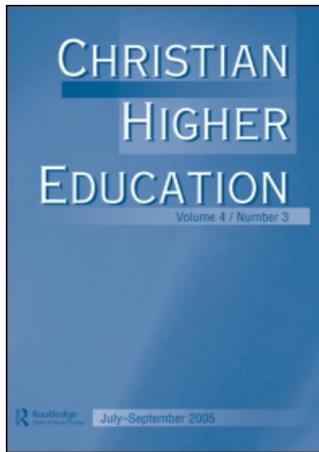


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Administrative, Faculty, and Staff Perceptions of Organizational Climate and Commitment in Christian Higher Education

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ADMINISTRATIVE, FACULTY, AND STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND COMMITMENT IN CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Findings of 957 surveyed employees from four evangelical higher education institutions found a negative correlation for climate and commitment and staff members. Administrators were found to have a more favorable view of their institutional climate than staff. Employee age, tenure, and classification had predictive value for organizational climate, whereas only employee age and tenure predicted organizational commitment.

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) reports that the enrollment of their 100-plus member schools jumped 35% between 1990 and 1998 compared with a 5% increase at private colleges and a 4% increase at public universities (Savoie, 2000). From 1990 to 2004 enrollment has grown 12.8% in public higher education compared with 27.5% in religious schools (Kwon, 2005). In spite of the staggering growth in Christian higher education, these institutions are underrepresented in the organizational literature.

Climate and commitment are applicable variables to institutions of higher learning (Gormley, 2005). Their absence from the literature leaves those who govern Christian higher education without the advantage of sound data. Accordingly, this article presents a study of Christian higher education climate and commitment.

Christian Higher Education

Though higher education has its roots in Christianity (Reed & Prevost, 1993), today's Christian schools provide an alternative to public institutions. They are set apart from their secular

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counterparts due to their: (a) commitment to developing their students' spiritual lives (Savoie, 2000); (b) values that permeate their mission statements, educational philosophy, and worldview (Adrian, 1997); and (c) belief in the centrality of the Bible (Burtchaell, 1997). Members who share the organization's values and purpose are poised to create a climate that is nurturing and protective (Armerding, 1992) and have a connectedness that produces commitment and satisfaction (Blanchard & O'Connor, 1997).

Organizational Climate

Climate is best thought of as the atmosphere within which an organization functions (Roueche & Baker, 1986). Like the air in a room, climate surrounds and affects everything that happens in an organization (Freiberg, 1999).

There is nothing inherently good or bad about an organization's climate. Rather, it assumes value when linked to critical organizational outcomes that manifest in the behavior of its members and organizational processes (Muchinsky, 1987). Researchers have sought to harness the benefits of climate by linking it to desirable organizational and individual outcomes such as supervisory support (Litwin & Stringer, 1968), certain employee demographics (Gavin, 1975), organizational hierarchy (Johnson, 2000), job tenure (Mearns, Flin, Gordon, & Fleming, 1998), supervisor-supervisee relationship (Michela & Burke, 2000), and job satisfaction (Joyce & Slocum, 1982). Because employees' perceptions of climate can influence behavioral outcomes, it is reasonable to assume that within Christian higher education, the organization's climate can be an important antecedent to employee behavior, and accordingly their organizational commitment.

Decades of climate research have generated various theories. Joyce and Slocum (1984) hold that groupings meeting the stringent criterion of significant discrimination between mean climate perceptions, demonstrated relationships to important organizational outcomes, and higher interrater agreement are interpretable as collective climates. In contrast, Schneider and Reichers (1983) attribute the development of climates to three sources: common exposure of organizational members to the

same objective structural characteristics (i.e., organizational perspective); attraction, selection, and attrition of organizational members, resulting in a member homogeneity; and social (symbolic) interaction leading to shared understandings/meanings.

