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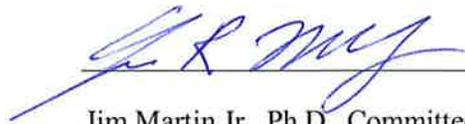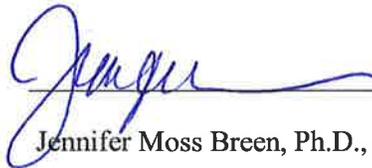
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THE PECULIAR INSTITUTION? A MULTISITE CASE STUDY OF

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT CULTURES AT SMALL CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS

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By

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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial
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Abstract

This multisite case study explored the perceptions of athletic department members of the important factors of organizational cultures in athletic departments at small Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States. The study comprised of site visits to three small Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States. At each site, six individuals associated with the athletic department were interviewed; other data sources included observation, examination of institutional websites, social media, and artifacts. The findings identified common important factors of the athletic department organizational cultures and were organized around the elements of athletic department culture elements described by Schroeder (2010). The themes within institutional culture were organizational structure, common values, and standing in the gap. The important factors of the external environment included the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, denominational environment, and the climate of higher education. The themes within the internal athletic department environment include common values, clear expectations, and community. The leadership and power element revealed no additional subthemes that were conceptually different than themes within other elements. These themes are described for each institution. The dissertation concludes with evidence-based recommendations for the development of athletic department cultures at small Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States. The proposed solution provides seven recommendations that are based upon creating an understanding of institutional and athletic department cultures and developing an integrated structure with clear expectations and alignment of values that align with the mission of each unique university.

Dedication

      This study is dedicated to my grandparents, for believing in the value of education and supporting me throughout my educational journey.

Acknowledgements

I would not have completed this journey without the support of many. First, I want to thank Creighton University and the EdD program. The program was everything I could have wished for as I have honed my leadership knowledge and skills over the past several years. Thank you to my dissertation committee and especially my dissertation chair Dr. Bret Richards. From the beginning, you have supported and challenged me.

I am forever grateful to the Athletic Directors and Presidents that allowed me to do this research. Thank you for trusting me and giving me access to your institution. I complete this research feeling encouraged about athletics in Christian higher education because of people like you.

As I complete my doctoral journey, I am grateful to people that have instilled in me a love of learning. There are too many to name but I would be remiss not to thank Kevin Mykel and Wichita Collegiate School. I believe that my love of education and learning, as well as my philosophical bent, began in Humanities class at Collegiate. I continue to try to "prove myself worthy".

A special thank you to my parents-thank you for your love and support of this endeavor.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to my family…Charlie, Jane, and Molly…especially my wife Charlie. This was not on our radar when we got married. She thought she married a baseball coach. Thank you for the being supportive of me pursuing a doctorate. Thank you for your love and patience throughout this process. I could not have done it without your support (and editing).

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Background

The prominence of intercollegiate athletics within the structure of higher

education is unique to the United States (Beyer & Hannah, 2000; Bowen & Levin, 2003).

Nowhere else in the world is so much time and money given to intercollegiate athletics

within an educational system whose chief function is teaching and scholarship (Beyer &

Hannah, 2000; Flowers, 2009). Thelin (1994) asserted that athletics in higher education

are "American higher education's 'peculiar institution.' Their presence is pervasive, yet

their proper balance with academics remains puzzling" (p. 1). Since the inception of

intercollegiate athletics, institutions have struggled to balance mission, academic rigor,

and the pursuit of athletic success (Buer, 2009). Thelin's (1994) statement primarily

referred to large, public universities, but smaller institutions, especially Christian ones,

also can struggle to maintain a proper balance (Nite, Singer, & Cunningham, 2013).

Christian colleges operate with the educational philosophy that the key to

understanding the human condition is the idea that God has come to the world in Christ

(Ringenberg, 2006). This philosophy can develop a unique culture in which faith is an

essential part to education. However, the expectations of intercollegiate athletics often

conflict with the institutions' organizational culture and mission (Jayakumar &

Commeaux, 2016; Nite et al., 2013). Furthermore, athletic department cultures can clash

with the organizational culture of the institution, because the values, beliefs, and

assumptions of the one can be very different from those of the other (Southall, Wells, &

Nagel, 2005). For example, Nite et al. (2013) found that at a Christian institution, coaches

were fired for not winning enough even if they represented and executed the Christian

mission of the institution.

To add to the complexity of finding the proper balance, colleges and universities

are collaborative, yet autonomous, environments (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008; Buer, 2009).

Frey (1994) referred to universities as organizations that are loosely coupled. Within

most of higher education's organizational structures, faculty and staff enjoy autonomy

within their departments with little top-down organizational control (Berquist & Pawlak,

2008; Frey, 1994). Therefore, intercollegiate athletics, like other departments on college

campuses, tend to operate with substantial autonomy (Duderstadt, 2000; Frey, 1994).

While operating with this autonomy internally, small Christian colleges face external

pressure and expectations from their external denominational stakeholders. These

pressures can impact a multitude of factors from recruiting students from the

denomination to not allowing athletic contests on Sunday (Sutherland, 2016).

There have been calls for reform of intercollegiate athletics since the first

intercollegiate athletic competition in 1852 (Sack, 2009). Those calls have persisted and

grown louder over time as intercollegiate athletics have become more publicized and

commercialized (Sack, 2009). In a 1989 Louis Harris poll, eight out of ten Americans

believed that college athletics were out of control. Over half of the colleges that

competed in football at the major college level in the 1980s received a sanction or

reprimand from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (The Knight

Foundation, 1993). However, reform attempts have been relatively unsuccessful. Beyer

and Hannah (2000) suggested that the lack of success has not been due to lack of effort

by administrators but has instead been the result of an inability to understand and deal with the culture of intercollegiate athletics within higher education.

Statement of the Problem

In Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Nebraska, and Iowa (defined as the Midwestern United States for the purposes of this study), there are 45 Christian institutions with student enrollments of fewer than 1,500 undergraduate students (defined as a small college for this study) and with at least 12 intercollegiate sports at their institution (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Within the same region, an additional 98 larger, primarily secular, institutions operate and offer intercollegiate athletics (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). These numbers show that the Midwestern United States is full of small colleges and universities that compete with one another for students. These institutions face "challenges of survivability" (Henck, 2011, p. 212) as closure rates for colleges with operating revenues of under $100 million have been predicted to triple and merger rates to double by 2017 (Thomason, 2015). All of the small Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States have operating revenues of under $100 million.

For many small private institutions of higher education, the recruitment of student-athletes is an important part of the enrollment management plan (Docking & Curton, 2015). In the state of Kansas in 2015, 45.77% of students enrolled at institutions with at least 12 varsity sports that are members of the Kansas Independent Colleges Association were student-athletes (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Members of the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference, which includes one institution from both Oklahoma and Nebraska, have an average of 58.38% of their student-body as student-athletes (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Organizational culture within higher education is nuanced, complex, and rife with competing values (Frey, 1994; Henck, 2011). An intercollegiate athletic culture can be compatible with the culture of a broader institution if the athletic department's leader has a clear understanding of the institution's culture and if personnel decisions are informed by the institution's mission and culture (Schroeder & Paredes-Scribner, 2006). This challenge can be difficult for many institutions, because tension can occur between being competitive athletically and fulfilling the mission of the college (Jayakumar & Commeaux, 2016; Nite et al., 2013). These competing values can be caused by differing assumptions about higher education, student-athletes, and the business purpose of intercollegiate athletics (Sack, 2009) and can lead to the development of subcultures that could conflict with the overall culture of the institution (Trice & Beyer, 1993).

The mission of small Christian institutions is often holistic in nature and focused on the academic, community, and spiritual goals. However, Christian colleges face the same challenges of recruiting students as secular institutions in the highly competitive environment of higher education (Sutherland, 2016). Athletic departments experience the added pressure of helping to maintain college enrollment numbers while hoping to recruit students who are drawn to the mission of their institution. The coach that can win the most games or recruit enough student-athletes may not be the coach that is most aligned with the institution's mission and culture. This tension can be more pronounced at a Christian institution, where coaches and teachers face the added element of coaching and teaching from a Christian perspective (Schroeder & Paredes-Scribner, 2006).

This study can be helpful to leaders because it explored the important factors in athletic department organizational cultures within a population of colleges and

universities that have been the subject of little research. Managing culture is at the core of the job of a leader (Schein, 2010). Thus, this study sought to identify the important factors of athletic organizational cultures at three small Christian colleges to produce evidence-based recommendations to aid leaders in managing and developing culture.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multisite case study was to explore the perceptions of athletic department members of organizational cultures in athletic departments at three small Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States.

Research Question

The study was guided by the following research question:

What are the perceptions of athletic department members of the important factors of organizational cultures in athletic departments at three small, Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States?

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to develop evidence-based recommendations for the development of athletic department cultures at small Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States. Given the challenges and pressures facing these institutions, this study provided athletic departments insight into how others are operating. More specifically, this study sought to understand the important factors of organizational cultures at three small Christian colleges to provide leaders information they could use to manage and develop cultures.

Methodology

Organizational culture is difficult to define and assess because it is the combination of numerous social processes and relationships among group members (Schroeder, 2010). Although some instruments can quantify aspects of culture, qualitative studies are a widely used approach for the study of culture because they allow for an in-depth understanding of the feelings and perceptions of individuals as well as the nuances of a specific context. Schein (1996) suggested that there is nuance to the study of culture where quantitative measurement and qualitative approach can both be helpful in understanding the organization.

For this study, a qualitative approach was utilized. A qualitative approach to research produces data through observations and interviews that are not easily converted to numbers (Babbie, 2013). Within this type of research, the researcher seeks to provide a holistic account of the subject being researched in which multiple perspectives are explored and the nuances of the experience are investigated (Creswell, 2013). Stake (1995) suggested that qualitative research is as much about good thinking as good methods. The intent of the chosen methodology was to have a sound methodological design while leaving space for adaptation based upon the data gathered.

Multisite Case Study

A multisite case study was utilized in this research. A multisite case study was a suitable approach for this study because it allowed for exploration of the research question through interviews and other data sources within a real-word context. Due to the "complex, inaccessible, fuzzy, and holistic" (Alvesson, 2002, p. 14) nature of culture, exploring the subject through the perceptions and experiences of individuals was

appropriate. This allowed for the investigation of individuals' perceptions in relation to athletic department organizational culture while collecting data from multiple institutions to provide more compelling data than a singular case (Yin, 2014).

Participants

The participants in this study were the athletic director (AD), the president, the faculty athletic representative (FAR), and three coaches at each institution. The AD was the supervisor of the athletic department and holds the responsibility of planning, organizing, leading, and evaluating all programming performed by the athletic department (Branch, 1990). Of the coaches interviewed, one at each institution was the coach of the sport with the largest number of student-athletes while the other two coaches were individuals that the athletic director considered the either formal or informal leaders within the athletic department.

Data Gathering

Within this methodological approach, data was primarily gathered through interviews, but observations and examinations of artifacts were also conducted to understand the values and context of the culture (Van Manen, 1990). The initial research plan sought for an examination of student-athlete and employee handbooks as well, but these either did not exist or were not made available by all institutions; therefore, they were not used in analysis. Artifacts provide visible forms and manifestations of culture and institutional documents provided insight into the structures in place to support and maintain culture (Schein, 2010; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Vagle (2014) suggested that it would be impossible for a researcher to suspend all previous experiences and knowledge of a phenomenon; thus, it is important for the researcher to acknowledge previous

experiences and knowledge but bridle these experiences so they do not affect the analysis or interpretation. Bridling calls for the researcher to acknowledge previous experience with the phenomenon and allow the experience to aid in the research. The researcher did this through acknowledgement of previous experiences and journaling personal thoughts and feelings throughout the data gathering and analysis process.

The goal of this multisite case study was to explore the perceptions of the participants of the important factors of organizational cultures in athletic departments at three small, Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States. Exploring the research question in this way was helpful because culture is, at least in part, a "deep-level, partly non-conscious sets of meanings, ideas and symbolism" (Alvesson, 2002, p. 14). Due to the lack of research on this subject and the emphasis placed on information and reflections learned from participants, a multisite case study was appropriate to understand the important factors of the athletic department organizational cultures. The participants were chosen based on the assumption that the positions that they were in would provide insight regarding the organizational cultures of the athletic departments.

Definition of Relevant Terms

Many of the terms in this study have multiple definitions that could vary in common culture and throughout the academic literature. However, within the context of this study, these terms were used with specific definitions that provide an understanding of athletic departments at small, Christian institutions. For this study, the following terms were specifically defined.

