

Climate Perceptions of Community College Staff and Faculty

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Problem

- Many community colleges are decreasing the hours and benefits of employees and transitioning full-time positions to part-time to address budget shortfalls.
- Currently, most literature focuses on the effects of the employment transition on faculty (eg. Jaeger & Eagen, 2011; Wagoner, Metcalfe, & Olaore, 2004) however, noninstructional employees account for more than 45% of community college staff (Duggan, 2008).
- The stressful economic environment and shifting workforce can affect institutional climate for all employees.
- Organizational climate is important for employee satisfaction, change processes (Ayers, 2005), turnover, and morale (Duggan, 2008).

Theoretical Construct

Parker, Baltes, Young, Huff, Altmann, Lacost, and Roberts (2003), *Relationship between psychological climate perceptions and work outcomes*

- Parker et. al. (2003) build on previous literature to propose an organizational climate framework (See Figure 1.)
- Psychological climate impacts employee attitudes, which, in turn, affect motivation and performance.

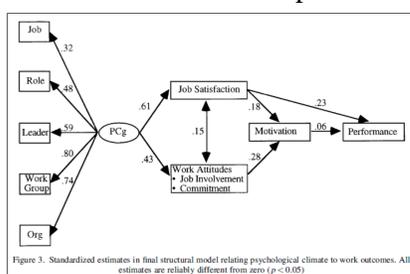


Figure 1. Standardized estimates in final structural model relating psychological climate to work outcomes. All estimates are reliably different from zero ($p < .05$).

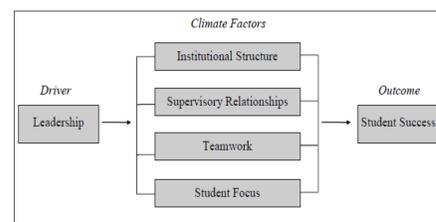


Figure 2.

- While Parker et al.'s construct shows the importance of organizational climate, our work is driven by Baker and Hoover's (1997) Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) model (see Figure 2), which operationalizes organizational climate in a higher education setting.

Instrument and Methodology

- The PACE Survey is a 46 item instrument that measures organizational climate through employee perceptions on the model's climate factors.
- PACE respondents are asked to rate climate factors through specific statements on a five-point scale from a low of "1" to a high of "5."
- Additionally, respondents are asked to provide demographic information including personnel classification, employment status, race, gender identity, and years of employment.
- In previous studies, the overall PACE instrument showed a coefficient of internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) of 0.98.
- Multilevel modeling was used to examine the variance at both the individual and institutional level.

Research Question 1

Do community college staff perceive institutional climate differently than faculty?

Respondent-Level

Variables	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	3.72(.03)***	3.95(.17)***
Staff	-0.06(.01)***	-0.06(.01)***
Part-Time	0.17(.02)***	0.17(.01)***
Hispanic	0.05(.04)**	0.05(.02)**
Native American	-0.06(.02)	-0.11(.04)*
Asian American	0.08(.02)**	0.12(.03)***
African American	0.07(.04)***	0.06(.02)***
Pacific Islander	0.03(.02)	0.02(.06)
Two or More races	-0.29(.01)***	-0.29(.02)***
Female	-0.01(.01)	-0.01(.01)
Years of Employment	-0.01(.00)***	-0.01(.00)***
Institution Variance %	0.21	0.18
AIC	77010.74	72739.56
BIC	77121.00	72933.37

Note. This sample included 21,059 Faculty and 17,790 staff members. Reference groups for predictors: Employment Position = Faculty; Status = full-time; Race = White; Gender = Male. Years of employment was centered around the mean (9.63). Institutional level variables (Institution Type, Urbanicity, and Region) were included in Model 3; however, none were significant. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Research Question 2

Do community college part-time staff perceive institutional climate differently than full-time staff?

Respondent-Level

Variables	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	3.49(.04)***	3.73(.17)***
Part-Time Staff	0.16(.01)***	0.15(.01)***
Hispanic	0.05(.02)*	0.05(.02)*
Native American	-0.10(.06)	-0.11(.06)
Asian American	0.08(.04)*	0.14(.04)**
African American	0.05(.02)*	0.04(.02)
Pacific Islander	-0.03(.05)	-0.13(.08)
Two or More races	-0.27(.03)***	-0.28(.04)***
Female	0.01(.01)	0.01(.01)
Years of Employment	0.00(.00)***	0.00(.00)***
Institution Variance %	0.21	0.18
AIC	34883.93	32672.80
BIC	34976.22	32840.67

Note. This sample included 14,116 full-time staff and 3,674 part-time staff members. Reference groups for predictors: staff = full-time staff; Race = White; Gender = Male. Years of employment was centered around the mean (9.63). Institutional level variables (Institution Type, Urbanicity, and Region) were included in Model 3; however, none were significant. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Findings

- Staff perceive overall institutional climate more negatively than faculty.
- Controlling for employment status, race/ethnicity, gender identity, years of employment, and institutional-level characteristics like institution type, region, and urbanicity, staff from this study show a lower overall climate score on the PACE survey than faculty by .06 points.
- Part-time staff perceive overall climate more positively than full-time staff.
- Controlling for the variables mentioned above, part-time staff from this study demonstrate a .15 point higher overall climate score on the PACE survey than full-time staff.
- Respondent-level data is nested by institution. Adding institution-level variables improved the model fit in both studies by decreasing the variance between institutions, the AIC, and the BIC.

Implications

- The lower perceptions of institutional climate by staff compared to faculty indicate a need for institutions to consider employee satisfaction by personnel classification in addition to the aggregate.
- Contrary to our expected findings, part-time staff rate institutional climate higher than full-time staff.
- A possible explanation for this is that part-time work may be preferred by some staff, unlike part-time faculty who commonly desire full-time work. Separating part-time staff into those who do and do not desire full-time employment could yield different results and may be a useful topic for further research.
- The improved model fit when controlling for institution-level variables implies that institutional context may play an important role in understanding employee satisfaction.

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