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ABSTRACT

EFFECT OF THE CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION ETHOS ON THE PROBABILITY OF GRADUATES BEING SELECTED FOR TERMINATION DURING A REDUCTION IN WORKFORCE

This study explores the effect of the Christian higher education ethos on the probability of graduates of Christian universities being selected for layoff during post-graduate employment. The primary research question is: does the ethos of Christian higher education, and its resulting impact on graduates, reduce the relative probability of being selected for layoff as compared to graduates of secular institutions.

Of the approximately 3,000 higher education institutions granting four-year degrees, 646 represent themselves as being a Christian college or university. Is the Christian distinctive important? Those with a Christian faith tradition may suggest that the Christian distinctive has eternal, spiritual value; this research does not directly explore the spiritual value of a Christian education. Instead, this research explores the value placed by the job market on Christian education. More specifically this research explores the layoff experience of college graduates (with layoffs serving as an inverse proxy for value – those individuals selected for layoff are considered less valuable to the organization than those individuals retained). The findings of this research have implications for students selecting universities to attend, for organizations hiring college graduates, and for the academic community.

The primary theoretical foundation of this research rests on Max Weber's Protestant Work Ethic and subsequent related research. Additionally, recent work on layoff antecedents was considered. Research was conducted on the work histories of

1,515 college students (a subset of the 6,111 U.S. citizens born between 1957 and 1964 who are included in the National Longitudinal Survey, NLSY79, administered under the direction of the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics). Work histories from 1990 to 2002 were analyzed. Controlling for environmental, demographic, and personal factors, the relative layoff incidence rates for graduates of Christian and non-Christian universities were determined. Applying logistic regression to this data, it was determined that graduates of Christian universities are less likely to be laid off than graduates of non-Christian universities in this sample.