

Organizational Orientation in Public and Private Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT In this study, we investigated the relationship between organizational value orientation and two variables, organizational commitment and job satisfaction, among teachers from private and public elementary schools. We also assessed the central contribution of personal and organizational attributes (i.e., gender, length of professional experience, and type of school) in explaining employee organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Using survey research methods, we collected data from 135 teachers from public schools and 562 teachers from Catholic private schools. We analyzed the data by multivariate analysis of variance and multiple regression. In our study, we found differences between private (religious) and public schools. Specifically, results of this study suggested that (a) private schools exhibit a more normative orientation, whereas public schools exhibit a more utilitarian orientation; and (b) schools with a more normative value orientation had significantly higher teacher organizational commitment and job satisfaction than did schools with a more utilitarian value orientation.

In this research, we were concerned with how public and private schools differ in their motivational structure and how that structure affects teachers' affective attitudes toward the organization and their jobs. Specifically, we were concerned with identifying whether private and public systems differ in the value orientation used to motivate teachers at work and how such an orientation affects teachers' commitment to the organization and their job satisfaction. Two facets of schools must be examined to assess this relationship. First, one must consider the internal assumptions governing the daily behavior of school members. Are there any implicit rules governing behavior at work? Are there any differences between public and private schools concerning those rules? Second, one must consider how such rules relate to individual dynamics such as faculty job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The effective operation of school systems depends on a strong fit between the organizational norms and the individual's behavior and attitudes.

Conceptions of Schools

Schools as organizations may be conceived from various perspectives (Bolman & Deal, 1984). First, schools are seen as bureaucracies, albeit loosely coupled bureaucracies, with flat hierarchies and broadly stated, unclear goals. Second, schools are conceived around the needs of administrators, teachers, students and other personnel—a human resource model. Third, schools are seen as political organizations that have coalitions and interest groups competing, negotiating, and vying for scarce resources and power. Finally, schools are viewed as cultural entities where organizational events are socially defined and where the perceived meaning of a school event is more important than the event itself. This cultural perspective provides us with the extent to which reality is "socially construed and symbolically mediated" or what we call organizational culture (Bolman & Deal, 1984).

The influence of organizational culture has been observed in the Japanese management techniques that have prompted contemporary social scientists to broaden their perspectives of organizational theory. Cultural practices of lifetime employment, slow promotion, regular performance evaluation, and concern for the individual have clear implications for bonding the individual to the collective purpose of the organization (Ouchi, 1982; McErue & Hechler, 1985). A base of shared values and conceptions may be implicit but are exhibited in explicit behavior, artifacts, and processes through which the culture is formed, modified, and augmented (Kilmann, Saxton, & Serpa, 1985).

The publication of *Corporate Cultures* (Deal & Kennedy, 1982) and *In Search of Excellence* (Peters & Waterman, 1982) brought significant attention to organizational culture in the corporate world. However, in the field of education, the study of school culture has not become as popular as it has in the business world (Deal,

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1988). This lack of attention does not mean that we have completely ignored the concept of culture. There are some studies that have used the school as the unit of analysis. For instance, Cohen, Deal, Mayer, and Scott (1979); Deal, Mayer, and Scott (1983) stated that culture and symbols have played and will continue to play a major role in school performance, both actual and perceived.

Waller (1932) showed the importance of school culture, indicating that school rituals, ceremonies, and values are part of the daily life of schools. He stated:

Schools have a culture that is definitely their own. There are complex rituals of personal relationships, a set of folkways, mores, and irrational sanctions, a moral code based upon them. There are games, which are sublimated wars, teams, and an elaborate set of ceremonies concerning them. There are traditions, and traditionalists waging their old battle against innovators. There are laws and there is the problem of enforcing them, there is *Sittlichkeit* (p. 103).

Rossmann, Corbett, and Firestone (1988) analyzed resistance to change within schools and reported that teachers tend to underrate their performance if new events or conditions seem to interfere with expectations for behavior that reside within that school culture. Rosenblum & Louis (1981) also indicated that the normative structure of schools encourages conservatism, which protects schools against faddism and other short-term misguided efforts.

