, 2003). Additionally, federal and state agencies have privatized some social service programs, contracting a large portion of it to nonprofit organizations (Feiock & Andrew, 2006). While the government reimburses through contracts for those services, there are often other management costs incurred that were not previously experienced for the services provided, requiring other already strained funding sources to support that shortfall (Jang & Feioch, 2007, p.6). As the recovery continues, charitable giving has been returning to prerecession levels (MacLaughlin, 2015). However, as during recession, and despite this recovery, nonprofit organizations need to continually reevaluate their work to provide services as effectively and efficiently as possible.

This type of innovation may challenge organizational purpose and mission. To embrace such risk-taking and innovation and to keep their organizations successful, employees require supportive leadership (Maak & Pless, 2006). However, sometimes leadership may be unsupportive or even characterized as bad, destructive, or toxic. Toxic leadership undermines employees in many ways, stifling creativity and cutting-edge thinking, negatively impacting the organization in both the short and long term (Allen, Hitt & Greer, 1982; Kellerman, 2004; Reed, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005).

### **Background**

Some leadership scholars argue that to ignore the negative, or toxic, side of leadership fails to address the whole of organizational leadership (Conger, 1990;



Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004). Toxic behaviors range from managerial incompetence to genocide (Conger, 1990; Ashforth, 1994; Whicker 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Reed, 2004; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Lipman-Blumen, 2005). Most organizations, however, experience toxicity in a more limited way. For example, leaders are often psychologically and emotionally abusive, and/or threatening to the livelihood and social connectedness of the employees (Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007). Toxic leaders also may torment subordinates to the detriment of the mission and long-term health and welfare of the people in it (Conger, 1990; Ashforth, 1994; Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Reed, 2004; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007; DeAngelis, 2009; Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Reed & Olsen, 2010). As a result, their behavior redirects employee efforts from the mission to self-protection and other unproductive behaviors (Harris, Kacmar & Zivnuska, 2007). Not surprisingly, the harm employees suffer can devastate organizational success (Ashforth, 1994; Reed, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Tepper, 2007; Reed & Olsen, 2010).

Organizational success is usually measured by financial outcomes. However, nonprofits use a different business model that provides services and support instead of distributing profit (Koys, 2001; O’Niell, 2002). In light of that, measures of success need to focus on something other than the financial bottom line. Since leadership involves a relationship between followers and leader, the organizational success measures considered in this dissertation focused on followers. Two measures that use employee focused success measures are turnover and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB)

(Organ, 1997; Contino, 2002; Goetzel et al., 2003; Reed, 2004; Reed & Bullis, 2009, Reed & Olsen, 2010).

Toxic leader behaviors exhibited by supervisors or other organizational leaders decrease organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) in for-profit employees, and contribute to higher turnover (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000; Zellars et al., 2002; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011). However, the effect toxic behavior has on nonprofit professionals' turnover and organizational citizenship is not well documented.

Additionally, nonprofit professionals differ from their for-profit counterparts by their commitment to the work they do, often accepting lower pay and less favorable working conditions (Wittmer, 1991). This suggests that nonprofit employees' level of commitment may influence the effect of toxic leadership, lessening the impact it has on these two measures of organizational success. This influence has not been tested empirically.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The nonprofit sector in San Diego County provides services to residents who might otherwise be without them in areas from health and education, to the arts and sports. Furthermore, nonprofits often serve the most vulnerable populations for basic needs such as food, shelter, and safety. In times of shrinking resources, nonprofit organizations need to be innovative and creative in how they continue to deliver services. While toxic leader behaviors have been shown to undermine organizational success in for-profits and public organizations, it is not well documented how, or even if, toxicity is related to San Diego nonprofit professionals and their organizations' success (Conger, 1990; Ashforth, 1994; Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Reed, 2004; Hogan & Kaiser,

2005; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007; DeAngelis, 2009; Reed & Olsen, 2010). More specifically, there is no empirical evidence of the effect toxic leader behaviors have on nonprofit paid staff's organizational citizenship and turnover behaviors; nor, is there evidence of the influence their commitment to the organization may have on that relationship.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this concurrent mixed-methods study was to identify whether or not toxic leader behavior exists in San Diego nonprofits and, if it does, to measure the extent to which it occurs. This study also measured the effect of toxic leader behavior on nonprofit professionals' organizational citizenship and turnover behaviors, while also considering the influence of commitment on those relationships. Finally, it identified reasons individuals stay in an organization in spite of toxicity.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study was an opportunity to obtain empirical evidence of the effect toxic leader behaviors have on two measures of employee focused organizational success – OCB and turnover behavior. It also explored the influence of commitment on the effect of toxicity on paid staff's organizational citizenship and turnover behaviors. The information from this study may be used by Boards of Directors for organizational development, and for internal leadership development, as well as other types of organizations, such as educational institutions and consultant groups, for broader training and education. Such findings are of interest to leaders and managers of nonprofit organizations as they strive to recruit, retain and develop talented employees and volunteers.

## **Research Objectives and Questions**

The objective of this study was to explore the constructs of toxic leader behavior and its effect on the individual's OCB and intent to stay in the nonprofit organization.

The hypothesis was that staff members in nonprofit organizations tend to stay in a nonprofit despite toxic leadership. Questions that address this objective are:

1. To what extent does toxic leader behavior exist in San Diego nonprofits?
2. To what extent does toxic leader behavior explain variation in both organizational citizenship behavior and turnover behavior in San Diego nonprofits?
3. Does level of commitment significantly mediate and/or moderate the effect of toxic leadership on both organizational citizenship behavior and turnover behavior in San Diego nonprofits?
4. What reasons do individuals give for remaining with a nonprofit organization despite toxic leadership in San Diego nonprofits?

## **Conceptual Framework**

Toxic leadership includes managerial incompetence, threatening, controlling and illegal behaviors, and physical and non-physical abuse that are intentionally hostile or detrimental to both individuals and groups (Conger, 1990; Ashforth, 1994; Whicker 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Reed, 2004; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; DeAngelis, 2009; Kusy & Holloway, 2009). At the nation-state and pseudo nation-state levels, toxic leaders occasionally commit atrocities including genocide (Kellerman, 2004). While incompetent leadership is not uncommon and incompetence often leads to toxicity, it is not by itself considered toxic for this dissertation. Moreover, assault and murder, even though part of the larger toxic leadership taxonomy, are not part of a

normal work day in an American nonprofit. Therefore, this study focuses on individual and group manipulation, explicit and implied threats, and activities that undermine and create barriers to employee success that serve to intentionally intimidate, marginalize and degrade employees, causing them harm, and threatening the success of the organization, by their supervisors or organizational leadership.

### **Demographic Measures**

Leete (2006) found that nonprofit employees tend to more often be white and female, with higher levels of educational attainment, than their for-profit and public sector counterparts. In the military, some findings indicate that despite higher levels of abusive leader behaviors, employees with greater seniority have lower turnover rates (Reed & Bullis, 2009). Research also suggests that the mission focus, or type of organization, yields different staff member behavioral characteristics (Boris & Steuerle, 2006). In 2010, a report found that the majority of San Diego nonprofit employees were in education, health, and human service organizations (Hitchcock, Deitrick, Cesarini, McDougal, Roberts & Zinser, 2010). Therefore, type of organization was also included. Type of organization was based on the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities that will be explained later (Urban Institute, 2013). Based on this research, this study included gender, age, race/ethnicity, level in organization and educational attainment as demographic variables.

### **Measures of Organizational Success**

The harm toxic leadership can cause employees is an important issue from both the perspective of its effect on people and its impact on organizational success, both systemic and economic. Organizational outcomes, above and beyond the financial

bottom line, can be affected by toxic leader behaviors. Therefore, as nonprofit organizations' missions provide services and support, other measures of success are needed (O'Neil, 2002). This study used two impact measures of employee focused organizational success: OCB and turnover (Koys, 2001).

**Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).** Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) includes those actions of one employee to another, or one group to another, that enhance the long-term productivity of the organization that are not considered part of the individual's or group's primary or contractual position requirements (Organ, 1997). High performing organizations look for this type of behavior in their employees (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). It has been found that it is increased by the belief that the leader is supportive (Smith, Organ & Near, 1983). While successful organizations have employees who help each other and hold a positive attitude toward the organization, toxicity tends to quash these behaviors and attitudes (Zellars et al., 2002; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011).

**Turnover.** Turnover is another measure of organizational success and is related to toxicity. Turnover is expensive for organizations in the short term outlays and can, in the long term, lower productivity further impacting revenue (Hinkins & Tracey, 2000; Contino, 2002; Hillmer, Hillmer & McRoberts, 2004; Kacmar, Andrews, Rooy, Steilberg & Cerrone, 2006). Toxic leadership is associated with reduced morale and increased intention to leave (Steele, 2011), although Reed & Bullis (2009) suggest that senior level managers are less inclined to exit an organization than those who are lower in the organizational hierarchy. Turnover is also associated with OCB in that lower OCB has been linked to increased turnover (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000).

## **Commitment**

Handy and Katz (1989) found that nonprofit employees accept less favorable employment conditions, such as lower pay, to work for a cause to which they feel strongly committed. An inverse relationship has been found between organizational commitment and turnover (Blau & Boal, 1987; Allen & Meyer, 1990). However, commitment's mediating influence on turnover intentions when the employee is faced with a toxic leader is not well established. This influencing effect may be important if it modifies the negative impact of toxicity since that negative impact could adversely impact organizations. Further, identifying whether or not commitment influences the effect of toxic leadership on OCB and turnover may be useful in finding improvements as yet unrecognized in the nonprofit sector.

## **Summary**

The preceding discussion identified the effect of toxic leader behaviors normally found in U.S. organizations on two measures of organizational success related to individual employee attitude and activity: OCB and turnover behavior. Additionally, the influence of commitment to the organization on that effect was discussed. By better understanding the extent to which toxicity exists in San Diego nonprofit organizations and the impact of it on paid staff, actions can be taken to improve toxic situations that may lead to improvements in these organizations related to mission. These improvements may help to better serve the communities' needs with fewer resources. This study explored the effect of toxic leader behaviors on nonprofit paid staffs' OCB and turnover behavior, and the possible influence of commitment on those relationships. See Figure 1.

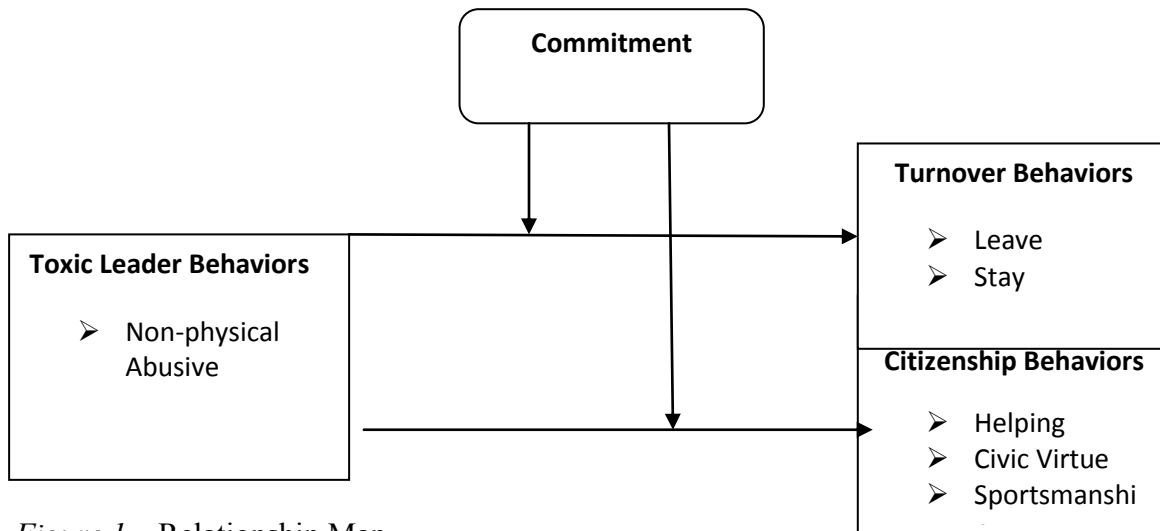


Figure 1. Relationship Map.

### Study Design

This study used a concurrent cross-sectional mixed methods design intended to determine the degree to which toxic leadership exists in San Diego nonprofits, its effect on paid staff's organizational citizenship and turnover behaviors, and the influence of commitment on that effect. This design was chosen to address both the breadth and depth of this effect (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It employed an electronic 63 item survey using scales for Toxic Leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and Commitment, a dichotomous question to address turnover, and an open-ended question to more deeply understand why people who work for a toxic leader stay in the organization. The sample consisted of San Diego nonprofit paid staff members whose organizations use a large San Diego human resources firm that provides personnel and training services. The client organizations represent some but not all categories of nonprofit organizations. Additionally, there was a small sample of a local nonprofit professional networking organization.



## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter includes the literature regarding the key aspects of this dissertation. The scale variables -- toxic leadership, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), turnover behavior and commitment -- are discussed along with the included demographic variables and the nonprofit organization type or category variable. The relationships between some of these variables will also be explored.

### **Introduction**

Research in the for-profit and government sectors has found a relationship between abusive leadership and organizational citizenship and turnover behaviors (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997; Zellars et al., 2002; Reed, 2004; Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Eatough, Miloslavik, Chu-Hsaing, & Johnson, 2011; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011; Steele, 2011). Nonprofit employees specifically have been found to tend toward certain demographic characteristics more than in the other sectors. They tend to be more often white, female, and have higher levels of educational attainment than their for-profit and public sector counterparts (Leete, 2006). Research has also determined that the level of position the employee holds and amount of time the employee has in the organization influences turnover behavior. Reed and Bullis (2009) found that despite higher levels of abusive leader behaviors, employees with greater seniority turn over less frequently (Reed & Bullis, 2009). Other research also suggests that the mission focus, or type of organization, yield different staff behavior characteristics (Boris & Steuerle, 2006).

### **Nonprofit Organizations**

The nonprofit sector in San Diego County provides residents with services in areas ranging from health and education, to the arts and sports. Furthermore, nonprofits

often serve the most vulnerable populations for basic needs such as food, shelter, and safety. In times of shrinking resources, nonprofit organizations need to be innovative and creative in how they continue to deliver services. While the corporate sector measures financial success outcomes, the nonprofit business model measures mission effectiveness (Larkin, 2013). These measures vary by mission type (Herman & Renz, 2008).

Internally, the context of the organization, its environment, mission, and staff characteristics determine personnel policies and procedures that will be effective in supporting the staff (Akingbola, 2012). Wilensky and Hansen (2001), found that nonprofit leadership considered some of the most important aspects of their job was to motivate staff within the context of the mission and to keep the organization on track, especially through organizational change. Additionally, they found that these leaders believed that removing obstacles in order for their staffs to better perform took a large part of their time. These reported leader activities are antithetical to toxic behaviors that de-motivate and raise barriers.

In general terms, there is some indication that nonprofit employees differ from for-profit employees in personality, values and behavior (Schepers, De Gieter, Pepermans, Du Bois, Caers & Jegers, 2005). They also tend to differ in their individual demographics. For example, they tend to be white, female, and have higher levels of educational attainment than their for-profit and public sector counterparts (Leete, 2006). Moreover, nonprofit professionals have been found to accept lower pay and less favorable working conditions than in the for-profit sector in order to serve a cause to which they are committed (Wittmer, 1991). This is evidenced by findings that nonprofit employees are less likely to turnover under less than ideal circumstances than employees

in other sectors (Blau & Boal, 1987; Allen & Meyer, 1990). Additionally, the mission focus, or type of organization, yields different staff behavior characteristics (Boris & Steuerle, 2006).

The Internal Revenue Service assigns each nonprofit organization a category and accompanying code determined by its primary mission focus (Urban Institute, 2013). There are twenty-six codes based on the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) (Urban Institute, 2013). See Appendix A for the complete list. These codes or categories are also parsed into larger groupings. These are called the NTEE major group (10) and major group (12) (Urban Institute, 2014). Table 1 shows the NTEE major group (12) categories. The difference between the groupings is that the Higher Education and Education categories are combined, as well as the Hospital and Health categories in the NTEE major group (10).

Table 1

*Organizational Types for NTEE major group (12)*


---

NTEE Major Group (12)	Title of Major Group
AR	Arts, culture, and humanities
BH	Higher Education
ED	Education
EH	Hospitals
EN	Environment/Animals
EH	Health
HU	Human services
IN	International
MU	Mutual/member benefit
PU	Public and societal benefit
RE	Religion
UN	Unknown

---

The major group (12) is used in this dissertation with some modification. In 2010, the Caster Family Center released a study on the local nonprofit sector. It modified the major group (12) combining hospitals with Health and separated Medical Research into its own category based on the impact and unique aspects of the local economy (Hitchcock, Deitrick, Cesarini, McDougal, Roberts & Zinser, 2010). It also reported that the majority of San Diego nonprofit employees were in education, health, and human service organizations.

Success for nonprofit organization is not determined by financial measures alone. Nonprofit employees have different characteristics than employees in other sectors. In light of these unique aspects of the nonprofit sector, the measures used in this dissertation for organizational success were organizational citizenship behavior and turnover because they focus on the employee, and the relationships of toxicity on these measures were evaluated using a measure of commitment.

### **Organizational Success Measures**

There are compelling reasons to control abusive leadership, with some estimates that it costs U. S. business up to 23.8 billion dollars annually in lower productivity, higher turnover, absenteeism and legal costs (Tepper, Duffy, Henle & Lambert, 2006). Abusive supervision lowers productivity, increases turnover, causes less favorable attitudes toward the job and organization in employees, and creates greater psychological distress in them (Tepper, 2000; Harris, Kacmar & Zivnuska, 2007). The financial burden and decreased productivity organizations incur from abusive leadership suggests that it is important to identify if organizations have toxicity, to what extent it exists, and its consequences. Turnover and organizational citizenship (OCB) behaviors are measures of organizational success that focus on the employee's reactions and perspectives (Koys, 2001). This is more appropriate for a nonprofit study since nonprofit organizations do not distribute profit. Additionally, measuring success based on mission accomplishment is specific to each unique mission and varies prohibitively amongst organizations within the same categories, as well as, across different categories of nonprofits (Koys, 2001; O'Neil, 2002). Also, when considering organizational success in the face of toxic leadership, the influence of commitment is important.

## **Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)**

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB) are actions between one employee and another, or one group to another that enhances the long-term productivity of the organization. A key element of OCB is that it is not a technical or contractual performance requirement (Organ, 1997). Specifically, OCB is behavior that helps coworkers, is courteous, and gives a good impression of the organization to outsiders (Zellars, Tepper & Duffy, 2002). These behaviors are collaborative, helpful and supportive. The results are not always tangible but lead to increased organizational success (Organ, 1997). The help one employee gives another that results in the improved performance of the latter is a major component of OCB. Furthermore, OCB is done with no expectation for direct reward or compensation. High performing organizations look for this type of behavior in employees (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005).

