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The Psychosocial Climate of Religious Congregations[1]

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This study represents an initial attempt to describe and understand the nature of religious congregations and their roles in the lives of members. Congregation Climate Scales (CCS) were developed and evaluated on a sample of 352 members of 13 diverse congregations. Meaningful relationships emerged among the CCS, attributes of the congregation, and attributes of the members. The small black Protestant congregations were particularly distinguishable by their greater expressiveness, stability, social concern, and extrinsic climate scores. The large white Catholic parishes were characterized by lower expressiveness and sense of community scores and a higher activity score. Members perceiving greater autonomy in their congregations reported greater self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Religious institutions represent a vast reservoir of resources in American society. These resources take several forms: people—approximately 131,000,000 congregation members and 473,000 clergy in the United States; settings—an estimated 333,000 churches and synagogues; values and norms—for example, the social approval accorded clergy and members in their attempts to reach out and help others; and finances—the capacity of religious systems to build economic support for their efforts (Jacquet, 1977;

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Haugk, 1976; President's Commission on Mental Health, 1978; Pargament, 1982).

These resources place religious institutions in a unique position. Few people progress through their lives without participation in some of the rituals (e.g., baptism, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, wedding, last rites, funeral) and/or regular activities (e.g., religious services, religious holidays, social action, educational and social programs) of churches and synagogues (Pargament, 1982). Through these rituals and involvements many people are provided assistance in dealing with life changes, opportunities for interpersonal support and personal development, and more generally, a sense of meaning in life (Kaplan, 1976; Moberg, 1962).

While many psychologists have acknowledged the central role of religious institutions, they have tended to view congregations as quasi-mental health agencies, the clergy as quasi-mental health professionals, and members as potential clients (Rappaport, 1981). In this process, the special mission of churches and synagogues, and the special roles, structures, and processes developed by these institutions to achieve their goals, have not been examined. Empirically based psychological studies of churches and synagogues as *religious* institutions which impact on their members are relatively scarce (Willie, 1972).

Those few studies, however, have been suggestive. Wicker and Mehler (1971), for instance, focused on the church as a behavior setting. They found that members belonging to churches of different sizes vary in their ease of assimilation and amount and kind of participation in the congregation. Hall and Schneider (1973) identified several organizational factors within the Roman Catholic church (e.g., work autonomy, job challenge) which relate to the psychological satisfaction, self-image, and self-esteem of clergy. Kahoe and Meadow (1977) reported that the degree of congruency between an individual's personal religious perspective and that of his/her respective church is associated with several personality dimensions as assessed by the 16 PF scales. Pargament, Tyler, and Steele (1979) found that churches and synagogues differ in their social control and religious belief-transmitting systems. Moreover, these differences relate to differences in the psychological and social well-being of the church/synagogue member. For example, members of congregations characterized by nonparticipative restrictive social control processes and authoritarian religious belief systems manifest less trust in others and a greater sense of control by powerful others than members of more participative–less authoritarian congregations. Jason and Lattimore (1982) demonstrated increased attendance at religious services following an intervention to strengthen the social involvement of members in the church. Maton (1982) evaluated the impact of an economic bartering system on the personal, social, and financial well-being

of members of a Christian fellowship. Pargament, Echemendia, Johnson, McGath, Maatman, and Baxter (in press) conducted an assessment of the religious needs of college students which served as a basis for the planning of programs by campus clergy. These studies as a group provide preliminary evidence of the significance churches and synagogues hold for the lives of their members. They also suggest that psychologists can both stimulate and measure change within religious settings.

Lacking in these disparate investigations, however, is a shared conceptual framework for viewing churches and synagogues. The lack of *understanding* of religious settings represents a substantive problem. It limits our ability to generate and examine specific questions. It limits our effectiveness as collaborators and agents of change. As Murrell (1973) has noted, "Before you intervene, know thy system" (p. 197). And, more generally, it poses a barrier to the development of a more unified approach to work with religious systems. In this study, the notion of congregational climate is proposed and examined as one concept contributing to a clearer understanding of religious systems.

CONCEPTUALIZING CLIMATE

The construct of climate has received considerable attention from behavioral scientists. It has been studied in a variety of systems—educational, treatment, industrial, family, and various community settings (excluding religious ones)—through a variety of methods (Powell & Butterfield, 1978; Trickett & Wilkinson, 1979; Hellriegel & Slocum, 1974). Generally, "climate" has been used to refer to psychologically meaningful representations of an environment (James, Hater, Gent, & Bruni, 1978). These representations grow out of the human effort to understand and create order in the environment (Heider, 1958). Their development is affected by the nature of the environment as well as the personality, perceptual and cognitive characteristics, and learning experience of the individual. Further, these representations provide norms and expectancies which serve as a basis for determining appropriate behavior in a context. Schneider (1975) summarizes these notions succinctly: "as individuals attempt to adapt to their environment, they perceive, explore and think about their environment. The result of these cognitive activities is the apprehension of order and this apprehension functions as a basis for behavior" (pp. 451-452). In this sense, climate has been defined as a central cognitive construct which intervenes between the setting and the attitudes and behavior of the individual.

Implicit in this encapsulated summary of climate theory are several assumptions which have been examined empirically:

First, it is assumed that different settings should have distinctive climates. Since climate is, in part, shaped by the setting, individuals within a milieu should to some extent share a view of their setting. Moreover, the shared perceptions which characterize one milieu should differ from those of another. In this vein, Moos (1974a) notes that "environments have unique personalities just as people do." His work and that of others indicates that the climates of different settings are indeed distinctive. Further, they can be reliably described (Litwin & Stringer, 1968; Pace, 1969; Stern, 1970; Moos, 1973).

Second, it is assumed that climate is a psychosocial construct; that is, it relates to the nature of the setting, and it relates to the personal characteristics of the member. Considerable research has pointed to the associations between members' perceptions of a milieu and the structures and processes of the setting. George and Bishop (1971), for instance, found that more bureaucratic educational systems are seen by teachers as less open in their climate than less bureaucratic systems. Moos (1974b), summarizing several studies, concludes that increased size of treatment wards relates to lower levels of perceived support and spontaneity, and higher levels of staff control on the wards. Numerous studies have also underscored the significant implications of climate for the attitudes and behavior of individuals. For example, several investigations have indicated that productivity and job satisfaction are greater among workers who perceive their work setting to be friendly and supportive of innovation (Hellriegel & Slocum, 1974). Other studies have documented the relationship between perceptions of treatment wards and behavioral change in patients (Alden, 1978; Moos, Mehren, & Moos, 1978).

Finally, it is assumed that the relationships between climate and the setting and climate and the individual develop through a process of reciprocal causation. This notion has been the subject of extensive theoretical work (Endler & Magnusson, 1976; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Holahan & Spearly, 1980). While methodological difficulties have limited the amount of empirical attention it has received, the assumption of reciprocal causation is noteworthy. It suggests that the setting will influence the members' perceptions. In support of this assertion, several studies involving a manipulation of organizational structures have resulted in changes in climate (Schneider, 1975). The assumption of reciprocal causation suggests that members' perceptions will influence the setting as well. In this vein, discrepancies between members' views of the actual and ideal climate within a setting have been proposed as a basis for organizational change (Insel, 1980).