Sarason (1971) wrote about the importance of the school culture and explained its power in resisting and redefining new ideas in schools. Finally, Lightfoot (1983) provided excellent portraits of different school cultures and the core values that surround them. She suggested that schools must find ways to create a culture that inspires students, teachers, and other personnel to excel at work, and to provide for psychological attachment for all. Lightfoot also suggested that schools must prevent the intrusion of external values that may interfere with the functioning of the school. She claimed that, unlike public schools, private schools have been very effective in building a culture that prevents the intrusion of values counter to their own.

Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore (1982) documented the significant differences between public and private schools. They argued that on average private schools produce a higher caliber of students. The authors claimed that private schools produce better cognitive outcomes than do public schools; on average, students from private schools perform better than do students from public schools on achievement tests, they added. Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore also said that private schools provide better student personality development than do public schools; students in private schools show higher levels of self-esteem and sense of control than do students from public schools. Moreover, private schools seem to be more successful than public schools in creating an interest in learning and encouraging interest in higher education

(Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). Students from private schools are more likely to attend college than are students from public schools, they added. Why are these differences so dramatic between these two types of schools? What organizational events create these patterns?

Three areas seem to be related to the effective functioning of schools in general: the organizational value orientation (an aspect of organizational culture), organizational commitment, and employee job satisfaction.

Organizational Orientation

Most studies concerning organizational value orientation have been descriptive, addressing primarily personal value orientation, particularly those of private industry executives. For instance, Dunnette (1976) studied the relationship between employee personality and work effectiveness using value-oriented statements, and Friedlander (1968) studied the relationship between personal values and personal and business goals. Similar studies were conducted by Guth and Tagjuri (1965) and England (1967); the investigations, nonetheless, were essentially of a descriptive nature (Reichers, 1985).

Managerial success and personal values also have been examined. For instance, England and Lee (1974) indicated that more successful managers emphasized pragmatic, dynamic, achievement-oriented values, whereas less successful managers preferred more static and passive values. They also found that a relationship existed between the values of supervisors and the values of highly rated employees, implying that those employees who hold value structures similar to those of their managers tend to be perceived as more productive. The values of supervisors have been found to influence interpersonal relationships and perceptions of individuals and also have been linked to ethical behavior (England & Lee, 1974). Thus, the individual value orientation of the manager, typically shaped by the values of the organization, contributes to some extent to the behavior of employees in the workplace.

In sum, most studies concerning value orientation have been conceptualized from a personal perspective and have emphasized the individual value orientation of business executives. There is a need to consider value orientation as an organizational level variable that may affect employee outcome variables such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction. If the relationship between value orientation and commitment can be understood, then understanding of the role of culture on employee bonding will be expanded.

Organizational Commitment

Researchers have examined employee commitment in three ways: (a) role-related studies, (b) outcome studies, and (c) individual intentions and characteristics studies. First, in the role-related research, employee commitment has been linked with variables such as professional-bu-

reaucratic role conflict (Blau & Scott, 1962), role tension (Nelson, 1980), and satisfaction with the work role (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974).

Second, researchers examined organizational commitment as an outcome variable; Becker (1960) and Stevens, Beyer, and Trice (1978) provided evidence of the accrual nature of commitment showing that increased personal investment in their jobs increases employees' organizational commitment. The third method of research suggests that commitment is related to various personal characteristics such as intentions to pursue additional education (Aranya, Kushnir, & Valency, 1986), age (Mowday, et al., 1982), gender, and father's occupation (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972). Angle and Perry (1983) concluded that if the worker perceives the organization as providing resources that satisfy his or her needs, the worker will reciprocate that commitment.

Research on teacher commitment has also produced similar results concerning commitment and its correlates. For instance, Kaufman (1984) concluded that motivation seekers were more committed to the teaching profession than were nonmotivation seekers. Snyder and Spreitzer (1984) found that elements of commitment included intrinsic and extrinsic satisfactions, as well as self-identity invested in the teaching role.