Some studies have found that the altruism of OCB is increased by the belief that the leader is supportive (Smith, Organ & Near, 1983). However, employees have been found to exhibit less OCB under a toxic leader (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997; Zellars et al., 2002; Eatough, Miloslavik, Chu-Hsaing, & Johnson, 2011; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011). This is the crux of the problem. Successful organizations have employees who help each other and project a positive attitude of the organization, while toxicity undermines this; therefore, a negative impact on efficiency and effectiveness could be anticipated if colleagues are unwilling to help each other outside of explicitly delineated requirements. Despite no monetary cost being directly associated with lower OCB activity, its impact affects productivity that does relate to financial success. While

successful organizations have employees who help each other and project a positive attitude of the organization, toxicity quashes these desired behaviors.

### **Turnover**

Turnover occurs when employees leave an organization of their own volition (Lee, 2009). It is expensive for organizations in both dollar outlays and work degradation (Hinkins & Tracey, 2000; Contino, 2002; Hillmer, Hillmer & McRoberts, 2004; Kacmar, Andrews, Rooy, Steilberg & Cerrone, 2006). For example, Reed (2004) found a relationship between decreased intent to stay with increased levels of toxic leadership. Steele (2011) associated reduced morale and increased intention to leave with toxicity. Kusy and Holloway (2009, p. 14) found 50 percent of those reporting experiencing toxicity with anyone in the organization contemplated leaving, while 12 percent actually did (Kusy & Holloway, 2009, p. 14).

Turnover costs can be broken into two types. The first are the direct costs associated with staff time to process the employee's departure, then finding, interviewing, hiring, and training a new employee, and the costs associated with modifying technology for the new employee.

The second type of turnover costs are indirect and include lost productivity during the new person's learning period, supervisor time to deal with problems related to the learning period, other employees' time to support the new person (required support), and industry specific issues that affect customers and clients (Hinkins & Tracey, 2000; Contino, 2002; Hillmer, Hillmer & McRoberts, 2004; Kacmar, Andrews, Rooy, Steilberg & Cerrone, 2006). For example, it can cost nearly \$34,000 to replace a nurse (Contino, 2002), and nearly \$22,000 to replace a retail call center customer service representative

(Hillmer, Hillmer & McRoberts, 2004). Considering that some industries have turnover as high as sixty percent annually (Hillmer et al., 2004), this becomes a significant part of the organization's budget.

To counter this, emphasis is being given to improving personnel programs to discourage turnover, especially in high turnover areas such as sales and service industries. Unfortunately, these programs focus on employee growth and development (Hinkins & Tracey, 2000); but not apparently on decreasing abusive supervision. Moreover, there is an established relationship between turnover and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB).

Lower OCB has been linked to higher turnover (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000). However, nonprofit employees have been documented as accepting less favorable employment conditions such as lower pay to work for a cause to which they are committed (Handy & Katz, 1989). In light of this, understanding commitment's influence on the relationship between toxic leadership and OCB and turnover is important since these behaviors impact the organizations' success. This possible mediating or moderating effect of commitment, underscores this unique dimension of nonprofit employees behavior.

### **Commitment**

Commitment is the attitude that causes one to continue working in an organization in spite of an abusive or difficult environment that may be attributable to the type of mission or work of the organization (Blau and Boal, 1987; Handy & Katz, 1998). It is associated with people giving greater effort to work activities without external incentives or threats (Goulet & Frank, 2013). This suggests that nonprofit employees' commitment



may influence the effect of toxic leadership, lessening the effect it has on turnover and OCB. Identifying this influence may be useful in improving performance in the nonprofit sector and ultimately improve service to nonprofit clients and communities. Before exploring the relationships between toxicity and organizational success, a review of the development and varying views and aspects of toxic leadership, or abusive supervision, is important to build the working definition used in this dissertation.

### **Toxic Leadership**

Bad, toxic, abusive, destructive, incompetent, and unethical all enter the lexicon of toxic leadership. This makes any discussion of the subject confusing and limited by the constant debate about what does and does not constitute the construct in question. Moreover, some toxic leadership is global and violent (e.g. genocide), while other toxicity is nonviolent and frequently experienced in organizational life. Because of the variation in toxic behaviors, some attempts have been made to create taxonomies of toxic leadership such as Williams (2005), Schmidt (2008) and Pelletier (2009) that help define behaviors rather than the toxic leader profiles used by Whicker (1997) and Kellerman (2004). This teasing out of individual behaviors allows researchers to focus on those areas that are relevant to the population studied. For example, in a typical American company, physical abuse and murder are, fortunately, outside the scope of accepted or normal behavior.

### **Background**

Toxic leadership concepts grew from major leadership theories and models, particularly the Transformational Leader Model. In this construct, the leader brings a vision of prosperity, develops strategies and tactics to animate the vision, and identifies,

develops and motivates the team that will make the organization successful in its present and future environments (Burns, 1974; Western, 2008). This model focuses on the positive and successful aspects of leadership. Some, however, questioned the model's efficacy if it did not consider the negative side of leadership, as well (Whicker, 1996; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Kellerman, 2004).

The taxonomy of toxic or abusive leadership includes a broad variety of behaviors. Some believe managerial incompetence is toxic because it undermines organizational nimbleness and effectiveness (Conger, 1990; Whicker 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Most accept abusive and illegal behaviors as toxic. Generally, frequency and intentionality are included in the definition and hostility that directly and negatively impact individuals and groups is prevalent in the descriptions (Ashforth, 1994; Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Reed, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005). More recently, DeAngelis (2009) has focused on those toxic behaviors that are passive aggressive, identifying them as more commonly found in organizations. Some definitions include those behaviors found at the nation-state and pseudo nation-state levels, including genocide (Kellerman, 2004). Underlying these behaviors, toxic leadership causes harm to employees and negatively impacts organizational success (Ashforth, 1994; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Tepper, 2007; Kusy & Holloway, 2009).

As can be seen from the varied behaviors mentioned above that are included in the toxic and abusive leadership literature, many organizations in the United States do not suffer with all of them. Murder and physical abuse are rarely, if ever, experienced. Additionally, managerial incompetence, while often coincidental with other toxic behaviors, is not considered by itself to be toxic for this dissertation. Therefore, this

dissertation used abusive behaviors directed toward individuals and groups that manipulate them with explicit and implied threats, and act to undermine and create barriers. These behaviors intentionally intimidate, marginalize and degrade the employees, causing them harm, as well as threatening the success of the organization. They will be discussed below in more detail.

### **Toxic Leadership**

Abusive leaders blame, divide, marginalize, undermine, and intimidate employees (Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004; DeAngelis, 2009; Kusy & Holloway, 2009). They torment their subordinates to the detriment of both the mission and people, undermining a positive organizational climate (Conger, 1990; Ashforth, 1994; Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Reed, 2004; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007; Reed & Olsen, 2010). Their behaviors create an environment that builds walls, and crushes creativity and loyalty. Not surprisingly, incivility from anyone, leader or colleague, has been found to impact productivity. For example, Kusy and Holloway (2009, p. 14) found that 50 percent of those who experienced incivility reported spending time worrying about it instead of working, and 25 percent explicitly said they cut back their work activity (p. 14). These responses suggest that long term toxicity can and often does decrease creativity and innovation. This is what toxicity can do, but what do toxic leaders do to be toxic?

Abusive supervisors discipline arbitrarily and enforce unreasonable standards. They intimidate and marginalize their subordinates who, in response, prioritize safety over productivity (Ashforth, 1994; Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Reed, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Reed & Olsen, 2010). In their attempts to maintain control, they

create out-groups and scapegoats to take the blame for any and all problems (Conger, 1990; Ashforth, 1994; Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005).

Supervisors can be arrogant and autocratic, exhibiting varying degrees of emotional instability that undermine a positive organizational climate (Conger, 1990; Ashforth, 1994; Whicker, 1996; Lipman-Blumen, 2004; Kellerman, 2005; Reed, 2004; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007; Kusy & Holloway, 2009; Reed & Olsen, 2010). Public verbal abuse, withholding praise or support, and vindictiveness are common toxic leader behaviors (Tepper, 2007). This type of leader undermines employees for their own self-interest.

Toxic leaders use out-groups and scapegoats to blame for any and all problems and maintain control, and in so doing maintain power (Conger, 1990; Ashforth, 1994; Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005). Toxic leaders may also disregard the needs and wants of outsider groups while supporting their in-group (Conger, 1990; Kellerman, 2004; Pelletier, 2009). People are either with them or against them, and those against them are actively punished (Whicker, 1996). Worse, they work on having their group coalesce around fighting other groups (Conger, 1990). These situations distract people from their work. These toxic leaders are punishment-oriented, and cannot separate their personal feelings from professional matters (Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004).

Toxic leaders manipulate, identifying and appealing to the needs of their supporters who may have been hired for their loyalty rather than their capabilities. This, in turn, keeps their supporters loyal, spending their time infighting, living in an

environment of mistrust. People are kept occupied fighting each other and trying to protect themselves, rather than taking care of the business of the organization.

Toxic leaders maintain a chokehold on information, and they either subvert or change the systems in place to regulate power such as hiring and firing practices, bringing in cronies and incompetent supporters to imbue loyalty and fear. The toxic leader becomes increasingly focused on loyalty and conformity, discouraging followers from informal interaction and association. They create fear by insisting the organization is under siege and survival depends on followers' loyalty. This is why it is important for this type of leader to maintain a tight control over the flow of information. Rarely do the facts support their hyperbole. As this behavior progresses, the leader's attempts to maintain power expand throughout the organization (Whicker, 1996). This process helps to stifle criticism and effectively eliminate dissent, initiative and creativity (Conger, 1990; Ashforth, 1994; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; DeAngelis (2009; Kusy & Holloway, 2009).

Conflict avoidance is also an observed trait. It may seem contradictory for an abusive person to be conflict avoidant, but this is particularly expressed in the passive aggressive toxic leader literature. Instead of confronting people, they marginalize and intimidate to suppress any conflict, inflating their own egos and reputations. They also tend to over task their best employees with no intention of rewarding them, then taking credit for the good work. They are intentionally disrespectful to assert their power, enjoying petty devices such as coming very late to meetings they scheduled (DeAngelis, 2009). Kusy and Holloway (2009) found these types of behaviors at all levels of organizations and among the most reported (p. 218).

## **Impact**

Toxic leadership represents patterns of behavior that intentionally intimidate, marginalize and degrade employees, and threaten the organization's success. The degree to which employees are ill affected by abusive supervision varies from person to person. Many factors influence one's response to toxicity such as personality and individual situation (Tepper, Duffy & Shaw, 2001). Systemic toxic leadership undermines organizational cohesion (Ashforth, 1994; Reed & Olsen, 2010). Interestingly, Tepper (2007) found that victims become more resistant to direction on the job, show more aggressive behavior to fellow employees, and even experience problems in their family life (p. 279). Two measures of organizational success: organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and turnover are both affected by toxic leader behaviors, and they are success measures that focus on employees instead of financials or production line activity (Koys, 2001).

Goulet and Frank (2013) found that commitment is associated with people giving greater effort to work activities. There is an inverse relationship between organizational commitment and turnover, and a direct relationship between OCB and commitment (Blau & Boal, 1987; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002). This may suggest that nonprofit employees' commitment could influence the effect of toxic leadership, lessening the effect it has on turnover and OCB (Goulet & Frank, 2013).

## **Summary**

Toxic leader behaviors range from incompetence to genocide (Kellerman, 2004). Despite this expansive list of behaviors, most organizations experience toxicity in a more limited way. Such leader behaviors are psychologically and emotionally abusive, and/or

threatening to the livelihood and social connectedness of the employees (Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007). Toxic leaders torment subordinates to the detriment of the mission and the long-term health and welfare of the people in it (Conger, 1990; Ashforth, 1994; Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Reed, 2004; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007; DeAngelis, 2009; Reed & Olsen, 2010). Their behavior redirects employee efforts from the mission to self-protection and other unproductive behaviors (Harris, Kacmar & Zivnuska, 2007). The harm to employees caused by toxic leadership can also devastate mission success by reducing OCB and increasing turnover (Ashforth, 1994; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000; Zellars, Tepper & Duffy, 2002; Reed, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Tepper, 2007; Reed & Olsen, 2010; Rafferty & Restubog, 2011).

Turnover and OCB are two measures of organizational success focused on employees rather than financials. Lower OCB has been linked to increased turnover (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000). Commitment may mitigate the effect of toxicity on OCB and turnover in light of the fact that nonprofit employees have been found to accept poorer working conditions in order to work for their chosen cause.

## Chapter 3: Methodology and Procedures

This chapter discusses the concurrent cross-sectional mixed-methods research design used to address the objectives and questions of this study. The research tools, sample, and data collection and analysis methods are presented. Additionally, methods to provide evidence in support of the validity and reliability of the research instrument will be described. Finally, the study's limitations will be explained.

### **Research Objectives and Questions**

The objective of this study was to explore the constructs of toxic leader behavior and its effect on the individual's organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and the individuals' intent to stay in that nonprofit organization. The overarching hypothesis was that staff members in nonprofit organizations stay in a nonprofit despite toxic leadership. Questions that address this objective are:

1. To what extent does toxic leader behavior exist in San Diego nonprofits?
2. To what extent does toxic leader behavior explain variation in both organizational citizenship behavior and turnover behavior in San Diego nonprofits?
3. Does level of commitment significantly mediate and/or moderate the effect of toxic leadership on both organizational citizenship behavior and turnover behavior in San Diego nonprofits?
4. What reasons do individuals give for remaining with a nonprofit organization despite toxic leadership in San Diego nonprofits?

### **Design**

While there is much discussion around the value and validity of mixed methods design, the past 15 years have shown that these types of designs are appropriate for many



research studies in the social sciences (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell & Clark, 2011). For this study, a concurrent cross-sectional mixed-methods research design was chosen for its flexibility and applicability to complex questions in which there is a desire to “drill down” into one aspect of a study, while also addressing more general relationship questions (Mazzola, Walker, Shockley & Spector, 2011). Specifically, the relationships between toxic leadership, and OCB and turnover behavior were examined for the effect of toxicity on organizations and employees; while the reasons employees stay in an organization in spite of toxic leadership was simultaneously evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative methods. These methods included descriptive statistics, content analysis, a partial path analysis to determine if commitment influences the relationship between toxic leadership and OCB and turnover behavior, and multiple regression analysis to determine correlations among the variables of interest.

### **Population and Sample**

San Diego County is home to over 75,000 paid nonprofit employees in nearly 2,000 nonprofit firms (Hitchcock, Deitrick, Cesarini, McDougal, Roberts & Zinser, 2010). This study used a convenience sample of San Diego nonprofit employees whose organizations use a San Diego human resources firm that provides personnel and training services. The firm agreed to send the survey via email to their client organizations’ staffs. There were approximately 3,500 organizations and 5,507 paid staff in the client base. Additionally, a local nonprofit professional networking organization agreed to allow the survey to be sent to members of its listserv. There was no further information on the listserv or membership except that there were approximately 3,000 e-mail addresses.

There is a large taxonomy for the various types of nonprofits referred to as the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2013). This taxonomy includes twenty-six major categories and as many as forty-eight subcategories. The final sample was described by, and compared to, the organization populations' demographics to determine representativeness.

Even though this was a convenience sample, the type of organization the respondents were employed in at the time of the toxicity was captured. This allowed a comparison of the prevalence of toxicity by organizational type and share of the population of client organizations of the agency, as well as the population of San Diego charities. From this, the discussion notes whether the respondents' organizations tended to be from certain agency taxonomies, or whether they represented the client-base of both the management company and San Diego County, as a whole.

The Internal Revenue Service assigns each nonprofit organization a category and accompanying code determined by its primary mission focus (Urban Institute, 2013). There are twenty-six codes based on the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (Urban Institute, 2013). See Appendix A for the complete list. These codes or categories are also parsed into larger groupings. These are called the NTEE major group (10) and major group (12) (Urban Institute, 2014). Table 1 shows the NTEE major group (12) categories. The difference between the groupings is that the Higher Education and Education categories are combined, as well as the Hospital and Health categories in the NTEE major group (10).

In 2010, the Caster Family Center at the University of San Diego released a study on the local nonprofit sector. It modified the major group (12) combining Hospitals with

Health (like the major group (10) and separated Medical Research into its own category based on the impact on the local economy (Hitchcock, Deitrick, Cesarini, McDougal, Roberts & Zinser, 2010). It also reported that the majority of San Diego nonprofit employees were in education, health, and human service organizations. Therefore, in this dissertation, the major group (12) categories were modified to include Medical Research as a separate category and eliminated the Unknown category because the respondents knew their type of organization.

### **Sample Size and Power**

The sample primarily consisted of San Diego nonprofit paid staff whose organizations used a large San Diego human resources firm that provides personnel and training services, and a small group of respondents from San Diego nonprofit professional networking group. The human resources firm's client organizations represent some, but not all of the categories of nonprofit organizations.

Sample size was calculated to meet the needs of each of the analytic techniques. Initially sample size was calculated to achieve 95 percent confidence level, five percent sampling error, a conservative 50/50 split on the proportion of the population expected to select any one of the responses, and an approximate known sample size of 7,000 (Faulstich, Erdefelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). Adding 20 percent for loss, the required sample size to conduct the multiple regression analysis was 385 respondents.

The minimum sample size for the regression analysis was calculated to be 131 considering a 20 percent loss factor with 80 percent power, a medium effect size and including eight independent or predictor variables (See Table 1). The empirical power tables as described by Fritz and MacKinnon (2010) were used to determine an

appropriate sample for the mediation and moderation analysis. Based on this, a sample size of at least 405 responses was required. Additionally, 20 percent loss was included requiring at least 505 responses. Since one dependent or outcome variable was dichotomous (Turnover), a sample size was also determined for the logistic regression. Referencing Faul, Erdefelder and Lang's G\*Power 3.1 (2009), the logistic regression sample size was 522, again including a 20 percent loss factor. Therefore, 522 responses were needed to conduct all aspects of the design's analysis. All sample requirements were met except for the logistic model with 471 responses to the survey. Bootstrapping, addressed later in Chapter 4, was used to determine if the logit regression would become significant; however, it turned out not to be.

### **Measurement Methods**

Ten variables were used to address the research questions. All demographic variables except age were categorical (Gender, Level in Organization, Highest Level of Education at Time of Experience, Type of Organization) and were selected because they were identified in the literature as being statistically significant with at least one of the latent variables used in this study. These latent variables -- Commitment, OCB and Toxic Leadership -- were measured using Likert-type response scales. Finally, the variable Turnover was addressed with a dichotomous (Yes/No) question. Table 2 describes these variables and the ways that they were measured.