A process of reciprocal influence should also characterize the relationship between climate and other individual attributes and behaviors. For instance, several studies have found that perceptions of an environment influence the likelihood of an individual joining, becoming involved, and remaining in that setting (Moos, Shelton, & Petty, 1973; Schneider, 1973). Other studies suggest that an individual's expectations, personality, and cognitive skills affect his/her perceptions of the environment. Greenberg, Obitz, and Kaye (1978), for example, reported that more internally oriented patients perceived more support and clarity and less anger and aggression in their treatment wards than less internally oriented patients within the first 2 weeks of treatment.

Conceptualizing Congregation Climate

Drawing from this theoretical and empirical literature, congregation climate is defined as psychologically meaningful representations of the church/synagogue. As depicted in Figure 1, congregation climate is viewed as a variable which intervenes between the church or synagogue and the individual member. Furthermore, as the bidirectional arrows suggest, it is a psychosocial construct which both shapes and is shaped by the nature of the institution and its members. Illustrative institutional and member attributes of import for congregation climate are shown in Figure 1.

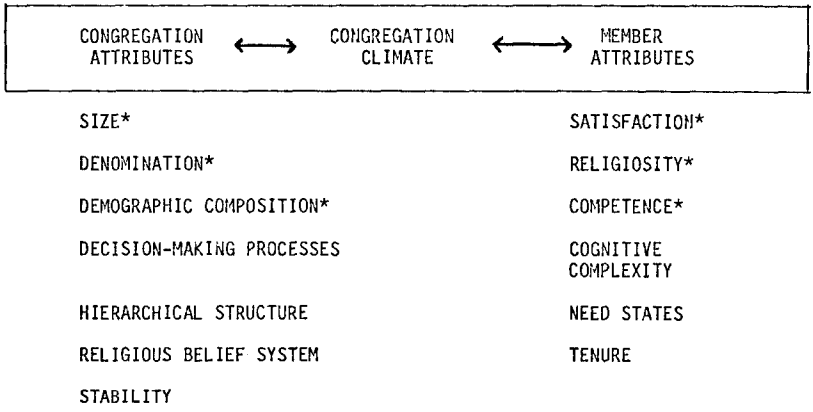

Fig. 1. Congregation climate as a variable intervening between the church/synagogue and the member.

This view of congregation climate, derived from general climate research and theory, raises a number of questions beyond the scope of any single empirical study. In this initial investigation, three basic hypotheses concerning congregation climate are examined.

1. Congregations will manifest distinctive climates.
2. The climate of the congregation will relate significantly to attributes of the institution (e.g., size, denomination, racial composition).
3. The climate of the congregation will relate significantly to attributes of the member (e.g., satisfaction, religiosity, competence).

More generally, this investigation addresses not only these hypotheses, but the underlying construct of congregation climate and its value as a concept contributing to a greater understanding of religious systems.

METHOD

Measures

Instruments were developed and selected to measure congregation climate, attributes of the congregation, and attributes of the member.

Congregation Climate

Numerous measures of climate have been developed for use in a variety of settings (Litwin & Stringer, 1968; Stern, 1970; Moos, 1973). These scales could have been adapted for use in religious systems. While more economical, this approach would have rested on the assumption that the most psychologically meaningful dimensions of religious settings are the same as those of other settings (e.g., schools, treatment wards, businesses). Arguing against this assumption, several writers have addressed the special character of churches and synagogues (Moberg, 1962; Yinger, 1970; Roozen & Carroll, 1982). These systems have goals, roles, structures, resources, and belief systems which set them somewhat apart from other settings. Therefore, rather than adapt a foreign climate instrument to the congregation, a congregation climate measure was developed specifically suited to religious systems.

Defining Dimensions of Congregation Climate. Dimensions of congregation climate were identified through three methods: (a) The authors visited and participated in a variety of religious settings; (b) A wide body of literature was reviewed in addition to the organization climate literature previously cited. The theoretical and empirical work of sociologists and church planners was particularly helpful in defining

relevant climate dimensions within religious settings (Roof, Hoge, Dyble, & Hadaway, 1979; Yinger, 1970; Wagner, 1976; Walrath, 1979; McGaw & Wright, 1979); and (c) Structured interviews were conducted with clergy and members from nine Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religious institutions. They were asked to identify the dimensions of church/synagogue life which affect the well-being of the congregation member and of the institution itself. The interviews were tape-recorded and content analyzed by the authors.

Through these processes, the authors developed a list of the dimensions of congregations most psychologically salient to the members. Ten dimensions of congregation climate were defined:

1. Autonomy: The extent to which the congregation encourages or allows individuality in its members. The degree to which differences in ideas, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes are expressed in the congregation.
2. Sense of Community: The degree to which members feel a sense of support, fellowship, and belonging in the congregation. The extent to which they interact and cooperate with each other, both inside and outside of the congregation.
3. Activity: The extent to which members develop, offer, and support a variety of programs and activities within the congregation.
4. Social Concern: The degree to which the congregation supports community-oriented activities, and encourages awareness and involvement with current social problems. The extent the congregation is involved in social concerns.
5. Openness to Change: The degree to which the congregation is receptive to change in programs, approaches, and ideas. The extent the congregation implements new programs and activities.
6. Stability: The degree to which the congregation has maintained itself as a viable and well-functioning system.
7. Expressiveness: The degree to which the congregation encourages the expression of emotion/feelings. The extent emotions are openly expressed in the congregation.
8. Order/Clarity: The degree to which the congregation orders and structures its activities and clearly conveys this structure to its members.
9. Intrinsic Religious Orientation: The degree to which congregation members are seen as living consistently with their religious beliefs and principles.
10. Extrinsic Religious Orientation: The degree to which church members are seen as involved in religion primarily for utilitarian reasons.

These 10 dimensions of congregation climate were shared with five clergy and highly involved members. Their feedback indicated that the dimensions represented important elements of congregation life.

Developing Items to Measure Congregation Climate. The authors generated approximately 20 to 25 items for each climate dimension. The tape-recorded interviews with clergy and members were helpful in this regard. Each item was descriptive of one climate dimension. Each item was also descriptive of one of eight areas of congregation life. These areas were identified through the same processes used to define climate dimensions. The eight areas of congregation life included: the clergy, weekly religious services, education programs, facilities, policies, social programs, leaders, and the members. Thus, the climate measure consists of items representing a matrix of climate dimensions by areas of congregation life. Items illustrating each climate dimension and each area of congregation life are presented in Table I.[3]

The climate items were sorted by five judges into the 10 climate dimensions. An item was dropped from the pool if more than one judge (< 80% agreement) placed it in the inappropriate category. The climate items assigned to the dimensions were also shared with five clergy and highly involved congregation members. Their feedback was used to refine the climate items.

