

Can “collegiality” be measured?: Further validation of a faculty assessment model of discretionary behaviors

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ABSTRACT

The professoriate has been debating the value of adding collegiality as a fourth criterion in faculty evaluations. Collegiality is considered to be any extra-role behavior that represents individuals' behavior that is discretionary, not recognized by the formal reward system and that, in the aggregate, promotes the effective functioning of the educational organization. The AAUP recommended against including collegial behaviors in faculty evaluations stating that the inclusion could hinder academic freedom by not allowing for dissent and that the construct of collegiality is amorphous which prevents the creation of an effective tool available to evaluate collegial behavior. Despite this opinion, faculty members continue to be denied tenure because they were cited as lacking civility. Efforts by researchers have been made to address the concern expressed by the AAUP about the amorphous nature of the construct by delineating the indicators associated with collegial behaviors. Initial efforts led to the creation of a list of collegial indicators validated by Research I and Research II professors who provided the basis for a subsequent assessment constructed based on the validated indicators. The current study has extended the validation of the indicators to a sample of Master's university professors. Results suggested that there was agreement in representativeness of collegiality between university types. These results have further reduced the amorphous nature of the construct and allows for an expanded use of the assessment in faculty evaluations.

Keywords: Collegiality, Faculty, Evaluations, Indicators, Validation

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INTRODUCTION

The three areas of university faculty performance include scholarship, teaching and service. Evidence of each area needs to be demonstrated in tenure and promotion reviews. Faculty also has additional extra role responsibilities that are not included in the formal contract. The extra-role behaviors referenced may be considered to be elements of collegiality. Collegiality is a complex issue in academia because of the culture of academic freedom and expression (University of Wyoming, 2004). The AAUP defines collegiality as “collaborative and constructive cooperation”. Seigel (2004) views this definition as over-inclusive. He stresses that faculty rarely collaborate with members of their faculty on scholarship because scholarship tends to be a solitary pursuit. This solitary nature does not mean the faculty member is not collegial. In addition, a professor may not agree with all administrative objectives set for the institution. Does this make him/her uncooperative? Seigel also adds that the definition is dynamic and changing over time.

Organ’s (1988) has used a long-standing and inclusive definition of collegiality. He suggests collegiality may refer to any extra-role behavior that represents individuals’ behavior that is discretionary, not recognized by the formal reward system and that, in the aggregate, promotes the effective functioning of the educational organization. The terms collegial behaviors, civility and extra role behaviors are used interchangeably for the purpose of this paper.

Relevant literature and legal findings support university faculty accountability for non-contractually bound collegial behaviors in tenure and promotion evaluations (Connell & Savage, 2001). For example, researchers noted that collegial behavior position statements have been included in formal college documents (Boyce, Oates, Lund & Fiorentino, 2008). Specifically, Southern Utah University, Auburn University, Washington and Lee, and Virginia State include dispositions and collegiality in promotion and tenure guidelines and position announcements as characteristics of successful candidates. Trends have even revealed the emergence of collegiality as a fourth category of formal assessment in some institutions. The case for including extra role behaviors is further supported by research that investigated the perceived faculty importance of collegiality over other job factors such as salary and workload in the workplace (Fogg, 2006).

The AAUP recommendation says in its rationale that collegiality should never be the sole cause of non-reappointment, denial of tenure or dismissal and therefore, not be considered a discrete category. The difficulty that arises with this perspective is that the lack of collegial behavior has and continues to be a sole criterion for dismissals and denials in numerous court cases. Several noteworthy cases involving tenure denial because of lack of collegiality include: *Fisher v. Vassar College*, 1995; *Yackshaw v. John Carroll University*, 1993; *Kelly v. Kansas State Community College* 1987; *Romer v. Hobart & William Smith Colleges*, 1994; *Bresnick v. Manhattanville College* (1994). Courts ruled in favor of the institutions in each of these cases. Martin Snyder who is the director of planning and development of the AAUP stated, “More and more cases are coming up on some version of the collegiality issue” (Lewin, 2002). Courts continue to refuse to become enmeshed in personnel decisions, ruling that universities have broad discretion to consider collegiality but the rulings continue to recommend formal inclusion of expectations.

There are obvious problems associated with the inclusion of collegiality in faculty evaluations. The most note worthy problem with including collegiality is that the professoriate is not in agreement with having this fourth criterion. The American Association of University

Professors (AAUP) has provided an influential voice on this issue by adopting a recommendation that does not support including collegiality as an evaluation criterion (AAUP, 2006). The AAUP cites the amorphous nature of the construct as problematic. How can a faculty members' collegiality be evaluated if the construct of collegiality has not been psychometrically defined? Connell and Savage (2001) have suggested the development of an efficient and useful tool. The development of such a tool would require providing evidence of the validity of delineated indicators of collegiality.

In response to the suggestion of Connell and Savage (2001), researchers conducted a study that required a nationwide random sample of professors representing all major fields of study to rate indicators thought to represent collegial behavior (Johnston, Schimmel & O'Hara 2011). The results of their study provided a list of 27 validated indicators of collegial behaviors. Each of the 27 behaviors was categorized under one of the following subscales: Altruism, Conscientiousness, Sportsmanship, Courtesy, and Civic Virtue (Organ, 1988). Further examination of this work suggested that the delineators of Civic Virtue could be viewed as service as opposed a discretionary behavior. The validated indicators provided the basis for an assessment tool that could be used to measure collegiality in a formal manner as suggested by the courts. The scale created has limited use for Research I and II universities.