Athletic Department: Individuals and student-athletes involved with intercollegiate athletics or under the supervision of the Athletic Director.

Christian Institution: Educational institution of higher learning that operates with the philosophy that the key to understanding humanity is the idea that God came to the world through Christ (Ringenberg, 2006).

Division I: Members of the National Collegiate Athletic Association who "generally have the biggest student bodies, manage the largest athletics budgets and offer the most generous number of scholarships" (NCAA, 2016). For this study, the terms "Division I" and "major college" are used interchangeably.

Intercollegiate Athletics: Athletic teams that are funded with athletic scholarships by the institution and that compete at the varsity level against other institutions.

Organizational Culture: "The pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 1984, p. 3).

Student-Athlete: "Student who was listed on the roster of an intercollegiate athletic team at any point during his or her college career" (Bowen & Levin, 2003, p. 5).

Limitations and Delimitations

There were limitations and delimitations in this study. First, the personal bias of the researcher was a potential limitation, because I believe there is a problem that needs to be addressed within athletic department cultures at small Christian institutions. I have spent a decade working at institutions that are similar to the population chosen for this study. My perception is that the athletic departments at small, Christian institutions tend to operate in a cultural context that is different from the overall cultural context of the

institution. In my opinion, this tendency leads to athletic departments having difficulty

contributing to the mission of the institution. While my previous experience and opinions

were potentially limitations, they were useful in the study because I understood the basic

context of each institution. Further, my results were quite different than what I would

have anticipated, so my own experiences and perceptions were helpful in comparing and

contrasting data.

This study focuses upon the self-reported perceptions of participants. Data was

largely collected through individual interviews. Conclusions were dependent on the

ability of the individuals to communicate clearly and honestly as well as on the ability of

the researcher to interpret the results without bias and with a contextual understanding of

the comments. While an expectation of honesty is natural, I cannot know with certainty

that all participants answered my questions in a forthcoming manner. The number of

individuals that were interviewed was also a limitation because not all members of the

athletic department were interviewed.

A delimitation of this study was that the population is Christian colleges from the

Midwestern United States. The population for this study was restricted to this very

specific subset of institutions. Participants were chosen based on these criteria, and

neither secular institutions nor institutions outside of the Midwestern United States were

considered for the study. Further, the study focused on members of the institutions'

athletic departments. Based on the interviews' intended scope, most faculty and staff

outside the athletic department were not be accounted for in the study. Thus, perspectives

exist that were not considered that could potentially affect athletic department cultures.

The Role of Leadership in this Study

Cultural management and development are at the core of a leader's job (Schein, 2010). All management performed by leaders is undertaken within a specific context and culture (Alvesson, 2002). When an organization is founded, leadership dictates culture. Once the culture is established, the culture often dictates the type of leader that will be successful within the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Because small, Christian institutions face challenges to remain viable (Andringa, 2009), it is necessary for leaders to understand how to develop cultural environments that align with the values and assumptions of their institutions' cultures while also promoting changes needed to maintain viability (Gerdy, 1997).

Boerma (2011) suggested that many leaders at secondary and post-secondary Christian institutions are skeptical about the importance of research and there exists a significant gap between mission and practice. This phenomenon can possibly be attributed to the fact that most faculty at small Christian institutions have little time to perform scholarly research because their role focuses almost exclusively on teaching. However, leaders within the realm of intercollegiate athletics at small Christian institutions are under enrollment and cultural pressures, because athletes can constitute a significant part of the student-body. Thus, leaders experience the pressures of maintaining enrollments and creating positive cultures on their campuses for all students. This study sought to provide information about the athletic department cultures at three small Christian institutions that can be useful to leaders. The findings could give information to leaders working within this context ideas about how to improve practice.

Significance of the Dissertation in Practice Study

This study endeavored to provide information about athletic department cultures at three small Christian institutions. The study is significant because it contributes to a field that receives little attention within scholarly research. In fact, Schroeder's (2010) cultural model, which was utilized to organize the findings, was the only model available in the academic literature that had been specifically utilized for examining and assessing intercollegiate athletic department cultures at Christian colleges. The model from Schroeder (2010) is heavily influenced by the work of Schein (2010). The model has not been extensively tested, and it is not tested here, but it provides a helpful framework to organize this study's findings.

The average size of the 1,600 private, non-profit colleges and universities in the United States is 1,920 students (National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, 2014). Approximately 900 of these 1,600 are religiously affiliated (Henck, 2011). As shown in the EADA data, athletics is prominent on many small, Christian campuses. Athletic department culture can contribute positively or negatively to the life of a campus. The long conversation in higher education about the place of intercollegiate athletics can be more pronounced on these campuses due to the higher percentage of student-athletes that make up the student body. No blueprint or recommendations exist in the current literature for best practices for small Christian colleges.

However, regarding organizational culture, a vast amount of literature exists that can be applied to this population and that can help guide leaders in higher education. Schroeder (2010) provided a well-constructed and pertinent organizational cultural assessment model, but it has had a limited presence in scholarly research. This research

hopes to provide insight to leaders that will help improve practice and policy within

athletic departments at small, Christian institutions.

Summary

The Midwestern United States is saturated with small, Christian institutions

whose intercollegiate athletic programs serve an important function within enrollment

management while providing an athletic experience for student-athletes from a Christian

perspective. If leaders can understand organizational culture within the athletic

department, it is helpful in order to develop a cohesive department that is consistent with

the culture of the institution (Southall et al., 2005). This study sought to identify the

important factors of athletic department cultures at three institutions in the Midwestern

United states. The study provides information that could help these leaders improve

practice and hopefully serve the mission of their institution more effectively.

Little research is available about organizational culture in athletic departments at

small, Christian institutions. This study provides information that can help leaders reflect

on and understand their own cultural context and potentially improve practice. It is

important for leaders to understand organizational culture within the athletic department

to develop an athletic department that functions within the cultural parameters of the

institution. The remainder of this dissertation proceeds as follows. Chapter Two provides

a literature review. The literature review broadly explores organizational culture, explores

organizational culture within education and intercollegiate athletics, and provides

information for the current context and assumptions regarding intercollegiate athletics.

Chapter Three provides a description of the research and data analysis protocol for this

multisite case study. Chapter Four presents the findings of the research and Chapter 5

provides recommendations supported by the research data and academic literature,

implications for leaders, and implementation ideas for recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Significant research has been conducted about organizational culture since the late 1970s (Clark, 1972; Martin, 2002; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Pettigrew, 1979; Schein, 1996, 2010; Trice & Beyer, 1993). To fully understand organizational culture within athletic departments at small, Christian institutions, different perspectives of culture are helpful to study and understand. This literature review begins with an examination of the differing perspectives of organizational culture and is followed by reviews of organizational culture within higher education, intercollegiate athletic departments, and assumptions about intercollegiate athletics.

Organizational Culture

In colloquial terms, cultures are "the way we do things around here." Within cultures, there are common sets of beliefs, values, and actions that members of cultures adopt and expect others to adopt. The study of organizational culture attempts to explain how these beliefs, values, and actions are accepted, how they operate, and why they are important within organizational life.

Societal or organizational cultures develop over time and through negotiation among group members about what important values, actions, and ideas mean to a group (Schein, 2010). Cultures emerge from groups of people who develop norms of behaviors and ways of managing the uncertainties of life. Cultures help to create understanding about how things are done and to pass these understandings on to new members to create order and minimize disruption (Trice & Beyer, 1993).

However, cultures are not simple, nor are they typically easy to understand. Alvesson (2002) referred to cultures as "complex, inaccessible, fuzzy, holistic phenomena" (p. 14). Cultures consist of deep-rooted values and assumptions that are understandable and reassuring to the members of the culture but can be confusing and, and often incomprehensible, to outsiders.

Organizational Saga and Crisis

Scholarly research about group dynamics and organizational psychology began long ago, but the specific study of organizational culture did not emerge until the 1970s. Clark (1972) and Pettigrew (1979) formed the initial elements of the study of organizational culture that would serve as the foundation for future theorists. The term "organizational culture" had not been widely used in scholarly research when Clark (1972) published his work. He used the term "organizational saga" to describe how people within organizations formed close bonds and developed patterns of living and interacting. Organizational saga is a formal group's understanding of its unique history and accomplishments. Typically, organizational saga is rooted in a single person, often described as a founder, who champions a purpose and values that are eventually adopted by a group of people within an organization.

Schein (1983) later asserted that the purpose and values championed by the founder would not be concretely adopted until the group overcame a crisis. This collective understanding of an organization's saga helps an individual understand the nonstructural and incommunicable ways of operating within an organization (Clark, 1972). Clark's primary focus was the uniting factors of culture: values, history, and fundamental assumptions about living and interacting.

Pettigrew (1979) furthered the work of Clark (1972) and formally defined organizational culture. Through his examination of sociological and anthropological research, as well his personal research of a private boarding school in Britain, he developed certain beliefs that would become the foundation for organizational cultural theorists. He defined organizational culture as "the system of such publically and collectively accepted meanings of operating for a given group at a given time" (Pettigrew, 1979, p. 574). He noted that organizational culture is dynamic, but has foundational principles that guide beliefs and actions. Cultures are united through the foundational values that are integrated throughout the organization. He also developed definitions for symbols, beliefs, values, and myths that would later be expanded by future organizational culture theorists.

Perspectives of Culture

Clark (1972) and Pettigrew (1979) established the foundation for the study of organizational culture that was then further developed by other theorists. Schein (1984) developed a model to understand and evaluate culture from an organizationally integrated, leader-centered perspective. However, no organization possesses an entirely homogenous culture. Instead, organizations consist of subcultures that are held together by an overall culture. These subcultures can be in alignment or in conflict with the overall culture and may garner more loyalty than the overall culture (Lok, Westwood, & Crawford, 2005). Throughout the organizational culture literature, three prominent perspectives are present. These perspectives are the integrationist, differentiation, and fragmentation perspectives (Martin, 2002). These perspectives suggest different levels of organizational agreement regarding the overarching cultural values. However, the

strength of the overall culture is a key determinant in the cultural cohesiveness of the

organization (Alvesson & Lindkvist, 1993; Trice & Beyer, 1993).

Integrationist Perspective. The integrationist perspective asserts that culture is

dictated by the leader and is the glue of an organization. This perspective is characterized

by consensus, harmony, community, and a clear overall organizational culture (Alvesson,

2002). Shared values and a high level of consensus are assumed to exist within the

members of the organization (Martin & Siehl, 1983). This understanding of culture has

continued to be widely used in the study of organizational culture because it is an easy

model to guide research and aid in analysis and findings (Alvesson, 2002). Many have

suggested that this view is too simplistic for the complexity of culture and only provides

a superficial examination of culture (Alvesson, 2002; Hatch, 1993; Martin & Siehl, 1983;

Trice & Beyer, 1993). However, the practical and intuitive nature of the integrationist

perspective continues to maintain its appeal (Hogan & Coote, 2014).

Schein (2010) identified three levels of culture: artifacts, espoused beliefs and

values, and assumptions. Hatch (1993) criticized Schein's model because it did not

emphasize strongly enough the interactivity of artifacts, espoused values and beliefs, and

assumptions. Espoused values and beliefs lead to assumptions. Once they are known to

work, Schein (2010) asserted that they become non-debatable and very difficult to

change. They then interact with artifacts as values, beliefs, and assumptions can

subsequently be illustrated through cultural artifacts (Hatch, 1993). Other theorists have

utilized different terms to define the levels of culture but they arrive at the same concepts.

Trice and Beyer (1993) asserted that cultures have two distinct components: substance

and forms. Chaffee and Tierney (1988) identified three dimensions of culture: systems, environments, and values. The definitions of these levels of culture are similar.

For this review, Schein's (2010) levels of culture are the primary focus, but other perspectives are explored. These levels of culture illustrate the direct and indirect ways that culture is developed within organizations (Hogan & Coote, 2014).

Artifacts. Bolman and Deal (1992) identified artifacts and symbolic activities as important aspects of cultures because they provide internal group meaning. Artifacts are the visible forms and manifestations of any culture. Artifacts are a way of communicating cultural ideas (Trice & Beyer, 1993). They comprise anything that can be seen, heard, or felt within the organization. They can include written documents, such as mission statements and policy manuals, artwork, or anything else tangible within an organization (Schein, 2010). Observable behaviors are also artifacts but can be difficult to decipher. Artifacts can demonstrate management's values by being an endorsement of certain behaviors (Hogan & Coote, 2014). For example, the type of artwork that is on the walls of buildings communicates the values of an organization. However, one cannot understand the meaning of an artifact or symbol without understanding it within the specific cultural context of the environment. Further, cultural members may interpret and understand cultural artifacts differently, which can lead to cultural differentiation or fragmentation (Mills & Hoeber, 2013).