The initial version of the Congregation Climate Scale (CCS) used in this study consisted of approximately 15 items per climate dimension resulting in a total of 150 items. Positively and negatively phrased items were selected for each dimension to avoid the problem of acquiescent response set. Congregation members responded to each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "completely descriptive" to "not at all descriptive" of their congregation.

Attributes of the Congregation

It was beyond the scope of this study to examine the relationships among congregation climate and the variety of attributes of churches and synagogues. Instead three congregational attributes were considered: racial composition, religious identification, and size. Each of these attributes has been described as a meaningful distinguishing element of religious congregations (Cone, 1975; Moberg, 1962; Wicker & Mehler, 1971). The attributes were measured by a questionnaire which was completed by the clergy from each congregation.

[3]Since the climate scales were developed to have general utility for a variety of religious settings, references to denomination-specific terms were replaced (e.g., parish, priest, deacon, mass, Jesus Christ) with more generic terms (e.g., congregation, clergy, religious services). In work with one denomination exclusively, the language could be modified. A copy of the scales is available from the first author.

Table I.

Climate dimension	Congregation aspect	Sample item
Expressiveness	Members	Other than at weddings and funerals it is rare for members to express their emotions at church.
Openness to change	Policies, rules, and regulations	Most members do not support changes in church rules.
Stability	Leaders	Our church has little trouble finding members to serve as leaders.
Social concern	Programs and activities	This church offers training for members who wish to help the sick, lonely, and aged.
Autonomy	Education	In our religious education classes people are encouraged to say what is on their minds.
Order/clarity	Services	Services are sometimes confusing and hard to follow.
Sense of community	Clergy	The clergy know most of the members by name.
Level of activity	Services	This church has different services to meet the needs of different members.
Intrinsic religious orientation	Clergy	The clergy provide models to the congregation in living their lives.
Extrinsic religious orientation	Members	Many members attend services because of social pressures.

Attributes of the Members

Similarly, the entire range of member attributes could not be examined in this study. Three characteristics of members were selected for study: religiosity, congregation satisfaction, and psychosocial effectiveness. These characteristics have been described as important personal attributes predictive of other attitudes and behaviors (King, 1967; Smith & Ironson, 1979; Smith, 1968). They were measured through several instruments described below.

Religiosity: Religion has been conceptualized as a complex multidimensional construct (King, 1967; Allport & Ross, 1967; Pargament, Steele,

& Tyler, 1979). Three dimensions of an individual's religious orientation were measured in this study.

(a) Fundamentalism. The Fundamentalism scale of Batson (1976) was used to assess the degree to which members espouse orthodox religious beliefs.

(b) Intrinsic Religiosity. Feagin's (1964) Intrinsic Religiosity scale served as a measure of the extent the individual believes he/she lives by his/her religious principles.

(c) Congregation Involvement. The degree of member involvement in his/her congregation was measured by five items identified through factor analysis. These items were frequency of attendance at religious services, frequency of participation in congregational social activities, the number of hours spent in the congregation a week, the number of congregational activities the member is involved in, and the number of congregation members known by their first name (Wicker & Mehler, 1971). In this sample, the internal consistency of the scale was modest (coefficient $\alpha = .64$).

Congregation Satisfaction. This attribute of members was assessed by the Congregation Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) developed by Silverman (1982), and patterned after the widely used Job Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969). The CSQ contains a set of scales measuring members' satisfaction with the eight aspects of congregation life noted earlier: leaders, education, members, facilities, services, policies, clergy, and special programs and activities. Each satisfaction scale contains adjectives or short phrases descriptive of these aspects of the congregation. In a preliminary investigation the satisfaction scales were found to have high internal consistency (coefficient alpha ranging from .90 for education to .67 for facilities) as well as adequate test-retest reliability (ranging from .82 for policies, rules, and regulations to .62 for clergy). The CSQ scales also demonstrated significant evidence of convergent validity and moderate evidence of discriminant validity. In addition, the CSQ scales related significantly to demographic measures and a measure of congregation involvement.

Psychosocial Effectiveness. Building on previous empirical and theoretical work, Smith (1968) and Tyler (1978) have defined competent psychosocial functioning in terms of three attributes: a positive set of attitudes toward oneself, a favorable attitude toward others, and a set of active planful problem-solving skills. Research has demonstrated relationships between this configuration and relevant external criteria of effective functioning. The attributes of psychosocial competence were operationalized in this study through the following measures:

(a) Self-attitudes. These were assessed by Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This scale consists of 10 Likert-type items which have demonstrated high internal consistency and test-retest reliability. The

scale has related positively to clinical measures, and a variety of social and behavioral consequences.

(b) Attitude Toward Others. These were measured by Rotter's (1967) Trust Scale and a Scale of Life Satisfaction (Smith & Ironson, 1979). An 18-item Likert-type measure, the Rotter Trust Scale was used to assess the favorableness of an individual's expectations concerning the outcome of interactions with others (Rotter, 1967). The scale has been used in a number of settings. Rotter reported test-retest reliability estimates from .56 to .68, as well as significant relationships between the scale and various measures of personal adjustment. The Scale of Life Satisfaction was developed through factor analyses of items concerning present and long-term satisfaction with life. One very strong evaluative factor emerged. The internal consistency of items forming this scale was .88 (Smith & Ironson, 1979).

(c) Problem-solving skills were measured by Tyler's (1978) Behavioral Attributes of Psychosocial Competence (BAPC) scale. This measure assesses the degree to which the individual defines problems in a realistic manner, sets appropriate goals, pursues these goals in an active planful manner, and learns from his/her successes and failures. Tyler reported adequate internal consistency (KR = .84) for the BAPC. The scale also discriminates between exemplary and marginal high school students, black workers, senior citizens, and church and synagogue members. The short form of the scale consists of 11 forced-choice items.

Additionally, each member completed questions concerning their age, sex, educational level, occupation, and marital status. The socioeconomic status of members was measured by Hollingshead and Redlich's (1958) Two-Factor Index of Social Position. Finally, to assess the relationship of congregational climate to a social desirability response set, a short Likert-form of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale was used (Greenwald & Satow, 1969).

Procedure

The present study attempted to develop an understanding of a variety of religious settings. Thus, a diverse rather than homogeneous sample of churches and synagogues was approached. Specifically, religious leaders from 18 churches/synagogues were asked individually to participate in a collaborative process involving religious and social science resources. Of these 18 leaders, 5 chose not to involve themselves in the project (3 Jewish and 2 Protestant). Unfortunately then, synagogues are not represented in this sample of congregations.

Clergy who agreed to participate were asked to select a minimum of 10% of their congregation or maximum of 50 members for involvement in

the study. Members were chosen from the congregation roster through a systematic sampling plan (Shaeffer, Mendenhall, & Ott, 1980). The investigators worked with the clergy to facilitate adequate selection through this process.

The clergy and support staff from each congregation contacted their members and arranged a meeting at the congregation where the measures were administered by the investigators without the clergy present. Members completed the measures anonymously. Following completion of the scales, informal discussion regarding the project took place.