Organizational Commitment

The most robust conceptualization of organizational commitment incorporates three concepts (Meyer & Allen, 1991). First, affective commitment refers to employees' emotional attachment, identification with, and involvement in the organization; employees because they *want to*. Second, when employees assess that the costs of leaving (e.g., reduction in pay, benefits, lack of alternative jobs) are deemed greater than the costs of staying, employees remain because they *need to*; this is labeled as continuance commitment. The third component is normative commitment, which refers to employees feeling obligated for such reasons as loyalty or believing the organization has invested a lot in them; thus, they feel they *ought to* stay. Affective commitment has been found to be favorable for employees and organizational outcomes in terms of satisfaction, well-being, turnover, and higher productivity (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Normative commitment appears to be positively associated with organizational outcomes but to a much lower extent than affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Continuance commitment, however, is generally perceived as unfavorable (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Researchers have sought to understand both the antecedents and consequences of organizational commitment (cf. Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Predictors or antecedents of commitment include employee characteristics (Aven, Parker, & McEvoy, 1993; Kushman, 1992; Morris & Sherman, 1981; Nikolaou & Tsaousis, 2003; Reichers, 1986), work experience (Brown & Peterson, 1993; Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994; Grant, 2002; Kiewitz, Hochwarter, Ferris, & Castro, 2002; Lok, Westwood, & Crawford, 2005; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Ng, Butts, Vandenberg, DeJoy, & Wilson, 2006; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), and organizational factors (Agarwala, 2003; Bishop, Scott, & Burroughs, 2000; Brown, 1996; Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995; Loui, 1995; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Postmes, Tanis, & deWit, 2001; Shore & Wayne, 1993; Steers, 1975; Tansky & Cohen, 2002; Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991; Welsch

& LaVan, 1981; Wiener & Vardi, 1980) including climate (Carr, Schmidt, Ford, & DeShon, 2003).

A few studies have investigated commitment in academic institutions. Chieffo (1991) found that mid-level administrators were committed to their organizations because of the nature and autonomy of their work. Wolverton, Montez, Guillory, and Gmelch (2001) found that commitment of deans increased with age, tenure in the position, and job satisfaction. They also found that deans were more committed if they considered their organizations to exhibit high academic quality and good environmental quality. Billingsley and Cross (1992) reported four predictors of faculty commitment: leadership support, role conflict, role ambiguity, and stress. Organizationally, Thornhill, Lewis, and Saunders (1996) found that the flow of information downward to employees, the flow of information upward, and management style significantly affected employee commitment. Colbert and Kwon (2000) found organizational variables such as organizational dependability, support, and instrumental communication were significantly related to employee commitment. Significance was also found between commitment and tenure and skill variety. Borchers and Teahen (2001) found that commitment does not vary significantly between full- and part-time faculty or between those in residence and those online.

Research evidence for a relationship between climate and commitment is limited. Turan (1998) surveyed 900 randomly selected teachers from secondary schools in Turkey, but no significance between climate and commitment was found. In contrast, McMurray, Scott, and Pace (2004) assessed Australian automotive manufacturing employees, finding a significant relationship. Chiang (2001) used climate as an independent variable, commitment as the intervening variable, and organizational citizenship behavior as the dependent variable and found a positive correlation between the three variables. The researcher concluded that employers could increase organizational citizenship behaviors by improving their climate and increasing employee commitment. Gormley (2005) studied the impact of climate, role ambiguity, role conflict, and work role balance on nursing faculty's commitment and turnover intention. Using commitment as the dependent variable, Gormley found role ambiguity and role conflict were significantly negatively correlated with affective,

continuance, and normative commitments. In contrast, the organizational subscales of consideration, intimacy, and production emphasis were positively related to the three types of commitment and negatively related to turnover intention. Gormley's study revealed that intention to leave employment could be predicted by role ambiguity and the types of commitment along with the climate subscales of intimacy and disengagement.

Thus, the scant literature on climate and commitment seems to indicate that a mixed, but generally positive relationship exists between the two constructs. No studies, however, have investigated the relationship in Christian higher education.

Methodology

A total of 2,076 employees from four evangelical universities located in the Southwest, Midwest, and Eastern United States were requested to complete an online survey. Nine demographic factors were queried: employee classification (i.e., administrator, faculty, staff), salary or hourly, full-or part-time, age, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education, tenure, and years of working in higher education.