One example of an artifact that requires interpretation is the pregame prayer in which many athletic teams participate. Teams at secular and religious schools alike gather for a prayer prior to athletic contests. Often these prayers are done on the playing field or court. This ritual could be interpreted in many ways. Some team members may

perform the prayer as an expression of faith while others may participate to demonstrate

team unity and cohesion (Turman, 2003). The way one interprets these actions could

represent drastically different cultures, either religious or simply close-knit. Artifacts are

easily observed but difficult to fully understand and interpret (Schein, 2010). Thus, it is

important to attempt to understand the cultural context deeply before interpreting the

meanings of behaviors or artifacts.

    Espoused beliefs and values. Schein (2010) identified espoused beliefs and

values as another level of culture. Espoused beliefs and values are the ideals, goals, and

principles of the organization. Trice and Beyer (1993) referred to espoused beliefs and

values as "cultural substance." The substance of values and beliefs allow for members of

a culture to create meaning and justification for actions. These justifications include

rationalizations that may or may not be true or congruent with other artifacts or beliefs

but that create meaning and value for the culture (Schein, 2010). Gagliardi (1986) stated

values are the "idealization of collective experience of success and emotional

transfiguration of beliefs" (p. 133). Values are one of the key ways by which leaders can

shape behavior, encourage innovation, and motivate followers (Hogan & Coote, 2014).

    The congruence of values within an organization can be important to the

performance of employees and the overall organization (Posner, Kouzes, & Schmidt,

1985; Schein, 2010). In a study of corporate culture, Posner et al. (1985) found that

shared values within an organization led to greater feelings of personal success,

commitment to organizational goals and values, and increased ethical behavior. This

alignment of values is accomplished through recruiting employees whose values align

with the organization and through the orientation and socialization process of employees.

In a study of organizational culture at a Division II Christian institution, Nite et al. (2013) found that coaches at a Christian college in the Great Lakes region of the United States were asked to resign for not winning at a high level. These resignation requests occurred even though the most important espoused value of the athletic department was student-athlete spiritual formation and whole-person development and coaches were succeeding in that area. This inconsistency caused cultural disruption and distrust because coaches were asked to resign even though they were fulfilling the most important stated value. Therefore, values might not be consistent with actions, and either actions or the discrepancy between actions and values might reveal underlying assumptions.

Many individuals that work in intercollegiate athletics are highly idealistic about the effects and outcomes of intercollegiate athletics (Brand, 2006). These idealistic outcomes include character development and community building as well as student-athletes learning the valuable lessons of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. However, conflicting evidence supports these idealistic beliefs about the altruistic outcomes of intercollegiate athletics. Some have found little proof (Emerson, Brooks, & McKenzie, 2009; Jayakumar & Commeaux, 2016) while others have illustrated high levels of student-athlete engagement in educationally purposeful activities (Rettig & Hu, 2016; Umbach, Palmer, Kuh, & Hannah, 2006). At the highest levels of competition, intercollegiate athletics are riddled with stories of low student-athlete academic achievement, widespread rules violations, and devotion to sports above all else. These incidences can overwhelm the evidence that the outcomes of intercollegiate athletics are positive and provide important life lessons for student-athletes.

Basic underlying assumptions. Basic underlying assumptions are manifestations of espoused beliefs and values that are present in a culture and are often taken for granted (Schein, 2010). Members of a culture may not be able to state or describe underlying assumptions because they are so ingrained in everyday life (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013). Narratives emerge out of assumptions that allow sense to be made of experiences (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Narratives are also referred to as ideologies (Alvesson, 2002; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Ideologies are sets of beliefs that members of a culture share that explain or justify why things are done a certain way. However, Rehman (2002) suggested that these underlying assumptions lead individuals to assume that cultural homogeneity exists, when opinions and values within cultures are diverse.

Basic underlying assumptions serve a primary function of reducing people's anxiety by allowing them to understand expectations (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008). Further, consistent expectations can lead to greater organizational effectiveness (Denison & Mishra, 1995). Any culture's base is its set of basic underlying assumptions, because these are proven ways for the culture to operate (Hatch, 1993). One of any culture's basic assumptions is how to deal with conflict. Cultures deal with conflict differently based on their members and experiences. Some cultures deal with confrontation through avoidance while others react emotionally. Both behaviors are learned and have been proven to work reliably in resolving disagreement.

In the example of incongruous values found by Nite et al. (2013), basic underlying assumptions were revealed. Although Christian formation was stated as the most important value at the institution being studied by Nite et al. (2013), coaches who excelled at implementing this value were still asked to resign due to lack of athletic

success, which revealed underlying assumptions within the culture. This underlying

assumption could have been that winning was the most important value with the athletic

department. There could have also been a belief that Christian faith formation was

difficult to accomplish within a losing athletic program. It would be difficult to know

which assumption was true without spending time in the culture and understanding it.

Differentiation and fragmentation. Researchers have tended to focus on the

integrationist perspective of culture to the exclusion of other theories (Martin, 2002). The

integrationist perspective has also been widely used in cultural analysis (Alvesson, 2002).

This perspective predominantly focuses upon the executive leadership of the institution

and the expectation that values will be consistent across the organization. While room

exists for subcultural development within this perspective, if groups are not acting in

accordance with the values set forth by leadership, integrationists believe that it is

necessary to be address those groups immediately (Alvesson, 2002; Maximini, 2015;

Schein, 2010). The strength of the overall culture aids in the organization's success but

does not guarantee it (Alvesson, 2002; Tierney, 2008).

Alvesson (2002) recognized that organizational cultures have a strong level of

ambiguity and fragmentation. The integrationist perspective assumes organization-wide

consensus and clarity. However, within complex institutions like colleges and

universities, subcultures develop that may run counter to the overarching values of the

organization. Consensus regarding overall values may not always be possible. Alvesson

(2002) suggests that culture is "best understood as referring to deep-level, partly non-

conscious sets of meanings, ideas, and symbolism that may be contradictory and run

across different social groupings" (p. 14). Two perspectives of culture focus on cultural

variation and presume that overall cultures are less strong than they are in the

integrationist perspective. These perspectives are differentiation and fragmentation

(Martin & Siehl, 1983), and they consider the intricacies of cultures within complex

organizations; whereas, the integrationist perspective oversimplifies organizational

culture. Lok et al. (2005) suggested that subcultures have a more significant effect on

organizational commitment than the overarching organizational culture. Individuals

typically spend more time and have more in common with subcultural members than they

do with others who are from the organization but who are outside their subculture. This

aligns with the assertion of Haslam, Reicher, and Platow (2011) that leaders gain power

and influence through being representative of the group identity. Therefore, if a follower

views a leader within the subculture as more representative of their beliefs and values

than senior leadership, their commitment is likely to the subculture.

   Differentiation. In the differentiation perspective of culture, consensus exists only

within the lower levels of the organization (Martin, 2002). The entire organization is not

able to achieve consensus regarding values and assumptions, but groups within the

organization can. Examining culture from this perspective focuses on the inconsistencies

of values, assumptions, and views on how work is done between levels and groups within

the organization and not simply within the organization's leaders (Meyerson & Martin,

1987). From the differentiation perspective, cultural content and behavior can be

developed by multiple individuals at many levels of the organization, not simply at the

managerial or executive level (Martin, 2002).

   Groups within an organization that can have cultural consensus are known as

subcultures. Alvesson (2002) defined subcultures as being created within organizations

through group interaction and work groups or departments within the organization. These

subcultures can form around similarities among subgroup members that include external

cultural similarities, work groups, ethnic backgrounds, religious backgrounds, and many

other similarities. The most predominant subculture is developed among individuals who

perform similar work tasks (Trice & Beyer, 1993). These subcultures develop through

common descriptions of what Sackmann (1992) defined as dictionary knowledge.

Dictionary knowledge is the descriptions, labels, and language used within organizations

that may differ from their typical societal interpretations. On a subcultural level,

dictionary knowledge can differ from higher level leadership because it focuses on what

actually is happening within a certain group, not simply on the idealistic vision of

overarching values set forth by executive leadership. However, it is helpful for these

differentiated subgroups to work to align, or at least appear to align, with the broader

organizational values to have a voice in the culture (Mattingly & Hall, 2008). Without

alignment, it will be difficult to have a well-performing organization.

Fragmentation. The fragmentation perspective characterizes culture through

disorder and lack of clarity (Alvesson, 2002). Other perspectives of culture attempt to

reconcile ambiguity, while fragmentation suggests that leaders need to simply understand

that ambiguity is part of organizational culture (Meyerson & Martin, 1987).

Fragmentation is the most difficult cultural perspective to describe and articulate and for

this reason has not received a great deal of attention among the academic community

(Martin, 2002). From this perspective, the only consensus is that there is no consensus or

clarity within cultures and that acknowledging this will aid in the functioning of the

group. Everyone within the organization interprets the manifestations of culture

differently. By acknowledging the lack of clarity or consensus, groups, and even individuals, have the freedom to act and interact in ways they see fit, even if those ways run counter to others. Singular predominant interpretations of culture do not exist; instead, many different understandings occur based on groups of individual perspectives and backgrounds (Martin, 2002).

While total ambiguity is disconcerting to cultural leaders, Martin (2002) stated that leaders should be comfortable with it and acknowledge that ambiguity is part of organizational life. Leaders operate from a differentiation or a fragmentation perspective based on the extent to which they are willing to tolerate ambiguity. Alvesson (2002) suggested that while ambiguity and fragmentation within an organization is normal, performance issues would occur if no common understanding surrounds culture. He called this concept bounded ambiguity.

Martin (2002) argued that culture is not as clean and straightforward as the integrationist perspective suggests. Instead, all three perspectives need to be embraced in the study of culture to comprehend the complexity and uncertainty of organizational life with the understanding that none of them will fully capture a culture's nuances and complexity. The inherent disorder, and often-contradictory nature, of culture is best captured through the understanding of these three different perspectives.

Subcultures

When organizational culture was first being studied, organizations were understood to have one distinct homogenous culture shaped by executive leaders (Alvesson, 2002). However virtually all cultures operate with subcultures (Trice & Beyer, 1993). The development of subcultures is a natural part of the life of an organization

(Schein, 2010). Schein (2010) characterized organizational subcultures as different work-related groups within organizations. Trice and Beyer (1993) asserted that subcultures within organizations were inevitable due to the internal diversity of the workplace. Even the cultures that appear to be the most simple and consistent have subcultures that are multiple and fluid (Alvesson, 2002). Subcultures are unique cultures that develop within an overall culture and that possess ideologies, cultural forms, and possibly differentiated practices from the broader organization. As organizations grow, subcultures inevitably develop. Further, organizations should expect subcultures to develop as employees add their own interpretations of the overall culture's values and then naturally gravitate to similar interpretations as their own (Chatman & Cha, 2003). Lok et al. (2005) found that organizational subcultures had a stronger effect on the attitudes, behaviors, and commitment than the primary, overarching culture of an organization.

Subcultures can emerge through friendships, similar interpretations of culture, work tasks, and many other avenues (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Subcultures are also commonly formed around job responsibilities. Executive leadership typically creates the dominant culture that is generally accepted by most organizational members. Subcultures identified by Martin and Siehl (1983) include enhancing, orthogonal, and counterculture. The enhancing subculture enthusiastically supports the dominant culture. The orthogonal culture acts independently and at times contrary to the dominant culture but not in ways that create conflict or oppose leadership. The counterculture challenges the beliefs and practices of the organization.

At their core, subcultures are inevitable and are neither good nor bad. They can create conflict but can also exist peacefully within the overall culture (Trice & Beyer,

1993). However, depending on how subcultures influence members, subcultures can have

positive or negative effects on the organization (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013).

One way subcultures are formed is through the growth of an organization. As

organizations grow and mature, they require more specialization and functional work

groups to perform specific tasks as well as managers to supervise and manage these

groups. The development and operation of these subcultures can produce significant

conflict if not managed well because these subcultures have different interpretations and

manifestations than the overall culture (Schein, 2010). Often, this conflict is

misdiagnosed as political interdepartmental fighting instead of cultural misunderstanding,

education, or structural misalignment.