Approximately 1 month after completion of the questionnaire, 25 members who had volunteered to respond to additional surveys completed the CCS via mail to provide an estimate of test-retest reliability.

Each congregation received a written feedback report. This report consisted of information specific to the congregation as well as more general findings from the project. If the congregation desired, a personal feedback visit was arranged.

Sample

Thirteen religious congregations located in southeast Michigan and northwest Ohio participated in this study. As can be seen in Table II, the congregations vary in size, denomination, locale, and sociodemographic composition of their members.

The sample was comprised of the 13 clergymen from the churches and 352 members. Thirty-seven percent of the members were male, 71% were married, and 22% were black. The average member was 44 years of age, had some college education, and had belonged to the church for 18 years.

Table II. Characteristics of Participating Churches

Denomination	Sample size	Church size	Town size	Years of membership	Race	Proportion males (%)
Baptist	10	230	11,000	30	Black	17
Roman Catholic	36	6,200	350,000	10-25	White	46
Nazarene	24	256	350,000	10	White	36
Roman Catholic	38	4,000	26,000	4	White	40
Lutheran	44	600	2,500	30	White	50
African Methodist Evangelical	33	1,100	350,000	20	Black	37
Roman Catholic	24	2,500	350,000	30	White	46
Lutheran	24	120	26,000	5	White	47
Lutheran	29	1,400	1,250,000	10	White	45
African Methodist	10	100	36,000	15	Black	20
Methodist	25	800	1,250,000	6	White	48
Baptist	23	400	350,000	35	Black	25
Presbyterian	33	330	1,250,000	10	White	40

On the average, members attended religious services once a week, spent 1-2 hours a week in church, participated in two church activities, and prayed privately outside of church once a day.

The characteristics of the sample were compared to the characteristics of the entire membership of the churches as estimated by the clergy. In the total church population, 38% of the members were male, 65% were married, and 10% were black. They averaged 46.5 years of age and had belonged to the church for an average of 19 years. In general, the sample and population of members were similar with respect to these characteristics. Precise estimates of the level of member involvement in the church were not obtained for the total church membership. Thus, the representativeness of the sample of this dimension could not be determined.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

As a prelude to the examination of the three hypotheses of this study, the Congregation Climate Scales (CCS) were further refined and their psychometric properties were evaluated.

Items selected for use in the climate scales in this initial study met three criteria: standard deviations greater than 1; item-total scale correlations greater than .25; and item-social desirability scale correlations less than .15. Of the original 150 climate items, 78 met these criteria. These items were also representative of the eight areas of congregation life.

In Table III, the distribution statistics and estimates of reliability are presented for the CCS. Scores on each of the CCS were generally normally distributed. The CCS also demonstrated evidence of internal consistency (coefficient α .69 to .83). Test-retest reliability estimates of the CCS were

Table III. Distribution Statistics and Reliability of the CCS

CCS	No. of items	Scale mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Coeffi-cient alpha	Test-retest
Expressiveness	8	21.04	7.54	.41	.81	.57
Openness to change	6	19.61	4.81	−.40	.72	.71
Stability	8	31.40	5.99	−.76	.76	.66
Social concern	9	28.79	7.60	.03	.82	.81
Autonomy	7	23.44	5.07	.00	.70	.57
Order/clarity	9	35.51	5.97	−.87	.72	.89
Sense of community	10	36.52	7.30	−.42	.83	.72
Activity	7	19.36	6.11	.25	.75	.68
Intrinsic	7	24.78	4.61	−.18	.69	.82
Extrinsic	7	15.88	5.13	.48	.72	.77

more variable than the estimates of internal consistency (*r*'s .57 to .89), perhaps reflecting the smaller sample ($n = 25$) completing both forms. Nevertheless, they offer modest support for the temporal stability of the CCS.

The intercorrelations among the CCS are presented in Table IV. The correlations were of low to moderately high magnitude (*r*'s .02 to .58), and point to some shared variance among the scales. Generally, however, the correlations were substantially smaller than the estimates of scale reliability. Thus, while related, the CCS appear to measure different phenomena. As indicated in Table IV, the correlations of the CCS with the Marlowe-Crowne social desirability scale were low, and for the most part, nonsignificant. In short, these analyses provided initial psychometric support for the CCS, and their use as tools in the present study.

Hypothesis 1. Congregations Will Manifest Distinctive Climates

Support for this hypothesis rests on two related findings; that members of different congregations view their congregations differently, and that members of the same congregation view their congregation similarly. To examine the first possibility, a multivariate analysis of variance was performed which determined whether the CCS discriminate among the members of different churches. In this analysis the 13 churches served as the independent variable and the 10 climate scales served as the dependent variables. The CCS did discriminate significantly among the churches, Pillai's trace $F(120, 2470) = 6.67, p < .001$. The multivariate eta^2 associated with this analysis was quite high (.97), indicating that 97% of the variance in this analysis was attributable to differences among the members of these 13 churches (Kerlinger & Pedhauzer, 1973).

Table IV. CCS Intercorrelations[a]

CCS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Expressiveness		.17	.09	.25	.24	.23	.45	.03	.21	.11	.00
2. Openness to change			.44	.31	.28	.47	.38	.27	.13	−.34	.11
3. Stability				.21	.10	.51	.23	.30	.14	−.41	.07
4. Social concern					.48	.49	.35	.58	.41	.06	.06
5. Autonomy						.45	.49	.41	.57	.02	.06
6. Order/clarity							.49	.37	.43	−.34	.14
7. Sense of community								.11	.47	−.14	.06
8. Activity									.39	.12	.00
9. Intrinsic										−.03	.08
10. Extrinsic											−.11
11. Social desirability											

[a] $r > .09, p < .05; r > .13, p < .01; r > .15, p < .001$.

Table V. Discrimination Among Churches by CCS and Homogeneity of CCS Scores Within Churches

CCS	F^a	Eta²	Church no.–Homogeneity coefficient													
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Md *H*
Expressiveness	40.11	.60	.68	.82	.75	.77	.71	.67	.84	.79	.75	.89	.93	.75	.65	.75
Openness to change	7.17	.21	*b*	.52	.48	.21	.21	.45	.41	.82	*b*	*b*	.60	.49	.75	.45
Stability	15.57	.38	.32	.61	.91	.90	.61	.83	*b*	.36	*b*	.73	.53	.26	.50	.53
Social concern	17.26	.42	.73	.64	.78	.60	.58	.74	.72	.70	.69	.79	.67	*b*	.71	.70
Autonomy	3.74	.13	*b*	.44	*b*	.40	.36	*b*	*b*	.71	.32	.75	*b*	*b*	.52	.32
Order/clarity	3.94	.14	*b*	.64	.48	.53	.38	.79	*b*	.76	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	.66	.38
Sense of community	10.99	.29	.61	.54	.47	.62	.72	.53	*b*	.75	*b*	*b*	.50	*b*	.72	.53
Activity	19.85	.43	.15	.62	.32	.72	.72	.70	.55	.67	.72	.63	.71	.62	.59	.63
Intrinsic	3.26	.11	.49	*b*	.62	.57	.16	*b*	.78	.50	.22	.77	*b*	*b*	.44	.44
Extrinsic	2.97	.10	*b*	.43	.66	.63	.29	.50	*b*	.75	*b*	*b*	.11	*b*	*b*	.11
Mean *H*			.23	.57	.55	.62	.48	.60	.20	.73	.11	.68	.51	*b*	.62	

[a]All $F(12, 340)$, $p < .001$.
[b]H ≤ .00.