Table 2  
Variables - Type and Measurement

	Variable	Type	Level of Measurement	How Measured
1	Age at Time of Experience	Independent/Demog/Covariate	Categorical	Questionnaire Item
2	Gender	Independent/Demog/Covariate	Categorical	Questionnaire Item
3	Level in Organization at Time of Experience	Independent/Demog/Covariate	Categorical/ Ordinal	Questionnaire Item
4	Age Now	Independent/Demog/Covariate	Categorical/ Ordinal	Questionnaire Item
5	Highest Level of Education at Time of Experience	Independent/Demog/Covariate	Categorical/ Ordinal	Questionnaire Item
6	Type of Organization	Independent/Demog/Covariate	Categorical/ Interval	Questionnaire Item
7	Toxic Supervision	Independent/Latent variable	Ordinal/Interval	Questionnaire Subscales Likert items
8	Intent to Stay at Time of Experience	Dependent/Manifest variable	Categorical (Binomial)	Questionnaire Item
9	Organizational Citizenship Behavior	Dependent/Latent variable	Ordinal/Interval	Questionnaire Subscales Likert items
10	Commitment	Independent/Latent variable	Ordinal/Interval	Questionnaire Subscales Likert items

### Data Collection Process

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, potential participants were approached via an invitational email sent out by either the human resources (HR) organization or through the networking organization's listserv. Each email included the

study's purpose, risks, benefits, informed consent and contact information for the Principle Investigator (PI) and the PI's dissertation advisor. Consent was granted by the respondent indicating on the survey their consent was given and then by submitting the survey. This means of giving consent was explained both in the email and on the survey, itself. The survey was accessed through a link in an introductory email that asked the recipient to participate, explaining the value of the study to both them and the larger San Diego nonprofit community. An electronic survey was chosen over a paper format in consideration of both time and cost constraints. While Lin and Van Ryzin (2012) note a consistently lower response rate from electronic surveys over paper, the sample was sufficiently large to anticipate an acceptable response rate.

**Coding and Scoring.** Toxic Supervision, Commitment and OCB used 7 point Likert-type response scales. The item response scores were totaled with no weighting to create variable scores. Commitment had six reverse coded items and OCB had three all of which were handled in SPSS.

The qualitative question was manually coded and diagramed using Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software. A priori codes were developed using the major constructs from the non-physical abusive toxic leadership and turnover literature. Additionally, open coding techniques were used to identify reoccurring codes and eventually themes (Glesne, 2005).

Latent content analysis was used to discover the underlying themes and meanings of the coded words and phrases included the building of conceptual maps or networks to visualize the findings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). These networks provided a structure for the analysis of relationships between codes, quotations, and concepts (Patton, 2002;

Creswell, 2009). The *a priori* codes included commitment since the study explored commitment's impact on the relationship between toxicity, as well as, turnover and OCB.

Manifest content analysis included the counting of codes, quotations, and concepts (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Frequency distributions were reported showing the number of times coded words and phrases appeared in order to help understand the importance of both words and phrases.

### **Instrumentation**

While discussions of toxic leadership and its components have been ongoing, scale measures have been developed more recently such as those offered by Ashforth (1994), Tepper (2000), Schmidt (2008), Pelletier (2009) and Shaw, Erickson and Harvey (2011). Particularly, Shaw, Erickson and Harvey developed an instrument to identify and measure destructive leadership in organizations that purposefully and comprehensively addresses the diversity of toxicity as informed by Kellerman (2005) (Shaw, Erickson & Harvey, 2011). It was the most comprehensive measurement instrument found to deal with each aspect of toxic leader behavior defined in this study. As such, the toxic supervision variable was formed from six subscales of the Shaw, Erickson and Harvey (2011) Destructive Leadership Questionnaire. See Table 3 for the scales used and their reliability scores, Table 4 for question sequence, and Appendix B for the layout of the survey. The subscales conform to Cronbach's alpha criteria for reliability (Santos, 1999) in that five of the factors had an alpha above .8, while one was .75 (p. 581-583). Since the instrument was developed three years ago it conforms to the .7 or above threshold for newer instruments.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior was measured using the Podsakoff, Ahearne and MacKenzie (1997) instrument, the OCB Measure, with three scales: Helping Behavior, Civic Virtue, and Sportsmanship, with each using a 7-point Likert response scale. Sportsmanship was reverse coded. The reliability scores reported in the literature for these three scales are .95, .96 and .88 respectively (Podsakoff, Ahearne & MacKenzie, 1997, p. 266).

Commitment was measured using The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979) consisting of fifteen questions with six reverse-coded using a 7-point Likert response scale. Because the instrument was developed using multiple samples, the reliability scores ranged from .82 to .93 with a median of .90 (p. 232).

A dichotomous question that addressed whether or not the respondent remained in the organization despite working for a toxic leader identified those who chose to remain in the organization despite the existence of toxicity. The sorting question was “Were you ever treated in a manner that caused you to seriously consider leaving the organization?” (Reed & Olsen, 2010). If the respondent answered “yes” then they were asked “Did you leave?” If “yes” then they skipped to the next section of the survey. If the answer was “no” they moved to the open-ended question. The open-ended question asked respondents to describe and explain why they stayed despite working for a toxic leader. “Please explain in as much detail as possible why you decided to remain in the organization?”

The survey also included demographic variables that the literature indicated influenced the impact of toxicity on OCB and turnover. They were gender,



race/ethnicity, type of organization, age, level or position in the organization, time since the experience, and highest level of education attained (Boris & Steurle, 2006; Leete, 2006).

The toxic leadership, organizational citizenship, turnover and commitment items were asked as either recollection questions or based on the respondent's present situation. If it was a recollection question for the respondent, an inclusive time boundary of 24 months was used to minimize recall bias. The directions at the beginning and throughout the survey reiterated this time boundary.

Table 3

*Scale and Subscale Reliability Scores for Instruments Used in the Survey*

Instrument	Factor Name	$\alpha$
Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (Shaw, Erickson & Harvey, 2011, p. 581)	Acting in a Brutal Bulling Manner	.94
Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (Shaw, Erickson & Harvey, 2011, p. 581)	Micro-managing and Over Controlling	.92
Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (Shaw, Erickson & Harvey, 2011, p. 582)	Playing Favorites and Other Divisive Behavior	.91
Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (Shaw, Erickson & Harvey, 2011, p. 582)	Acting in an Insular Manner Relative to Other Groups in the Organization	.75
Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (Shaw, Erickson & Harvey, 2011, p. 583)	An Inconsiderate Tyrant	.94
Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (Shaw, Erickson & Harvey, 2011, p. 581)	Lying and Other Unethical Behavior	.96
Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday, Smith & Porter, 1979, p.232)	Median of all 12 samples	.90
Organizational Citizenship Behavior Measure (Podsakoff, Ahearne & MacKenzie, 1997, p. 266)	Helping	.95
Organizational Citizenship Behavior Measure (Podsakoff, Ahearne & MacKenzie, 1997, p. 266)	Civic Virtue	.96
Organizational Citizenship Behavior Measure (Podsakoff, Ahearne & MacKenzie, 1997, p. 266)	Sportsmanship	.88

As noted above, Table 4 indicates the sequence of variable items in the survey instrument. The toxic items were immediately after the demographic variables because only those respondents who indicated in the sorting question that they had worked for a toxic supervisor answered them. Those who indicated they did not were sent to organizational citizenship and commitment items. Respondents who had worked for a toxic supervisor answered the OCB and commitment items after the turnover question positioned at the end of the toxic scale items.

Table 4

*Survey Instrument Question Group Sequence*

Variables	Range and Order in Survey Instrument
Demographic variables	1-7
Toxicity scales	8-32
Turnover	33-35
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	36-48
Commitment	49-63

### **Analysis**

Descriptive statistics, multiple regression, a partial path analysis to determine influence, and content analysis were used to explore the constructs of toxic leader behavior and its effect on the individual's OCB and intent to stay in their nonprofit organization (Meyers, Gamst & Guarino, 2006). Additionally, the psychometric characteristics of each instrument based on the responding sample are presented. For a

variable to be considered statistically significant, the  $p \leq .05$  level is used throughout the analysis.

The objective of this study was to explore the constructs of toxic leader behavior and its effect on the individual's organizational citizenship behavior, and intent to stay in that nonprofit organization. The specific analytical tools used to address each research question are described below.

Research Question 1. To what extent does toxic leader behavior exist in San Diego nonprofits?

Analysis began with a description of each variable and an evaluation for normality. The frequency distribution for the toxic leadership, OCB and Commitment variables were run and visually inspected to determine data normality; additionally, the skewness and kurtosis statistics were run and evaluated. The variables were considered to have reasonably normal distributions. To answer Research Question 1, the level of toxicity was determined by evaluating the mean, mode and quartiles of the toxic leader scale variable, and the means of 25 items of the toxic supervisor scale variable. Additionally, a comparison was made to Shaw's, Erickson's and Harvey's (2011) findings.

Since these authors evaluated each item's mean, the means of each item that comprised the toxic leader variable in this study were also calculated. The previous study only reported the highest and lowest means, so those were compared to the highest and lowest item mean for the toxic leader behavior variable in this study. The means were found to be higher in this study, which was understandable since only those people who

self-identified as working for an abusive supervisor responded, while the previous study included anyone, regardless of whether or not they felt they had worked for a toxic boss.

Research Question 2. To what extent does toxic leader behavior explain variation in both organizational citizenship behavior and turnover behavior in San Diego nonprofits?

For the relationship between toxic leadership and OCB, multiple linear regression was used to estimate the model because there was not enough available literature to suggest appropriate ordering of the variables for sequential regression. Multicollinearity, which exists when two predictor variables are highly correlated, was examined through a two-step process (Meyers, Gamst & Guarino, 2006, p. 180). To ensure this was not occurring with Toxic Leadership Behavior, Commitment and OCB, simple correlations were run and any coefficient of .9 or greater was considered for elimination (Tabnachik & Fidell, 2001, p. 84). Secondly, tolerance and variance inflation factors (VIF) was run to identify any tolerance value greater than 10 (Meyers, Gamst & Guarino, 2006, p. 212). Fortunately, there were none, indicating that the independent variables were not measuring the same things.

Pearson correlations with the dependent variable and the covariates, as well as Beta coefficients were used to evaluate the contributions of each variable to the regression model. While predictor variables should not be too highly correlated so they are not measuring the same thing, they should also be significantly related to the dependent variable. Therefore, Bartlett's test for sphericity was used to determine if there was sufficient correlation between the variables in the model. R-square and an F-test

determined the explanatory capacity of the variables (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2001, Miles & Shevlin, 2010).

For the relationship between toxic leadership and turnover, a logistic regression model was used; this was required because the dependent variable, turnover, was the dichotomous response (yes/no) to the question: “Did you leave?” (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2001; Miles, Shevlin, 2010). For this variable, No served as the reference category.

A goodness of fit Chi Square test was also used to identify if the model could sufficiently explain the relationship of the variables. Operationally, this process first finds the sum of the predicted and actual probabilities that the respondent will turnover for each case. These sums are added together for each model giving a log-likelihood for the model. In this case, the larger model consisted of the predictor variable (Toxic Leadership Behavior) and the smaller model was the intercept only model. In order for the log-likelihood to behave like a chi square, the intercept only model is subtracted from the predictor model (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2001, p. 525).

To further determine the validity of the model, the percentage of variance of the dependent variable explained by the independent variable was examined using both the Cox and Snell, and Nagelkerke tests (Meyers, Gamst & Guarino, 2006, p. 239). In addition, a Wald test was used to determine the contribution of each covariate to the model (Meyers, Gamst & Guarino, 2006).

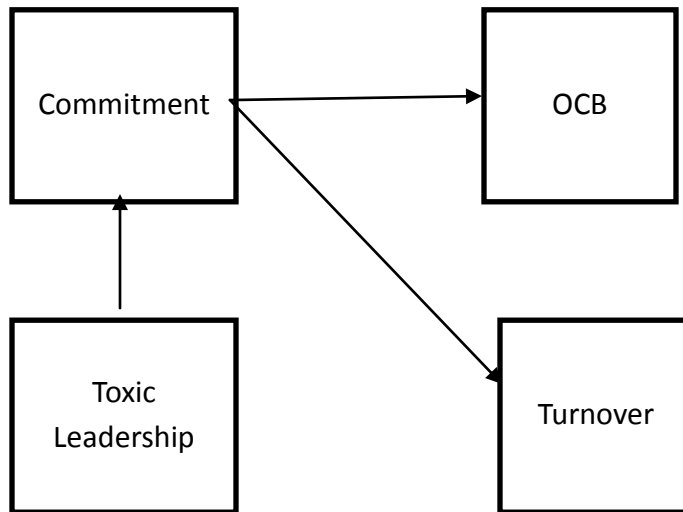
Research Question 3. Does level of commitment significantly mediate and/or moderate the effect of toxic leadership on both OCB and turnover behavior in San Diego nonprofits?

A moderator variable influences the relationship between a covariate and the dependent variable in two ways. It may influence the degree of the relationship between the variables (strength) or change which variable effects the other (direction) (Baron & Kenny, 1986). For example, an employee may think about leaving an organization because of toxic leader behavior, but decide to stay because of commitment. In order to determine if the commitment variable had a moderating influence on the effect of toxicity on turnover behavior, correlations were examined. Baron and Kenny (1986) suggest that the interaction of the predictor and moderator variables should be correlated to the outcome variable, but the moderator and predictor variables separately should not be significantly correlated to the outcome variable. To the extent that these relationships exist, four regression models were evaluated:

- The effect of the predictor variable (toxic supervision) on the outcome variable (turnover or OCB)
- The effect of the moderator variable (commitment) on the outcome variable (turnover or OCB)
- The effect of the interaction of the predictor (toxic supervision) and the moderator (commitment) together on the outcome variable (turnover or OCB)
- The effect of the interaction term, the moderator and predictor on the outcome variable (turnover or OCB) (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

A mediator variable influences the effect of the covariate on the dependent variable because of some aspect of the respondent; the how and why of the variable relationship (Baron & Kenny, 1986). For example, commitment might mediate the effect of toxicity on turnover so that an employee would not leave the organization, despite

experiencing toxic leader behaviors. To test for mediation, a partial path analysis was used. As recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1177), three regressions were run to show that 1) the Independent Variable (IV) or predictor variable effects the mediator; 2) the predictor affect the dependent variable (DV) or outcome variable; and, 3) the mediator affects the outcome variable. See Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* Commitment Analysis Path.

Research Question 4. What reasons do individuals give for remaining with a nonprofit organization despite toxic leadership in San Diego nonprofits?

Content Analysis explicated the reasons the respondents gave for staying in the organization despite the presence of toxicity. The software program, Atlas.ti, was used to pictorially depict the categories developed from the codes and facilitate the development of the themes that emerged from the data. These codes led to themes that showed the general constructs underlying why the respondents decided to stay. These themes and constructs were analyzed to find possible patterns and connections that might shed light on these issues of retention despite toxicity (Glesne, 2005).

## **Conclusion**

As an employer, the San Diego nonprofit sector expenditures represented 5.6 percent of San Diego County's Gross Metropolitan Product (GMP) in 2010 (Hitchcock, Deitrick, Cesarini, McDougal, Roberts & Zinser, 2010). More than 1,800 of the sector's organizations employ over 75,000 staff members who earn nearly \$745,000 in wages. Understanding the nonprofit leadership landscape, particularly with respect to abusive or toxic behaviors, and its effects on those who fulfill their organizational missions is important to the future success of nonprofits as they face a future with continued constrained resources and growing need.



## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine if toxic leadership exists in a convenience sample of San Diego nonprofit organizations, and to derive insights to its effect on organizational success as measured by organizational citizenship and turnover behaviors. Descriptive findings are presented first for the responding sample, followed by the results for each of the four research questions.

### **Data Collection**

Respondents were drawn from paid staff members in San Diego nonprofit organizations affiliated with a local human resources support and training organization, and a local nonprofit professional networking organization. The human resources organization sent the survey with an introductory email encouraging participation and four separate reminders in a five-month period. It reported 5,507 addresses that were updated weekly. This suggested an opportunity for reaching the target number of 522 responses to properly conduct the logistic regression needed for the mediating and moderating analysis of the dichotomous turnover outcome variable, even though electronic surveys traditionally yield a lower response rate (Lin & Van Ryzin, 2012).

Since the organization sends periodic surveys to its constituents, survey fatigue was a concern (Van Mal, 2015). Van Mal suggests that email reminders encouraging participation can overcome some of this fatigue. As noted, four reminders were sent over the five months the survey was in the field. Despite efforts to encourage greater participation, the total number of responses was lower than desired. The human resources organization yielded an 8.6 percent response rate, despite reporting an approximately 10 percent response rate as typical.

In an attempt to gain sufficient responses, a local networking organization for nonprofit professionals was contacted and agreed to allow the survey to be sent through their listserv. The contact for that organization indicated there were approximately 3000 addresses in that listserv. Unfortunately, nothing more precise was available. That organization did not supply any supporting or encouraging email or any demographic information. The survey was sent one time to that listserv.

### **Sample**

The responses constituted a convenience sample of nonprofit paid staff members. They held one of three organizational staffing levels: line staff, mid-level manager or senior leader. The sample of staff members represented organizations from every category of the NTEE major group (12) from the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2013). See Table 5 for organizational categories by respondents and the San Diego sector.

### **Respondents**

Survey respondents included 402 individuals affiliated with the San Diego nonprofit human resources support organization and 69 from the local nonprofit professional networking organization. Two hundred and ninety-eight respondents indicated they had worked for an abusive supervisor and 173 responded they had not. This met the requirement of 131 responses for the linear regression analysis to evaluate the relationship between toxic supervision and OCB, but not the 522 responses needed for the logistic regression to understand the possible influence commitment may have had on the toxicity and turnover relationship.

The demographic variables collected included gender, age, race/ethnicity, age at time of toxic experience, level in organization during experience, category or type of nonprofit organization, years worked for the toxic supervisor, and highest education attained during the experience. Of the 471 respondents, 89 (19%) were male, 363 (77%) female, and 19 (4%) declined to answer. Seventy three percent (328) were white and 13 percent (56) Hispanic. All other race/ethnic groups totaled 18 percent (87). Two hundred and ninety eight (63%) responded they had worked for a toxic supervisor. The remaining demographic variables pertain only to those who responded they had worked for a toxic supervisor.

Of the 273 who responded to the highest education attained question, the majority had attended college with 32 percent reporting holding advanced degrees, 44 percent baccalaureate degrees, and 13 percent attending some college. The average age at the time the respondent worked for a toxic supervisor was 38 years. Respondents who indicated the position level they held during the experience were fairly evenly distributed with slightly higher mid-level managers: Line Staff 87 (32%), Mid-managers 107 (39%), and Senior Leaders 80 (29%). Comparing the response rate to the total HR agency clients of each level in the organization, Line Staff represented 27 percent, Mid-level Manager 27 percent, and Senior Leaders 16 percent of the HR agency's clients, with the remainder not holding one of these position types.

The type of organizations the respondents worked in was compared to the distribution of nonprofit categories found in San Diego County. A Caster Family Center report showing San Diego nonprofit category numbers (Hitchcock, Deitrick, Cesarini, McDougal, Roberts & Zinser, 2010) was used for comparison. As can be seen in Table

6, the survey respondents represented a higher percentage of Arts and Culture organizations (15% versus 10%), Health organizations (19% versus 7%), and Human Services organizations (32% versus 23%), than were found in the San Diego nonprofit sector, as a whole (See Table 5).