Schein (2010) identified three generic subcultures that develop within

organizations: operator subculture, engineering subculture, and executive subculture.

These subcultures emerge based on the roles of different areas of an organization and can

also include a hierarchical level. The work demands of the roles in an organization's area

are a significant factor in subcultural development (Trice & Beyer, 1993). However, they

are not the only determinant. There are multitudes of other factors aid in the development

of subcultures. These include "differential interaction, shared experiences, similar

personal characteristics, and social cohesion" (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 224). Different

subcultures can produce conflict due to their different roles and perspectives, but all are

essential for organizational effectiveness.

Operator Subculture

Members of the operator subculture are individuals who produce or sell the

organization's product or service. These individuals are on the ground interacting with

customers. They hold a different perspective than leadership primarily regarding how the

work should be done (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Operators believe they have a better

understanding of the nuances of their work and a better idea about how things are done

than their supervisors because of their close interaction with customers and the product.

These beliefs might not always align with institutional processes. Within an

intercollegiate athletic department, athletic coaches would be part of the operator culture

because they recruit, coach, and work directly with student-athletes. Athletic-trainers can

also be members of this subculture because they work directly with student-athletes.

Engineering Subculture

The members of the engineering subculture operate within roles that manage the

technical aspects of the organization and develop efficient predictable processes. These

individuals value certainty, logic, and believe that tasks must be accomplished in certain

ways and work to provide perfect solutions (Chapman, Hayes, Sloan, & Fitzgerald,

2011). Within an intercollegiate athletic department, this subculture can include those

that manage eligibility and compliance, faculty-athletic representatives, and

administrators who coordinate events and travel.

Executive Subculture

The members of the executive subculture are the top managers within the

organization. These individuals are primarily concerned with the fiscal health of the

organization and its overall operations. This subculture is typically isolated and small. It

may include just the head of the organization and possibly the executive team. Executives

are often in conflict with engineers and operators because they have differing

perspectives on how work should be done and how products should be produced. While

operator and engineering subcultures value logic and certainty, individuals within the

executive subculture tend to be driven towards flexible and innovative environments

(Chapman, et al. 2011). Within an intercollegiate athletic department, the AD is the

primary executive. An assistant AD could be a member of this subculture depending on

his or her scope of responsibility.

Summary

Cultures are complex phenomena that are defined by patterns of values, beliefs,

and basic assumptions. There are multiple perspectives of cultures that assert different

levels of agreement of organizational members regarding the overarching beliefs, values,

and assumptions of the organization. Subcultures develop based on the roles individuals

have within an organization as well as interpretations of values. These subcultures can

have a stronger impact on the attitudes, behaviors, and organizational commitment of

individuals than that of the over-arching culture (Lok et al., 2005).

Organizational Culture in Higher Education

Historically, the study of organizational culture has focused on the corporate

world (Chaffee & Tierney, 1988). Barney (1986) suggested that culture could be a source

of sustained competitive advantage for organizations if the culture is unique, valuable,

and not easily copied. Many other scholars have recognized the effect of culture on

organizational performance within the corporate world (Collins, 2001; Denison &

Mishra, 1995; Hofstede, 1998). Further, Finch, Burrell, Walker, Rahim, and Dawson

(2010) found that the significance of culture on performance was especially true in

corporate cultures during stable environments. However, in volatile environments, the

effect of a strong corporate culture may be mitigated.

Culture within institutions of higher education is different from culture within corporations because colleges and universities have many different goals, and their primary focus may not be simply to produce profit (Duderstadt, 2000). Further, the shared governance and autonomy that are present within higher education cause greater complexity in the study of the organizational cultures of colleges and universities because these cultures serve many different functions, each leading to competing values. Fan and Zietsma (2016) suggested that organizations with shared governance could be rife with struggles because different segments of the employee body had ingrained values and attitudes that likely differed from other employee groups. Every institution has a unique identity and set of circumstances that affects its culture (Chaffee & Tierney, 1988).

The organizational structure of colleges and universities allows for autonomy and thus leads to differing beliefs and cultures within the institution. These differing beliefs and cultures can lead to employees having a stronger commitment to subcultures than they do to the overall organization (Frey, 1994; Lok et al., 2005). Berquist and Pawlak (2008) recognized six different types of cultures within institutions of higher education. While the researchers asserted that one dominant culture existed within an institution, because higher education is by nature culturally differentiated, multiple cultures were present at single institutions. Academic departments and divisions are often viewed as protected territory; resulting in them being disconnected from one another as well as from other aspects of the institution (Feezell, 2015). At the major college level, the athletic department is often incorporated as its own business and, on paper, has only a loose affiliation with the institution. These factors lead to an environment in which competing values are at the forefront of cultural understanding and development.

Features of Organizational Culture in Higher Education

Institutions and their cultures have faced increased fragmentation, internal complexity, and external pressures over time (Buer, 2009; Chaffee & Tierney, 1988). Chaffee and Tierney (1988) and Schroeder (2010) have provided helpful contexts for how to examine and study institutional culture. Cameron and Quinn (2006) and Obenchain, Johnson, and Dion (2004) have explained how these elements manifest themselves in cultures at Christian institutions.

Elements of Institutional Culture

Chafee and Tierney (1998) identified four elements of institutional culture that can be explored in the study of institutions. The first is the role of symbols, specifically, how symbolism and values play a part in an institution's decisions and actions. Second, researchers can examine the institution's history as an essential element to understand institutional culture. An institution's organizational saga (Clark, 1972) and how cultural members interpret that saga affect the development of values and assumptions of a culture and how an institution views itself.

Another element of culture is how leaders use time and space in decision making and creating cultural parameters. In this characterization, Chaffee and Tierney (1998) refer to how time is spent, how meetings are structured, how often meetings occur, and other similar patterns of meeting and decision-making. Space is defined as the amount of collaboration and ownership individuals and departments adopt within the organization. The last element of culture is how information is exchanged in relationship to leadership and power. Some organizations have formal communication channels based on levels within the organization, while others do not.

The elements of institutional culture identified by Schroeder (2010) through his examination of institutional culture research include five main features of institutional cultures. These features provide a broader perspective of the institutional context and explore internal and external factors that impact organizational culture. Still, researchers should be mindful that each feature at each institution will be unique and should be evaluated as such (Chaffee & Tierney, 1988). All institutions have a unique history and an identity, both of which have shaped their cultures over time.

The first of Schroeder's five features is the same as Chafee and Tierney's (1988) with an accounting for the history of the institution. The history and tradition of an institution leads to the development of values and assumptions that are ingrained in its culture. The second feature is the internal environment, in which the mission is the defining feature by which actions are evaluated and decisions are made. The third feature is the development of subcultures that are created by students, faculty, and staff. These subcultures create polarities between groups of people in the organization. Polarities cannot be fixed in academic cultures because there are paradoxes between subcultures; instead, they can be understood and managed (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008).

Next, Schroeder (2010) identified the external environment as an important feature of institutional culture. A multitude of external groups affect culture. These include accreditation bodies, media organizations, state and federal governments, and even the market of prospective students that the institution is pursuing. The fifth and final feature is leadership. Leaders can be formal or informal and should account for the previous four elements while also managing the paradoxes that exist within the organization (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008).

Competing Values Framework

Cameron and Quinn (2006) developed the competing values framework to help explain and diagnose complex cultures with competing values. This framework was not developed specifically for higher education, but has been used by researchers to study organizational culture within higher education (Obenchain et al., 2004). As cultures form and change, group members will have some agreement on the basic assumptions under which they will operate. These assumptions are agreed upon through a discussion about values. There does not have to be total agreement within the culture about the most important values for the group, but some negotiation needs to take place because important values can conflict with one another (Schein, 2010). In the model developed by Cameron and Quinn (2006) four possible cultures were identified within which organizations operate. The model has four quadrants (described below), and cultures are described in the model as internally or externally focused, stable or flexible, controlled or autonomous, and flexible or discrete (see Figure 1).

The four cultures within the competing values framework are clan, adhocracy, hierarchy, and market. Clan is a collaborative culture that is caring, internally focused, and participatory (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Adhocracy is a creative, externally focused, and innovative culture. The hierarchy culture is controlling, internally focused, and stable. Lastly, the market culture is competitive, externally focused, and controlled. Some institutions of higher education operate within a single culture. Multiple cultures may also be present within an organization (Henck, 2011).
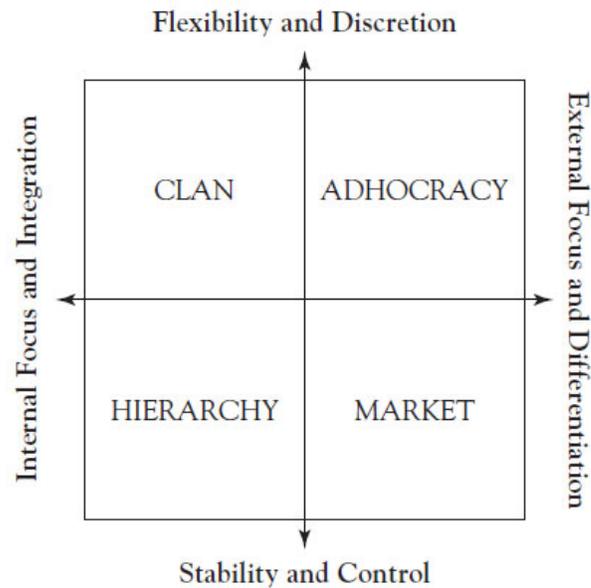
Figure 1. Competing Values Framework. Adapted from "Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture," by K.S. Cameron and R.E. Quinn, 2006, p. 39.

Of the cultures described by Cameron and Quinn (2006), the clan culture is the most prevalent within Christian higher education (Obenchain et al., 2004). Obenchain et al. (2004) surveyed all institutions in the 2001 Higher Education Directory about their institutional culture to assess, among other things, culture type. From the schools that completed the survey, clan culture was found to be especially predominant in Christian higher education. Approximately 50% of the responding Christian colleges identified as clan. The authors speculated that the primary reason for this finding was that Christian institutions have a strong focus on community and values (Obenchain et al., 2004).

Clan culture focuses on mission, values, collaboration, and a family atmosphere (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). The predominant values are commitment, open and clear communication, and development. A leader within the clan culture acts as a mentor and facilitator. The basic assumptions of this culture are that groups within the institution

collaborate but can operate autonomously within departments, that groups experience a

humane work environment that provides a collegial and personal atmosphere, and that

administration empowers the participation and commitment of employees (Cameron &

Quinn, 2006). Further, there is an expectation of equitable distribution of rewards and

recognition (Alvesson & Lindkvist, 1993). A weakness within clan culture is that

innovation is difficult due to a natural insular focus of the clan (Obenchain et al., 2004).

With a focus on community and collaboration, a clan culture can become inwardly

focused and isolated from external developments and innovation.

Obenchain et al.'s (2004) second most prevalent finding was that many

institutions had no single prevailing culture. Of the Christian institutions surveyed, 19%

were found to operate with multiple cultures. This finding aligns with that made by

Berquist and Pawlak (2008), who asserted that while institutions typically have one

dominant culture, cultures are not mutually exclusive. The complexity of institutions of

higher education lends itself to the presence of multiple cultures. Institutions recognize

the need to operate in a complex market and therefore need versatility (Obenchain et al.,

2004). Within higher education, a clan culture provides stability and commitment to

values. However, a market culture focuses on external factors with an emphasis on

maintaining competitiveness within the marketplace. Balancing these different cultures is

complex and difficult, but both are needed to adapt, innovate, and maintain relevance.

Often the most effective leaders are those who can operate within multiple

cultures (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). This flexibility allows for an internal commitment to

culture but also an outward focus on external cultures that understands the market and

innovates to meet the demands of the marketplace. The market culture focuses on

increasing the institution's competitive position. Within Christian higher education, denominational governing bodies and churches tend to maintain a commitment to orthodox values and beliefs. These governing bodies can have different perspectives about the student market they tend to attract. In fact, some of these institution's external groups may assume that innovation will lead to a lessening commitment to the institution's core beliefs and values, resulting in a resistance to innovation (Henck, 2011).

Intercollegiate Athletic Cultures

There is little research that pertains to the study and evaluation of culture within intercollegiate athletic departments (Jayakumar & Commeaux, 2016; Nite et. al, 2013; Schroeder, 2010; Southall et al., 2005). Also, little information is available in relation to either the placement of athletic departments within organizational structures at colleges or universities or the specific structural design of athletic departments (Cunningham & Rivera, 2001). However, it is generally assumed that athletic departments, like academic departments, operate with a high level of autonomy and independence within the institution (Frey, 1994). This autonomy leads to the emergence of subcultures that develop, or at least are perceived to develop, values that can be contrary to those of the institution (Buer, 2009; Nite et al, 2013).