Climate was assessed using the Personal Assessment of College Environment (PACE; NILIE, 2005) questionnaire. Its 46 items capture four climate dimensions with norms generated from approximately 45 community colleges: (a) Institutional Structure—3.31, (b) Supervisory Relationship—3.62, (c) Teamwork—3.67, (d) Student Focus—3.80, and (e) a total mean of 3.57. The PACE uses a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = *Very Satisfied* to 5 = *Very Dissatisfied*. The PACE has demonstrated sound validity (Caison, 2005; Tiu, 2001) and reliability with a coefficient of internal consistency (NILIE, 2005).

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ; Meyer & Allen, 1997) uses 18 items to measure (a) Affective Commitment, (b) Normative Commitment, and (c) Continuance Commitment. Respondents use a 5-point scale: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. Several studies provide strong support for the OCQ (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Cohen, 1996; Dunham et al., 1994).

Results

From a census of 2,076 employees, 957 ($N = 957$; 46%) returned usable data. When examined according to classification, 76.7% of Administrators, 47.4% of Faculty, and 43.2% of Staff (43.2%) returned surveys. The strong response from the administrators might be indicative of their interest to understand their campus environment.

In sum, the sample was predominantly Caucasian, salaried, full-time, and staff (see Table 1). Respondents were predominantly between the ages of 20 to 30 with the second highest over the age of 51. The sample was divided on gender and represented employees without extended years of service; most respondents reported being with their institutions 5 years or less.

Table 2 contains the data obtained from each questionnaire, with the lower scores reflecting greater satisfaction or agreement. Regarding the PACE, the climate factor mean scores ranked as follows: teamwork, student focus, supervisory relationship, and institutional structure. Administrator mean scores varied from a low for teamwork to a high for institutional structure. Though administrators appear satisfied with their climate they were least satisfied with institutional structure, the very part of the organization to which they are most central. Likewise, faculty and staff were also satisfied; both faculty and staff mean scores ranged from a low for teamwork to a high for institutional structure.

Based upon these results, Christian higher education respondents perceived their organizational climate as good. Regardless of employee classifications, teamwork was perceived most favorably and institutional structure the least.

In aggregate, Organizational Commitment (OCQ) means were neutral for all types (Table 2) and neutral across employee classifications, except for administrators who expressed mild commitment. The standard deviations of affective and normative were elevated so that actual loyalty and obligatory commitments may be either agree or disagree range.

In accordance with other studies (e.g., Chiang, 2001; Gormley, 2005; Grant, 2002; McMurray et al., 2004; Suliman, 2001), this analysis also found a weak but significant correlation between employee perceptions of climate and commitment. In contrast, however, this study found a negative correlation.

TABLE 1 Frequencies and Percentages of Demographic Variables

Variable	Total
<i>N</i>	957
Classification	
Administrator	89 (9.3%)
Faculty	222 (23.2%)
Staff	646 (67.5%)
Status	
Full-time	907 (94.9%)
Part-time	48 (5.0%)
No response	1 (.1%)
Payment	
Salary	635 (66.4%)
Hourly	320 (33.4%)
No response	2 (.2%)
Gender	
Male	500 (52.2%)
Female	455 (47.5%)
No response	2 (.2%)
Age	
<20	14 (1.5%)
21–30	324 (33.9%)
31–40	154 (16.1%)
41–50	207 (21.6%)
>51	258 (27.0%)
Ethnicity	
African-American	31 (3.2%)
Asian/Islander	17 (1.8%)
Caucasian	862 (90.1%)
Hispanic	21 (2.2%)
Other	23 (2.4%)
No response	3 (.3%)
<1 year	214 (22.4%)
1–4 years	322 (33.6%)
5–9 years	162 (16.9%)
10–19 years	140 (14.6%)
>20 years	114 (11.9%)
No response	5 (.5%)
<1 year	235 (24.6%)
1–2 years	225 (23.5%)
3–5 years	198 (20.7%)
6–10 years	120 (12.5%)
> 11 years	178 (18.6%)
No response	1 (.1%)
High school	133 (13.9%)
Two years	125 (13.1%)
Four years	340 (35.5%)
Master's	212 (22.2%)
Doctorate	145 (15.2%)
Total	2 (.2%)