Focusing on variables that affect commitment, Bredeson, Fruth, and Kasten (1983) analyzed commitment to teaching through teachers' responses to organizational incentives. They found that few extrinsic incentives were available that affected teacher performance directly, and that intrinsic motivation was the most powerful link to teacher commitment. Further research by Knoop (1980) on job involvement (thus commitment) of secondary schoolteachers found that this construct related to such variables as educational level, participation in decision making, and satisfaction with supervision, and explained a portion of the variance in job satisfaction. However, Knoop found that for elementary schoolteachers, involvement related mainly to personal motivation, marital status, and job satisfaction. In summary, commitment is a powerful variable that has been linked to personal as well as organizational outcomes, including productivity, work role satisfaction, and employee job satisfaction (Mowday et al, 1982).

Job Satisfaction

Although there have been hundreds of studies of job satisfaction in the private sector, we focused on only relevant job satisfaction literature in education. Job satisfaction literature in education falls into two broad areas: research on personal, work, and organizational factors that influence job satisfaction and research on the consequences or outcomes of job satisfaction.

Research on job satisfaction and its predictive correlates that are not relevant to this study have focused on different organizational settings and organizational vari-

ables. For example, Morris (1981) examined the work environments of middle schools and high schools in relation to teacher job satisfaction. She found that factors such as school size, expenditure per pupil, student:teacher ratios, and racially mixed populations affected teacher job satisfaction. She further indicated that strong principal leadership emerged as a consistent factor affecting teacher satisfaction and motivation. Ashton et al. (1981), comparing middle schools and junior high schools, found that middle schoolteachers were more satisfied with teaching, were more likely to again choose teaching as a career, and had higher expectations of academic success for their students than did junior high teachers. Deever and Shockley (1975) analyzed the job satisfaction of teachers in selected extended school year programs and concluded that senior high schoolteachers were more satisfied than teachers at other levels and that the voluntary fourth-quarter program was the most satisfying to teachers.

Research also has addressed the outcomes associated with teacher job satisfaction. Knoop and O'Reilly (1978), who studied job satisfaction of elementary schoolteachers and its relationship to perceived school effectiveness, found that effectiveness was related positively to the satisfaction of teachers with their co-workers, with supervision, and with the work itself. However, like job satisfaction-job performance studies in the private sector, the direction of causality in this relationship is hard to establish. Bridges (1980) examined the relationship between job satisfaction and teacher absenteeism, concluding that a weak negative relationship existed between the two variables. Because the influence of other variables on absenteeism (or turnover) is difficult to measure and control, the relationship between satisfaction and absenteeism may be attenuated.

One final comment about job satisfaction literature is important. Although job satisfaction has consistently been found to relate positively to organizational commitment, Peters, et al. (1981) indicated that commitment and job satisfaction added nonredundant sources of variance to employee turnover intentions. Therefore, there is reason to suspect that the relationship between job satisfaction and other variables would not necessarily mirror the relationship between organizational commitment and these same variables.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Simply defined, organizational culture is "the way we do things around here" (Bower, 1966). Lortie (1975) shows that culture includes what members of a group think about social action; culture encompasses alternatives for resolving problems in collective life. In other words, an organizational culture includes assumptions about reality, shared values, myths and stories, rites and rituals, ceremonies, and heroes and heroines (Deal, 1988; Kilmann et al. 1986). This means that the organization's

history must be established in order to have a shared view where assumptions, values, and beliefs are taken for granted because they have been workable. This implies a claim to uniqueness and specific patterns of discourse that exert influence over the behavior of organizational participants (Martin, Feldman, & Sitkin 1983; Smircich, 1985). We used Schein's (1985) model of organizational culture to inform this study.

According to Schein (1985), organizational culture is the "basic assumption and beliefs that are shared by the members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic taken-for-granted fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment" (pp. 6-7). Culture is viewed as a property of a stable social unit or organization and is a product of group experience. Accordingly, these group experiences have helped to form a shared view of reality among employees within the organization, and this shared view has come to be taken for granted and to have dropped out of awareness (Schein, 1984, p. 6). These assumptions, which are indisputable within the organization, then become guides to behavior that tell employees "how to perceive, think about, and feel about things" (Schein, 1985, p. 6).