While subcultural autonomy and differing departmental values are not abnormal within complex organizations (Fan & Zietsma, 2016; Lok et al., 2005), the prominence and visibility of athletic departments, as well as the competing and conflicting values within athletic departments, lead to these discrepancies being more pronounced (Buer, 2009; Jayakumar & Commeaux, 2016; Southall et al., 2005). Therefore, the athletic subculture at institutions of higher learning can result in a clash of values between the

athletic department and the institution. This clash has led to a prevalent belief within

higher education that intercollegiate athletics can either be educational or commercial,

when in fact intercollegiate athletics possesses a dual identity with educational and

commercial responsibilities (Buer, 2009).

Cultural Cover Up

Jayakumar and Commeaux (2016), Southall et al. (2005), and Schroeder (2010)

performed three of the predominant studies about organizational culture within athletic

departments. Jayakumar and Commeaux (2016) and Southall et al. (2005) focused on the

major college level of athletics and Schroeder (2010) broadened the focus to all levels

while focusing on smaller Christian institutions. All three studies have clarified

organizational culture within the context of intercollegiate athletics.

Jayakumar and Commeaux (2016) performed a case study that examined the role

of organizational culture in influencing the college experience for student-athletes and

balancing the roles of student and athlete. This case study was performed at a single,

major university in the western United States and was heavily influenced by the work of

Schroeder (2010) and Clark (1972). Interviews were conducted with 20 student-athletes

and other stakeholders but were primarily focused on one former student-athlete.

Jayakumar and Commeaux (2016) found that although academics were spoken about as

the key priority, the system was set up to force student-athletes to choose between

academics and athletics as their primary focus. The authors of the study referred to this

system as a cultural cover-up, indicating that the idealized image of student-athletes

excelling both on the field and in the classroom led to unrealistic expectations that would

ultimately, at least at the athletic department being studied, be unfulfilled (Jayakumar &

Commeaux, 2016). Further student-athletes may feel more loyalty to their coaches and team due to the primarily being recruited by the athletic coach, the large amount of time spent with their athletic team, and the stereotypes given to them by the general campus and broader culture (Adler & Adler, 1988; Emerson, et al., 2009).

The conclusions of Jayakumar and Commeaux (2016) aligned with Nite et al. (2013), in which competing values between a university and its athletic department was examined. In a case study of an NCAA Division II Christian institution, Nite et al. (2013) found that the institution's faith and academic values often conflicted with the athletic values of winning and marketing the university. When the institution made decisions that aligned with the athletic values and not the institution's values, its leadership lost credibility. Another competing value noted was the religious nature of the institution and the predominantly secular culture of athletics within the United States.

Differing Values

Southall et al. (2005) investigated the organizational cultural perceptions of four Division I athletic departments that were members of the same athletic conference. The authors utilized the organizational cultural perspectives of Martin and Siehl (1983) to understand the different subcultures within the department. Revenue sports were defined as football and men's and women's basketball. Southall et al. (2005) discovered different perceptions of organizational culture between male and female coaches as well as between coaches of revenue and non-revenue sports. The subgroup of male coaches and coaches from revenue-program perceived winning as one of the primary, fundamental values of the department. Within the subgroup of revenue-program coaches, women's basketball coaches were found to hold similar values as their male counterparts.

However, a critical finding of the study was that revenue sports have the potential to

create subcultures that may be at odds with the overall values of either or both the athletic

department and/or the institution. Southall et al. (2005) suggested that it was incumbent

upon athletic administrators to recognize these potential issues and address

countercultures that may emerge within the revenue sport subculture to avoid the cultural

cover-up discussed by Jayakumar and Commeaux (2016).

The findings of Southall et al. (2005) concerning culture were consistent with

those made by Putler and Wolfe (1999) about the differing expectations and values in

intercollegiate athletics. Putler and Wolfe (1999) found that intercollegiate athletic

programs and stakeholders differed in their priorities and expectations of winning,

profits, ethics, and the education of student-athletes. The largest correlations found were

negative ones between winning and ethics as well as finances and student-athlete

graduation rates (Putler & Wolfe, 1999).

Assessment of Intercollegiate Athletic Culture

Schroeder (2010) filled a significant gap in the research by providing a model

developed for assessing intercollegiate athletic culture. His model was influenced by the

work of Schein (2010). The model was developed as a response to what Schroeder

considered a lack of understanding about the effect of culture within intercollegiate

athletic departments and a belief that many problems experienced between institutions

and athletic departments were due to a misalignment, or misunderstanding, of culture.

Cultural misalignment was also identified in the work of Beyer and Hannah (2000), who

asserted that problems with intercollegiate athletics have resulted from the inability of

leadership to understand and change culture. The model developed by Schroeder (2010)

has the possibility of improving practice by enabling institutions to logically and practically examine, assess, and develop culture. While this model is helpful, there is no evidence that it has been extensively tested by academic scholars or has been used by institutions as a model for examining athletic department culture.

The organizational culture of an institution influences the culture of the athletic department as it functions under the umbrella of the institution. To understand athletic departments, the broader institution must be taken into account. However, higher education's culture is complex due to its multi-faceted goals of education, broad-based offerings, and its dependency on the loyalty and generosity of donors (Duderstadt, 2000). Thus, much like other departments, the athletic department likely has a differentiated culture that may or may not support the overarching beliefs and values of the institution.

Schroeder (2010) stated, "Every culture is context bound. Each athletic department will maintain its own unique assumptions, and its leadership will materialize in different ways. Culture is an interconnected web of relationships" (p. 115). The culture of the institution creates the context in which the athletic department operates and serves as a foundation by which to assess an athletic department's culture. Schroeder's (2010) model examined the interactivity between an institution's culture, its internal environment, its external environment, and its leadership and power.

Institutional culture. Institutional culture is the starting point for understanding athletic culture because the former provides the latter's boundaries and parameters (Schroeder, 2010). The overarching mission and environment of the institution provides context for the athletic department culture. The institution's mission, admission standards, total enrollment, academic offerings, and religious affiliation all provide

context and cultural boundaries for the athletic department's culture. If the athletic

department acts outside of the parameters set by the institution, the athletic department

likely has little credibility among employees (Nite et al., 2013). However, Schroeder and

Paredes-Scribner (2006) noted that faith could also be the common value that allows

athletics to be a valued and an integrated subculture within a Christian institution. The

structure and design of an organization are central to defining what it is and how it will

operate (Cunningham & Rivera, 2001). Therefore, the structural alignment of the athletic

department is also a piece of institutional culture that affects the parameters of athletics.

For example, if an athletic department is housed within the student affairs' office,

different parameters are set than if the department were supervised by athletics or

operated as its own separate entity.

> **External environment.** The second factor within intercollegiate athletic culture is

the external environment. The external environment includes media, professional leagues,

fans, boosters, sport-governing organizations, and the overall national athletic culture

(Schroeder, 2010). At the major college level, these external factors have been key in the

widespread attention paid to and significant financial investments made in intercollegiate

athletics. Putler and Wolfe (1999) found that different stakeholder groups that influenced

athletic departments valued diverse, and often competing priorities. At the smaller

college level, external influences include the governing body of the sponsoring religious

denomination. The external environment of small Christian schools impacts

intercollegiate athletics differently than that at the major college level. At the major

college level, external constituencies respond to winning through increased donations and

applications for admission (Martin & Christy, 2010). However, at a Christian institution

with an enrollment of 2,857, it was found that athletic success had a minimal impact on enrollment (Brunet, Atkins, Johnson, & Stranak, 2013).

      Athletic department internal environment. The third factor affecting intercollegiate athletic culture is the athletic department's internal environment. While an athletic department can operate under the influence and umbrella of the institutional culture and external environment, it often has its own departmental environment that mediates cultural development The factors within the internal athletic department environment can include the mission of the department, artifacts, subcultures, and the history of the department (Schroeder, 2010). In a study of Division I athletic departments, Fink, Pastore, and Hiemer (2001) found that athletic departments operate in environments that value individuals acting similarly. When similarity is valued among athletic department members, difficulty can result in adopting institutional values, because of the natural competing priorities between athletic departments and the institutions in which they are housed, as discussed by Jayakumar and Commeaux (2016), Shulman and Bowen (2001), Southall et al. (2005), and others. The specific conflicts between the cultures of an athletic department and its institution culture can be understood by analyzing the levels of culture described by Schein (2010).

      Leadership and power. Culture is created and embedded by leaders. Conversely, once a culture is established, that culture specifies the type of leadership that is appropriate (Schein, 2010). Therefore, to understand and assess organizational culture, cultural and leadership elements must be studied together. Athletic department culture within higher education is complicated because it interacts with the institutional culture, the internal athletic department environment, and the external environment (Schroeder,

2010). However, when leaders understand the organizational culture, they are more equipped to integrate the athletic department with the institutional culture (Schroeder & Paredes-Scribner, 2006). The oversight of leadership is key in emphasizing and prioritizing the important cultural values and beliefs of the institution (Nite et al., 2013).

Leadership can be the key to successfully navigating culture and all the different groups that influence the athletic department (Nite et al., 2013). Schroeder (2010) asserted that three aspects of leadership must be understood when assessing athletic culture. First, the researcher must determine who holds leadership and power. The different facets of institutional culture allow many informal leaders to have a voice within athletics. To understand the culture's context, the researcher should examine who holds power and who is competing for power. Leaders attain and maintain power through their ability to define and represent the identity of the groups (Haslam et al., 2011).

Second, the processes of decision-making should be understood. The structures and processes of higher education tend to operate by committee and are slow and deliberate (Schroeder, 2010). Athletic department decision processes are typically more centralized, with leaders in positional power holding decision-making power. Branch (1990) suggested that individuals who are prone to goal and task accomplishment lead effective intercollegiate athletic departments.

Lastly, to determine athletic department culture, a researcher must assess how leaders are selected and hired (Schroeder, 2010). Leaders have the influence to shape culture, so the process of their selection is paramount. However, once a culture is entrenched within an institution, the choice of leader could be determined by the culture within the department, because an attractive leader will be the embodiment of the culture

as opposed to the leader who shaped it (Nite et al., 2013). The collective beliefs within

the department, unless they are so disconnected from the institution that the department

needs to be reshaped, determine the type of leader that will be selected. Ryska (2003)

found that alignment between leadership style and athletic department goals was essential

to lowering the occupational stress of leaders. Further, Trail and Chelladurai (2002)

suggested that athletic leaders should emphasize important cultural values in decisions to

gain support for their department and athletic programs.

Intercollegiate Athletics

Education has held a tenuous balance with athletics since the mid-1800s, when the

first intercollegiate varsity rowing competition was promoted and commercialized by a

local railroad executive (Flowers, 2009; Vanover & DeBowes, 2013). Intercollegiate

athletics in the United States are unique in the world because they operate under the

premise that they hold an important educational function for students. No other

educational system in the world places such an emphasis or spends an equivalent amount

of money on athletics as the United States does (Flowers, 2009). However, while some

scholars assert that athletics holds an important place within higher education (Gayles &

Hu, 2009), others hold that the departments exist for marketing and enrollment purposes

(Flowers, 2009; Sack, 2009). The place of athletics within higher education becomes

more complex at Christian institutions because the mission is dually focused on

academics and faith. These focal areas can conflict with the values and assumptions held

by athletic departments (Nite et al., 2013; Schroeder & Paredes-Scribner, 2006).

Schroeder and Paredes-Scribner (2006) performed a case study in which they

examined the role of religion in an institution and its intercollegiate athletic department

culture. They found a consistent culture between the institution and its athletic

department because both were aligned with the values and basic assumptions of the

institution's Christian mission. This religious alignment allowed the athletic culture to

connect with and have credibility within the broader organizational culture. If it were not

aligned with the broader institutional culture, the athletic department could have

experienced a loss of credibility (Nite et al., 2013).

Intercollegiate Athletic Assumptions

Sack (2009) suggested that the ever-present tension between athletics and

academics resided in differing assumptions about higher education, student-athletes, and

the commercialization of athletics. He identified three different viewpoints regarding

collegiate sport: intellectual elitist, academic capitalist, and athletes' rights. Each

viewpoint held different assumptions regarding the purpose and value of intercollegiate

athletics. While Sack (2009) discussed these viewpoints in relation to major college

athletics, they are pertinent to small college athletics because there athletic programs

produce revenue through enrollment numbers, much like athletic programs at the major

college level produces revenue through success and marketing (Feezell, 2015). Christian

colleges have focused on athletics to increase enrollment, improve alumni support, and

market their institutions (Schroeder & Paredes-Scribner, 2006).