Table 5

*San Diego Sector Comparison with Respondents' Organizations*

Nonprofit Organizational Type	Percentage of Organization Type in San Diego Sector 2010	Percentage of Organization Type by Respondents
Arts & Culture	10	15
Education	16	9
Higher Education	0.4	2
Environmental/Animals	4	6
Health	8	19
Medical Research	0	1
Human Services	23	32
International	2	1
Public/Societal Benefit	18	10
Religion	20	2
Mutual Member Benefit	0.1	2

Additionally, the HR organization that distributed the survey provided a breakdown of their constituents by their level in the organization and type of organization. These were the only demographics available from the distributing agencies, and they are presented as a point of comparison to the sample for these particular demographics.

Arts and Culture, and Health organizations were overrepresented in the sample compared to the Human Services organization's client base for Line Staff. Arts and Culture organizational employees were also more often Mid-managers in the sample, while Mutual/Member Benefit organizations were hardly represented in the sample at all. See Table 6.

Table 6

*Comparison of Staff Level and Type of Organization by Agency and Sample*

Organization Type	Line Staff		Mid-manager		Senior Leader	
	Agency	Sample	Agency	Sample	Agency	Sample
Arts & Culture	7	13	6	20	11	15
Education	6	5	6	11	12	10
Higher Education	2	3	1	1	2	3
Environmental/ Animals	5	5	5	7	5	7
Health	19	32	15	9	10	13
Medical Research	0	3	0	0	0	1
Human Services	30	25	33	33	35	41
International	0	0	0	2	0	1
Public/Societal/ Benefit	3	9	3	11	5	6
Religion	3	1	4	2	4	1
Mutual/Member Benefit	27	3	27	2	16	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

### Challenges to Sampling

The primary challenge to completing this study was access to a population of nonprofit paid staff members sufficiently large enough to yield the desired level of

statistical significance. While there are many organizations in the San Diego nonprofit sector that maintain listservs of their constituent or client organizations' members, none, however, are necessarily representative of the local sector, or available to outside researchers without benefit of an existing relationship. Another challenge was that the organizations that agreed to allow access to their member lists also send other surveys throughout the year raising the very real possibility of survey fatigue. Despite efforts to encourage greater participation, the total number of responses was lower than desired.

### **Data Collection and Preparation**

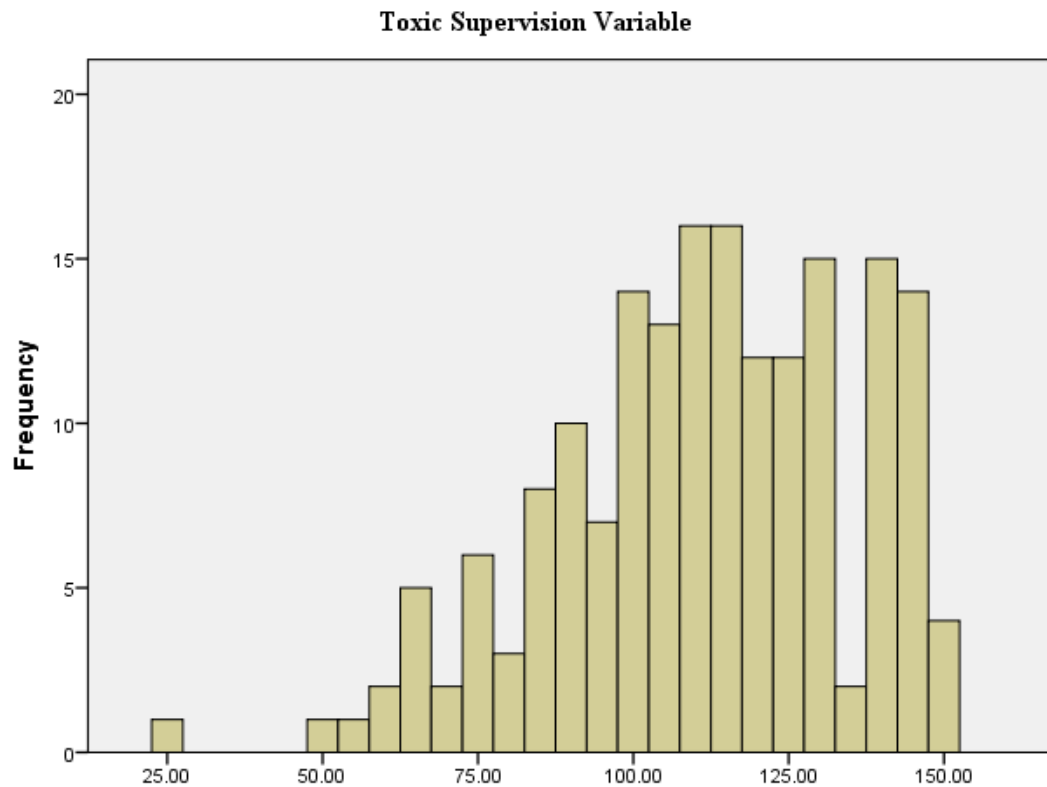
After obtaining IRB approval, surveys were distributed electronically through emails with a link to a survey in the software Qualtrics housed on the University of San Diego servers. The emails were sent by one local human resources agency to its listserv. The other was sent to a networking organization's list by the researcher through a process available to members. Membership is free to anyone interested. The researcher completed the membership form and uploaded the survey with the IRB approved accompanying email. Email addresses were not available to the researcher and the organizations did not track which email addresses completed the survey. The data from 471 responses to the questionnaire were migrated into SPSS from Qualtrics.

### **Coding of Quantitative Data and Scale Scores**

All cases were examined for data entry and clerical errors; when errors were found they were corrected. Descriptive statistics were then reviewed for all variables. All questionnaire items were explored for normality and equality of variance, as well as reliability. All scale variables were slightly negatively skewed. Visual inspection showed relatively normal data and no transformations were conducted. Cronbach's alpha

reliability coefficients were greater than the normally accepted .7 (Santos, 1999) for all three measures used in this study.

The 25 items considered appropriate for this study from the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ) (Shaw, Erickson & Harvey, 2011) were scored with a 7-point Likert-type response category ranging from 1- Strongly Disagree to 6-Strongly Agree and 7- I Don't Know. The I Don't Know response was coded 777 in SPSS. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the toxic supervision scale from this questionnaire was .88. There were 179 valid responses with a mean response of 111, median response of 113 and variance of 575. The skewness value was -0.52 and Kurtosis value was 0.118. Visual inspection supported the normality of the scale data. See Figure 3.



*Figure 3.* Toxic Supervision Variable Data Histogram from SPSS Output.

The Organizational Citizenship Behavior Measure (Podsakoff, Ahearne & MacKenzie, 1997) is a fourteen item scale that uses a 7 point Likert-type response category ranging from 1-Strongly Disagree to 7-Strongly Agree. Three items were reverse coded in the survey and recoded in SPSS. The scale in this study had a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of .85. There were 240 valid responses with a mean of 61, median response of 61 and variance of 120. The skewness value was -0.125 and Kurtosis value was -0.57. Visual inspection supported the normality of the scale data. See Figure 4.



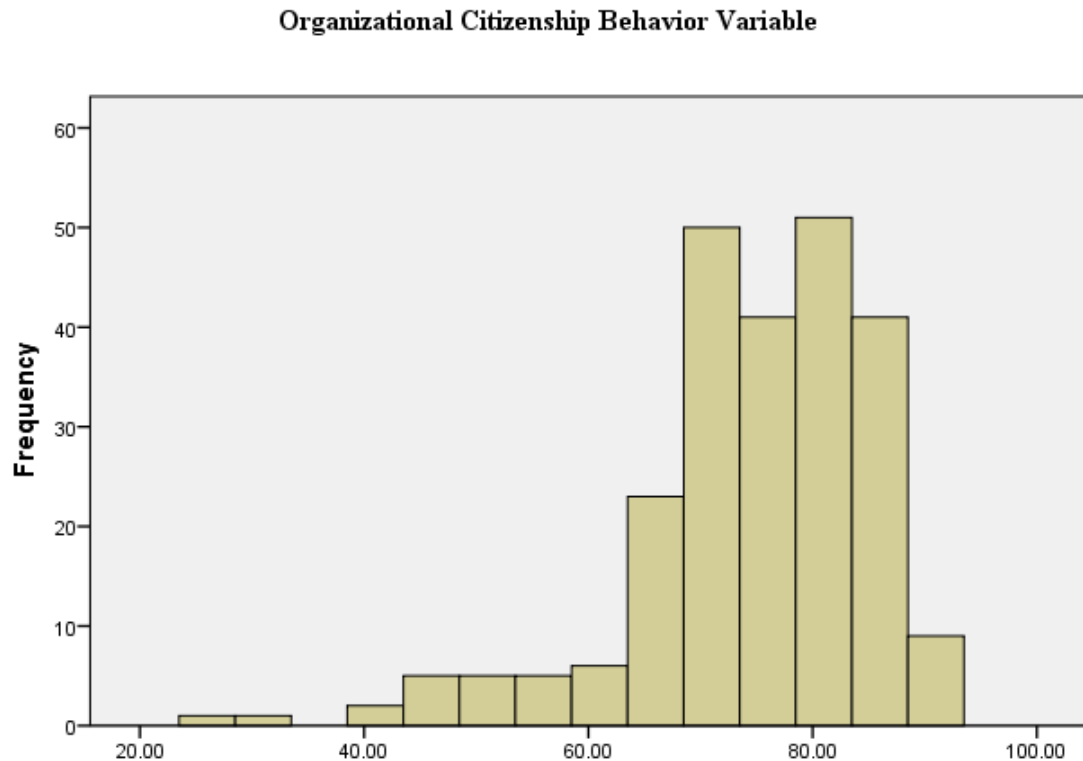


Figure 4. *Organizational Citizenship Behavior Variable Data Histogram from SPSS Output.*

The Measurement of Organizational Commitment (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979) is also a fourteen item scale that uses a 7-point Likert-type response category ranging from 1-Strongly Disagree to 7-Strongly Agree. Six items were reverse coded and recoded in SPSS. The scale in this study had a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .89. There were 238 valid responses with a mean response of 75, median of 76 and variance of 331. The skewness value was -1.36 and Kurtosis value was 2.82. Visual inspection supported the normality of the scale data. See Figure 5.

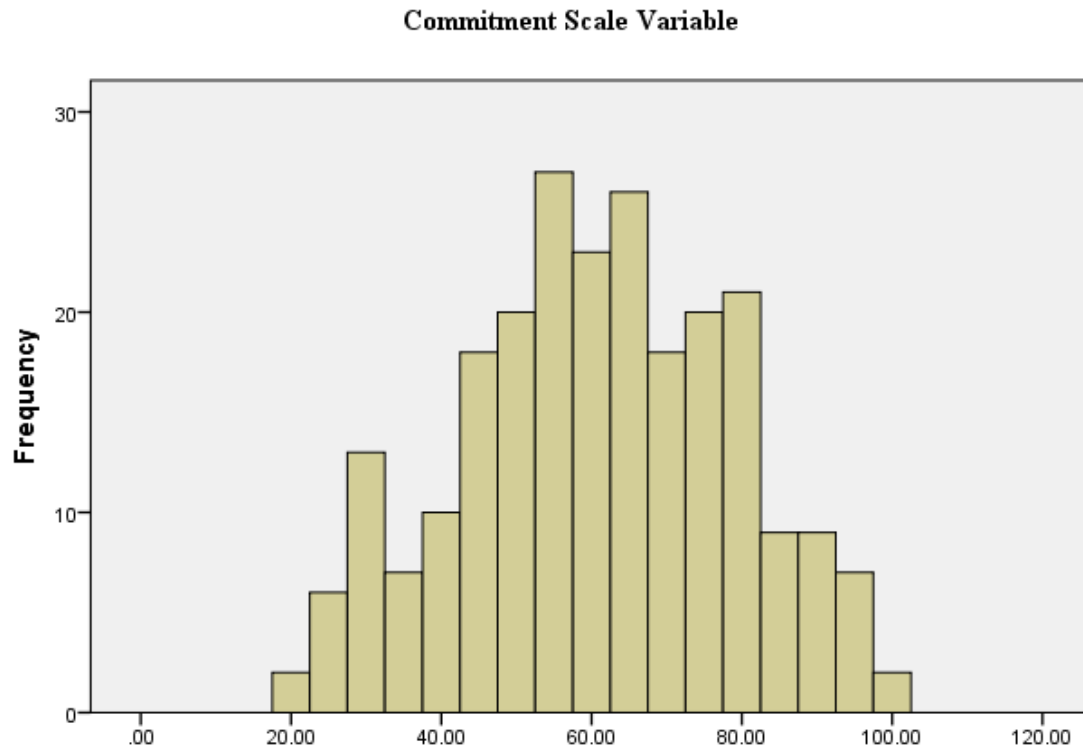


Figure 5. *Commitment Variable Data Histogram from SPSS Output.*

### **Research Questions**

Four research questions were analyzed. Descriptive statistics were used for research question 1. Regression and reliability analyses were used for research questions 2 and 3. Finally, content analysis was used to code and categorize the open ended responses of why the individual remained in spite of toxic leadership. The following explains the analysis in depth.

#### **Research Question 1**

To what extent does toxic leader behavior exist in San Diego nonprofits?

This question was analyzed using the responses from the 63% (298) of the total respondents who indicated they had worked for a toxic supervisor. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the demographic variables provided by this group of respondents. Additionally, these respondents responded to 25 items from the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ) (Shaw, Erickson & Harvey, 2011) concerning type and severity of the toxicity they experienced. These items comprised the toxic supervision variable used for further analysis. It was evaluated using frequencies, mean, median and quartiles. Because Shaw, Erickson and Harvey reported their findings from their initial study using the highest and lowest means for the DLQ's items, the means for each of the 25 items used in this study were also calculated.

### **Demographics of Respondents Experiencing Toxicity**

With respect to the demographic variables, nonprofit employees were found to be more often white, female, and with higher levels of educational attainment than their for-profit and public sector counterparts (Leete, 2006). As shown in Table 7, while there were only 89 (19%) male respondents overall, 49% (44) of them indicated they had worked for a toxic supervisor. Female respondents represented 77% (363) of the total respondents with 70% (253) of them experiencing toxic supervision, revealing that in this sample, women experienced toxicity at a higher rate than men.

Table 7

*Total Gender and Gender Experiencing Toxic Supervision*

Gender	Total Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents	Respondents Who Worked for Toxic Supervisor	Percentage of Respondents Who Worked for Toxic Supervisor
Male	89	19	44	49
Female	363	77	253	70
Missing	19	4	1	-
Total	471	100	298	63

Table 8 shows respondents by race/ethnicity as well as the percentage of those who experienced toxic supervision by race and ethnicity. While White respondents were the majority by far at 73%, they experienced toxicity at a lower rate (66%) relative to their total representation. Hispanic respondents were the next largest category with 13% of the total sample. However, 59% of the Hispanic respondents experienced toxicity. The small number of non-white respondents may explain some of the much larger percentages experiencing toxicity, but does suggest a possible line of future inquiry.

Table 8

*Respondents Who Worked for a Toxic Supervisor by Race/Ethnic Group*

Category	Total Sample	Percentage Total Sample	Worked for Toxic Supervisor	Percentage Who Worked for Toxic Supervisor Within Group	Percentage Who Worked for Toxic Supervisor by Total All Groups
White	328	73	217	66	48
African American	8	2	5	63	1
Hispanic	56	13	33	59	7
Asian	24	5	17	71	4
Hawaiian	8	2	4	50	1
Other	24	5	17	71	4
Missing	23	5	5	-	-
Total	471	100	298	-	-

The following table provides educational attainment data for the 298 respondents who indicated they had worked for a toxic supervisor. As can be seen in Table 9, the sample in this study is heavily college educated with 44% (131) holding a baccalaureate degree and 32% (96) holding an advanced degree. These findings are consistent with previous research that found nonprofit employees are more highly educated than their peers in other sectors (Leete, 2006).

Table 9

*Highest Education Attainment of Respondents Who Worked for a Toxic Supervisor*

Education Level	Total Respondents	Percentage Total Respondents
Some High School	0	0
High School Graduate	4	1
Some College	38	13
Bachelor's Degree	131	44
Advanced Degree	96	32
Certificate	3	1
Missing	26	9
Total	298	100

The position level the individual held in the organization while experiencing toxic leadership was also analyzed. Table 10 shows the largest group experiencing toxicity in the sample was mid-level managers at 36%. However, while senior leaders experienced toxicity at a lower rate than either of the other two categories, they did only slightly, with 27% of senior leaders reporting that they experienced toxicity, compared to 29% of line staff and 36% of mid-managers. This suggests that toxic supervision is an issue at all levels of the organization, but greatest at the mid-manager level.

Table 10

*Position Held While Working for a Toxic Supervisor*

Position	Total Respondents by Position Level	Percentage of Respondents Working for Toxic Supervisor by Position Level
Line Staff	87	29
Mid-Manager	107	36
Senior Leader	80	27
Missing	24	8
Total	298	100

The final demographic variable analyzed was the category of nonprofit organization in which the respondents worked. As discussed previously, there are 26 categories of nonprofit organizations often grouped into larger categories for analysis (See Table 5). This was also the variable besides the position level in the organization that the HR agency provided. Therefore, Table 11 shows a comparison of the type of organization by category between respondents, the agency's clients and the San Diego sector as reported in 2010 (the latest report breaking down San Diego nonprofit organizations by category).

Table 11 shows that human service organizations employed the largest percentage of all three groups: respondents (29%), the HR agency clients (32%) and the San Diego sector (23%). The health organization category was the next largest type represented by 17% of the respondents, 16% of the agency clients and only 8% of the San Diego sector as a whole. This variation was attributable to the types of client organizations affiliated with the HR agency, but did not suggest whether or not certain types of nonprofit

organizations are more vulnerable to toxicity than others, indicating further inquiry is needed.

Table 11

*Comparison of San Diego Sector Organization Categories with Total Agency Clients and Respondents Working for a Toxic Supervisor*

Nonprofit Organization Group Category	Percentage in Sample	Percentage in Agency	Percentage in San Diego Sector (2010)
Arts	14	7	10
Education	9	7	16
Higher Education	2	2	0*
Environment/Animals	6	5	4
Health	17	16	8
Medical Research	1	0	0*
Human Services	29	32	23
International	1	0	2
Public/Societal Benefit	9	3	18
Religious	2	3	20
Mutual/Member Benefit	2	25	0.1*
Missing	8	-	-
Total	100	100	100

\*Too small a number to indicate in table.

### **Destructive Leader Questionnaire (DLQ) Items**

The 25 items from the Destructive Leadership Questionnaire (DLQ) (Shaw, Erickson & Harvey, 2011) were analyzed as well as the scale variable Toxic Supervision that was derived from the 25 items to determine the level of toxicity experienced by the



respondents. The item means ranged from the lowest, 3.48, to the highest, 5.02. Table 12 depicts the items used for the toxic supervision scale variable from the DLQ along with the subscales from which the items were taken, the total responses for each item, and their means. The items dealing with brutal and bullying behavior, as well as inconsiderate and tyrannical behavior had the highest means. The toxic supervision scale variable had a mean of 111 and median of 113 with no true outliers. Overall, respondents concerns with toxic supervision in bullying were more pronounced than issues of ethics and emotionalism.