The purpose of this study was to extend the use of the validated assessment tool so that it may be implemented at diverse college and university settings. Specifically, the goal was to have professors of Masters Southern institutions rate the degree to which they see each indicator as representing collegial behavior. Additionally, differences in mean ratings between Research I/ II Universities and Masters Southern institutions were examined. Indicators receiving high ratings of collegiality by both university types could provide the basis for a collegiality assessment tool with wider applicability.

METHOD

Procedure

The process of validating indicators of a construct such as collegiality requires content expert feedback as to the representativeness of each indicator. This study specifically wanted to measure the degree to which a sample of professors at Master's Southern universities rated the representativeness of each indicator. Further, the results of this sample of Master's Southern professors would be compared to previous results from a sample of Research I and II university professors. Items rated as highly representative of collegiality by both professor samples would have an increased generalizability for use towards the creation of a scale to assess collegial behaviors as suggested.

Sample

Invitations to complete the survey were emailed to participants using *Class Climate*, a software package typically used for large-scale survey projects, such as university course evaluations. A list of faculty contacts was assembled from the 59 institutions listed in the Masters Southern Category that appeared in the 2008 issue of US News and World Report. Research assistants compiled the master list by selecting faculty members whose email address was publically available on institution's web site. Invitation emails were sent to participants in

randomly drawn samples of 100; 5900 total emails were sent, and 623 were returned (10.5% return rate).

Instrumentation

A scale that measured collegial behavior with items validated by previous research was edited to create a survey that assessed each indicator's representativeness of collegiality (Johnston, Schimmel & O'Hara, 2011). Specifically, the scale had five subtests derived from Organ's (1988) work on organizational citizenship behavior that included Altruism, Conscientiousness, Sportsmanship, Courtesy and Civic Virtue. Validation studies indicated that there were 27 items professors from University I and II rated as representative of collegial behavior.

Further examination of the subtests suggested that items that fell under Civic Virtue were more "service to university" items. These items were omitted from this survey as service components are typically a stand-alone category in faculty evaluations. Items in this subtest included regular meeting attendance, keeping appointments, completing committee responsibilities and contributing to joint efforts. The removal of these items left 22 previously validated items that were items for the revised scale used in this study (see Table 1 for list of all items included).

The revised scale kept the same Likert format used previously with the 22 items from the remaining subtests. Scores ranged from 1 indicating not representative of collegial behavior at all to 5 indicating very representative of collegial behavior.

RESULTS

Mean ratings by Master's Southern professors ranged from 3.68 to 4.50 out of 5 (see Table 1 for mean ratings). Overall, results from the survey given suggest Master's Southern universities and University I and II professors highly agree that all indicators represent collegial behaviors. Additionally, Master's Southern university professors rated 18 of 20 items higher and more representative of collegial behavior than their Research I and II University peers with one item rated the same between university types.

Despite the overall suggestion that both professor groups considered all indicators to represent collegiality to a high degree, there was not exact ranking agreement. Master's Southern university professors rated "agrees to teach an appropriate share of undesirable courses" as the least representative of collegiality ($x=3.68$) as compared to the University I and II professors who rated "assists co-workers with personal problems when needed" as the lowest ($x=3.11$).

There was not ranking agreement between professor groups on the most representative of collegiality indicators. "Negotiates respectfully with co-workers" was the indicator rated the most representative of collegiality by Master's Southern professors ($x=4.50$). University I and II professors rated "demonstrates respect towards co-workers" as the most representative of collegiality ($x=4.61$). "Having positive contact with co-workers outside of own department" had the identical means between university types ($x=4.19$).

Implications

The high level of agreement between Research I and Research II and Masters Southern Universities provides further evidence of the validity of the scale. Additionally, the scale has increased its use for both college types. These results have further reduced the amorphous nature of the construct thus addressing AAUP's initial concerns. The revised scale is more salient and includes fewer items and allows for an expanded use of the assessment tool in faculty evaluations.

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APPENDIX

Table 1

Final List of Incumbent Reviewed and Rated Indicators of Collegiality

Model of Collegiality by OCB Category

Altruism

1. Assists co-workers with job related problems
2. Assists co-workers with personal problems when needed
3. Shares materials when needed
4. Consults with others on work related problems when needed

Conscientiousness

5. Puts forth extra effort on the job
6. Serves on university wide committees
7. Volunteers for appropriate share of extra jobs or assignments
8. Agrees to teach an appropriate share of undesirable courses
9. Displays a generally positive attitude
10. Has positive contact with co-workers within own department
11. Has positive contact with co-workers outside of own department
12. Encourages faculty
13. Supports faculty

Sportsmanship

14. Avoids excessive complaining
15. Avoids petty grievances
16. Is not disruptive in meetings
17. Negotiates respectfully with co-workers
18. Praises achievements or awards of co-workers

Courtesy

19. Does
20. not “gossip” negatively about co-workers
21. Challenges perceived injustices in a respectful manner
22. Demonstrates respect towards co-workers
23. Touches base with relevant persons