Intellectual elitists. Sack (2009) asserted that this group is defined by their lack

of agreement with how money is spent on college athletics. They believe that the money

spent on college athletics takes funding away from academics and lowers the academic

standards of the institution. This financial commitment, in the eyes of intellectual elitists,

creates a culture in which athletics are more important than academics. This group

believes important steps in reforming collegiate athletics include increased faculty oversight of athletics, enhanced academic standards, and reducing or eliminating the effect of commercialization (Sack, 2009).

Academic capitalists. It is the belief of this group that athletics are important educational experiences for student-athletes in which life lessons are learned. This group understands as a business the intersection of institutions of higher education, athletics, and academics. Athletics serve as an important marketing tool for institutions because it furthers their brands, and, if teams are successful, increases enrollment and the bottom line at the major college level (Martin & Christy, 2010). However, in a study of a small, Christian school, Brunet et al. (2013) found that successful athletic programs did not strongly influence a student's decision to enroll in the institution. Academic capitalists also believe that "scholarships have had a democratizing effect on higher education, adding to campus diversity, and opportunities for minorities and women" (Sack, 2009, p. 79). This assertion was not supported by Shulman and Bowen (2001) who found that opportunities were not increased for minority groups in the institutions that they studied.

Athletes' rights activists. This group asserts that intercollegiate athletics is big business and that student-athletes are exploited employees. There is a belief among this group that collegiate sport is commercial entertainment that is a significant part of popular culture. The effect of intercollegiate athletic teams is so strong that they can play a key function in the socialization of a community and become part of the fundamental identity of institutions, communities, and even entire states (Beyer & Hannah, 2000; Melnick, 1993). Further, athletes' rights activities believe the NCAA is hypocritical, because they claim to value collegiate athletics as an avenue in which students can

participate in balance with their academic and social experiences but instead are using

athletes to further the commercial interests of their organization. Athletes' rights activists

strongly advocate for athletes receiving a fair share of the revenue produced through their

sport as well as typical protections afforded to employees, such as workers'

compensation and insurance (Sack, 2009).

There is little evidence to suggest that the experience of student-athletes differs

drastically from that of the non-student-athlete. In fact, athletes and non-athletes do not

significantly differ in terms of educational engagement (Umbach et al., 2006). However,

both critics and advocates of collegiate athletic programs continue to claim their benefits

or decry the lack thereof.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

Minimal research is available regarding athletic department culture, especially in

relation to Christian institutions. Therefore, this chapter examines culture and

institutional culture broadly. All institutions have an organizational saga in which an

understanding of its history and values develop. People's collective understanding of the

history and values leads to accepted forms of operating and relating to one another

(Clark, 1972). Martin (2002) suggested that multiple perspectives of culture are based

upon the level of consensus within the organization about the assumptions, values, and

beliefs. Subcultures can exist in support of the dominant culture. However, subcultures

within the organization can also have different interpretations of, or even operate in

contradiction to, the overall culture (Schein, 2010).

Institutions of higher education have complex cultures due to the autonomous

nature of governance. This autonomy can result in a conflict in values as subcultures can

emerge (Buer, 2009; Frey, 1994). Obenchain et al. (2004) identify the clan culture as the most prevalent culture within Christian higher education due to a more internal and collaborative focus. Further, due to the central focus on values and faith, all departments are expected to align with the Christian mission of the institution, an expectation that can lead to an integrationist perspective of culture. Nite et al. (2013) and Jayakumar and Commeaux (2016) show that tension can exist between the values of the institution and its athletes. When these important values are in conflict, leadership can lose credibility, especially if decisions are perceived to be made that are not in concert with the overall mission and culture of the institution. However, Christian colleges can achieve alignment with institutional culture and athletics if they align with the values of the institution and hire personnel that support the mission (Schroeder & Paredes-Scribner, 2006).

The institutional history, values, and leadership are common elements of organizational culture identified by scholars (Clark, 1972; Chafee & Tierney, 1998; Schroeder, 2010). Building off the elements of organizational culture, Schroeder (2010) offers the only cultural assessment model for intercollegiate athletic departments. This model includes the institutional culture, the external environment, the athletic department's internal environment, and the leadership of both the institution and its athletic department. This model was central to the development of the interview questions for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This multisite case study explored the perceptions of athletic department members of organizational cultures in athletic departments at three small, Christian institutions. This chapter provides the rationale for utilizing a qualitative approach, specifically the multisite case study; states the research question; and describes the data collection procedures, analysis protocols, and ethical considerations. The case-study approaches of Schroeder (2010) and Nite et al. (2013) informed the decision of utilizing a case study as both studies used case studies to specifically examine athletic department organizational culture at Christian institutions. This approach can provide context and meaning to opinions, focus on processes and not outcomes, and help researchers understand unique phenomena (Schroeder, 2010).

In the study of organizations, a qualitative methodology is suitable to understand the actions and the meanings placed on these actions by group members. Qualitative research is a suitable methodology because the world is complex and often single, simple explanations do not exist for actions or events (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). This method of inquiry is used to gain a deep understanding of a problem or issue, not necessarily to solve the problem or issue (Creswell, 2013). However, this approach can produce information that provides strategies to help address real world problems (Gerring, 2004). Qualitative inquiry allows researchers to explore the experiences of individuals, understand how meanings are formed, and discover different variables within culture (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

A multisite case study approach allows for a deeper investigation into the research question than a single case site case study. The examination of organizational culture is both an objective and a subjective exercise (Sanders, 1982). Research on organizational culture in intercollegiate athletic departments has primarily been performed using the qualitative case study approach (Jayakumar & Commeaux, 2016; Nite et al., 2013; Schroeder, 2010). Organizational culture can be explored as a phenomenon in which individual members of a culture perceive its artifacts, values, and assumptions differently (Sanders, 1982). For this study, the researcher used a multisite case study approach while employing tenants of phenomenological exploration.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multisite case study was to explore the perceptions of athletic department members of organizational cultures in athletic departments at three small Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States.

Research Question

The study was guided by the following research question:

What are the perceptions of athletic department members of the important factors of organizational cultures in athletic departments at three small, Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States?

Research Design

Creswell (2013) provided five different approaches to qualitative research: case study, ethnography, narrative, grounded theory, and phenomenology. In the literature reviewed for this dissertation, the case study methodology was the approach used to examine intercollegiate athletic department organizational culture. This study utilized a

multisite case study in order to understand the perceptions and experiences of athletic

department members with athletic department organizational cultures.

A multisite case study allowed for this study's research question to be explored.

Within a culture, individuals develop subjective meanings for their experiences and their

perceptions of the world around them. Some differences between integrative,

differentiated, and fragmented perspectives of culture can be accounted for by this

subjectivity. Although a leader attempts to present a mission, values, and a culture that all

members of an organization will follow, differentiated subcultures are likely to emerge

because individuals can perceive and understand these factors differently (Martin &

Siehl, 1983; Schein, 2010).

Case Studies

Case-study research is an appropriate method of inquiry to investigate a case (or a

phenomenon) in its real world context. A case study is suitable when the behavior of

research participants cannot or should not be manipulated, an understanding of the

context is important, and the boundaries or context of the phenomenon may be unclear

(Yin, 2014). Schein (2010) recommended utilizing a qualitative approach to decipher

culture. Schroeder (2010) asserted that case studies are suitable for the examination of

culture and developed a model for assessing intercollegiate athletic department culture.

This model was used in this study to organize the findings, but during the course of the

research, no attempts were made to test the validity or reliability of the model.

Additionally, case studies are bounded to provide parameters and make the

research manageable (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Cases can be bounded by time and place,

time and activity, or definition and context (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A bounded system

distinguishes who and what are involved as well as who is excluded from the study (Yin, 2014). Schein (2010) suggested, "culture is an abstraction" (p. 7). It is important for the researcher to understand the experiences of individuals with culture and provide a rich description of the cases to recognize the abstract nature of organizational culture. Therefore, for this study, I sought to understand the perceptions of athletic department members regarding the important factors of athletic department organizational cultures.

Social Constructivist Frame

This study was framed by social constructivism. A researcher who pursues a study from a social constructivist viewpoint aims to make sense of and interpret the meanings research participants assign to the world. This framework is appropriate for considering qualitative research data because it asserts that individuals understand the world in which they live by applying subjective meanings to their experiences. The meanings assigned to experiences are diverse and multiple (Creswell, 2014). The goal of this research study was to understand, summarize, and analyze both the experiences and the meanings that individuals assign to their experiences.

Philosophical Paradigms

Guba and Lincoln (1994) identified three philosophical paradigms to be considered in qualitative study: ontological, epistemological, and methodological. Creswell (2013) called these paradigms "philosophical assumptions" and discusses an axiological assumption as well. Understanding philosophical paradigms is important because a researcher's beliefs or viewpoints help develop research questions and protocols. These paradigms represent the worldview being undertaken in research, the nature of the world, and how the researcher and his or her participants fit into these

beliefs about the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Further, researchers and those reading

and reviewing research have their own philosophical assumptions about the world, so

researchers must explicitly state the assumptions they bring to the study (Creswell, 2013).

Ontological paradigm. The ontological paradigm refers to the researcher's

assumptions about the world and the nature of reality (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Reality

does not consist exclusively of a single viewpoint; instead, multiple realities exist based

on an individual's experiences (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). Understanding these

multiple realities is at the core of qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Guba and

Lincoln (1994) suggested that reality is relative and is constructed within families,

communities, organizations, or other groups with which people identify. Differences exist

in people's actions, interactions, and emotional responses to the world, resulting in

multiple interpretations of reality (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Within the context of this

study, some participants had different perspectives and opinions on athletic department

and institutional culture.

Epistemological paradigm. The epistemological paradigm is based on

knowledge. This paradigm, or set of assumptions, provides a framework for exploring

what knowledge is and how it is constructed within a specific context (Creswell, 2013).

The researcher uses the epistemological paradigm to get close to research participants to

understand the context of where they live and work as well as the subjective meanings

assigned by different individuals to their experiences. Members of an athletic department

have constructed knowledge and meanings based on their interpretations of the

institution's mission, their interactions with others, and their experiences with and beliefs

about sport culture. The researcher and research participants are "interactively linked so

that the 'findings' are literally created as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p 111). Bridling (a concept that will be discussed later in this chapter) my previous experience was important in my ability to understand the specific contexts that will be explored in this study.

Methodological paradigm. The methodological paradigm, or the axiological assumption, of the study is informed by the close nature of these relationships between the researcher and the participants within the qualitative research setting. Qualitative research's methodological process is inductive because of the close relationships between the subject of the study and participants and because the process begins with specific occurrences and works toward generalizations. Axiological assumptions relate to the role values play in research; specifically, in that the researcher brings into the study certain beliefs and values that should be recognized for the research and its findings to be valid (Creswell, 2013). I believe at Christian institutions, the organizational culture of the institution should be strongly linked to athletic department culture. Further, I believe this link is not strong and has been undermined at many institutions because of competing values between education and athletics (Nite et al., 2013). This belief has informed my work as an AD as I have worked to align the athletic department culture with the organizational culture of the institution.

Participants and Recruitment

Multiple case studies provide more compelling evidence than a single case study because they explore more cases and the results can be more powerful (Yin, 2014). Multiple case studies also allow for a broader capturing of the various perspectives and multiple realities of individuals regarding the phenomenon. Further, exploring the

phenomenon across multiple institutions will potentially allow for understanding features that are unique or common (Stake, 1995).

The intent of this multisite case study was to study three athletic departments at small, Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States by interviewing six individuals from each institution while also examining institutional artifacts, documents, and observation. The same roles were interviewed at each institution: the president, the AD, the faculty-athletic representative (FAR), and three coaches. This selection allowed me to interview 18 individuals who had experienced the phenomenon of organizational culture in the athletic departments of these institutions, resulting in data that is more well-rounded and powerful than a single site case study would provide (Yin, 2014).