To determine the discriminative power of each of the climate scales, individual univariate analyses of variance were conducted for each of the climate scales with the 13 churches serving as the independent variable. In Table V, the univariate F tests and associated eta^2 statistics are presented for each of the climate scales. The univariate F tests for the 10 climate scales were statistically significant at the .001 level. The eta^2 statistics reveal that the Expressiveness, Activity, Social Concern, Stability, Sense of Community, and Openness to Change scales discriminated fairly to quite strongly among churches. The Autonomy, Order/Clarity, Intrinsic, and Extrinsic scales discriminated among churches less strongly, but nevertheless significantly. Thus the results of these analyses indicate that members' views of climate of their respective churches are significantly different from each other.

The multivariate analysis of variance, univariate analyses of variance, and estimates of effect size show that the CCS discriminated well among the churches. These analyses do not, however, provide a direct measure of the degree of homogeneity of members' views of their congregation. To determine the degree to which members of the same congregation view their congregation similarly, homogeneity coefficients (H) were computed for each of the 10 climate scales in each of the churches (Tryon & Bailey, 1970). These coefficients can be interpreted similarly to correlation coefficients. When there is total agreement among members' views of a church, $H = 1.00$. When there is as much or more variance in members' views within a church as there is in members' views within the entire group of churches, $H \leq .00$.

The homogeneity coefficients are shown in Table V. With the exception of church 12 the median H for the churches ranged from .11 to .73. These coefficients indicate that in most congregations members hold, at least to a modest degree, similar perceptions of their respective church. Clearly, however, in some churches the homogeneity of members' perceptions is greater than in others.[4]

The results of the analyses of variance and analyses of homogeneity provide fairly strong support for Hypothesis 1. Members of different churches report quite different climates. Members of the same congregation generally report similar climates, although the degree of similarity varies from church to church. Together these results point to the distinctiveness of the climates of these congregations.

Before continuing, it is important to note that the homogeneity among members' perceptions suggests the scores of members on select climate

[4]The homogeneity of members' perceptions also varies across the climate dimensions (Median H from .11 to .75). Corroborating the results of the univariate F tests, the homogeneity coefficients were largest for the Expressiveness, Social Concern, Activity, Stability, Sense of Community, and Openness to Change scales.

dimensions within a church can be aggregated meaningfully. These aggregate CCS scores may then serve as a basis for further social/ecological level analyses. Conversely, to the extent that members' perceptions of their church are not homogeneous, CCS scores can be treated as individual difference variables for use in psychological/individual level analyses. The relatively small number of churches in this initial sample, however, restricts analyses of the CCS in this study to the psychological/individual level.

Hypothesis 2. The Climate of the Congregation Will Relate Significantly To Attributes of the Institution

Relationships were examined between the CCS and three attributes of the congregation: racial composition (white vs. black membership), religious identification (Protestant vs. Roman Catholic), and size (small = less than 400 members, moderate = 400 to 1,100 members, large = more than 1,100 members). However, as was indicated in Table II, race, denomination, and church size are confounded within this sample of churches; that is, the black churches are small and Protestant, and the Catholic churches are large and white. In an attempt to sort out the effects of these three variables, the churches were placed into four categories: small black Protestant, small white Protestant, moderate white Protestant, and large white Catholic. A multivariate analysis of variance was performed with the CCS as dependent variables and these four groups as the independent variable. Univariate F tests were then calculated to assess the degree to which individual climate scales discriminate among these four groups. As points of contrast, multivariate analyses of variance were also conducted with the CCS as dependent variables and *each* of the three attributes of the congregation as independent variables. The results of these analyses are presented in Table VI.

Each of the multivariate analyses of variance yielded significant results.[5] However, the CCS discriminated among the four-group classification more strongly (η^2 = .81) than among either of the individual institutional variables. The size of this effect offers strong support for the

[5]With respect to race, members of the black churches reported significantly more Expressiveness, Stability, Order/Clarity, Sense of Community, and Extrinsic Religious Orientation than members of the white churches. Members of the Protestant churches perceived significantly greater Expressiveness and Sense of Community, and less Social Concern and Activity than members of the Roman Catholic churches. As church size increases members report significantly less Expressiveness and Sense of Community and greater Social Concern, Stability, and Activity. Members of small and large churches perceived greater Openness to Change and Autonomy, and less of an Extrinsic Religious Orientation than members of moderate-sized churches.

Table VI. Multivariate and Univariate Discrimination by CCS Among Churches Grouped by Congregation Attributes

	Congregation attribute							
	Race		Denomination		Size		Race × Denom. × Size	
CCS	*F*	Eta²	*F*	Eta²	*F*	Eta²	*F*	Eta²
Expressiveness	126.11[c]	.27	38.27[c]	.10	59.70[c]	.26	68.90[c]	.42
Openness to change	.69	–	.36	–	11.71[c]	.07	12.55[c]	.12
Stability	4.80[a]	.01	2.91	–	5.01[b]	.03	3.70[a]	.04
Social concern	3.15	–	24.45[c]	.07	6.88[b]	.04	12.47[c]	.13
Autonomy	.00	–	.58	–	2.98[a]	.02	1.96	–
Order/clarity	4.26[a]	.01	.13	–	1.69	–	4.93[b]	.05
Sense of community	10.43[b]	.03	55.59[c]	.14	39.03[c]	.19	32.00[c]	.26
Activity	2.53	–	103.12[c]	.24	46.44[c]	.22	39.76[c]	.31
Intrinsic	.00	–	.39	–	2.20	–	2.20	–
Extrinsic	7.54[a]	.02	1.08	–	3.24[a]	.02	5.01[b]	.05
Pillai's Trace	11.71[c]		27.71[c]		14.87[c]		12.69[c]	
Multivariate eta²	.29		.52		.65		.81	

[a] $p < .05$.
[b] $p < .01$.
[c] $p < .001$.

hypothesized relationship between congregation climate and those attributes of congregation life.

In Figure 2, the means are depicted for the four size-race-denomination groups on the eight CCS yielding significant univariate *F* statistics. The small black Protestant churches are characterized by a markedly high score on the Expressiveness scale, a high score on the Sense of Community, Stability, Social Concern, and Extrinsic scales, and low score on the Activity scale. The small white Protestant churches manifest high Expressiveness, Sense of Community, and Openness to Change scores, and low Activity scores. The moderate-sized white Protestant churches are described by low scores on the Activity, Stability, Openness to Change, Order/Clarity, and Social Concern scales. Finally, the large white Catholic churches manifest high Activity, Stability, and Social Concern scores, and low Expressiveness and Sense of Community scores.