TABLE 2 Means and Standard Deviations by Employee Classification

Factor	Administrator <i>M(SD)</i>	Faculty <i>M(SD)</i>	Staff <i>M(SD)</i>
PACE			
Institutional structure	2.33 (0.77)	2.44 (0.75)	2.53 (0.74)
Supervisory relationship	1.98 (0.76)	2.17 (0.73)	2.17 (0.73)
Teamwork	1.70 (0.64)	2.00 (0.73)	2.02 (0.73)
Student focus	2.02 (0.64)	2.02 (0.53)	2.17 (0.59)
Total climate	2.06 (0.64)	2.18 (0.59)	2.27 (0.62)
OCQ			
Affective	2.91 (1.20)	3.11 (1.12)	3.04 (0.95)
Normative	2.96 (1.05)	3.04 (0.91)	3.01 (0.89)
Continuance	3.07 (0.73)	3.10 (0.72)	2.99 (0.75)
Total commitment	2.99 (0.75)	3.07 (0.66)	3.01 (0.69)

PACE Coded Scale: 1 = Very Satisfied; 2 = Satisfied; 3 = Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied; 4 = Dissatisfied; 5 = Very Dissatisfied.

OCQ Coded Scale: 1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree; 4 = Disagree; 5 = Strongly Disagree.

The first research question asked: What is the relationship between administrators' perception of organizational climate and their organizational commitment? For administrators, there is no statistically significant relationship between their perceptions of their institutional climate and their level of organizational commitment. As depicted in Table 3, administrators' perceptions of climate produced five positive correlations showing a reciprocal relationship between the following: (a) structure and focus on student needs, (b) supervisory relationship and institutional structure, (c) teamwork and student focus, (d) institutional structure and teamwork, and (e) focus and supervisory relationship. For commitment, there was a correlation between normative and affective commitment. As administrators increase in their feelings of obligation to their institution they also increase in their emotional bond and vice versa. Results failed to find any correlations between climate factors and commitment types. For administrators there was no relationship between their perceptions of organizational climate and their commitment to the organization.

TABLE 3 Correlations Between Organization Climate Scales and Organizational Commitment Scales for Administrators

	Institutional structure	Supervisory relationship	Teamwork	Student focus	Continuance	Normative	Affective
Institutional structure	1.00						
Supervisory relationship	.75**	1.00					
Teamwork	.69**	.75**	1.00				
Student focus	.80**	.64**	.72**	1.00			
Continuance	-.05	.07	.07	-.05	1.00		
Normative	.03	.03	-.08	.07	.12	1.00	
Affective	.02	.01	-.08	.05	-.18	.82**	1.00

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, $N = 89$.

The second research question asked: What is the relationship between faculty members' perception of organizational climate and their organizational commitment? For faculty responses, analysis did not produce a significant correlation. Table 4, however, shows positive significant correlations for all climate factors and one commitment type: (a) supervisory relationship and teamwork, (b) student focus and institutional structure, (c) supervisory relationship and institutional structure, (d) supervisory relationship and student focus, (e) teamwork and institutional structure, and (f) teamwork and student focus. As was true for administrators, faculty responses also evidenced a positive correlation between normative and affective commitment; as faculty members' sense of obligation to their institution increases, their emotional bond to the organization also increases and vice versa. Faculty correlation results failed to find any relationship between the climate factors and commitment types and between total climate and commitment scores.

The third research question asked: What is the relationship between staff members' perception of organizational climate and their organizational commitment? Unlike the previous findings, staff reported a negative significant correlation between total scores on the PACE and OCQ, rejecting the null hypothesis. Surprisingly, as staff member satisfaction of climate increases, their organizational commitment decreases and vice versa. Table 5 displays staff responses, indicating positive correlations between: (a) institutional structure and student focus, (b) institutional structure and supervisory relationship, (c) institutional structure and teamwork, (d) supervisory relationship and teamwork, (e) teamwork and student focus, (f) continuance and normative commitment, and (g) normative and affective commitment. Negative correlations were found between: (a) institutional structure and the three commitment types, (b) supervisory relationship and the three commitment types, (c) teamwork and the three commitment types, (d) student focus and continuance, and (e) student focus and normative commitment.