Case selection. Cases that were selected for this study met the preliminary criteria of being Christian institutions that offer at least 12 varsity sports and have a total undergraduate enrollment of less than 1,500 students. In addition, two primary considerations were made in case selection. First, institutions and athletic departments were willing to provide access to the researcher. Second, cases were sought from a diversity of Christian denominations and from rural and urban locations. The institutions within the population represent a variety of Christian denominations, and I was careful not to focus on one particular denomination. For example, four institutions in Kansas had pacifist beliefs connected historically to their core theology. While studying one of these institutions would not have been a problem, studying them exclusively was not the intent of this study. The institutions within the population had similarities based on the size of the student body, the number of intercollegiate sports offered, and their Christian faith foundation. Institutions within this population were in both urban and rural settings.

Within the population, more institutions were in rural than in urban settings; however, institutions from both were desired and able to be studied.

      Participant selection. In their study of competing logics at a Christian institution, Nite et al. (2013) used a purposive sampling technique and sought to interview those individuals that possessed responsibility for establishing and developing institutional or athletic department culture. These individuals included high-level administrators, the AD, FARs, and head coaches. They interviewed 13 individuals in total. Schroeder (2010) pursued a different method in his study of intercollegiate athletic culture. He used a snowball sampling technique in a single case study in which he interviewed the AD and then used the AD to facilitate interviews with other individuals who may have been pertinent to the study. A total of 19 individuals were interviewed.

      A danger in a multiple case study is that too much information will be collected and it will be unmanageable to analyze (Yin, 2014). By visiting three institutions, this study did not achieve the number of interviews or the depth of investigation within a specific case as Nite et al. (2013) or Schroeder (2010) achieved. However, a broader examination across the three institutions resulted.

      For this study, a purposive sampling was used. Participants were in key roles that held responsibility for managing and developing the athletic department cultures. These roles were the AD, whomever the AD reports to, the FAR, and three athletic team coaches. One of the coaches was from the sport with the most student-athletes on its roster because at small institutions the largest teams form a large percentage of the student population. Due to their size, these teams and their coaches were therefore likely

to affect the institutions. The other two coaches were individuals considered leaders

within the department and will be selected with the help of the AD.

Data-Gathering Procedures

Gathering data from multiple sources is important for construct validity because

analysis can be confirmed from more than a single source (Yin, 2014). This study utilized

semi-structured interviews. However, Sanders (1982) identified observation and

institutional documents as important in the study of organizations. Data was gathered

through multiple sources. These multiple sources included researcher observations of

social interactions and activities, interviews, institutional documents, and artifacts

(Creswell, 2014). All data collected was cataloged to know its source, where it was

stored, and how it was analyzed.

Interviews. A semi-structured interview protocol was used. The purpose of

interviews was to explore and gather information about individual experiences in a deep

and meaningful way and to develop a conversational relationship with the participants to

further understand their experience (Van Manen, 1990). The interviews were guided by

the comments of the interviewees, and the researcher provided prompts (see Appendix C)

based upon the remarks of the interviewees. Each interview began the same way, with the

interviewee being asked to provide their personal definition of organizational culture.

Following their response to this question, they were also asked to describe the

organizational culture and athletic department culture of their institution. After those

specific questions, the interviews were directed by the interviewees' comments. The

researcher used interview prompts, but not all prompts were utilized because the

interviewee responses guided the interviews. Therefore, no interviews were exactly the

same and were guided by the experiences and perceptions of the interviewee. Within

qualitative research, all interviews can be "treated as exciting opportunities to potentially

learn something important about the phenomenon" (Vagle, 2014, p. 79). This type of

semi-structured interview was informed by the influence of phenomenology on this case

study in seeking to understand the perceptions of the participants.

The interview questions and protocol went through numerous revisions and

adjustments throughout the planning and proposal process. Initial interview questions

were tested in the summer of 2016 and were primarily based on the structure and

questions used by Schroeder (2010) utilizing the categories of intercollegiate athletic

department culture that he provides in his assessment model. At that time, over 20

questions were used and the proposed methodology of this study was a case study. Some

questions worked well and some were found to be not relevant. The questions and

prompts that were utilized (see Appendix C) were adjusted according to what was learned

in the test interviews and research proposal process.

Institutional documents. The researcher intended to review organizational and

athletic department handbooks and mission statements, websites, Facebook accounts,

Twitter accounts, and any other pertinent documents that are published publically. The

AD was asked to provide these institutional documents. Not all institutions disclosed

their employee handbooks so they were not utilized in data analysis. Nor did athletic

departments have handbooks, so the researcher did not examine the handbooks that were

provided for analysis.

Artifacts. Artifacts are visible forms and manifestations of culture in which

cultural values and ideas are communicated (Trice & Beyer, 1993). The campus layout,

building structure, dormitory layout, decoration of the athletic department offices, and displays of athletic achievements are among some of the artifacts that can inform the researcher about the organizational culture and athletic culture of an institution. I received campus tours to examine campus artifacts and learn about the values of the institutions, but I also spent time on my own exploring the campuses. Important artifacts were documented with pictures, and notes were taken utilizing the "Field Notes" structure as shown in Appendix C. Analysis of artifacts was performed in conjunction with the analysis of other data that is collected during the holistic readings of the interviews and then referred back to by the researcher when needed during other parts of the analysis process.

Observation. Observations included the physical setting of the institution, the research participants, other individuals that I came into contact with, social interactions, activities, conversations, and my own behaviors while onsite. Observations were documented during interviews on the Interview Protocol sheet (see Appendix D) and on my notepad if written during tours or in between interviews. The handwritten notes written during tours or between interviews were transferred to digital format at the end of the day and stored with other collected data. I acted as a non-participant observer, meaning I was not part of the group that was being observed but they were aware of my presence as I observed (Creswell, 2013).

Field notes and journaling. Throughout the data collection process, I made notes from observations and wrote personal reflections and impressions. The field notes were either objective statements, such as notes about the layout of a room, or thoughts and feelings regarding personal reflections about the process (see Appendix C). The

journaling process allowed for continuous reflection and analysis of the information being learned while creating an awareness of personal biases that may surface (Vagle, 2014). The journaling process was utilized during data collection and data analysis.

Validity and Reliability

The goal of qualitative research is to develop a deep understanding of a subject (Creswell, 2013). The standard scientific requirements for research must be reconceived for qualitative research, in which objectivity and subjectivity are not mutually exclusive. Objectivity means that the researcher remains true to the object. The researcher becomes in a sense "a guardian and a defender of the true nature of the object" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 20). Subjectivity relates to describing the phenomenon in an insightful way, with great depth, while not being "carried away by … unreflected preconceptions" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 20). Research designs should focus on the research questions and be judged logically. Questions of validity and reliability should be centered on trustworthiness, credibility, confirmability, and data dependability (Yin, 2014).

Validity

Validity in research is defined as the accuracy of data collection. In this study, multiple measures will be used to improve validity. The same initial questions were used regarding the interviewees' definitions of organizational culture, and their perceptions of the organizational culture of their specific institutions and athletic departments. However, after those questions, prompts were utilized based upon the interviewees' responses. The questions went through several iterations during the planning process as the research plan was developed and refined.

Creswell (2013) suggested the rich, thick descriptions of the case setting, the participants of the study, and the themes from the data from multiple sources of evidence provide a grounded understanding of the specific context. In Chapter Four, the findings of this study provide rich, thick descriptions of the case settings, participants, and themes. To improve data dependability and credibility, several sources of evidence were considered so that no single piece of evidence will be used for interpretation and analysis. Further, to address the trustworthiness and dependability of the data, participants were asked follow-up questions after transcript review. The ADs at each institution were asked to review the profile of their institution for accuracy. Data was coded in a systematic and disciplined fashion. Lastly, a case-study database was developed throughout the study to maintain all notes and records of the processes of the study.

Reliability

The goal of reliability is to minimize mistakes and biases in the study (Yin, 2014). Within qualitative research, exact replication of results is unlikely, if not impossible. Instead, reliability refers to the ability of a study's structure to be replicated and to the maintenance of a detailed case-study database. The researcher used the same initial questions in each interview, examined the same organizational and athletic department documents, and received a campus tour at each location. Additionally, the same data-gathering plan was utilized at every institution. The site visit schedule was different at each location because of the participants' schedules, but the same protocols were practiced at each location.

Data Analysis

A large amount of data was collected in this multisite case study. To manage and secure the data, several practices were utilized. All interviews were recorded with an Olympus audio recorder, then uploaded and transcribed on the secure website Rev.com. The audio from the interviews were downloaded to the computer of the researcher and then deleted from the audio recorder. Field notes and pictures taken were stored on the computer as well. All data was backed up on a cloud-based service, and interviews and field notes were entered into MAXQDA. Data from athletic department and institutional Twitter accounts were also captured within MAXQDA. Athletic department and institutional Facebook accounts were reviewed outside of MAXQDA. All data storage locations were password protected. All data collected, field notes, and exchanges with participants were stored in a case-study database to insure the reliability of the study. MAXQDA was used as the data analysis software used for this project for the analysis of interview transcripts, field notes, and social media.

The researcher continuously reflected on the data that was collected to obtain a clear and deep understanding of the athletic department cultures as perceived by interviewees at each institution (Moustakas, 1994). All interviewees were sent their interview transcript to review and were contacted with clarification questions from the researcher. The ADs were asked to review their institutional profiles to improve validity and clarity (Yin, 2014).

For data analysis of interviews, the researcher utilized the whole-part-whole method as outlined by Vagle (2014) for each individual case; then, after completing whole-part-whole for each case, cross-case synthesis. Pictures, institutional and athletic

department websites, Facebook, and Twitter accounts, and the field notes of the

researcher were examined during "whole" reads of the data and examined when needed

during the other parts of the analysis process. The whole-part-whole method is a six-step

process that was used as follows:

1. The researcher conducted a holistic reading of the data to become familiar with

   the data in its entirety. The data that was analyzed in this part of the process was

   interview transcripts, artifacts and pictures, a review of institutional and athletic

   department websites, Facebook, and Twitter accounts, as well as the field notes of

   the researcher.

2. The researcher completed an initial line-by-line reading during which notes are

   taken and both open-coding and journaling processes are used. During the line-

   by-line stages, only interviews were specifically analyzed. The researcher

   reviewed other documents throughout the line-by-line process when needed in

   order to gain context or understanding of comments made during interviews.

   Vagle (2014) suggested that the first line-by-line reading and marking should be

   done by hand prior to the use of any type of qualitative software. The researcher

   planned on completing the first line-by-line reading by hand, but adjusted the

   process after hand-coding the first two interviews. Subsequently, MAXQDA was

   utilized for all readings. This was the first research endeavor of this magnitude,

   and the researcher felt most able to conduct thorough coding process and analysis

   by using MAXQDA exclusively. After the first coding process, an initial list of 18

   codes with numerous sub-codes emerged with six initial themes to guide the

   analytical process. These codes and themes were informed by the topics that

emerged during interview but also by relevant literature. The initial themes included defining organizational culture and mission, organizational structure, denominational environment, the gap, athletic department culture, and athletic department values.

3. The researcher identified follow-up questions and contacted appropriate parties.

4. The researcher conducted a second line-by-line reading. Themes and codes continued to be explored and were refined.

5. The researcher conducted a third line-by-line reading focusing on further analysis and interpretation. The goal of this reading was to summarize each participant's analytic thoughts and to start linking overall themes while also continuing to incorporate information and analysis from observations and artifacts. At this time, the researcher wrote memos about each code and each interviewee to continue the iterative process of understanding key themes and statements of each interview. New themes and understandings also emerged during this process. In all subsequent readings, the researcher searched for and attempted to understand rival explanations to search for and consider possible interpretations of the data. This process improves internal validity and guards against researcher bias (Yin, 2014). See Appendix E for the list of codes and sub codes.

6. The researcher performed subsequent readings. The researcher followed up by reading the text, combining codes and sub codes as needed, and looking for additional insights, rival explanations, and comparing and contrasting interviewees. The final reading of the interviews was a whole reading of all data.

After utilizing Vagle's whole-part-whole for each case, cases were compared using cross-case synthesis. Cross-case synthesis was used to aggregate each case and findings combined into a synthesized whole to uncover overarching themes and similarities (Yin, 2014). This simple method provided guidance for analyzing large amounts of data.

The cases were synthesized and analyzed through a thematic reading of the codes and exploring themes across cases. In cross case synthesis, all excerpts were read across cases of each individual code. Multiple codes were given to most excerpts. Interviews of the same role across institutions were compared and contrasted during cross case synthesis. This allowed for additional analysis of the comparison and differences across cases and codes. Codes were also read and analyzed across cases to find similarities and differences and the comparison resulted in subthemes within particular themes.