Points of contrast among the church groups are particularly interesting to note. For example, the small black and white Protestant churches have similar climate profiles, with the exception of the greater Expressiveness, Stability, Social Concern, and Extrinsic scores in the black churches. The moderate white Protestant churches stand somewhat apart from the other churches in their lower Openness to Change, Social Concern, and Order/Clarity scores. The large white Catholic churches are

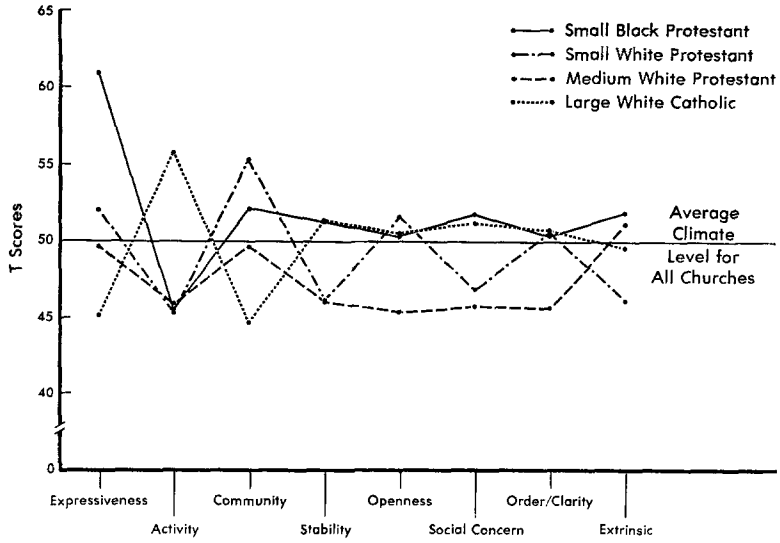

Fig. 2. The climate profiles of churches grouped by size, race, and denomination.

particularly distinguishable by their lower Expressiveness and Sense of Community scores and higher Activity score.

Hypothesis 3: The Climate of the Congregation Will Relate Significantly to Attributes of the Member

To assess the relationships among the CCS and the individual variables, multiple regression analyses were conducted with the CCS as predictors and the religiosity, satisfaction, and competence variables as criteria.[6] The results of these analyses are presented in Table VII. As indicated by the multivariate F tests, the CCS were significant predictors of each of these individual variables. The CCS were relatively strong

[6]Intercorrelations were calculated among the CCS and several demographic variables: sex, age, education, marital status, and SES. The correlations were low order and nonsignificant (r's from .00 to .15) with two exceptions. Members of higher SES viewed their churches as less Expressive ($r = -.20$) and more active ($R = .17$). To assess the effects of these demographic variables on the relationships between the CCS and individual criteria, the multiple regression analyses were repeated with the effects of age, SES, and sex identification partialed out. The size and pattern of relationships between the CCS and criteria were generally quite similar.

Table VII. Regressions of Religiosity and Competence Indices on CCS

	Religiosity			Congregation satisfaction[a]								Competence			
CCS	Fundament-alism	Involve-ment	Intrin-sic	S	M	P	E	L	SP	F	C	Self-esteem	Trust	Coping skills	Life satisfaction
Expressiveness	.40[d]	.14	−.18[c]	.11	−.07	.04	.08	−.06	−.02	−.30	.14	−.10	−.19[c]	−.15	−.19[c]
Openness to change	−.08	.04	—	.10	.24[d]	.13	.21[c]	.23[d]	.09	−.07	−.08	−.03	.12	.02	−.03
Stability	.10	−.01	.11	.22[c]	.11	.03	.22[c]	—	.15	.08	.16	.10	−.05	.10	−.01
Social concern	−.05	−.21[b]	.18[b]	.17[b]	−.01	−.07	−.04	−.03	.04	—	.23[c]	.03	−.08	−.11	.02
Autonomy	−.08	.08	−.04	.12	.13	.03	−.01	.13	.09	.13	−.08	.23[c]	.09	—	.23[c]
Order/clarity	.09	−.08	.16	−.05	−.12	.23[b]	.03	.04	.01	.07	.02	.06	.15	−.06	−.06
Sense of community	.06	.28[d]	.06	.06	.38[d]	.14	.14	.30[d]	.23[c]	.16	.19[b]	.08	.08	.24[c]	.07
Level of activity	−.34[d]	.04	−.16	.04	.07	.09	.06	.13	.20[c]	.04	.12	.03	.06	.17	.11
Intrinsic religion	.25[d]	.21[d]	.33[d]	.08	.11	.01	.11	.04	.02	−.13	.02	−.07	—	−.12	.03
Extrinsic religion	.10	−.04	—	−.10	−.03	.02	.09	.01	−.05	—	−.05	−.07	−.11	—	−.11
R^2	.37	.22	.24	.32	.39	.21	.27	.34	.32	.10	.26	.12	.13	.08[c]	.11
F	13.98[d]	6.54[d]	9.77[d]	11.65[d]	15.72[d]	6.20[d]	8.94[d]	13.37[d]	11.12[d]	3.40[d]	8.41[d]	3.30[d]	3.89[d]	2.54[c]	2.87[c]

[a] S = Services; M = Members; P = Policies; E = Education; L = Leaders; SP = Social Programs; F = Facilities; C = Clergy.
[b] $p < .025$.
[c] $p < .01$.
[d] $p < .001$.

predictors of the individual religiosity variables and the satisfaction of the members with their church. They predict individual competence modestly but nevertheless significantly.

It appears that each of the CCS relates to the individual criteria in a different fashion. Some scales relate to one of the individual dimensions exclusively. Openness to Change and Stability are linked positively to various aspects of the members' satisfaction with the church. The members' perceptions of Autonomy in the church relate exclusively and directly to the competence variables of self-esteem and life satisfaction. Order/Clarity is predictive of members' satisfaction with Policies in the church alone. The Intrinsic CCS relates exclusively and directly to the religiosity variables of fundamentalism, central involvement in the church, and individual intrinsic orientation.

Other scales related to more than one individual dimension. Sense of Community is predictive of central involvement in the church, satisfaction with members, leaders, activities, facilities, and clergy, and active coping skills. The perception of Social Concern in the church is associated with peripheral church involvement, an intrinsic religious orientation, and satisfaction with the services and the clergy. Members' perceptions of the level of Activity in the church related inversely to their adherence to fundamentalist beliefs, and directly to their satisfaction with the activities.

The Expressiveness scale is linked to each of the individual dimensions. It is associated with a fundamentalist orientation positively and an intrinsic religious orientation negatively. Expressiveness relates to dissatisfaction with church facilities. Further, it is negatively associated with the competence variables of trust and life satisfaction. The Extrinsic Religious Orientation scale was the only scale which did not predict members' reported religious orientation, satisfaction, and psychosocial competence status.