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted to predict climate (Table 6). On the first step were the demographic variables and on the second step classification. The model yielded three significant predictors of climate: age, years of service, and classification. The regression equation was significant, $R^2 = .03$, $F(3,$

TABLE 4 Correlations Between Organization Climate Scales and Organizational Commitment Scales for Faculty

	Institutional structure	Supervisory relationship	Teamwork	Student focus	Continuance	Normative	Affective
Institutional structure	1.00						
Supervisory relationship	.72**	1.00					
Teamwork	.57**	.74**	1.00				
Student focus	.73**	.59**	.51**	1.00			
Continuance	-.06	.02	-.01	.02	1.00		
Normative	-.01	-.02	.04	.07	-.01	1.00	
Affective	-.01	-.04	.002	.05	-.13	.78**	1.00

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, $N = 222$.

TABLE 5 Correlations Between Organization Climate Scales and Organizational Commitment Scales for Staff

	Institutional structure	Supervisory relationship	Teamwork	Student focus	Continuance	Normative	Affective
Institutional structure	1.00						
Supervisory relationship	.71**	1.00					
Teamwork	.67**	.82**	1.00				
Student focus	.74**	.56**	.52**	1.00			
Continuance	-.22**	-.11**	-.13**	-.20**	1.00		
Normative	-.32**	-.30**	-.28**	-.25**	.40**	1.00	
Affective	-.24**	-.27**	-.26**	-.16	.16**	.73**	1.00

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, $N = 646$.

TABLE 6 Standardized and Unstandardized Beta Weights for Significant Predictors

Predictor variables	Organizational climate		
	Standardized beta	Unstandardized beta	<i>t</i>
Age	-.18	-.09	-4.45
Years of organizational service	.12	.05	3.01
Employee classification	.09	.08	2.52
Organizational commitment			
Age	.16	.09	4.23
Years of organizational service	-.14	-.07	-3.71

932) = 10.40, $p < .001$, though the three variables in the model accounted for 3% variance. The beta weight for age was negative, meaning that as age increased, climate dissatisfaction decreased and vice versa, whereas for years of service and classification it was positive. For commitment, two predictors emerged: age and years of service. The regression equation was significant, $R^2 = .02$, $F(2, 934) = 10.33$, $p < .001$, accounting for 2% variance. The beta for years of service was negative; as tenure increased, organizational commitment decreased and vice versa. As with climate, age was positively associated; older employees were more likely to express greater levels of commitment.

A one-way MANOVA (Table 7) was conducted to determine the effect of classification on climate and commitment. Significant differences were found on the dependent measures but should be interpreted with caution due to small effect size, Wilks's $\lambda = .99$, $F(4, 1870) = 3.37$, $\eta^2 = .01$. The index was weak, indicating that the independent variable only accounted for 1% of the variance. Since a level of significance was found through the MANOVA, ANOVAs were conducted as follow-up tests on each dependent variable. Using the Bonferroni method, to control for Type I error, each ANOVA was tested at the .025 level. The climate ANOVA was significant, $F(2, 936) = 5.72$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2 = .01$, but the ANOVA for commitment was not, $F(2, 936) = .95$, $p = .39$, $\eta^2 = .002$. In light of the significance, post hoc analyses to the univariate ANOVA for the recall scores consisted of

TABLE 7 MANOVA Means and Standard Deviations by Employee Classification

Dependent variable	Administration	Faculty	Staff
Organizational climate			
<i>M</i>	2.06*	2.17	2.27
<i>SD</i>	.63	.58	.61
Organizational commitment			
<i>M</i>	2.98	3.07	3.01
<i>SD</i>	.74	.69	.69

*Note 1: Administration < Staff at $p < .025$.

Note 2: No significant differences between employee classifications for commitment.

conducting pairwise comparisons to find which employee classification affected commitment. Findings revealed that administrators held a more favorable view of climate than staff, but no difference was noted between administrators and faculty and between employee classifications for commitment.

Discussion

Extant research has not contributed to understanding what it is like to work in a Christian higher education environment or why employees maintain employment. To address this void, the research's center of attention examined the relationship between employee perceptions of climate and commitment in evangelical higher education.