Another component of Schein's model includes artifacts and behaviors that are the most visible aspect of the organizational culture. Schein points out, nonetheless, that artifacts and behaviors may be misleading because similar behaviors may result from different values. In this perspective, the meaning of the behavior is more important than the behavior itself. In Schein's model, the study of organizational culture is more easily achieved through the study of central organizational values than through the study of highly visible, but incomprehensible behaviors. The final component of Schein's model includes values. Accordingly, values are measurable and testable and remain conscious and are explicitly articulated because they serve the "normative or moral function of guiding organizational members in key situations" (Schein, 1984, 1985). Values are the organizational members' sense of what ought to be. For example, teacher autonomy in instruction is valued in schools. We hypothesized that these cultural values are present in school systems. Of particular interest in this research is a cultural element, organizational value orientation, informed by Etzioni's (1975) earlier work.

Etzioni (1975) and Gross and Etzioni (1985) proposed a typology to classify organizations according to their means of control and subordinate involvement. Three types of organizations were described—those with either a coercive, a utilitarian, or a normative value orientation (or means of control). A coercive organization uses mostly physical threats to control the behavior of participants within organizations. Utilitarian organizations use mostly material rewards to control employee behavior, and normative organizations use mostly symbolic rewards to control employee behavior. Furthermore, Etzioni postu-

lated that normative organizations generate more commitment from employees than the other types of organizations do.

Borrowing Etzioni (1975) and Gross and Etzioni's (1985) concepts of normative and utilitarian organizations, we assumed that school systems have theoretically two underlying value orientation systems: normative and utilitarian. The normative value guidance system emphasizes symbolism within and outside of the organization. For example, a teacher may be recognized publicly as "the teacher of the year." This public recognition is a symbolic gesture expressed by school officials to recognize the teacher's contribution to school. Thus, the school is emphasizing the normative aspects of the organization. By contrast, a utilitarian value system emphasizes materialistic rewards such as monetary incentives to motivate employees at work. To illustrate, a teacher might be given a stipend for providing leadership in organizing a special curriculum or a monetary bonus for exemplary attendance. Normative and utilitarian value orientations are neither mutually exclusive nor are they constant across schools.

In the present study, we used Etzioni's (1975) normative and utilitarian concepts to study the relationship between organizational value orientation (normative or utilitarian) and organizational commitment and job satisfaction among teachers. We expected that private schools were more likely to typify normative orientations, whereas public schools were more likely to emphasize utilitarian orientations. Consequently, teachers from both private and public schools were sampled to test the study hypotheses. After the private school/normative and public school/utilitarian assumption was validated (see the Methodology section), the following hypothesis was tested.

Hypothesis: Schools with a more normative value orientation (private schools) will have higher levels of teacher organizational commitment and job satisfaction than will schools with a more utilitarian orientation (public schools).

Methodology

Sampling and Data Collection

The sample included teachers from both public and private schools. Three school districts from a midwestern state were selected to participate in the study. The school districts were selected within a metropolitan area. The population was elementary schoolteachers. All teachers from such school districts constituted the population from which 150 were selected at random. The total response rate for this sample was 88%.

Teachers from private schools were selected from schools within two large Catholic dioceses in one southeastern state. All teachers participating in this study were elementary schoolteachers. We surveyed 600 teachers from the two dioceses and received 562 usable question-

naires for an overall response rate of 94%. The largest percentage of respondents was Catholic, although only 9.1% of the respondents were religious employees, as opposed to lay employees (91%). Descriptive statistics on the subjects' age, years of professional experience, and gender are found in Table I.

The data from the public school subjects were collected through a self-administered set of instruments and returned individually to the research team. Data from private school subjects were collected in group settings and returned by each building principal. The overall response rate was 88% and 94% for public and private schools, respectively.