Some Post Hoc Analyses

The specific relationships between CCS and individual religious and psychological variables may be moderated or mediated by other variables. For example, the relations among these measures may differ from congregation to congregation. To test this possibility, separate correlations were calculated for each congregation. The results of these analyses should be viewed with some caution since some of the congregation samples are small, and numerous correlations were conducted.

Generally, the pattern of relationships among variables appeared to be similar across congregations. However, there were some exceptions. The correlations between Expressiveness, Openness to Change, and the

congregation satisfaction scales were positive in some congregations and negative in others. In addition the negative correlation between Expressiveness, Trust, and Life Satisfaction did not emerge when calculated for members of white and black congregations separately. Further analyses suggested an answer. As was noted, the members of black congregations perceived greater expressiveness than members of white congregations. Black members also report less trust (M = 49.79) and less satisfaction with life (M = 38.19) than white members [M (trust) = 52.87; M (L.S.) = 40.72]. Thus, the negative correlations between Expressiveness, Trust, and Life Satisfaction appear to be an artifact of the race of the members.

The relationships among CCS and individual variables may also be moderated by the characteristics of the members within a congregation. For example, preliminary analyses indicate that in congregations perceived to be more open to change and more autonomous, members who are more tolerant of ambiguity are more satisfied in their congregation than members less tolerant of ambiguity. In congregations perceived to be less open to change and less autonomous, tolerance for ambiguity relates negatively to the satisfaction of members with their congregation.

DISCUSSION

This study addresses the lack of a shared framework for understanding religious systems. Congregation climate was proposed as one construct useful for viewing churches and synagogues. This basic proposition was put to test. Specifically, a review of the large body of climate theory and research suggested a number of hypotheses about congregation climate. Three of these hypotheses were examined in this initial study: congregations will manifest distinctive climates; the climate of the congregation will relate significantly to attributes of the institution; and the climate of the congregation will relate significantly to attributes of the member.

To study these hypotheses, dimensions of congregation climate were identified, and scales were developed to measure these dimensions. Climate dimensions were defined through a variety of methods. Among the most important of these methods was our direct and indirect participation in congregation life. Through this involvement, dimensions of climate particularly relevant to churches and synagogues emerged. These dimensions encompass the wide range of programs, people, and processes which characterize religious settings. Further, the dimensions are of import for the members themselves, the members as a social group, and the congregation as an institution. In this sense, the dimensions of congregation climate are commensurate with Moos' (1974a) three-dimensional

taxonomy of climates involving personal development, relationship, and system maintenance and system change dimensions.

While specifically relevant to congregations, the climate dimensions are similar to those which have been used to describe and measure the climate of other settings. For example, the sense of community dimension is similar to the closeness and group life dimensions used by Stern (1970) in educational settings. The autonomy dimension appears closely related to the agent independence dimension defined by Schneider and Bartlett (1970) in organizational environments. The order/clarity and stability dimensions are similar to the clarity and order/organization dimensions used by Moos (1974a) in treatment wards and other settings. In short, the climate dimensions are particularly suited to the religious environment. However, these dimensions can be linked, compared, and contrasted with the climates of other environments.

Scales were developed to measure the dimensions of congregation climate. The Congregation Climate Scales demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency and generally acceptable temporal consistency. The moderate intercorrelations among the CCS are similar in magnitude to those reported by researchers examining climate within other settings (Litwin & Stringer, 1968; Trickett & Wilkinson, 1979). These intercorrelations fall well below the level of internal consistency of the scales. Thus, the climate scales appear to be measuring different phenomena. These analyses offer initial psychometric support for the CCS and for their use in examining the three hypotheses of this study.

The Distinctive Climates of Congregations

It was predicted that the different congregations in this study would manifest distinctive climates. This prediction rested on the assumptions that members, to some extent, share a view of their congregation, and that members of different congregations see them differently. Both assumptions were supported. Analyses of the homogeneity of members' perceptions of the climate within their respective congregations indicated that members generally viewed their churches in at least a moderately similar manner.[7] The CCS also discriminated quite strongly among the congregations in this sample.

These findings suggest that, like other settings, congregations have "distinct personalities" (Moos, 1974a). Their distinctiveness is not surprising

[7]Interestingly, the amount of homogeneity among members' climate perceptions varied across the churches. Further study might consider the homogeneity of perceptions of members within a setting as an important measure of organizational life itself, perhaps indicative of tension, conflict, or tolerance for diversity within the setting.

given the diversity of the structures, processes, and functions of churches and synagogues and the diversity of their membership (Moberg, 1962; Walrath, 1979; McGaw & Wright, 1979). However, the climate construct provides a shorthand device for capturing some of the psychologically meaningful characteristics of congregations. It also offers a language and taxonomy for describing and, more generally, understanding some of the similarities and differences among myriad religious settings.

Information about the climate of a particular congregation may be practically useful as well. In this study, data from the CCS and other measures of congregation functioning served as sources of feedback tailored to each participating church. Congregations were presented with a comparison of their average member profile to that of all other congregations.[8] The perceptions of highly involved and moderately involved members within the congregation were also compared. Further, individual CCS items endorsed by the members of a congregation with extremely high or low frequency were red-tagged and shared with the congregation. Since the items themselves are descriptive and focused on specific aspects of congregation life, this information helped the congregation define concrete areas for change.

Clergy and/or leaders from the congregations generally found the feedback to be accurate and useful. Several concrete activities have developed as a result. For example, one large congregation whose members reported a low sense of community has established smaller programs and activities to provide opportunities for members to get to know each other. The effects of this and other changes in the congregations on the members and the congregation itself remain to be evaluated more formally.

Congregation Climate as a Psychosocial Construct

The construct of congregation climate was conceptualized as psychosocial, mediating between the social/institutional attributes of the religious setting and the individual attributes of the congregation member. The results of this study support this perspective. Meaningful relationships emerged between the climate scales and both institutional and individual variables. These relationships are discussed in further detail.

Climate and the Religious Congregation. Previous theory and research suggested that the climate of congregations would relate significantly to various attributes of the institution itself. Three of these institutional

[8]Given the diversity of religious congregations, in further applied work, the climate profile of a congregation might best be compared to the ideal climate profile of the congregation rather than the average profile of a heterogeneous set of congregations.

attributes were examined in this study: congregational race, size, and denomination. As predicted, the climate profiles of congregations of different race, size, and denomination were quite distinctive. Given the small number of congregations representing each of these groups, these differences should be viewed only as suggestive of similar differences within the larger population of congregations.

The small black Protestant congregations were characterized by higher levels of stability, expressiveness, social concern, and sense of community. This picture is consistent with the writings of numerous theologians who have described the black church as a central source of personal and social support and identity, and as a base for social change (Cone, 1975; Roberts, 1974).

