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Carol Vallett, Candidate

Jill Mattuck Tarule, Ed.D., Advisor

Doctor of Education

Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

April 3, 2008

9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

University Heights South 1 Multipurpose Room

Title: Exploring a Relationship Between Organizational Virtuousness  
and Organizational Culture in Higher Education

## ABSTRACT

In contemporary life, organizations are how society accomplishes what individuals cannot (Hall & Tolbert, 2005). People spend significant parts of their lives as members of various organizations as employees, patients, students or citizens and consequently organizations have taken on increasing importance in the world. Recently, the field of Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) has emerged as a new frame for analyzing organizations using a strengths perspective and empirical methods. In particular, organizational virtuousness, the manifestation of virtues within an organization, has emerged as a focus for examining organizational success and member engagement. Organizational virtuousness, conceptualized as virtues such as compassion, optimism, and trust has been studied by Cameron et al (2003) and found to be positively correlated with successful performance in business and for-profit organizations. Organizational culture provides another frame for analyzing organizations. Organizational culture refers to the unseen rules and basic assumptions that govern how an organization operates (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985).

This quantitative study uses these two perspectives to examine relationships between organizational virtuousness and organizational culture in two non-profit, university continuing education units. A survey instrument, based on the Survey of Organizational Virtuousness (Cameron et al, 2003) and the Competing Values Organizational Culture framework (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1991) was administered online.

Results reveal that the Survey of Organizational Virtuousness is a valid and reliable instrument for use with a higher education audience. The virtue factors that were identified in this context were benevolence, profound purpose, compassion, optimism, joy and integrity. There were significant differences in perceived culture type and organizational virtuousness between the two institutions. All virtue factors were highly correlated with a particular organization culture, group culture, but not correlated with a rational culture.

This study extends the concept of organizational virtuousness by examining how it might correlate with perceived organizational cultures. It suggests that some organizational cultures may foster a sense of virtuousness which has, in turn, been associated with organizational success. The study also proposes further research that would provide more data regarding the strength of and potential outcomes from the relationship between perceived organizational virtuousness, culture and performance. In addition ways to foster organizational virtuousness are explored.