Instrumentation

The constructs measured in this study were organizational value orientation, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. Questionnaires were used to assess each concept. Items on each concept were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. A summary of each measure is presented below.

Organizational and demographic data were gathered using a series of single-item, objectively worded questions. School type, organizational tenure, gender, years of experience, and age were among the organizational and personal data collected.

Organizational Value Orientation Questionnaire. We defined organizational value orientation as a guidance system that sets the criteria for psychological behavior and assists in making choices relative to some evaluative aspect of life (Wilson, 1975). Using Etzioni's (1975) normative and utilitarian concepts, we developed an instrument to examine the degree of each value orientation present in an organization as perceived by employees. Normative orientation was operationalized as a system that emphasizes mostly symbolic means to motivate teachers. Utilitarian orientation, on the other hand, was operationalized as a system that uses primarily remunerative means to motivate teachers.

Before administering the Organizational Value Orientation Questionnaire (OVOQ) in the present study, we tested the instrument for its construct validity. It was submitted to employees of an organization that used primarily material rewards to motivate its employees. The overall average score was low, indicating that the organ-

ization was primarily utilitarian. At the same time, another organization known for its use of normative rewards to motivate workers (a volunteer organization) was used to test the OVOQ. Again, the OVOQ discriminated, indicating a high score for such organization.

The OVOQ also was submitted to a reliability test. The instrument was given to 100 teachers from a midwestern state. The coefficient alpha for the scale was .89. The total instrument included 10 items, representing normative and utilitarian value orientations. Items were scaled so that a high total score on the instrument suggested a normative orientation, and a low total score suggested a utilitarian orientation. Examples of the items used in this instrument include the following:

1. Special awards (e.g., teacher of the year) are used to recognize teaching excellence.
2. A method of recognizing excellence in teaching at this school is based on recommended pay increases.

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. Organizational commitment indicates loyalty to the organization. Porter et al. (1974) and Mowday et al. (1982) defined the concept as the employee's acceptance of the organizational goals, willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and desire to remain an employee of the organization. The instrument used in this study was the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979). The OCQ has been correlated with other "affective" measures for validity purposes, averaging $r = 0.70$. Its reliability has ranged from 0.82 to 0.93 with a median of 0.90. This instrument has been tested with several groups such as public employees and university employees and appears to yield consistent results across different types of organizations.

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. The measure of job satisfaction used in this study was the short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), which was based on a theory of work adjustment presented in Lofquist and Dawis (1969). They defined job satisfaction as "fulfillment of the requirements of an individual by the work environment" (p. 76).

The MSQ has good construct validity (Lofquist & Dawis, 1969); the instrument has been compared with the results of the long form of job satisfaction, and has been tested with six different samples yielding no statistically significant differences. The instrument's strong reliability has been verified as well. The median internal reliability for the general job satisfaction scale is 0.90 (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967). Cook, Hepworth, Wall, and Warr believed that the index of general job satisfaction is an excellent measure.

Independent Variable Validation

Private schools and public schools were selected for comparison because private schools were expected to ex-

Table I.—Descriptive Statistics of Sample Subjects

Teachers	Age		Total prof. exp.		n	% female
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD		
Private school	38.5	6.6	12.0	4.4	562	80.1
Public school	39.0	8.2	13.8	5.7	132	65.3

hibit stronger normative characteristics in rewarding and motivating teachers, whereas public schools were expected to exhibit more utilitarian characteristics. To verify that the two systems had significantly different value orientations, we ran a *t* test between public and private schoolteacher groups on the Organizational Value Orientation Questionnaire. The test results indicated that private schoolteachers scored significantly higher than public schoolteachers on the OVOQ scale, implying that private schools have a stronger normative orientation, $t(692) = 4.53, p < .001$, than do public schools (see Table 2). Consequently, group membership (private or public) was used to test for differences in organizational commitment and job satisfaction between organizations with more normative versus more utilitarian value orientations.

We ascertained that those schools participating in the study had no new incentive plans such as merit pay or career ladders that might influence the assessment on the dependent variables. All subjects reported that no new incentive plans were being used at their schools when the study was in progress.