Table 12

*Toxic Supervision Scale Variable Items, Response Totals and Means*

Item DLQ Subscale	Item Question	Total Responses	Mean
Acting in a Brutal Bullying Manner	My boss enjoys making people suffer	237	3.48
Acting in an Insular Manner Relative to Other Groups in the Organization	My boss does not care about things happening in other units	231	3.80
Lying and Other Unethical Behavior	My boss rarely acts with a high level of integrity	252	3.90
An Inconsiderate Tyrant	My boss could best be described as mean	256	3.94
An Inconsiderate Tyrant	My boss is a tyrant	252	4.01
Acting in an Insular Manner Relative to Other Groups in the Organization	My boss demonstrates no concern for anyone outside his/her own unit	250	4.03

Item Subscale	Item Question	Total Responses	Mean
Overly Emotional With Negative Psychological Characteristic	My boss often gets emotional	255	4.06
Lying and Other Unethical Behavior	My boss often acts in an unethical manner	250	4.29
Acting in a Brutal Bullying Manner	Anyone who challenges my boss is dealt with brutally	254	4.34
Acting in a Brutal Bullying Manner	I have often seen my boss bully another employee	253	4.36
Acting in a Brutal Bullying Manner	My boss places brutal pressure on subordinates	255	4.39
Overly Emotional With Negative Psychological Characteristic	My boss lacks self-control	256	4.44
Lying and Other Unethical Behavior	My boss blames others for his/her own mistakes	249	4.49
An Inconsiderate Tyrant	My boss is pig headed (i.e. extremely stubborn)	255	4.50
Acting in a Brutal Bullying Manner	My boss rarely shows a high level of respect for others	255	4.58
Lying and Other Unethical Behavior	My boss often says one thing while doing exactly the opposite	252	4.65
Lying and Other Unethical Behavior	My boss often takes credit for the work that others have done	252	4.72
Playing Favorites and Other Divisive Behavior	My boss tends to show excessive favoritism	248	4.73

Item Subscale	Item Question	Total Responses	Mean
An Inconsiderate Tyrant	My boss is an inconsiderate person	255	4.77
Acting in a Brutal Bullying Manner	My boss sees every negotiation issue as a win/lose conflict	242	4.80
Playing Favorites and Other Divisive Behavior	My boss has personal favorites	251	4.96
An Inconsiderate Tyrant	My boss is arrogant	256	4.97
An Inconsiderate Tyrant	My boss is self-centered	256	5.01
Acting in a Brutal Bullying Manner	My boss holds grudges	241	5.02

### Summary Research Question 1

Two hundred and ninety-eight (63%) respondents experienced toxicity. While this sample cannot be generalized to the greater San Diego sector, the sample does have some representative characteristics of nonprofit employees, such as their race, gender and educational level. In other words, they tended to be white women with higher levels of education. If the desire to respond to the questionnaire itself is any indication of toxicity, respondents from arts organizations responded to the survey at twice the rate that they were represented in the agency's population. At the same time, mutual/member benefit organizations were one of the largest client groups of the agency and were not part of the response group at all. There may be many other reasons for this such as time available to take the survey, fear of confidentiality being broached, or perhaps some other reason, but this certainly suggests further study is needed into the level of toxicity with respect to different organizational types.

The level of toxicity as represented by the item means was compared specifically because the initial study of the DLQ by Shaw, Erickson and Harvey (2011) reported their highest and lowest item means. However, since this dissertation used only respondents who indicated they had worked for a toxic supervisor, the highest and lowest item means were higher than those reported in the initial study that included all participants whether or not they had worked for a toxic boss. Therefore, while there were higher levels of toxicity reported by the highest and lowest means of the 25 items used in this study, it is not a clear indicator of higher levels in this sample. However, these results did indicate that toxic leadership by an immediate supervisor or other organizational leader does exist in at least some places in the San Diego nonprofit sector.

### **Research Question 2**

To what extent does toxic leader behavior explain variation in both organizational citizenship behavior and turnover behavior in San Diego nonprofits?

This question was analyzed using bivariate correlations, linear, and logistic regression. Specifically, the outcome variable organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) was modeled as a continuous variable and was evaluated with multiple linear regression. The outcome variable turnover was measured as dichotomous and was evaluated with logistic regression.

### **Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)**

Bivariate correlations were used for an initial identification of possible predictor variables. Stepwise regression was then used to identify predictor variables from this initial set that might have a significant relationship to the outcome variables. Pearson product-moment correlations of the toxic supervision, OCB, and all demographic

variables yielded only one significantly correlated variable, high school graduate,  $p$  value = .01,  $r = .16$ . However, only 4 responses were in that category so the variable was not used. In addition, there were seven other variables with insufficient responses to include in the model: International, Medical Research, Religious, Some High School, High School Graduate, Certificated and Some College. As such, each stepwise model included the following demographic variables: African American, Hispanic, Asian, Hawaiian, Other Race/Ethnicity, Bachelor's Degree, Advanced Degree, Arts, Education, Higher Education, Environment/Animals, Health, Human Services, Public/Societal Benefit, Mutual/Member Benefit, Line Staff, Mid-Manager, Senior Leader, and Male.

A stepwise regression model including the above mentioned demographic variables and the predictor variable, toxic supervision, were regressed against the outcome variable, OCB, and none of the independent variables were found to be significant. However, because the literature suggested that certain variables might be correlated, and assuming that nonprofit employees respond as employees in other sectors have been found to behave, the scale variables OCB and toxic supervision were recoded into their subscales for additional analysis.

Three separate models were evaluated for each of the three OCB subscales (helping behavior, sportsmanship and civic virtue). Each model included the six DLQ subscales used for the toxic supervision variable and the earlier described demographic variables. Of the 26 subscales in the DLQ, this study's toxic supervision scale variable contained questions from six of the 26 subscales of the DLQ that were most related to the definition of toxicity used in this study. Table 13 reports both OCB and toxic supervision

scale and subscale reliability scores, all of which were at or above the .7 level (Santos, 1999).

Table 13

*Cronbach's Alpha Values for Toxic Supervision, OCB Scale and Subscale Variables*

Scale Variable	Subscale Variable	$\alpha$
Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)	Helping Behavior	.90
	Civic Virtue	.85
	Sportsmanship	.79
	Toxic Supervision	.95
Toxic Supervision	Acting in a brutal bullying manner	.88
	Lying and other unethical behavior	.84
	Playing favorites and other divisive behavior	.85
	Acting in an insular manner relative to other groups in the organization	.81
	Overly emotional with negative psychological characteristics	.67
	An inconsistent tyrant	.85

Stepwise regression was performed for the OCB subscale variables on the demographic variables, the toxic supervision scale variable, and its six DLQ subscale variables used to create the toxic supervision scale variable. Of the eight models evaluated, five yielded at least one significant predictor (See Table 14 for the significant predictor variable models). While these models were all significant, they had nearly no

predictive capacity as shown by the R-square values that indicated the models explained only three to six percent of the variation in the outcome variable.

Table 14

*Significant Models for the Outcome Variable OCB, OCB Subscales, and Predictors Toxic Supervision and Toxic Subscales*

Model	Outcome	Predictors	F	Sig	R <sup>2</sup>	t	Sig	B
1	OCB	Demographics	5.78	.02	.04			
		Toxic Subscales						
		Significant Predictor: Lying/Unethical				2.41	.02	.34
2	Civic Virtue	Demographics	5.0	.03	.03			
		Toxic Subscales						
		Significant Predictor: Lying/Unethical				2.23	.03	.03
3	Civic Virtue	Demographics	5.37	.02	.03			
		Toxic Subscales						
		Significant Predictor: Brutal/Bullying				2.32	.02	.08
4	Sportsmanship	Demographics	4.33	.04	.03			
		Toxic Subscales						
		Significant Predictor: Arts Organization				-2.08	.04	-1.95
5	Helping	Demographics	5.41	.04	.03			
		Toxic Subscales						
		Significant Predictor: Lying/Unethical				3.29	.001	.35
		Insular				-2.01	.05	-.47

Upon inspection, two additional issues were noted. First, the direction of the relationship was not what has been reported in the literature; and, second, the coefficients were so small as to be unimportant. Furthermore, the literature consistently reports a negative relationship between toxicity and OCB. However, in all cases except two (the demographic predictor, arts organization, on the OCB subscale, sportsmanship, and the toxic supervision subscale, acting in an insular manner relative to other groups in the organization, on the OCB subscale, helping behavior) the direction of the relationship was positive, and the coefficient was less than 0.50. Even for the models that conformed

to the expected direction, the effect size was extremely small. One explanation for this is that the sample may have been too narrowly constrained from the beginning. The survey instrument included a sorting question. Those respondents who indicated that they did not believe they had worked for an abusive supervisor did not respond to the toxic supervision items. Doing this may have too greatly limited the variation in the responses which may account for the extremely low explanatory capacity of the models and the miniscule effect size. This may also account for the lack of significance in the turnover logistic regression models.

### **Turnover**

Logistic regression was used to evaluate the relationships between the dichotomous dependent variable, turnover, and the same predictor variables that were considered for OCB. These variables included toxic supervision and the subscales comprising toxic supervision. Neither the model with the toxic supervision scale variable nor the model with the toxic subscale variables was significant. This too is not supported by the literature, where turnover is consistently found to increase as toxicity increases. While this may also be a result of the too tightly constrained sample that, in the case of turnover resulted in a lack of significance, this lack of significance may have other reasons.

One of these reasons may have been that the sample was too small for the logistical regression required for the dichotomous turnover outcome variable since power analysis indicated that 522 responses were necessary and only 298 were obtained. While there are statistical methods like bootstrapping designed to overcome these kinds of issues, bootstrapping is based on the assumption that all possible responses are



represented in the sample (Meyers, Gamst & Guarino, 2006, p. 222). If the sample was overly narrow, this would not be the case. Therefore, the lack of improvement in significance after bootstrapping may have reflected the need for improved sampling because all responses had not been obtained, resulting in too little variation for the analysis.

Finally, the turnover and toxic supervision relationship may not be significant as a result of other significant variables that were not included in this study. Some of these may have been uncovered through the open ended question responses addressed in Research Question 4.

### **Summary Research Question 2**

This analysis evaluated the relationships between toxic supervision, and OCB and turnover. While there was no significant relationship between turnover and toxicity in this sample, OCB was significantly related to one of the toxic subscales, lying and other unethical behavior. Additionally, each of the OCB subscale models indicated that there was a relationship with at least one of the toxic subscales (See Table 13). However, these relationships were quite weak, the direction of the relationships was not supported by the literature, and the models' explanatory power was so small as to be unimportant. In light of this, another possibility was considered.

Because the respondents only answered the toxic supervision items if they indicated that they believed they had worked for a toxic supervisor, there may have been too little variation in the sample and the finding may have actually been an example of a Type I error. In addition to this issue for OCB, the sample was determined to be too

small for the logistical regression required for the dichotomous turnover outcome variable.

Since previous research from the private and public sectors revealed that turnover increases and OCB decreases in the face of toxicity, the internal sampling issues that have been discussed may have impacted the analysis. Furthermore, with respect to turnover, some qualitative findings addressed in the open ended question may offer other possible influencers acting on those who stayed in spite of toxicity. These are addressed later in Research Question 4.

### **Research Question 3**

Does level of commitment significantly mediate and/or moderate the effect of toxic leadership on both organizational citizenship behavior and turnover behavior in San Diego nonprofits?

Moderator and mediator variables account for many differences in people's behaviors (Barons and Kenny, 1986). According to Baron and Kenny (1986) these differences are influenced in unique and specific ways depending on which type of variable is exerting that effect. However, moderation and mediation are often used interchangeably resulting in confusion for both readers and analysts. As a specification variable used to determine the type and strength of the relationship between the dependent (outcome) variable and independent (predictor) variable, a moderator is classified as being related to the outcome variable and interacting with the predictor variable (Sharma, Durand & Gur-Arie, 1981). Mediating variables, however, explain how and why the outcome and predictor variables are related, suggesting underlying processes across behaviors (McKinnon, 2009).

Commitment was included in this study to determine if it moderated or mediated the relationship between toxic supervision, and both OCB and turnover since nonprofit paid staff members are thought to endure less than optimal working conditions because they are committed to the cause for which they work (Handy & Katz, 1989).

### **Moderation**

There are three relationships used to test for moderation in the Baron and Kenny method. The evaluation of the moderating effect of commitment on the relationship between the outcome variable (turnover or OCB) and the predictor variable, toxic supervision, consists of the effect of the predictor variable on the outcome variable, the effect of the moderator variable on the outcome variable, and the effect of the interaction of the predictor and the moderator, together, on the outcome variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 176). To control for commitment and toxicity, a fourth model was included to understand how the interaction term affects both the predictor and moderator. Baron and Kenny also suggest that while the interaction of the predictor and moderator variables should be significantly correlated to the outcome variable, the moderator and predictor variables separately should not be significantly correlated to the outcome variable.

**Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).** To test for moderation, a pre-condition is that the interaction variable (toxic supervision and commitment) needs to be correlated to OCB, and the toxic supervision and commitment variables uncorrelated individually with OCB.

The interaction term was significantly correlated to the outcome variable OCB,  $r(156) = .34, p = .000$ , while the predictor variable, toxic supervision, was not significantly correlated to OCB, thus supporting moderation. However, the moderator

variable, commitment, was significantly correlated with the outcome variable, OCB,  $r(227) = .33, p = .000$ , violating the requirements for moderation. Therefore, this first step in moderation indicated that commitment did not moderate the relationship between toxic supervision and OCB.

In an effort to completely evaluate the moderation issue, the regressions were performed despite the correlations not conforming to the requirements in this model. The four models involved regressing: toxic supervision on OCB; commitment on OCB; the interaction variable (toxic supervision and commitment) on OCB; and the interaction term, predictor, and moderator on OCB (See Table 15 for models' results). The regression results were varied and inconclusive. As can be seen in Table 15, the R-square improves slightly between models 3 and 4, however, model 1 was not significant and the coefficient values were so small as to be unimportant. While this may be another result of the sample being too tightly constrained, there was no conclusive evidence that commitment moderated the effects of toxicity on OCB.

Table 15

*Results of the Moderation Regressions for the OCB Dependent Variable*

Model	F	Sig	R <sup>2</sup>	t	Sig	B
Toxic supervision	3.46	.07	.02	1.86	.07	.07
Commitment	26.88	.000	.11	5.19	.000	.20
Interaction Term	20.52	.000	.12	4.53	.000	.001
Full Model	9.17	.000	.15			
Toxic Superv.				2.31	.02	.22
Commitment				2.53	.01	.44
Interaction Term				-1.44	.15	-.002

**Turnover.** To test for moderation with the turnover outcome variable, a pre-condition was that the interaction variable (toxic supervision and commitment) needed to be significantly correlated to turnover. It was not. Additionally, only the logistic regression models including toxic supervision and commitment separately were significant. These results indicated that commitment did not moderate the relationship between toxic supervision and turnover, either.

**Mediation**

The method used to determine mediation was derived from Axman (2009, p. 173) and Baron and Kenny (1986, p. 1177). Mediation explains the psychological aspect of a person's actions related to external events. The process to determine mediation includes evaluating the significance of correlations between the mediator and predictor variable, and three regression steps to understand if the mediating variable has an effect on the outcome variable. The first step regresses the mediator on the predictor. The second step

regresses the outcome variable (turnover or OCB) on the predictor variable, and the third step regresses the outcome variable on both the mediator and predictor variables.

Therefore, to first determine if commitment mediates toxic supervision's effect on turnover and OCB, the commitment and toxic supervision variables need to be significantly correlated. Additionally, upon inspection, coefficients and errors need to indicate that there is an appropriate directional change (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 1177). In other words, the effect of the mediator should produce a smaller coefficient for toxic supervision in the third step equation that includes both commitment and toxicity. Inspection of coefficients and errors can be used because this is a simple model with one predictor and one mediator (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In this analysis, the mediator (commitment) and predictor (toxic supervision) were significantly correlated,  $r(164) = -.190, p = .014$  indicating that it was appropriate to run the regressions.

**Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).** Because the correlational requirement was met, the three previously discussed regressions were run. While the mediator on predictor model was significant, the outcome on predictor model was not, making it impossible to determine if the unstandardized coefficient decreased when commitment was added to the model. Therefore, commitment was not found to mediate the relationship between toxic supervision and OCB.

**Turnover.** Again, since the toxic supervision and commitment variables were significantly correlated, the three regressions were run. In this instance, all three logistic regression models were significant. However, the toxic supervision predictor variable was not significantly different from zero in the full model, indicating a change, but the R-

squares and coefficients were so small that the results were still inconclusive, as they had been for OCB.

### **Summary Research Question 3**

There was no conclusive moderating or mediating effect of commitment on either OCB or turnover found. As noted above, this may have been a result of the sample being too narrowly constrained. Only those respondents who indicated that they believed they had worked for a toxic or abusive supervisor completed the toxic supervisor variable items, likely limiting the variation too much to discover any inferential findings. Furthermore, other measurement errors and incorrect assumptions about the influencer variables may also have impacted the analysis. Specifically, the assumption in this study was that commitment was the influencer variable on toxic supervision. This may not be the case.

Baron and Kenny (1986), caution that because of the very nature of mediators being an internal, psychological variable, measurement error can result in an underestimation of the effect of the mediator and an overestimation of the effect of the predictor variable (p. 1177). They also warn that there may be an incorrect assumption about which variable is the predictor and which is the mediator in the model (p. 1177). Therefore, while commitment did not conclusively moderate or mediate either relationship, there may be other as yet unidentified variables operating on the relationship. Some of these other factors may have been discovered in the qualitative question responses.

#### **Research Question 4**

What reasons do individuals give for remaining with a nonprofit organization despite toxic leadership in San Diego nonprofits?

The fourth and final research question was an open-ended qualitative question to address reasons why people who worked for a toxic supervisor remained after considering leaving. Coding and category development was accomplished using the manual method of data analysis.

#### **Data Collection**

Respondents who indicated that they had worked for an abusive supervisor were asked a dichotomous (yes/no) question if they had considered leaving the organization because of the toxic supervisor. If they responded they had, they were asked if they did leave. If they responded that they had not left, they were then asked to explain why in as much detail as possible in a single open ended question. Of the 298 respondents who indicated they had worked for a toxic supervisor, 182 considered leaving but stayed in spite of it. Of these individuals who stayed, 175 gave an explanation as to why they did.

#### **Data Preparation**

The researcher copied the list of responses into an excel document. Responses were reviewed for all possible codes. Each separate code was copied to its own cell to facilitate recording frequencies of each, as well as ease of reassigning the coded data to different family networks or categories.