Except for Turan's (1998) study, which failed to find a correlation in Turkish secondary schools, studies have strongly pointed to a positive relationship between the two constructs (Gormley, 2005; Grant, 2002; McMurray et al., 2004; Welsh & LaVan, 1981). Interestingly, this study found a negative relationship, suggesting Christian higher education personnel perceptions of their climate, as measured by the PACE (NILIE, 2005), is negatively associated with their expressed commitment, as measured by the OCQ (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Put simply, the more satisfied Christian higher education employees are with their institutional climate, the less commitment they express and vice versa. Administrator and faculty perceptions of climate were also not related to their commitment. Several possible explanations are advanced for the

deviant finding that staff perceptions of climate were negatively associated with their commitment level. First, since staff members represented nearly 67% of the total sample, it stands to reason that their perceptions strongly influenced the overall negative correlation.

Second, possibly the reversed scoring direction of the PACE (1 = *Very Satisfied*, 5 = *Very Dissatisfied*) and the OCQ (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*) might have produced confusion. Upon completion of the PACE, respondents were informed that the order of the response was different for the remaining questions (i.e., OCQ). If respondents failed to note the difference, their responses to the OCQ would indicate the reverse of their perception.

Perhaps the deviancy is due to staff members being less familiar with questionnaires. Since staff represented 67% of the sample, the impact of this error would skew the results. It may have been prudent to correspond the scales prior to administration though the rationale to maintain the order was to protect instrument integrity.

Fourth, if the questionnaires accurately recorded Christian higher education personnel perceptions, the negative correlation may be the by-product of sample size ($N = 957$). A large sample may produce correlations where only microscopic ones or none exist (Harris, 1985). Alternatively, one school was about four times larger than the others, which may have skewed the overall sample. The statistical strength of this subclimate would have impacted the findings.

Fifth, perhaps a negative correlation does exist given the unique nature of Christian higher education employees (Burtchaell, 1997; Fisher, 1989; Marsden, 1997). It is possible that such employees maintain employment for reasons other than those assessed by the OCQ.

This research may have failed to find a positive significance due to the change in the psychological contract of most United State employees (Rousseau, 2000). Employers and employees once enjoyed mutual loyalty, but economic changes have eroded employer commitment to its employees (Rousseau, 2001, 2004). In turn, employees are more cautious in their commitment (Rousseau, 2000). To the extent that the psychological contract is violated when their job is insecure, workers are more likely

to feel betrayed and less likely to commit (Blau, 2000). The weakened contract may also be due to a generational effect since studies suggest that younger workers do not consider long-term job security as normative (Tulgan, 2000), holding an average of 10.2 jobs from ages 18 to 38 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2004). In this study, the majority of the sample was less than 30 years of age. The literature suggests that younger employees emphasize career development rather than employer loyalty (Blau, 2000; Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1996; Houseman, 1996).

Finally, how employees are socialized into an organization might also bear upon their commitment. Meyer and Allen (1997) hold that one approach to organizational socialization does not require new employees to give up their former selves in order to become members, whereas another approach attempts to have new employees “fall in line,” suggesting that membership is a privilege—an approach that does produce commitment. Tacitly, such an approach might convey an unhealthy mistrust of outsiders and a condescending view of newcomers. Perhaps Christian higher education institutions socialize employees in ways that runs counter to a healthy commitment.

In sum, this study found that Christian higher education employees’ perceptions of their organizational climate are negatively correlated to their expressed levels of commitment. PACE norms fall within the neutral range with standard deviations that could result in either satisfied or dissatisfied responses (NILIE, 2005). In contrast, Christian higher education respondents revealed that they were satisfied with all climate factors. Interestingly, each factor in this study is practically the reverse order from the normative data.

When the data are considered based upon employee classification, the degree of satisfaction between administrators, faculty, and staff are similar. In contrast with other studies (e.g., Fouts, 2004; Johnson, 2000; Manzo-Ramos, 1997; Owens, 2004) that found that staff members were the least satisfied with their institution’s climate, this study indicated no differences between classifications of employees. Though this study did not address specific roles within the higher learning institutions, no statistical difference was noted based upon an employee’s classification (i.e., administrator, faculty, staff).