Results

Overall, the study findings suggest that differences in commitment and job satisfaction levels exist between public and private teachers. Furthermore, the variables of commitment and job satisfaction are explained by similar variables.

Using group membership (private/public) as the independent variable, the researchers used multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to test for differences in commitment and job satisfaction (hypothesis). Unequal cell sizes due to the disparity between the number of public and private schoolteachers did not pose a problem, because statistical analysis revealed no violation of the homogeneity of variance assumption. Results of the first omnibus MANOVA test suggested that a statistically significant difference in organizational commitment and job satisfaction existed between teachers in private school versus teachers in public school organizations (see Table 3).

Posthoc analysis completed with univariate *F* tests revealed statistically significant differences in organizational commitment, $F(1, 692) = 68.84, p < .001$, between the two groups. Teachers from private schools were significantly more committed to the goals of the organization and willing to work for it than were teachers from

public schools. Similarly, job satisfaction, $F(1, 692) = 45.11, p < .001$, was significantly different between private and public schoolteachers, with private schoolteachers scoring higher than public schoolteachers on the job satisfaction questionnaire (see Table 4).

Discussion

Results of the data analysis supported the study's research hypotheses. Three major findings were observed. First, the data validated the assumption that Catholic private schools were characterized by a more normative value orientation. Although it is important to remember that one can find both normative and utilitarian cultural elements in private as well as public schools, private schools appear to have a relatively stronger normative orientation. This finding may be a result of greater homogeneity among faculty (and students) in private schools than in public schools. In particular, the faculties of parochial schools such as those included in this study are dominated by members of the Catholic church. This homogeneity in religious belief may create strong commonality in core values, assumptions, and beliefs that guide or typify the organization (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Coleman, Hoffer & Kilgore, 1982). To the degree that there is greater commonality of values, assumptions, and beliefs in private school employees relative to public school employees, fewer utilitarian techniques or practices may be required to "control" or influence employee behavior. As a result, private schools may be typified by a more normative orientation and public schools may be typified by a more utilitarian orientation.

Second, normative organizations (private schools) yielded significantly higher teacher commitment and job satisfaction than did utilitarian organizations (public schools). This finding is consistent with the literature which suggests that the culture (in this study, value orientation) of the organization influences employee outcomes (Gross & Etzioni, 1985; Schein, 1985) and that normative organizations generate more employee commitment than do utilitarian organizations (Etzioni, 1975).

Finally, this study, although limited in its design, partly supports the assumption that the organizational culture (in particular, the organizational value orientation) of Catholic private schools is different from that of public schools. Further, the study results support the notion that elements of an organization's culture may strongly relate

Table 2.—*t* Test for Organizational Value Orientation of Private and Public Schoolteacher Groups

Teachers	No. of cases	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i> (2-tailed)
Private school	562	28.4	7.4	.31	4.53	692	.000
Public school	132	25.1	7.8	.68			

Note. *N* = 694.

Table 3.—Omnibus MANOVA for Differences in Commitment and Job Satisfaction of Normative (Private) and Utilitarian (Public) Organizations

Test	Value	Approx. F	Error/df	p
Pillais	.121	47.84	691	.000
Hotellings	.138	47.84	691	.000
Wilks	.878	47.84	691	.000
Roys	.122	47.84	691	.000

Note. $N = 694$. Eigenvalue = .138; canonical correlation = .349.

Table 4.—Means and Standard Deviations for Private and Public Schoolteachers on Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction

Teachers	Organizational commitment	Job satisfaction
Private school (normative)		
M	69.2	80.2
SD	7.4	12.9
Public school (utilitarian)		
M	63.0	71.7
SD	8.3	13.2

Note. $N = 694$.

to certain organizational and employee outcomes. In this case, there is a clear relationship between an organization's value orientation and employee commitment and job satisfaction. However, there are many other cultural elements and employee/organizational outcomes that must be explored in future studies before one can have a full appreciation for the complexity of the relationship between school culture and its consequences.

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