## **Analysis**

Manifest and latent content analysis were used to explore themes. The manifest descriptions of the content resulted in reported frequencies, while the latent descriptions also described underlying meanings represented in conceptual mapping (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Open coding determined frequencies of response ideas and was used to explore family networks or categories. Because this analysis addressed research question four that specifically looked at the reasons that people stayed in spite of working for a toxic supervisor or other organizational leader, the Framework Approach was used. The software Atlas.ti was used to map the thematic relationships between the codes and the categories.

The Framework Approach analyzes qualitative data within a context of a particular issue (usually in a policy context), in this case explaining staying after considering quitting (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000). It employs multiple steps but is also flexible for the needs of the research (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). As with all qualitative analysis, familiarization with the data was the first step. The second step involved identification of the thematic framework, or using the *a priori* themes, while searching for other possible themes from the data. The data was then coded, charted, mapped and interpreted (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009, p. 4).

## **Quality and Integrity**

Discussion regarding the rigor of qualitative research is ongoing. While some qualitative researchers reject the notions of reliability and validity used in quantitative research, the need for researchers and the consumers of their research to have confidence in the methods and analysis is still needed (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers,

2002). Lincoln and Guba developed four constructs around trustworthiness of qualitative research to address these issues (Shenton, 2004). They are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (p. 64).

Credibility, one of the most important aspects of trustworthiness, considers how congruent the findings are with reality (p.64). Transferability is concerned with the applicability of the findings to other situations (p. 69). Dependability refers to replicability of the research, looking for some confidence that if the study was redone with the same respondents, similar results would be had (p. 71). Finally, confirmability addresses the possible biases of the researcher to ensure they do not influence the findings.

The qualitative question in this concurrent mixed methods design had a single specific purpose—to identify categories of reasons why those who considered leaving because of the toxic leader but did not. To develop these codes and categories, the data was reviewed by multiple people; therefore, dependability and confirmability were addressed by the data review process.

The data, codes and categories were reviewed with at least one other colleague and a committee member to ensure appropriateness of the category and assignment of codes to those categories. The data was maintained so that the original written responses were kept beside the codes and categories that were developed. This provided easy access and an opportunity to calculate frequencies. The written responses and codes were unattached to any identifying markers and were broken up into phrases so as not to be connected to the original response or identifiable in any other way to the respondents. Because these responses were a few sentences or phrases, there was little or no context

discernible. Therefore, there was little concern that separating the response items into component single expressions, or components, would affect understanding. On the other hand, the possibility of incorrect reinterpretation of the phrases was avoided by not using single word lists. Credibility was addressed by including other research that addressed the findings, while transferability was examined by using the qualitative findings to help explain the quantitative findings in this study.

### **Categories and Themes**

The *a priori* categories discovered in the qualitative data were commitment and OCB. Additionally, seven other categories emerged. While five were manifest categories, resilience emerged as another latent variable with the *a priori* categories. The categories and their codes and frequencies are noted with representative quotations from the survey responses throughout the discussion that follows. Additionally, the codes and their frequencies can be found in Appendix C.

**Manifest categories.** The following section describes the categories developed from words and phrases that suggest the straightforward meaning of the words. While these categories may represent important influencer variables, any underlying themes cannot be gleaned in this type of analysis. Analysis of the responses determined five of this category type. Table 16 displays the manifest categories, frequencies, and the accompanying codes.

Table 16

*Manifest Categories, Frequencies and Codes*

Category	Codes	Category Frequency
Change Within Organization		59
	The employee was promoted	
	The supervisor left	
	The employee was moved within the organization	
Job Search		48
	Can't find another job	
	Difficult job market for my Age	
	Difficult job market for Nonprofits	
	Feel lucky to have a job	
	It's a bad job market	
	Looking for another job	
Compensation		36
	The employee likes the benefits	
	The employee likes the pay	
	The employee needs the level of pay	
Career Management		29
	Don't want to start over	
	Employee wants experience	
	Fear of damage to career by supervisor	
	Organizational leadership encouraged employee to stay	
	Supervisor allows career Development	
	The employee is retiring soon	
	The job is a great opportunity	

Category	Codes	Category Frequency
Likes Work		23
	Employee likes the field	
	Employee likes the work	

***Change within the organization.*** Change within the organization had only two coded components and was the largest category frequency (59). In the first code, the individual was moved away from the abusive leader. In the second, the toxic supervisor left the organization. In some cases, the leader or supervisor was fired, but often it was represented simply as *the person left*. Twice as often the supervisor left the organization, either fired or chose to leave, (40 comments), as the staff member was moved (19 comments), indicated by “The supervisor took a job at another nonprofit, so I remained at the organization.” In six instances, the staff member reported being promoted with the move. For example, the comments were similar to “The boss moved on and I was promoted to another role.” None of these comments suggested that the promotion was connected to the abuse.

***Job search.*** The job search category included five codes that delved further into how the individual felt about the possibility of existing opportunities. Only one code was not representative of a discouraged seeker or someone fearing limited opportunities. The negative toned codes expressed concerns with the economy such as *feel lucky to have a job and it's a bad job market*.

Table 17 represents those who indicated they were in search of other employment. Of the 48 responses, 44% (21 comments) indicated that the individual was still in search of other employment. These individuals simply had not become discouraged seekers yet.

The majority, however, 56% (27 comments) suggested a long period of looking or a failure to find other employment. Often, comments included references to the difficult economy or the 2008 economic downturn.

Table 17

*Job Search Category Illustrative Comments*

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Representative Quotations

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“I applied to many jobs while I worked for this person but couldn’t find one.”

“I have been looking for other job opportunities for some months now because after six years of being under his leadership, I really can't handle it anymore.”

“I have only stayed because I am currently in the process of looking for a new job, but she is the direct reason as to why I no longer want to work here.”

“I am only with the organization while I am in the process of finding another job.”

“There are little opportunities in the current job market.”

“Recession hit, lack of jobs, purchased new home so had to keep present level of employment.”

“I need the job, downturn in the economy means fewer jobs in my sector, in general there are not many opportunities in my chosen career field to move from institution to institution, i am limited to where I can go.”

“Terrible job market for nonprofits in San Diego is big reason why I have chosen to stay.”

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**Compensation.** The compensation category had a frequency response of 36 and also had two response codes, as shown in Table 18. One code represented an expression of responsibility as the family bread winner, while the other expressed the desire to maintain the level of pay or benefits they had without explaining why. These responses focused on salary and benefits. In some cases, the individuals remarked that the organization offered a higher level of pay and benefits than is typical in nonprofit

organizations suggesting that there may be an underlying belief that working in the sector brings low pay and benefits. This could be an interesting interview topic for future research. The compensation category was intentionally limited to comments solely about pay and benefits.

Table 18

*Compensation Category Illustrative Comments*

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Representative Quotations

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“I have a family to support and times are tough as it is difficult to find adequate employment.”

“It is a full time job in my field with benefits, which cannot be said of a lot of other jobs in my field in San Diego.”

“Concern that I could not find another position with the same level of pay, responsibility and seniority that I had at the organization with the abusive supervisor.”

“After 20 years, my paycheck is high enough that starting over somewhere else would be a financial hit.”

“I have a single family income and would require a job that would provide a similar salary.”

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***Career management.*** The category, career management, expressed sentiments of wanting the experience the job offered or the career enhancement the supervisor afforded the employee. It also demonstrated fear that the supervisor would undermine the employee’s career if he or she left. This category represented a career focus that overrode any negative aspect of the situation. While some looked to the future expressing consideration for what they could gain, others expressed that keeping what they had gained in the career was more important than leaving.

Another code that was considered for career management involved those who were promoted away from the toxic supervisor within the organization. These were included with the larger category of change within organization because there was no indication that the individual had considered their career, only that the move had included a promotion.

While this category had some of the most varied types of comments, it also had one of the smaller frequencies, 29. As can be seen in Table 19, they ranged from *long term goals to fear of damage to the career by a vindictive boss*. Additionally, there was a code that dealt with those who put up with the abuse because of the career development and community connections the abusive supervisor afforded the employee.

Table 19

*Career Management Category Illustrative Comments*

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Representative Quotations

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“I knew he would lie about me, and despite my reputation, I felt he would be believed.”

“I’m only a few years away from retirement and have decided to “ride it out.”

“This position is important to my next career move, so I rationalize the abuse by reminding myself of what I can gain from the experience.”

“I remained at the organization despite my supervisors behavior because of the opportunities available to me.”

“I am staying because I hope to be able to retire in the next few years and I do not want to lose my accrued benefits I’m only a few years away from retirement and have decided to “ride it out”

“Because he is successful, and his success allows me to do work I might not otherwise be able to.”

“I have been here for 2 years, and building on what I have already accomplished would get me farther than moving laterally to a new organization and starting all over.”

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### Representative Quotations

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“I wanted to gain further experience in my position and I did not think I would be able to find an equivalent position elsewhere.”

“Lack of relevant work experience and new to the work force; needed to stay for longevity reasons to gain enough experience before looking for other work.”

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**Likes Work.** The last manifest category had response types that the individual indicated they liked the job. Of the 23 comments, two codes emerged. Comments for one code expressed that the individual liked the field. “I loved my job and what I was doing it was that simple.” The other type of comments expressed an idea that the person liked the actual work process. “I was able to do my job effectively and with quite a bit of independence.” Since these codes did not indicate any deeper meaning or feelings and only expressed enjoying the work and the process, these responses were not included in the commitment category.

The manifest categories represented both temporal and practical content. Some respondents were thinking far ahead considering what the long-term benefits to their career might be, while others expressed ideas that appeared more in the present such as that they enjoyed the job or had immediate family financial needs to consider. The next group of categories represented those responses that may be part of a larger or deeper theme. There are four of these latent categories

**Latent categories.** Latent categories represent underlying themes and meanings of the coded words and phrases (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Four latent categories were discovered during coding, OCB, commitment, resilience, and the antithesis category to resilience, lost confidence. Table 20 offers the latent categories’ frequencies and codes.

Table 20

*Latent Category Frequencies and Codes*

Category	Codes	Category Frequency
Resilience	<p>Not directed at me</p> <p>Personal responsibility</p> <p>Situation got better</p> <p>Sought help from organizational leadership</p> <p>Employee believed it would work itself out</p>	52
Commitment	<p>The employee is committed to the mission</p> <p>The employee is passionate about the mission</p> <p>The employee loves the mission and clients</p>	45
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	<p>Employees banded together</p> <p>Employee likes colleagues</p> <p>Employee wants to protect colleagues</p>	25
Lost Confidence	<p>Employee has lost confidence in self</p>	4

*Resilience and Lost Confidence.* The Lost Confidence and Resilience categories are discussed together here because they may represent two extremes on a continuum. For example, people who expressed ideas that indicated they may be resilient may have gained this capacity from both their personal experiences and their genetic predisposition. The same may be said for those who expressed losing confidence or feeling beaten down. They may have not gained resilient capacities nor had a genetic predisposition to resilient behavior, since resilience is the ability to succeed in spite of adversity (Resnick, 2011). Importantly, it is both a process and state of being that can be modified over time (Luther, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). Some research has identified changes in the brain that create a propensity to be resilient, or not, particularly in the face of long term stress (Tsankova, Renthal, Kumar & Nestler, 2007). Resilience also relates to the systems in which one lives and the resources available often referred to as the ecological model (Ungar, 2011).

There were 52 responses that might be considered resilience and only four that were not but the four were so intense that they required their own code. These indicators suggest some people may have had the internal and external resources and capacity to cope with certain levels of abusive behavior. Additionally, a lack of resilience may explain why some people indicated they were or nearly were incapacitated by the same kind of situation. Table 21 shows the varied comments in this category. Some remarked about a long-term engagement with the abuser in an effort to modify the behavior. Others suggested that the impact of the abuse was limited, further suggesting resilience. Those four who had lost their confidence either alluded to or openly admitted internalizing the negativity directed at them.

Table 21

*Resilience and Lost Confidence Categories Illustrative Comments*

Representative Quotations
<p>Resilience</p> <hr/> <p>“In general, his behavior had a limited effect on me but it did affect the entire organization.”</p> <p>“I had worked (hard) for this organization for over five years and felt I was not going to let someone bully me out of a job.”</p> <p>“I also protect myself quite well from my supervisor by not engaging in the arguments or power struggles.”</p> <p>“I also feel this is a temporary situation that will work itself out eventually.”</p> <p>“It took over a year of firmly refusing to engage in battles, but insisting on respectful behavior.”</p>
<p>Lost Confidence</p> <hr/> <p>“The pattern of abuse was so pervasive that I had internalized her negative view of me so I thought that I was in a hopeless situation, powerless to get out, and worthless to any other organization.”</p>

***Commitment.*** Commitment is the attitude that causes one to continue working in an organization regardless of the type of environment, and may be attributed to the type of mission or work of the organization (Blau and Boal, 1987; Handy & Katz, 1998). It is associated with people giving greater effort to work activities without external incentives or threats (Goulet & Frank, 2013). Of the 45 responses, some respondents used the term *commitment* or *committed to the cause, the mission or the clients served*. Others expressed love or passion for the mission or the clients. These emotions have been noted as part of nonprofit employees’ views about why they do difficult and often poorly

compensated work (Handy & Katz, 1998). The quotations shown in Table 22 suggest a deeper feeling than those represented in the Likes job category.

Table 22

*Commitment Category Illustrative Comments*

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Representative Quotations

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“I have a strong commitment to the mission of the organization and I knew that I would outlast her board tenure.”

“I love serving the clients.”

“I passionately believe in my organization's mission and vision”

“Love the non-profit I work for and figured I would be dealing with similar issues at other jobs.”

“I also stayed because I feel strongly that the job I do is important and I am committed to making a difference in the lives of the children and families we work with.”

“Because I believe very strongly in the mission of the nonprofit organization.”

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***Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).*** Organizational citizenship behaviors are those actions of one employee to another or one group to another that can enhance the long-term productivity of the organization but are not part of the individual's job requirements in any way. This is a key element of OCB -- that the behavior is not a technical or contractual performance requirement (Organ, 1997). Specifically, OCB is behavior that helps out coworkers, is courteous, and gives a good impression of the organization to outsiders (Zellars, Tepper & Duffy, 2002). In essence, these behaviors are collaborative, helpful and supportive.

The OCB category was expressed by 25 comments in three distinct codes. These codes revolved around descriptions of supporting colleagues that might involve the peacemaker subscale of Organ's OCB model (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach,

2000). The individuals indicated wanting to protect their other colleagues. Respondents noted that the employees banded together to support one another against the toxic leader, suggesting in some cases that their deep relationships help them accomplish their work. As can be seen in Table 23, the responses tended to revolve around ideas of unity and job accomplishment.

Table 23

*Organizational Citizenship Behavior Category Illustrative Comments*

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Representative Quotations

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“Some of us have chosen to band together and ride her out.”

“I really enjoy working with every other person in my organization”

“I believe I mitigate some of the executive director's difficult and abusive actions.”

“I also love the rest of my co-workers and feel we have a good relationship, get stuff done, and collaborate despite the difficult boss.”

“I remain with the organization because I enjoy the culture, staff and environment here in spite of my supervisor.”

“I fear that if I leave, the next level would too.”

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**Summary Research Question 4**

The five manifest and four latent categories discovered in the responses offer only a cursory look at the reasons people stayed in spite of toxic leadership. Further amplification of the relationship between these potentially important influencers on staff members' decisions to stay or leave is necessary to better understand why they stay, as well as how they interact with their colleagues and perform their duties. These responses, however, suggest that there may be more, complex and difficult relationships amongst staff members, leaders and colleagues that need further exploration.

The five manifest categories suggested concerns with the economy (familial responsibility), difficulty finding another job and personal interests that outweighed the toxicity such as career management concerns and just liking the job itself. The latent categories, resilience, OCB, commitment and lost confidence, may relate to the manifest categories but more complete follow up is required to fully understand the connections between these categories and the nuances within them.

### **Summary of Results**

Toxic leadership was found to exist in this sample of San Diego nonprofit organizations. Despite the sample being too tightly constrained at the beginning of the study, the findings regarding the relationship between toxicity, and OCB and turnover indicated that there was no relationship. However, a less constrained sampling method may be needed to determine conclusively if there is or is not a relationship. This may also be the case for the mediating or moderating influence of commitment on both OCB and turnover. Baron and Kenny (1986) support this possibility in their discussion of the complexity of social science variables, especially, that the internal psychological nature of mediators can result in an underestimation of the effect of the mediator and an overestimation of the effect of the predictor. Therefore, there may be variables that are operating on the respondents that are not included in the model, some of which may have been discovered in the qualitative question responses with variables that include issues of compensation, a difficult economy, professional development, personal relationships, commitment and resilience. Further, OCB was found as a possible influencer variable that may be an additional explanation why there were inconclusive findings as an outcome variable.

The relationships between leader and follower and between fellow colleagues are complex. There are also a myriad of influences on the decision to remain or leave an organization. It is not surprising that toxicity exists in nonprofit organizations as it exists in organizations in both the for-profit and government sectors, however, the employee response to that toxicity is a complex interaction that calls for analysis that includes as much of that complexity as possible to fully understand its depth and breadth. In this way, researchers and practitioners can begin to understand the true impact toxicity has on the nonprofit organization.



## Chapter 5: Discussion

This study found that toxic supervision exists in the sample of nonprofit organizations. In this final chapter, the research is summarized including the problem and purpose statements and a review of the methodology. Findings are offered with some possible explanations that were discovered in the literature that may address certain aspects of the results. Finally, limitations of this study are discussed and some suggestions for future research are provided.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The nonprofit sector in San Diego County provides important services to residents, often the most vulnerable, who might otherwise be without them. In times of shrinking resources, nonprofit organizations need to be innovative and creative in how they continue to deliver those services. Although toxic leader behaviors have been shown to undermine organizational success in for-profits and public organizations, it is not well documented how, or even if, toxicity is related to nonprofit professionals and their organizations' success (Conger, 1990; Ashforth, 1994; Whicker, 1996; Kellerman, 2004; Reed, 2004; Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007; DeAngelis, 2009; Reed & Olsen, 2010). Specifically, there is no empirical evidence of the effect toxic leader behaviors have on nonprofit paid staff members' OCB and turnover behavior; nor, is there evidence of the influence employees' commitment to the organization's mission may have on those relationships.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The objective of this study was to explore the constructs of toxic leader behavior and its effect on the individual's OCB and intent to stay in the nonprofit organization

despite experiencing toxic leadership. Its objective included an understanding of the influence of commitment on those effects. Finally, it was intended to identify reasons individuals stayed in an organization despite experiencing toxicity from their leaders.

Questions that addressed this objective were:

1. To what extent does toxic leader behavior exist in San Diego nonprofits?
2. To what extent does toxic leader behavior explain variation in both organizational citizenship behavior and turnover behavior in San Diego nonprofits?
3. Does level of commitment significantly mediate and/or moderate the effect of toxic leadership on both organizational citizenship behavior and turnover behavior in San Diego nonprofits?
4. What reasons do individuals give for remaining with a nonprofit organization despite toxic leadership in San Diego nonprofits?

