Models of Change and the Impact on Organizational Culture: The Sanctuary Model ® Explored

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the construct of change and the impact change has on the organizational culture within nonprofit agencies. Specifically, this research compared The Sanctuary Model ® to more traditional methods of change. The paper examines perceptions and attitudes of staff toward the change process and the resultant organizational culture.

The implications of this study are a step in validating this particular model as a viable "road map" for nonprofits toward effective cultural change that can assist in improving organizational and fiscal practices within the sector.

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THESIS PAPER SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The changes that have faced the non-profit sector and specifically the mental health and social service systems providing care for people has been significant. Over the last 15 to 20 years, the mental health system and many of the nonprofit organizations that make up the mental health and social service systems have experienced dramatic changes in funding and reimbursement with the introduction of managed care (Bloom 2005, Guadagnino 2005). Additionally, there have been significant funding cuts at both the federal and state level for programs that serve the most vulnerable sector in our society. This has resulted in fewer programs to serve the population, increased workloads for staff working in these programs, program and communication fragmentation, and an overall sense of increased "stress" in these service systems (Bloom, 2005).

According to The Interim Report of the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2002), "The Commission is united in the belief that the mental health service delivery system needs dramatic reform. It is becoming clear that the mental health services system does not adequately serve millions of people who need care. While many consumers do receive effective treatments and services, many others do not. The system is fragmented and in disarray-not from lack of commitment and skill of those who deliver care, but from underlying structural, financing, and organizational problems. Many of the problems are due to the 'layering on' of multiple, well-intentioned programs without overall direction, coordination, or consistency. The system's failings

lead to unnecessary and costly disability, homelessness, school failure, and incarceration" (http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov/reports/Interim_Report.htm, Interim Report of the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2002).

Given the challenges facing the mental health and social service systems, there is a need to address the organizational problems that exist in order to more adequately serve the clientele who seek services from those entities. Additionally, in a social and political environment where there continue to be significant funding cuts, there is, more than ever before, a need for nonprofit organizations in the business of mental health and social services to be proactive and strategic in changing organizational and fiscal practices.

The Sanctuary Model of Change and Organizational Culture

The Sanctuary Model ® initially began as a treatment model for adults who had been traumatized as children. However, the creator of this model has more recently applied the ideas to organizations as a model of change that will assist in improving processes which will enhance overall organizational performance (Bloom, 2005). The application of this model is now being directed to the systems that actually provide service to patients or clients; which means that we are exploring issues such as organizational dynamics/organization change, leadership, and organizational culture.

The theory and research is related to constructs primarily found in the business literature and applied to what Dr. Bloom describes in the evolution of The Sanctuary Model as a "model of organizational change". This study tested the information we had from the business literature regarding what Bloom proposes in terms of the change process and the impact on the organizational culture when subscribing to this model in

one's organization. Therefore, this paper explores the construct of change

management on the impact of organizational culture, specifically investigating the

impact of use of The Sanctuary Model ® as an organizational model of change.

Research Methodology and Findings

Participants and Procedure:

Participants were identified from five different mental health/social service

agencies that have experienced significant change in the past several years. Three

agencies are currently using The Sanctuary Model and two agencies are not. The

agencies who participated in the study and who subscribe to The Sanctuary Model

consist of a residential treatment facility for children and adolescents in New York, an

Approved Private School for emotionally disturbed children in Pennsylvania, and a drug

and alcohol treatment program in Oklahoma. The agencies who participated in the

study as part of the test group and who do not subscribe to The Sanctuary Model

include two different mental health residential treatment programs located in

Pennsylvania.

Between the five agencies there are well over 800 employees with a total of 240

employees from the various organizations participating in the overall study. The control

group (non-Sanctuary agencies) responses totaled 144 or 60% of the respondents. The

test group (Sanctuary agencies) responses totaled 96 or 40% of the respondents in the

study.

Participants completed a self-report measure which incorporated measures of

organizational culture and attitudes toward change. The survey was complied from

existing measurement tools. The independent variable of attitude toward change was

measured using an 18-item, five point Likert scale questionnaire developed by Dunham,

et al (1989). The dependent variable of culture was measured using the Denison

Organizational Culture Survey (DOCS) which consisted of a 60-item, five point Likert

scale questionnaire (Denison, 2005). Additionally, personal and demographic data

relating to age, gender, marital status, educational background, income, position within

the agency, and length of employment with the organization were obtained.

Results

Data analysis consisted primarily of descriptive statistics procedures and some

inferential assessment. Descriptive statistical analysis was utilized to present the

primary characteristics of the sample. This included frequencies and percentages.

Because we were seeking to test a new model, the alpha coefficients for each of the

subscales were analyzed. Further analysis involved calculation of means, standard

deviations and inter-correlations of variables. Additionally, we examined the entire data

set conducting a comparative analysis of agencies who subscribe to The Sanctuary

Model and those who do not. Inferential statistics were employed to examine

differences between the Sanctuary and non-Sanctuary agencies. An independent t-test

was conducted in addition to an analysis of variance in order to examine significance

between the two model types.

Cronbach alphas for the new constructs ranged from .82 to .95, a very strong

reliability. Correlational analysis also indicated strong relationships between change,

culture, and organizational performance.

A T-test analysis was conducted which showed the mean levels of Sanctuary respondents were higher on every subscale of the measures than non-Sanctuary respondents. There was a significant positive difference in the strength of culture in the agencies who subscribe to The Sanctuary Model than those organizations that do not employ that same model. Additionally, the attitude toward change for the test group (Sanctuary), while not statistically significant, was more positive than that of the control group (Non-Sanctuary).

The ANOVA was conducted to assess the model of change and the impact of culture and attitudes toward change. This indicated that both culture and attitude towards change in the test organizations were significant at level of < .01, thereby supporting the significance in difference between the test group and control group of this study. Additional details of the findings are available by contacting the author.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this study provided an opportunity to test The Sanctuary Model as a viable model of organizational change. Within the non-profit sector, and especially in mental health and social services, change is a constant factor. With shifts in funding, legislation, and the increasing demands of our population who require community supports, it is critical for these types of organizations to develop strategic means to manage and efficiently respond to the continuous changes. This study's findings provide additional support for The Sanctuary Model as a potential change model within our sector. This is important since The Sanctuary Model evolved from a mental health treatment model one may therefore conclude it is more familiar and sensitive with the

specific needs and idiosyncrasies of nonprofit organizations than that of a pure business

model. By providing an alternative, it may then be possible for agencies within the non-

profit arena to more successfully embrace and employ the process of change using

such a paradigm; thereby positively impacting the culture within the agency. Ultimately

a strong positive culture and effective management of change can strengthen an

organization in their strategic environment while leading to improved financial health,

vitality, and in the end serving clients more effectively.

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