



Organizational Environment

 Williams, N.J., & Glisson, C. (2014). Testing a theory of organizational culture, climate and youth outcomes in child welfare systems: A United States national study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 38(4), 757-767.

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This journal article examines the direct and indirect effects of climate and culture on outcomes for youth in a national sample of 2,380 youth in 73 child welfare systems who participated in the 2nd National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being (NSCAW-II).

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

-  Organizational researchers have studied how characteristics of work environments impact employee and organizational performance since the 1950s. For this study, service effectiveness regarding positive outcomes for children and youth were measured by using the Child Behavior Check List (CBCL) along with the Organizational Social Context (OSC) survey.
-  Organizational culture describes the shared behavioral expectations and norms that characterize and direct behavior at work. Organizational culture impacts how employees prioritize and execute job tasks, how they make sense of work events, and how they experience the psychological impact of the work environment on their personal well-being. In child welfare agencies, cultural norms are associated with how caseworkers view and relate to children and families, their level of availability and responsiveness, and the specific practices they implement.
-  Organizational climate is comprised of shared employee perceptions regarding how their work environment impacts their own psychological well-being and functioning. Organizational climate effects employee motivation and work attitudes such as job satisfaction and commitment.
-  This study assessed the connection between youth outcomes and culture-related items of rigidity, resistance, and proficiency, along with climate dimensions of engagement, functionality, and stress:

Item	Description
Rigid Culture	Highly centralized decision-making, strict divisions of labor, minimal caseworker discretion in implementing work tasks, and an abundance of rules that constrain caseworkers' behavior
Resistant Culture	Caseworkers are expected to reject new ideas and innovations through either apathy (passive noncompliance) or active suppression of change
Proficient Culture	Caseworkers will have up-to-date knowledge to perform their job duties, will be responsive to clients, and will place the well-being of clients first
Engaged Climate	Caseworkers feel able to accomplish many personally meaningful things in their work, remain personally involved in their work, and treat their clients in a personalized way
Functional Climate	Caseworkers feel they receive the support, cooperation, role clarity, and resources they need to successfully perform their job duties
Stressful Climate	Caseworkers experience conflicting demands, feel as though they are unable to accomplish necessary job tasks, and are emotionally exhausted

-  Study findings confirmed that child welfare agencies with more proficient and less resistant organizational cultures exhibited more engaged, more functional, and less stressful organizational climates. In turn, more engaged, more functional, and more stressful climates were associated with improved outcomes for youth (while stress can be negative, caseworkers who expend the energy and effort required to achieve positive outcomes inevitably feel pulled in conflicting directions and perceive their work to be perpetually unfinished, leading to a stressful climate).

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

Results from this study support the direct link between organizational culture and climate and outcomes for children and youth within the child welfare system. Child welfare administrators can support service effectiveness with activities and interventions that are designed to improve specific dimensions of culture and climate.