### **Review of the Methodology**

To accomplish the aims of this study, a concurrent cross-sectional mixed methods design was used. Data was collected via an electronic survey developed in the software Qualtrics and stored on university servers. The data included 63 survey items to collect data on the respondents' experiences with toxic leadership and their reaction to it as measured through OCB, commitment and turnover. An open ended question was used to collect data on the reasons the individual stayed in the organization despite experiencing toxicity. The sample primarily consisted of San Diego nonprofit paid staff members whose organizations use a large San Diego human resources firm that provides personnel and training services. Additionally, a small group of respondents were affiliated with a

San Diego nonprofit professional networking group. The data was then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential techniques as well as content analysis.

### **Findings**

The primary finding was that toxic leader behavior was found in the sample of San Diego nonprofit organizations. Unfortunately, the results of the analyses of the relationships between toxic leadership, and OCB and turnover, as well as the influence of commitment on those relationships were inconclusive. However, respondents offered other influencer variables for the reasons nonprofit employees remain in the organization in spite of toxic supervision. Particularly, the outcome variable OCB was found in the qualitative results of other influencer variables on turnover suggesting that it may not be an outcome variable at all. The following discusses these findings by research question.

#### **Research Question 1**

To what extent does toxic leader behavior exist in San Diego nonprofits?

The fundamental purpose of this study was to determine if toxic leadership could be found in San Diego nonprofit organizations. It was. Two hundred and ninety-eight (63%) respondents experienced some level of toxicity. The respondents had representative demographic characteristics of nonprofit employees found in previous research. They were white (73%) women (77%) with higher levels of educational attainment (88%) than their counterparts in the for-profit and public sectors. On the other hand, the sample's types of organization differed from the agency's client organizations.

For example, arts and culture employees responded at twice the rate of the agency's clients. Moreover, mutual and member benefit organizations were not represented in the sample at all but were one of the largest groups of agency client

organizations. This may suggest a need for further inquiry into the relationship between toxic leader behavior and certain types of organizations.

The toxic supervision variable items were taken from the Destructive Leader Questionnaire (DLQ) that Shaw, Erickson and Harvey (2011) developed based on Kellerman's (2005) models of destructive leaders. Their sample was derived from respondents from advertisements on over 600 international professional websites and newspapers, at their university, on their local and national television stations, and with the cooperation of several human resource directors with whom they were acquainted (2011, p. 577). This resulted in item responses ranging from 501 to 691 respondents. Their respondents were from 30 nationalities, over half Australian (53.9%) and nearly a quarter (22.9%) American (p. 578), and represented all sectors. The average age was 43.8 years, with a range from 19 years to 76 years (p. 577), and 92.3 percent held university degrees (p. 578). Shaw and his colleagues ran descriptive statistics on each of the 123 items in the instrument but reported only the highest and lowest mean scores, 2.12 to 3.99 (p.578). In comparison, this study used a convenience sample solicited from staff members whose organizations were affiliated with a local human resources agency, and from members of a nonprofit professionals' networking organization that yielded 471 total responses.

Seventy-six percent of this study's respondents held university degrees and their average age at the time the toxic experience they were reporting was 38 years. They responded to 25 of the 123 items of the DLQ considered appropriate to this study's definition of toxicity. The highest and lowest item means in this study were 3.48 and 5.02 respectively, higher than those reported by Shaw, Erickson and Harvey. This is

likely due to the sorting process described above having only those who believed they had worked for a toxic leader respond and not that San Diego nonprofit organizations experience considerably higher levels of toxicity. However, this study was able to show that San Diego nonprofit employees do experience toxic leadership in different types of organizations, at all levels in the organization and educational attainment. The study provided a baseline for comparison by other researchers.

### **Research Question 2**

To what extent does toxic leader behavior explain variation in both organizational citizenship behavior and turnover behavior in San Diego nonprofits?

This analysis evaluated the relationships between toxic supervision, and OCB and turnover. While there was no significant relationship between turnover and toxicity in this sample, OCB and its three subscales (civic virtue, helping behaviors and sportsmanship) did have a significant relationship with one or more of the toxic DLQ subscales used for the toxic supervision variable (acting in an insular manner relative to other groups in the organization, acting in a brutal or bullying manner, and lying and other unethical behavior) and a demographic variable (arts organizations) (See Table 14). However, these relationships were weak, the direction of the relationships was not supported by the literature and the models' explanatory capacities were so small as to be unimportant. In light of this, other possibilities were considered.

The design of the study most likely caused these results because the respondents only accessed the toxic leader items if they indicated they believed they had worked for an abusive supervisor. This may have produced a too narrowly constrained sample that did not include the greater response variation of all respondents that impacted all or some

of the relationship evaluations. However, there may be some indication that other issues also impacted the results. How these may have affected the turnover and OCB relationships with toxic supervision is discussed briefly below.

**Turnover.** The dichotomous outcome variable turnover was unexpectedly negatively correlated to the toxic supervision predictor variable (TS) (TS,  $r(177) = -0.147, p = .05$ ), a finding that is unsupported in the literature. Logistic regression was used to evaluate the relationships between the dichotomous dependent variable, turnover, and the toxic leadership predictor variable and its subscale variables. Neither the model with the toxic supervision scale variable nor the models with the subscale variables were significant.

Power analysis indicated that 522 responses were necessary for a logistic regression analysis. Only 298 were obtained. While there are statistical methods like bootstrapping designed to overcome these kinds of issues, insufficient variation in the sample in the first place negated the use of this technique. The literature, however, reflects that turnover increases as toxicity increases. The negative correlation found in this study's analysis and the lack of model significance may be a result of the sampling method used. However, for the most part, these findings were inconclusive. Like the turnover relationship, the toxic supervision and OCB relationship also had inconclusive and unsupported findings that may be related to the sampling method. They may, however, also have other influences working on the relationships that will be touched on in the next section.

**Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB).** Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) was not significantly correlated to the toxic supervision variable. In an

effort to completely understand the relationship, stepwise regression was used with models including the outcome variable OCB, its subscales, the demographic variables, the toxic supervision scale variable and its subscale variables.

As can be seen in Table 14, the two toxic subscale variables, lying and other unethical behavior and acting in a brutal or bullying manner, were significant with two subscales of OCB (civic virtue and helping behaviors). However, the model's explanatory capacity and the coefficient effect sizes were so small as to be unimportant. As was discussed in the above section about the turnover outcome variable, this may be a result of the sampling method used. In an effort to more thoroughly explore these results, an investigation into additional literature yielded some other possibilities for them.

For example, Meyers, Gamst and Guarino (2006) suggest that a low R-square in a complex social science study may indicate a need for further research rather than an inadequate variable (p. 166). An example of one of these other variables is identification with the organization.

Decoster and colleagues (2013) considered how an employee's identification with the organization might buffer the effect abusive supervision has on group cohesion (Decoster, Camps, Stouten, Vandevyvere & Tripp, p. 626) using group cohesion as a desired organizational outcome variable (p. 624). It is an individual's perception of his or her relationship with their group and the force it creates to remain in that group. They found that higher identification with the organization buffers the effects of toxic supervision on perceived group cohesiveness (p. 630).

For nonprofit employees specifically, Handy and Katz (1998) found that nonprofit employees view the organization itself as fulfilling a social need (p. 251), suggesting that

they see the organization and the cause or mission as one. In light of this, Decoster's and colleagues' findings may indicate that nonprofit employees, who strongly identify with their organization's mission, and therefore their organization, may respond differently to abusive supervision with respect to certain organizational outcomes. Further research and a more inclusive sampling method might shed light on this possibility.

Further support of the idea that nonprofit employees' relationship to their organizations may be different than their counterparts in other sectors is Akingbola's (2012) nested social exchange model designed to explain the exchange or relationship between employees and their organizations. He nests both the economic exchange and social exchange in a third level derived from the social objectives, values and environment of the nonprofit organization (p. 984). He posits that when the social objectives and values of the organization are similar to those of the employee, it fosters a system of built-in social exchange between employees and their organizations. This exchange is based on the actual social goals and values of that particular nonprofit.

These employees expect a work environment that actualizes their values and offers them an opportunity to contribute to the social cause (Akingbola, 2012, p. 985), and they perceive the social objectives of the organization as part of their personal objectives (p. 988). This is offered as connectedness that may exist between employees and their organizations supporting the idea of mediating or buffering negative experiences such as toxic supervision that may not be prevalent in other sectors.

While the lack of variation in this study's sample produced inconclusive results, other research such as that presented above suggests the possibility that the relationships between toxic supervision and organizational success outcome variables like turnover and



OCB actually are different than normally found in the for-profit and public sectors.

There may also be other influencers and the influencer and predictor variables may even be juxtaposed as suggested by Meyers, Gamst and Guarino (2006). Some of these other influencers included OCB as a mediator instead of an outcome variable.

### **Research Question 3**

Does level of commitment significantly mediate and/or moderate the effect of toxic leadership on both organizational citizenship behavior and turnover behavior in San Diego nonprofits?

There was no conclusive moderating or mediating influence by commitment on either the relationship between abusive supervision and OCB, or abusive supervision and turnover. As noted above, this may have been a result of the sample being too narrowly constrained. However, this lack of influence may also have been impacted by incorrect assumptions about the influencer variable itself.

Baron and Kenny (1986) caution that because mediators are an internal psychological variable, measurement error can result in an underestimation of the effect of the mediator and an overestimation of the effect of the predictor variable (p. 1177). They also warn that there may be an incorrect assumption about which variable is the predictor and which is the mediator in the model (p. 1177). There may also be multiple influences acting at the same time.

In a study looking at the buffering effect of coworker support on work engagement in the presence of abusive supervision, Poon (2011) found that coworker support did not buffer the impact of abusive supervision on work engagement. However, Poon suggests that the lack of buffering may have been a result of three-way interactions

rather than the variable having no influence (p.68). A three-way interaction occurs with more than one moderator (Preacher, Curran & Bauer, 2006). Therefore, there may be other interaction variables that were not included in the model that affected the relationship between toxicity and the outcome variables. Furthermore, some overlap of other role perception and OCB may be involved.

Extra-role behavior, or those behaviors that are not part of their work requirements, such as OCB activities, may not be completely understood in their similarities and differences (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bahrach, 2000, p. 515). In light of this, nonprofit staff may view some aspects of OCB similarly to other types of behaviors such as commitment. Since they have been found to closely identify their organization's mission with their own values (Handy & Katz, 1998; Akingbola, 2012), they may have unidentified overlap in their concept of commitment and at least some aspects of OCB.

Additionally, as noted by Poon (2011), moderation may be present but with interactions between multiple influencer variables. Therefore, while commitment did not influence the relationship between toxic leadership and OCB or turnover, there may be other as yet unidentified variables influencing those relationships at the same time. However, if it is the case that there are other influencer variables, some of these may have been uncovered in the qualitative analysis involved in the final research question.

#### **Research Question 4**

What reasons do individuals give for remaining with a nonprofit organization despite toxic leadership in San Diego nonprofits?

Content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative question. It uses an inductive approach to create meaning from qualitative data's codes and categories through patterns and themes (Patton, 2002, p.453). The manifest descriptions of the content resulted in reported frequencies, while the latent descriptions also suggested underlying meanings represented in conceptual mapping through open coding (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The Framework Approach was included in the analysis process because the open-ended question had a single directed intent, specifically looking for reasons nonprofit employees stayed in an organization despite toxic leadership.

The first step of the analysis was familiarization with the data. The second step identified the thematic framework, or used the *a priori* themes, while searching for other possible themes. The data was then coded, charted, mapped and interpreted (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009, p. 4). Five manifest and four latent categories were discovered in the data. These categories represent potentially important influencers on staff members' decisions to stay, their interactions with their colleagues, and their performance of their duties. Respondents' comments expressed concerns about the economy, responsibilities to their families and colleagues, career aspirations, commitment to their mission and clients, and indicated personal characteristics reflective of resilience.

The manifest categories were *change within organization, job search, compensation, career management* and *likes work*. The category frequencies ranged from 23 to 59. Table 16 shows the manifest categories, their codes and frequencies.

Those who indicated that they were motivated to stay for their careers looked at the larger picture recognizing that they could gain needed experience and opportunities to further their work and their careers if they just endured the abuse. Others reported

fearing retribution by the toxic supervisor if the employee left the organization. Many of the responses reflected concern about the state of the economy. Some simply believed that there were few opportunities available for people in their field. Some respondents expressed worry that they could not afford to take a reduction in compensation because of their age or family situation. The only job search code that was not discouraged simply indicated that the individual was still in search of other employment and had not yet become discouraged.

A drawback to using a single open-ended question response is losing the context and deeper meaning of the response. For integrity purposes, no assumptions were made, so some manifest categories may actually be part of other latent categories, but understanding how would require further exploration. For example, the *likes job* category may in fact be part of the latent *commitment* category but the brevity of the responses prevented uncovering that much detail. The latent categories represented the two *a priori* variables, *commitment* and OCB, and two new and related categories, *resilience* and *lost confidence*. Table 20 shows the latent categories, frequencies and associated codes.

Those respondents who suggested mutual support from colleagues may represent part of Organ's OCB subscale, peacemaker (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach, 2000, p.518). Again, without follow up clarification, the true meaning was difficult to ascertain. However, this suggests that OCB may not in fact be an outcome variable but an influencer that might explain the inconclusive results as an outcome variable. Less difficult to discern, the *a priori* variable, commitment, was well represented in the sample's responses with statements revolving around love, dedication and stated

commitment to the organization's mission and clients. Resilience and lost confidence (considered as a lack of resilience in this study) were the final categories uncovered in the analysis.

Resilience is the ability of an individual, when faced with adversity, to create positive outcomes (Luther, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). Considered culturally and temporally specific (Unger, 2011), it derives from the competence literature defined as patterns of effective adaptation in one's environment (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998, p. 206). In addition to the adaptive aspects of resilience, there is also a physical component. Epigenetics, the chemical and cellular changes in the brain that occur when it is exposed to intense and extended stress, suggest that individuals may be more or less predisposed to cope with stress depending on their genetic expression (Tsankava, Renthall, Kumar, & Nestler, 2007, p. 355). The responses in the resilience category included views such as refusing to engage in combative activities and not allowing the toxic behavior to impact the individual, the same as the lost confidence responses indicated a possible lack of resilience.

The nine categories represented potentially important variables that influence leader/follower relationships in the nonprofit workforce. Underlying this analysis are multiple possible interactions that could be influencing these complex relationships that may be important to the understanding of toxic leadership's impact on nonprofit organizations' mission accomplishment.

### **Limitations**

In order to understand the findings of this study, each aspect of it -- from the collection process to the analysis -- need to be clearly explained. Included in this

thorough understanding, is as complete as possible a description of the potential biases and limitations so that the findings of the study can be understood in context.

Data collection using only an electronic survey has some response bias. A large group of people may not have organizational email thus being excluded from participation (Rea & Parker, 2005). However, the focus of this study was nonprofit organizations large enough to have paid staff members, suggesting that they would have some organizational email. Therefore, those excluded for lack of email would most likely be outside of the scope of this study.

Another possible bias concerned recalling a stressful situation. There is some evidence that anxiety may influence the recall of difficult or anxiety-filled memories (Mitte, 2008). Further, social desirability response bias may cause inaccurate and inflated recall of toxic incidents and the feelings surrounding them (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

There are also biases resulting from a small response group. In these cases some statistical measures may suffer from inflated Type I or Type II errors, and as a result, relationships may seem more or less significant than they really are (Meyers, Gamst & Guarino, 2006). In this study, it is very likely that there was a narrowing of the variation in the sample because the sampling method included only those individuals who believed they had worked for a toxic leader.

Moreover, since the qualitative analysis involved the responses to a single open-ended question, there may also be limited understanding of the true meaning the respondents were trying to convey. Additionally, researcher bias is always a concern in qualitative research. This requires that steps are taken to verify that the findings are not filtered through the particular views and prejudices held by the researcher (Glesne, 2005).

For example, if the researcher is also an employee in the nonprofit sector, bias could occur by focusing on positive and altruistic responses and ignoring or minimizing other types of responses. The specific measures taken to mitigate this type of bias were addressed in the analysis section.

Despite these limitations, however, this study verified that at least some nonprofit staff members spend time and energy dealing with toxic leader behaviors. It also offered additional influence variables that may be useful for future research.

### **Implications**

While there were no definitive findings about the relationship between toxicity, and OCB and turnover, there was information found that San Diego nonprofit staff members do experience toxic leader behaviors. There were also other possibly important relationship and influencer variables offered that may support greater understanding of the sector's workforce. It also may serve to bring toxicity to the attention of sector leaders, and begin a dialogue designed to improve leadership and working conditions for nonprofit employees. This is a large workforce that supports community members of all ages providing services to some of the most in need in San Diego County in areas including health, education, and homelessness.

This study was intended to open a dialogue in the San Diego nonprofit sector around toxic leadership. With ever shrinking resources and growing community need, it is important to pursue research designed to uncover the complexities of nonprofit leadership, both abusive and positive, and its effect on staff members' ability to innovate and ensure their organizations' success. While, the relationship findings were inconclusive, the qualitative responses suggested other reasons nonprofit employees do

not leave an organization because of a toxic supervisor implying organizations that measure success this way may have incorrect and misleading information.

Moreover, as employees who suffer under toxic leadership become leaders themselves, they may be inclined to continue the toxic methods through emulation, as suggested by Restubog, Scott and Zagencyk (2011) referring to Bandura's social learning theory, resulting in increased and more widespread toxicity (p. 714). Without adequate leadership development, along with sector specific leader development, they will not understand the relationships necessary for effective organizational success to ensure long term success.

Complex, multi-stakeholder environments define the space in which organizations from all sectors work (Maak & Pless, 2006). Nonprofit organizations need to understand how to relate to various stakeholders, including their own staff members, to successfully accomplish their missions. Based on available literature, the nonprofit sector seems to focus leadership on either board governance or succession planning, while the for-profit and government sectors have invested in leadership development throughout their organizations. The third sector may need to consider doing the same.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The results of this study support further research into the influence of the variables identified as manipulating the relationship between toxic leader behavior and turnover. Seven other influencer variables were found from the responses in this study. Understanding these influences and how they relate to each other will create greater understanding of nonprofit employees to better support them.



There are three recommendations for future research based on this study's findings. Additionally, there are other influence variables noted below that may enhance the understanding of toxicity's relationship to turnover and what influences nonprofit employees that were not found in this study but are in the literature.

First, redesign this study as an explanatory/sequential mixed methods study using an instrument that includes the entire DLQ and turnover as the outcome variable. Involve all possible respondents, not only those who feel they worked for a toxic leader. Additionally, include other influencer variables to better understand the nuances of the relationship between toxicity and turnover. The concept map above is offered as a menu of sorts to consider other issues at work on the leader/follower relationship as well as those uncovered in the qualitative part of this study.