Schneider and Reichers' (1983) contention that common exposure, social interaction, and selection result in a homogeneous membership leading to shared meanings that are manifested in unique perceptions of organizational climate did not hold true for this study. Given the fact that the climate ratings of administrators, faculty, and staff are similar, it is reasonable to infer that these employees are having similar experiences with the institution and that coworker interactions are perceived similarly. This high degree of consistency is an indicator of a strong climate, consistent with the collective climate theory (Joyce & Slocum, 1984) and the interactionist theory (Schneider & Reichers, 1983).

The saliency of favorable climate has been noted by many studies since it is linked to highly desirable organizational outcomes (Campbell, Dunnetter, Lawler, & Weick, 1970; James, 1982; Zohar, 1980). Thus, while the main thrust of this study was to explore the relationship of organizational climate and commitment, the fact that employees were satisfied with their climate is important to those in leadership of these particular institutions.

Concerning climate factors, the favorable perception of teamwork may be an indication that Christian values are evidenced through employee behavior. Of course, further investigation is necessary to ascertain if indeed such a relationship exists. Employees also perceive that their institutions have a solid student focus. A central value of all higher learning institutions is providing an education for their students. It is a healthy sign of these organizations that employees from all levels deem the focus on students as satisfactory. The fact that these particular schools are judged by all levels of personnel to meet student needs demonstrates that each of the schools understands their fiduciary obligations to parents and students. For supervisory relationships, this study found that employees were satisfied with their supervision. A primary administrative expectation is for supervisors to have high-quality, supportive relationships with their subordinates (Yukl, 1998). Respondent responses indicate that supervisors are meeting their job expectations, which is associated with positive employee and organizational outcomes (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-Lamastro, 1990; Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989; Michela & Burke, 2000). Although requiring fur-

ther study, this finding may provide some insight into the prowess of supervisors within these institutions.

In terms of predictors, in concert with other higher education studies (e.g., Manzo-Ramos, 1997; Mearns et al., 1998), this study found that tenure was associated with climate. Unlike Fouts' (2004) study, however, this study found that the longer employees remained with the organization the greater their satisfaction with the climate. The finding was correlational rather than causative. Thus, it is impossible to ascertain whether employees who feel satisfied with their organization's climate remain or whether those employees who remain with the organization become more satisfied with the climate. Second, age was negatively related to climate. That is, the older the employee, the less satisfaction was reported with climate. While the overall rating of climate by Christian higher education personnel was favorable, it would appear that older employees were less enthusiastic about the climate. Finally, employee classification was found to be predictive of organizational climate; knowing whether an employee is an administrator, faculty, or staff member may provide some insight into their perceptions of climate. A problem with this finding, however, is that the statistical analysis does not provide insight into how an administrator, faculty member, or staff member would perceive the climate. This study did not find any differences in climate perceptions based upon gender, ethnicity, educational level, years of experience in higher education, full- or part-time status, or salary or hourly. Other studies have found both gender and education to be predictive of climate (cf. Manzo-Ramos, 1997).

Unlike the PACE (NILIE, 2005), the OCQ (Meyer & Allen, 1997) has not found its place in higher education studies. Subsequently, Meyer and Allen's (1997) OCQ has generated no norms for higher education (J. P. Meyer, personal communication, October 13, 2006). This study found that employees were neutral in organizational commitment, though other studies have found positive correlations (e.g., Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Borchers & Teahen, 2001; Chieffo, 1991). Statistically, it is possible that a modest degree of commitment does exist. There may be several explanations for the neutral level of commitment. The first may be due to the nature of these organizations. The participating schools would describe themselves as evangelical

and conservative. Since the mission of Christian education is both academic and spiritual (Adrian, 1997), employees may remain with the organization because of their agreement with the school's mission. Regardless of one's position in Christian higher education, compensation is often less than other higher education institutions (Burtchaell, 1997). Employees may join and remain with these institutions because the organizations represent their values or their calling. Though Meyer and Allen's (1997) concept of normative commitment captures the belief that remaining with an organization is the best choice, it does not capture the notion of values.