The small white Protestant congregations were also marked by higher levels of sense of community and expressiveness. However, unlike their black counterparts, members of these congregations reported lower levels of stability and social concern. The lower level of stability may be reflective of the growth in membership reported by these congregations, and in this type of congregation nationally (Roozen & Carroll, 1979). The lower level of social concern may point to a more fundamental difference in the definition and approach of these white and black congregations to religious expression. James Cone (1975) makes this point powerfully:

> White theologians built logical systems: black folks told tales. Whites debated the validity of infant baptism or the issue of predestination and free will; blacks recited biblical stories about God leading the Israelites from Egyptian bondage . . . white thought on the Christian view of salvation was largely "spiritual" and sometimes "rational," but usually separated from the concrete struggle of freedom in the world. Black thought—usually related to their struggle against earthly oppression. (p. 54)

Moderate-sized white mainline Protestant congregations have been losing a significant proportion of their membership, unlike their smaller more conservative counterparts (Roozen & Carroll, 1979). This shift has been viewed by some as an indication of a loss in enthusiasm and challenge among mainline congregation members (Kelley, 1977). The climate profile of this type of congregation is consistent with this interpretation. These congregations manifest what appear to be more problematic profiles. The members of moderate white Protestant congregations report low levels of stability, openness to change, social concern, and order/clarity.

The large white Catholic congregations are characterized by low levels of expressiveness and higher levels of stability and social concern. These perceptions are certainly consistent with the formalistic, institutionalized, social action-oriented descriptions of many Roman Catholic parishes (Fichter, 1954; Moberg, 1962). The lower sense of community reported by members of these congregations may be a reflection of several factors. For example, the large size of the congregation may limit the development of

social relationships. Roman Catholics may also prefer a more personal form of religious expression. Finally, members of the large white Catholic congregations reported higher levels of activity than members of other congregations. Clearly, the Catholic parishes have a larger number of persons available to fill the variety of roles within the congregation. This is less true of the smaller congregations which are often undermanned (Wicker & Mehler, 1971).

Thus, consistent with the results of climate research in other settings, the climate of congregations is sensitive to differences in certain attributes of the institution (George & Bishop, 1971; Hellriegel & Slocum, 1974; James et al., 1978). Moreover, the climate profiles of those various types of congregations appear to be understandable and compatible with the theoretical and empirical literature concerning churches. In further research, congregation climate should be considered as it relates to other organizational attributes. The decision-making processes, religious belief system, and stability of the congregation as well as the nature of the neighborhood of the congregation have been described as particularly salient characteristics of churches and synagogues (Roof et al., 1979; Pargament, Tyler, & Steele, 1979; Nelson & Hiller, 1981). Climate theory and research, in turn, suggests that each of these attributes contributes to the climate of religious systems.

Climate and the Congregation Member. As predicted, congregation climate also related in a meaningful way to certain individual characteristics of the member. A variety of relationships was found between the climate scales and measures of the members' competence attributes, satisfaction with the congregation, and religious orientation. Several of the specific relationships are noteworthy. Three relationships are discussed in greater detail.

1. Members' perceptions of autonomy within the congregation related positively to their level of self-esteem and life satisfaction. This finding is consistent with a large body of theory and research pointing to the negative implications of individually restrictive social systems (Brehm, 1966; Argyris, 1975; Pargament, Tyler, & Steele, 1979). However, in this study the finding may be interpreted in several ways. Congregations which encourage differences among members may be shaped by and/or shape members who view themselves and their lives positively. It is also possible that members with higher self-esteem and life satisfaction are more likely to be attracted by and remain in more autonomous congregations. Finally, members with higher self-esteem and life satisfaction may be more likely to perceive autonomy within their settings than members who view their lives less positively. Empirical support from other settings can be offered for each of these interpretations (Photiadis & Schwartz, 1970; Alden, 1978).

2. The climate dimensions generally related in a positive manner to the satisfaction of members with various aspects of congregation life. Openness to change and sense of community were most consistently associated with congregation satisfaction. However, the correlations among the climate and satisfaction dimensions within each congregation were in some instances discrepant. For example, within some congregations, expressiveness relates in a significant positive direction to satisfaction, while within others it relates to satisfaction in a significant negative direction. This pattern of results suggests that congregations may differ in the type of climate their members prefer. Further research might assess differences among congregations in their "ideal" climate, as well as the implications of real-ideal climate discrepancies within the congregation. Similar studies within other milieux indicate that this information may provide valuable feedback to the setting regarding areas for change (Insel & Moos, 1974; Schroeder, 1979).

3. Members holding more fundamentalist religious beliefs saw their congregations as more expressive and more involved in their religious beliefs.[9] These findings provide empirical support for the observations of greater fervor, commitment, and zeal within the congregations of fundamentalist members (Moberg, 1962; Kelley, 1977; McGavran, 1970).[10] They do not address what several theologians and social scientists suggest are negative consequences of religious orthodoxy and strictness among congregations and their members (e.g., prejudice, intolerance of differences, reduced self-efficacy) (Evans, 1979; Glock & Stark, 1966). Further research using a variety of individual-systems criteria is needed to assess the implications of different approaches to religious organization for the well-being of the member, the congregation itself, and the larger community. The difficult practical task which follows is one of developing interactions among these groups that enhance rather than detract from each other and themselves (Pargament, Tyler, & Steele, 1979).

In short, these results support the view of congregation climate as a psychosocial construct mediating between the attributes of the social setting and of the congregation member. The results do not address the process

[9]While fundamentalism also related to perceptions of a lower level of activity in the congregation, this relationship appears to be an artifact of the smaller size of the congregations of more fundamentalist members. When examined within large, moderate, and small congregations separately, significant relations among these variables did not emerge.

[10]Kelley (1977), in his theory of why conservative churches are growing, suggests that a strong sense of community and active discouragement of member autonomy also accompany religious orthodoxy. In this sample, however, members holding more fundamentalist religious beliefs did not report a significantly greater sense of community or lower level of autonomy in their congregation.

through which these relationships develop. Previous literature noted earlier, however, suggests that they are reciprocally determined (Schneider, 1975; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Holahan & Spearly, 1980); that is, congregation climate may be both a product of and a contributor to the social organization of the religious setting. Similarly, it may represent both a construction of and a contributor to the individual members.

Longitudinal studies of the processes through which members join, remain, affect, and are affected by their religious settings are needed to clarify the paths and processes of influence among these variables. These investigations should take the form of intensive analyses of individual congregations, as well as large-scale studies of multiple congregations.

CONCLUSIONS

The climate construct appears to offer one useful frame of reference for studies of religious systems. The construct rests on a theoretical and empirical foundation which links the study of churches and synagogues to the larger body of organizational and psychological literature. Indeed, in these religious settings, the climate construct "behaved" like climate within other settings. Congregation climate also provides a framework for describing and understanding complex systems efficiently. This framework yields information which begins to shed some light on the nature of religious congregations and their roles in the lives of members. It also offers information of practical use to congregations. As importantly, this framework raises meaningful questions for further study.

Clearly, research within religious settings is in its early stages of development. This study proposed and examined congregation climate as simply one concept which provides a firmer foundation and broader framework for efforts to understand and assist religious settings. Further progress must rest on additional conceptual and empirical investigation. Yet as work in this significant area accumulates, it becomes clear that psychologists *can* collaborate with, learn from, and contribute to religious congregations and their members.

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