Second, it would be interesting to engage a network of organizations such as the Red Cross or United Way in which follow up interviews could be obtained for greater clarification, allowing for deeper meaning to unfold potentially capturing organizational context. This instrument could then be offered to multiple networks enabling a cross-case analysis of at least certain aspects of the findings to determine similarities and differences between them.

Third, conduct research with a broad sampling design that would collect data on the influencer variables discovered in this study and include some of the many possible additional influence variables noted in the conceptual map. By collecting this data from a large and diverse sample, the possible influencers could be evaluated by organizational mission to understand if mission affects the variable relationships, and include the exploration of possible self-selection characteristics of the respondents by mission type.

Finally, other additional variables that influence responses to toxicity include fundamental aspects of the individual's personality that may make them more or less likely to accept abuse, including their personal history of abuse. The findings of reasons respondents remained in the organization in spite of toxicity did not have the benefit of the respondents' contexts and backgrounds. For example, there could be a relationship between resilience and OCB, as well as respondent's individual personal traits, motivation and developmental level. Therefore, there are also other personal and individual aspects that influence the relationship between toxicity and turnover that could more thoroughly explain that relationship. Some are noted below.

Padilla, Hogan and Kaiser (2007) employing the core self-evaluations model, posited that individual traits and predispositions can make subordinates susceptible to toxic leadership. Core self-evaluations include self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and nonneuroticism (Judge, Locke, Durham & Kluger, 1998, p. 17). Furthermore, research has shown that people who have previous abuse from childhood, resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder, will have longer, and more extreme responses to stress as well as unnecessary stress responses, and that women will exhibit differences in those responses (Bremner, et al., 2003; Wu, 2009). Additionally, while men and women have been found to discipline their subordinates the same, the perception of differences between them exists (Bellizzi & Hasty, 2002; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Wu, 2009). This also begs the question whether or not subordinates' perceptions and reactions to abusive leadership differ by gender and the gender of the leader. Finally, underlying at least part of individuals' reactions to others and their environments is their developmental level. These are important questions in a sector so diverse in mission.

## Conclusions

Finding toxic leader behaviors in this sample of San Diego nonprofits was not unexpected since it exists to some degree in all organizations. It was surprising however that contrary to the literature the OCB findings were effectively inconclusive. This may be related to it appearing as a possible influencer variable in the qualitative question. Furthermore, there was no relationship found between turnover and toxicity that may have resulted from errors occurring from the overly constraining sampling method used, although, it may have been a function of nonprofit employees' unique characteristics and how they interrelate instead of methodological issues.

While commitment failed to influence toxic supervision's relationship to OCB and turnover, the other influencing factors uncovered need to be included in future research for greater clarity and understanding. There were eight other influencing variables in addition to commitment identified in this study, including the other outcome variable, OCB. See Figure 6. Some of these influencers dealt with the individuals' personal and group characteristics that may be stronger in nonprofit employees as well as issues and concerns they have with the economy. Further research is necessary to ascertain a more complete picture of the nonprofit workforce and how it is impacted by various leadership styles, including toxic leadership.

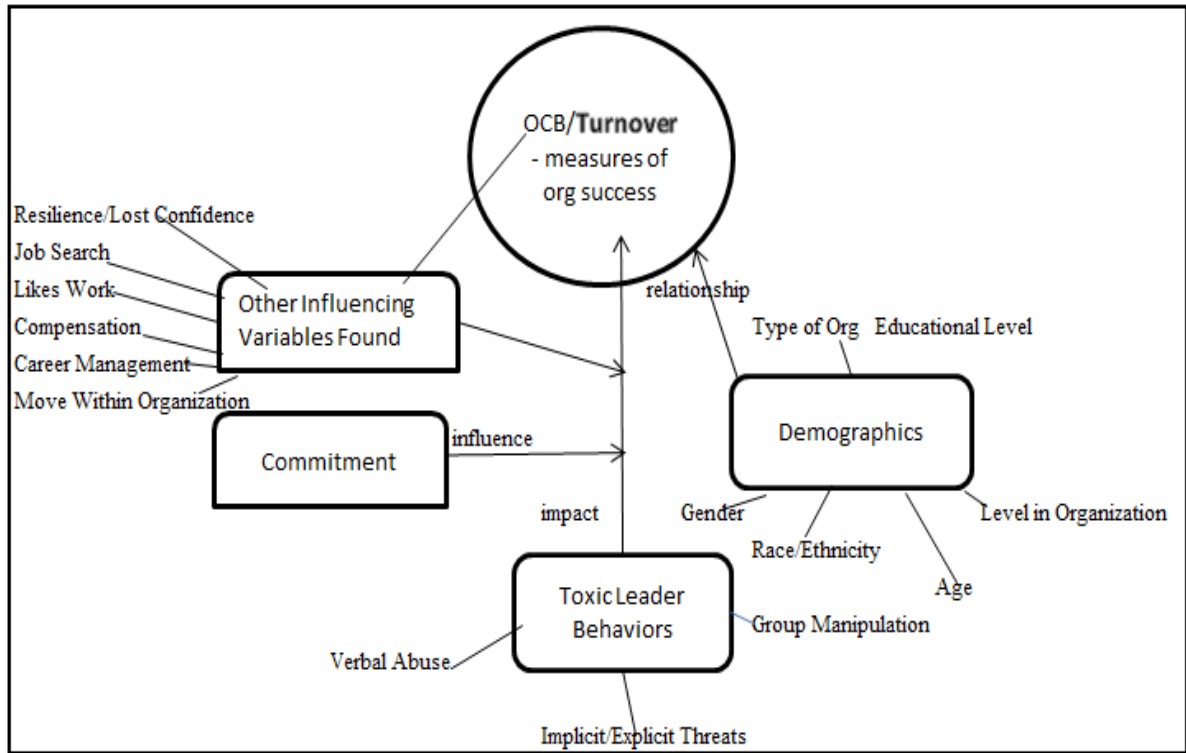


Figure 6. Revised Relationship Map.

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Appendix A

Complete List of National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) Major Groups

National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) Major Groups (Urban Institute, 2013)

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NTEE major group (A-Z)	
<b>A</b>	Arts, Culture, and Humanities
<b>B</b>	Education
<b>C</b>	Environmental Quality, Protection, and Beautification
<b>D</b>	Animal-Related
<b>E</b>	Health
<b>F</b>	Mental Health, Crisis Intervention
<b>G</b>	Diseases, Disorders, Medical Disciplines
<b>H</b>	Medical Research
<b>I</b>	Crime, Legal Related
<b>J</b>	Employment, Job Related
<b>K</b>	Food, Agriculture, and Nutrition
<b>L</b>	Housing, Shelter
<b>M</b>	Public Safety
<b>N</b>	Recreation, Sports, Leisure, Athletics
<b>O</b>	Youth Development
<b>P</b>	Human Services - Multipurpose and Other
<b>Q</b>	International, Foreign Affairs, and National Security
<b>R</b>	Civil Rights, Social Action, Advocacy
<b>S</b>	Community Improvement, Capacity Building

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<b>T</b>	Philanthropy, Voluntarism, and Grantmaking Foundations
<b>U</b>	Science and Technology Research Institutes, Services
<b>V</b>	Social Science Research Institutes, Services
<b>W</b>	Public, Society Benefit - Multipurpose and Other
<b>X</b>	Religion Related, Spiritual Development
<b>Y</b>	Mutual/Membership Benefit Organizations, Other
<b>Z</b>	Unknown

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Appendix B  
Survey Layout

### Survey Items and Prompts

“Have you ever worked for someone in a nonprofit organization that you felt was/is very difficult or abusive?” Yes/No. If no, then the survey takes them to “Thank you for your time and for your work in the sector.”

If “yes” then Please answer the following questions from your perspective when you worked for this difficult or abusive person. This can be any time in your career in a nonprofit organization.

1 What type of organization were you in at the time of the experience you are recalling - dropdown with choices from the NTEE

2 What level in organization were you at the time of the experience you are recalling - dropdown

3 Ethnicity -dropdown

4 Gender -dropdown

5 Highest education completed at time of the experience you are recalling - dropdown

6 Age at time of the experience you are recalling -write in

7 Age now -write in

Remember that all of the following questions are asking about the time and events that you have chosen because you felt that your supervisor was difficult or you had issues with him or her.

Each the following toxic leadership questions will use the 7 response Likert scale shown below questions 8-32.

1	2	3	4	5	6	99
strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree	don't know

8 My boss is an inconsiderate person

9 My boss is arrogant

10 My boss is self-centered

11 My boss rarely shows a high level of respect for others

- 12 My boss does not share power with the people with whom he or she works
- 13 My boss wants to dominate/control everything
- 14 My boss sees every negotiation issue as a win/lose conflict
- 15 My boss holds grudges
- 16 My boss could best be described as mean
- 17 My boss demonstrates no concern for anyone outside his/her own unit
- 18 My boss is pig headed ie extremely stubborn
- 19 My boss does not show trust in subordinates by assigning them important tasks
- 20 My boss is a micro-manager
- 21 My boss is autocratic
- 22 Anyone who challenges my boss is dealt with brutally
- 23 My boss enjoys making people suffer
- 24 My boss tends to show excessive favoritism
- 25 My boss does NOT trust others to do tasks properly
- 26 My boss tends to act in ways that divide employees against one another
- 27 My boss attempts to exert total control over everyone
- 28 I have often seen my boss bully another employee
- 29 My boss places brutal pressure on subordinates
- 30 My boss is a tyrant
- 31 My boss has personal favorites
- 32 My boss does not care about things happening in other units
- 33 Did you consider leaving the organization during the experience you recalled above? Yes/No

34 Did you leave? Yes/No

35 Please explain in as much detail as possible why you decided to remain in the organization? This is an open-ended question.

Please respond to the following questions thinking about how you felt during the experience you referred to above, as though you were in that situation now.

The following items use the this 7 point Likert scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither disagree or agree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

The following items began with: I...

36 Help others out if someone falls behind in his/her work

37 Willingly share my expertise with colleagues

38 Try to act like a peacemaker when colleagues have disagreements

39 Take steps to try to prevent problems with colleagues

40 Willingly give my time to help colleagues who have work-related problems

41 "Touch base" with colleagues before initiating actions that might affect them

42 Encourage others when someone is down

43 Provide constructive suggestions about how colleagues could improve their effectiveness

44 Is willing to risk disapproval to express my beliefs about what's best for my colleagues

45 Attend and actively participate in team meetings

46 Always focus on what was wrong with my situation, rather than the positive side

47 Consume a lot of time complaining about trivial matters

48 Always find fault with what colleagues are doing



- 49 I was willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help the organization be successful.
- 50 I talked up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.
- 51 I feel very little loyalty to the organization.
- 52 I would have accepted almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for the organization.
- 53 I found that my values and the organization's values were very similar.
- 54 I was proud to tell others that I was part of the organization.
- 55 I could just as well have worked for a different organization as long as the type of work was similar.
- 56 The organization really inspired the very best in me in the way of job performance.
- 57 It would have taken very little change in my circumstances to have caused me to leave the organization.
- 58 I was extremely glad that I chose the organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined.
- 59 There was not too much to be gained by sticking with the organization indefinitely.
- 60 Often, I found it difficult to agree to the organization's policies on important matters relating to its employees.
- 61 I really cared about the fate of the organization.
- 62 For me this was the best of all possible organizations for which to work.
- 63 Deciding to work for the organization was a definite mistake on my part.

## Appendix C

## Open-ended Question Codes and Frequencies

Open-ended Question Codes and Frequencies

Code	Frequency
supervisor left	40
like work	22
looking for other job	21
commitment to mission	20
need pay	19
personal responsibility	16
like colleagues	15
moved in org	13
believe in mission	13
can't find other job	13
bad job market	12
not directed at me	12
will work itself out	12
want experience this job provides	11
like benefits	9
love mission	8
fear of damage to career by supervisor	7
good at protecting myself	7
Promoted	6
will protect colleagues from toxic person	6
colleagues banded together	4
passionate about mission	4
lost confidence in myself from it	4
need level of pay	3
leadership encouraged to stay	3
appreciated my supervisor support despite toxicity	3
don't want to start over	2
Opportunity	2
retiring soon	2
like pay	2
sought help from org leadership	2
lucky to have a job	1
like this field	1
supervisor allows for career development	1
need benefits	1
difficult job market for my age	1
situation got better	1



ENTERED  
3/25/14

## Institutional Review Board Project Action Summary

**Action Date:** March 25, 2014

*Note: Approval expires one year after this date.*

**Type:**  New Full Review  New Expedited Review  Continuation Review  Exempt Review  
 Modification

**Action:**  Approved  Approved Pending Modification  Not Approved

**Project Number:** 2014-03-182

**Researcher(s):** Melanie Hitchcock Doc SOLES

Dr. George Reed Fac SOLES

**Project Title:** The Relationship Between Toxic Leadership and Organizational Citizenship and Turnover Behaviors in San Diego Nonprofit Paid Staff

*Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.*

### Modifications Required or Reasons for Non-Approval

None

The next deadline for submitting project proposals to the Provost's Office for full review is N/A. You may submit a project proposal for expedited review at any time.

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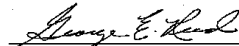
**Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost**  
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**SIGNATURE PAGE**

All applicable signature lines **MUST** be signed. If any required lines are left blank, the application will be returned to the principal investigator.

 \_\_\_\_\_ SOLES 28 Feb 2014  
 Researcher (signature) Department/School and Date

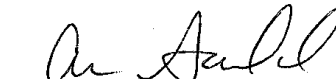
Melanie Hitchcock melanie.hitchcock-11@sandiego.edu 619 3393929  
 Researcher (printed) REQUIRED: email Phone

 \_\_\_\_\_ SOLES February 27, 2014  
 Faculty Advisor (signature) Department/School and Date  
 (Only required if PI is a USD Student.)

Dr. George E. Reed george.reed@sandiego.edu 619-940-4102  
 Faculty Advisor name (printed) REQUIRED: email Phone

NA  
 USD Sponsor (signature) email Phone  
 (Only required if PI is **NOT** a USD student/faculty. The USD sponsor must be a full-time employee of USD).


\_\_\_\_\_  
 USD Sponsor name (printed) Department/School and Date

 \_\_\_\_\_ 3-3-14  
 School/College IRB Representative Date  
 (ALL applications must obtain this signature, whether your unit has a designated IRB representative or not. Contact the IRB Chairperson if you need guidance.)

 \_\_\_\_\_ 3/6/14  
 Dean or His/Her Representative (signature) Date

APPLICANT: THE FOLLOWING WILL BE SIGNED AFTER YOU SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION TO THE PROVOST'S OFFICE.

**The project described above has been approved by the USD Institutional Review Board.**

 \_\_\_\_\_ 3/25/14  
 Chair or Administrator to IRB (signature) Date



ENTERED  
8/27/14

## Institutional Review Board Project Action Summary

**Action Date:** August 27, 2014

**Type:**  New Full Review  New Expedited Review  Continuation Review  Exempt Review  
 Modification

**Action:**  Approved  Approved Pending Modification  Not Approved

**Project Number:** 2014-03-182

**Researcher(s):** Melanie Hitchcock Doc SOLES  
Dr. George Reed Fac SOLES

**Project Title:** The Relationship Between Toxic Leadership and Organizational Citizenship and Turnover Behaviors in San Diego Nonprofit Paid Staff

*Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.*

### Modifications Required or Reasons for Non-Approval

None

The next deadline for submitting project proposals to the Provost's Office for full review is N/A. You may submit a project proposal for expedited review at any time.

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ENTERED  
3/10/15

## Institutional Review Board Project Action Summary

**Action Date:** March 10, 2015

*Note: Approval expires one year after this date.*

**Type:**  New Full Review  New Expedited Review  Continuation Review  Exempt Review  
 Modification

**Action:**  Approved  Approved Pending Modification  Not Approved

**Project Number:** 2014-03-182

**Researcher(s):** Melanie Hitchcock Doc SOLES  
Dr. George Reed Fac SOLES

**Project Title:** The Relationship Between Toxic Leadership and Organizational Citizenship and Turnover Behaviors in San Diego Nonprofit Paid Staff

*Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.*

### Modifications Required or Reasons for Non-Approval

None

The next deadline for submitting project proposals to the Provost's Office for full review is N/A. You may submit a project proposal for expedited review at any time.



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**UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO**  
**Institutional Review Board (IRB)**  
**REQUEST FOR CONTINUATION OF AN APPROVED RESEARCH PROJECT**

*Instructions to the researcher: In order to continue your research study, you MUST request a continuation from the IRB on an annual basis. Complete this form and print out hard copy. Obtain all required signatures and send a hard copy to:*

***Ms. Lori Ermac-Nash, Provost's Office, HC-214***

*Note: If you have CONCLUDED your study, do NOT submit this form. Instead, download and submit a "Summary of Research Project" form from the IRB website.*

**Name of PI: Melanie Hitchcock**

**Name of Faculty Advisor/Sponsor (if applicable): Dr George Reed**

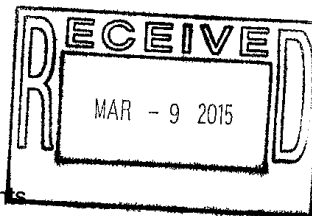
**Project ID # 2014-03-182**

*(This number can be found on your original approval form. It begins with the year in which your project was originally approved. Example: 2010-05-001)*

**Project Title: The Relationship Between Toxic Leadership and Organizational Citizenship and Turnover Behaviors in San Diego Nonprofit Paid Staff**

**Level of Initial Approval (check ONE):**

Expedited  
 Exempt  
 Full



**A. Progress of Research:**

Data have been collected from: 471 participants

**B. Human Subjects:**

Informed Consent Forms on file:

Yes

No ~~If "No," please explain: It is an online survey with a check box that notifies the participant that completing the survey gives consent.~~

**C. Are you making any changes to your study protocol for the next year?**

No

Yes, and the Request for Modification is attached.

**D. Have any adverse events occurred during the past year?**

(See <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/AdvEvtntGuid.htm#Q2> for a definition of adverse event.)


No

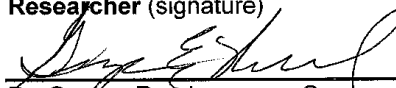
Yes, and the adverse event(s) consisted of:

If "Yes", describe your response to and reporting of the adverse event:




**SIGNATURE PAGE**

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Melanie Hitchcock      [Melanie.hitchcock-11@sandiego.edu](mailto:Melanie.hitchcock-11@sandiego.edu)      619 339-3929  
**Researcher** (signature)      Email      Phone

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dr. George Reed      [George.reed@sandiego.edu](mailto:George.reed@sandiego.edu)      619 940-4102  
**Faculty Advisor/USD Sponsor** (signature)      Email      Phone


      3/3/15  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**College/School IRB Representative** (signature)  
      3/5/15  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Dean/Administrator** (signature)

APPLICANT: THE FOLLOWING WILL BE SIGNED AFTER YOU SUBMIT YOUR CONTINUATION REQUEST TO THE PROVOST'S OFFICE.

*The project described above has been approved for continuation by the USD Institutional Review Board.*

      3/10/15  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
**IRB Administrator** (signature) Date