Second, the types of commitment measured by the OCQ (Meyer & Allen, 1997) may not have tapped into why Christian higher education employees remain with their organizations. Perhaps a specialized commitment instrument is needed that would more sensitively assess the reasons Christian personnel remain with their employers.

Another explanation for the insignificant degree of commitment may lie in the tenure of employees. Of the sample, 68.8% reported that they had less than 5 years with the institution; of those, 48.1% reported 2 years or less. In conversations with each institution, growth as opposed to attrition was credited for that phenomenon. Since employees were primarily new, any relationship between climate and commitment may not have become a factor. For example, Becker's (1960) Side-Bet theory requires the accumulation of benefits or other side-bets to eventually translate into greater levels of commitment. Shorter tenured employees may not have accumulated sufficient side-bets to promote their levels of commitment.

The fact that this study found tenure as negatively correlated adds confusion to the role of this variable with commitment. Several previous studies have found a positive relationship (e.g., Colbert & Kwon, 2000; Morris & Sherman, 1981), whereas other studies have failed to find any relationship (e.g., Hall & Schneider, 1972; Steers, 1977). This analysis found a negative association between tenure and commitment, which stands in contrast to Meyer and Allen's (1997) contention that the longer employees remain with their organizations the more attached they become. In this study, however, even though more tenured employees

were satisfied with their climate, they were less committed than employees with fewer years of organizational service.

Steers (1977) found that age was negatively associated with commitment, but most studies (e.g., Angle & Perry, 1981; Morris & Sherman, 1981; Morrow & McElroy, 1987) found positive association. Similarly, this study found that the older the employee, the greater the level of commitment. This study failed to find gender, ethnicity, education, employment, years in higher education, or classification as predictive of commitment. Other studies that have examined personal characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and educational level have yielded mixed results. Studies on the role of gender and commitment, for instance, have found that men and women differ in their commitment (e.g., Angle & Perry, 1981; Aryee & Heng, 1990; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) but a meta-analysis found no gender differences (Aven et al., 1993).

Recommendations

While perceptions of climate were favorable, employee commitment was not concomitantly propitious. Although the findings do not allow for definitive conclusions regarding commitment, administrators and governing boards can take note of a potentially vulnerable workforce. The seminal nature of this study provides baseline data to which other studies might compare, though generalizability is limited (Kerlinger, 1986) since Christian higher education may be heterogeneous rather than homogenous on these measures. Any inference to other like-minded schools is suspect.

Future Research

Christian institutions of higher education are ripe for empirical study. This study suggests that much can be learned in the application of instrumentation and methodology found in the business world to Christian higher education. Secondly, the iterative nature of qualitative methodology offers organizational researchers rich and heuristically valuable information upon which to conduct further studies. Future research should incorporate a mixed design that combines both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to cull a better understanding of these organizational processes in

these unique organizational environments. A third consideration would be a longitudinal study, to measure how perceptions of climate and commitment may either change or persevere with time and experience. It would also make it possible to tabulate consistencies both within and across departments and within and across schools within the same educational institution (e.g., subcultures). Such knowledge will provide administrators with a more holistic perspective of the factors that affect their employee's workplace experience. Moreover, future research should also consider the uniqueness of employees at a Christian school in assessing its organizational climate. The preponderance of the 120 PACE studies has been community college environments. Many climate measures exist that are suitable for higher education (Shenkle, Snyder, & Bauer, 1998). Although the decision to use the PACE posed no apparent concerns, all other studies that found significance between climate and commitment used a different measure. In light of the value placed on spiritual matters in conservative evangelical institutions, it would help to have a climate questionnaire that assessed such concepts. Assessing the spiritual climate requires more than adding spiritually oriented questions. For example, it would be important not only to assess the spiritual climate of the organizations as a whole, but to assess how each specific climate factor (e.g., institutional structure, teamwork) is evidenced in spiritual terms. While aspects of the PACE approach basic Christian values, it fails to capture the qualitative level and the extent to which these values are central to the mission of these institutions. Finally, future research could examine Christian higher education student perceptions as to the climate of their school, and relate it to their commitment. Since students are the primary consumers of education and since they experience climate differently due to their particular positions within the environments, they may offer interesting and fresh insights into the institution's environment.

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