The analysis was driven by the identification of the themes that emerged during the whole-part-whole process. The six initial themes are described within the description of analysis above of the whole-part-whole process. However, as the analysis process continued, the themes and codes were refined and organized around the four elements of athletic department organizational culture developed by Schroeder (2010). The four elements are institutional culture, external environment, internal athletic department environment, and leadership and power. This decision was made because the codes and themes that emerged more effectively addressed the research question when organized around the elements of Schroeder (2010) in order to provide structure for the organization and communication of the findings. The iterative and non-linear nature of qualitative research (Richie & Lewis, 2003) allowed for the flexibility to make this modification.

This adjustment meant some of the themes were assigned new names (athletic department culture became internal athletic department environment) while others were moved within other elements (denominational environment was moved to external environment).

Ethical Considerations

In case study research, researchers can be prone to using their studies to fulfill previously held beliefs (Vagle, 2014; Yin, 2014). I work in the field that is being researched and have strong beliefs about how athletic departments have difficulty aligning their culture with that of the institution. Further, I had some connections with each institution because I have worked within this institutional population for many years and attended a small, Christian institution as an undergraduate student. This knowledge was helpful to this study because it could allowed me to better understand some of the nuances of the institution as well as have a deeper contextual understanding of the environment. However, I was cognizant of my previous experiences and opinions to not unduly influence the reporting of results. These experiences were bridled during the data gathering and analysis processed and I utilized journaling to document my personal feelings and reactions to the process.

A researcher should bridle his or her personal experiences so that previous experiences are not allowed to affect the research or the interpretation of data during the research. Bridling is a more effective and realistic strategy than bracketing, which calls for the suspension of all previous knowledge to avoid any effect on interpretation or analysis. Bridling acknowledges that it is unrealistic for the researcher to suspend or forget all previous knowledge and calls for the researcher to allow his or experience and pre-understanding of a phenomenon to aid in the research. However, it is important for

the experiences and knowledge to be bridled as to not affect the research or the interpretation of data based on personal opinion (Vagle, 2014).

One strategy that was used to maintain the integrity of the data collection and the accuracy of the data will be fact checking with research participants. Research participants were given the contact information of the researcher to use if they would like to clarify or amend any comments. The researcher also asked for permission to contact participants for clarifying or additional questions.

The protection of human subjects was of the utmost importance in this study. Protection of human subjects included obtaining a letter of agreement for research participation from the AD at each institution, informed consent from each interview participant, protecting research participants from harm, maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of participants, and selecting participants equitably (Yin, 2014). Privacy and confidentiality was especially important because this was a multisite case study in which all institutions compete with one another for students and in athletic events. In the reporting of data, all names and identifying information were changed and a composite was used so that individuals will not be identifiable (Creswell, 2013). Further, all information was kept in the strictest of confidence and held securely on a password-protected computer. The only party to see the raw interview data was the transcriber at Rev.com, who was asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

Summary

Chapter Three provided an overview of the research methodology and data collection plan for this multisite case study. The purpose of the study was to explore organizational cultures at three small, Christian institutions in the Midwestern United

States. Three institutions were selected for the study and data was collected through

interviews, the examination of institutional documents and artifacts, and observations. A

detailed description of the data gathering and data analysis process was given in this

chapter. Data was analyzed through the utilization of the whole-part-whole analysis

process as well as cross-case synthesis. Adjustments that were made by the researcher

during the process of data gathering or data analysis were also described. These

adjustments were made in order to allow for good thinking and a clear presentation of the

findings by the researcher (Stake, 1995). The primarily ethical considerations included

researcher bias and protecting the confidentiality of participants.

      Chapter Four will present the findings of this study. The presentation of the

findings will include participant profiles, institutional profiles, a description of the

important factors of athletic department organizational cultures that emerged from the

three institutions, and a synthesis of the findings. Chapter Five provides

recommendations for accomplishing the aim of this study. The aim seeks to develop

evidence-based recommendations for the development of athletic department cultures at

small Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States. Chapter Five also proposes

recommendations based upon the research findings and academic literature as well as the

other stakeholder and leadership implications of the recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

In the preceding chapters, the background of the problem was described, literature related to the topic was reviewed, and the research methodology was explained in detail. Chapter Four presents the findings from the data that was gathered. The findings are presented first by describing the interviewees and then a brief profile each institution. The data from all institutions is then organized using the four elements of intercollegiate athletic culture developed by Schroeder (2010): institutional culture, external environment, internal athletic environment, and leadership and power. Common themes from the research sites emerged that fit within these four elements as the important factors of organizational culture at each Christian institution. This chapter concludes with a synthesis of the findings.

Participant Profiles

The sample for this study was the athletic departments at three small, Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States. The three institutions that participated in the study were each assigned a fictional name based upon characteristics derived from their institutional overview: Evangelical University, Student-Centered University, and Mission College. The three institutions were affiliated with different Christian denominations. The results of this study were based upon a total of six face-to-face interviews at each institution, observations while on campus, and a review of institutional websites and Facebook and Twitter accounts. Not all institutions had athletic department handbooks, nor were all employee handbooks shared, so they were not considered in the analysis.

At each institution, participants were interviewed from the same roles: president, faculty-athletic representative (FAR), athletic director (AD), and three coaches. The coach with the largest number of student-athletes was interviewed, and the AD chose two other coaches who they considered leaders within the department. The average length of service of interviewees was 11.1 years at Evangelical University, 5.8 years at Student-Centered University years, and 11.0 years at Mission College (see Table 1). Many interviewees served in several different roles during their times at their institutions. Table 1 reflects total years of institutional service, not years in the role in which they are currently serving. Eight of the interviewees were alumni, and only one was female.

Table 1

Institutional Years of Service by Role and Institution

Role	Evangelical University	Student-Centered University	Mission College	Average (Years)
President	5.3	4.1	8.3	5.9
AD	18.7	3.8	14.0	12.2
FAR	14.8	5.8	14.2	11.6
Largest-Sport Coach	3.2	3.3	15.8	7.4
Coach 1	14.3	7.9	8.0	10.1
Coach 2	10.3	9.7	5.8	8.6
Average (Years)	11.1	5.8	11.0	9.3

A summary of the interview lengths can be found in Table 2. The interviews were shorter with each successive school visited. On average, interviews with the presidents lasted longer than the others. Average interview length was shortest at Mission College. However, the FAR at Mission College had a time constraint for the interview, so it lasted only 19 minutes and 50 seconds. Possible reasons for the decline in interview length

included researcher fatigue, the timing of the interviews during the school year (Mission

College was visited the week after graduation), or the fact that interviewees at Student-

Centered University and Mission College may have more succinctly communicated their

understanding of the culture of the institution and athletic department.

Table 2

Interview Length by Role and Institution

Role	Evangelical University	Student-Centered University	Mission College	Average (Minutes)
President	39:35	42:50	45:03	42:29
AD	30:58	32:03	37:00	33:20
FAR	30:31	27:01	19:50	25:47
Largest Sport Coach	32:23	46:45	23:21	34:10
Coach 1	38:30	31:29	26:35	32:11
Coach 2	47:12	25:23	27:47	33:27
Average (Minutes)	36:31	34:15	29:56	33:34

Institutional Overviews

All institutions have a unique identity and context that affect their culture

(Chaffee & Tierney, 1988). Further, each institution is bound by its particular context and

its unique assumptions (Schroeder, 2010). Each institution within this study had a

distinctive identity and culture. In this section, each institution is briefly described to

provide context for the important factors of athletic department cultures that emerged

during data analysis of the three institutions.

Evangelical University

Evangelical University is a young institution of less than fifty years old that is located in a large city. During the past three years, undergraduate enrollment has declined while the number of student-athletes on campus has risen. Table 3 illustrates the changes in undergraduate enrollment and student-athlete enrollment from 2013–2015. The percentage of student-athletes within the undergraduate enrollment was believed to be 40% by interviewees; however, this number was lower in the Equity in Athletics data that was reported to the Department of Education.

Table 3

Evangelical University Undergraduate and Student-Athlete Enrollment

Population	2013	2014	2015
Undergraduate Enrollment	1,129	1,020	1,129
Total Student-Athletes	251	260	313
Student-Athlete Percentage of Undergraduate Enrollment	22.20%	25.50%	27.70%

Evangelical University offers a broad-based liberal arts education from a Christian perspective. The institution's denomination is evangelical and mission-oriented. The institution was initially founded to provide an undergraduate education to pastors and teachers from the denomination. It continues to offer primarily undergraduate academic programs but now to a student body from both within and outside the denomination and within and outside the Christian faith. The school also offers online and traditional graduate and professional programs. Admission standards were not easily accessible on the admissions website but standards were communicated by interviewees as 2.0 GPA

and 18 ACT. Evangelical University is a member of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities and the National Association of Independent College and Universities and is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

The academic section of the campus surrounds an open campus quad with large open spaces of grass. There are a few buildings that were recently either renovated or built and the institution is in the midst of a capital campaign to further modernize the campus. The campus buildings are filled with signs and artwork including Bible verses that promote Christianity. The main entrance of each building on campus contains a Christian artifact. The gym has a banner with a Bible verse displayed prominently near the entrance. The institution is distinctly Christian in their choice of campus artwork.

Evangelical University is a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). Evangelical University offers 13 varsity sports, six for men, six for women, and one co-ed sport. The men's sport offerings are baseball, basketball, cross-country, football, soccer, and track and field. The women's sport offerings are basketball, cross-country, soccer, softball, track and field, and volleyball. The co-ed sport offered by Evangelical University is cheerleading. During the past five years, the athletic department at Evangelical University has had multiple Top 50 finishes in the Learfield Sports Directors Cup rankings which ranks NAIA athletic departments based upon their overall athletic success. The number of institutions that are listed in the Learfield Sports Directors Cup rankings has been between 185 and 203 during the last five years. This fluctuation is due to institutions joining the NAIA or dropping their membership. Evangelical University's athletic teams often qualify for NAIA national postseason tournaments, and one program recently won a national championship.

A new AD was hired four months prior to data gathering through an internal hiring process. He is a long time employee of the institution and has served in numerous roles during his almost 19 years at the institution. However, the culture developed by the previous AD was still evident in the interviews. Each interviewee noted that the institution provides attractive financial aid packages to student-athletes to attract those with the athletic ability to compete at the national level. This increased investment occurs during a time of financial difficulty for the institution.

Student-Centered University

Student-Centered University is located in a mid-sized town in a suburban area and is over 125 years old. Undergraduate enrollment remains relatively stable while the number of student-athletes enrolled has increased. Table 4 illustrates the changes in undergraduate enrollment and student-athlete enrollment from 2013–2015. The percentage of student-athletes that made up the undergraduate enrollment was believed to be between 75–80% by interviewees; however, this number was lower in the Equity in Athletics data that was reported to the Department of Education.

Table 4

Student-Centered University Undergraduate and Student-Athlete Enrollment

Population	2013	2014	2015
Undergraduate Enrollment	624	589	618
Total Student-Athletes	371	356	379
Student-Athlete Percentage of Undergraduate Enrollment	59.46%	60.44%	61.33%

Student-Centered University enjoys a long-standing reputation as an institution where students can be involved in many different activities. Administrators estimate that 95% of the students who choose to attend Student-Centered University make the decision based on their ability to participate in an extracurricular activity.

Student-Centered University offers broad-based liberal arts undergraduate degrees and pre-professional programs from a Christian perspective. A Masters in Business Administration is their lone graduate program. Admission standards for undergraduates are the most stringent of the institutions in this study. Student-Centered University requires a 2.5 high school grade point average and a score of 18 on the ACT. They are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and are members of the National Association of Independent College and Universities.

The campus at Student-Centered University is small and well maintained with buildings that have been recently renovated. The school prioritizes investment in locations on campus where students gather to socialize, most notably the student center and cafeteria. Few distinctly Christian markers exist on campus, and the institution has a loose connection with their sponsoring denomination. The most notable Christian marker is in the chapel, which is located in the administrative building. The president at Student-Centered University noted that only a small portion of the student-body has come from the sponsoring denomination throughout the history of the institution and the school is accustomed to recruiting outside of its affiliated denomination.

The athletic department at Student-Centered University is a member of the NAIA. Student-Centered University offers 24 varsity sports, 11 for men, 10 for women, and three co-ed sports. The male sport offerings are baseball, basketball, bowling, cross

country, football, golf, soccer, tennis, indoor track, outdoor track, and wrestling. The

women's sport offerings are basketball, bowling, cross country, golf, soccer, softball,

tennis, indoor track, outdoor track, and volleyball. The coed sports are cheer, dance, and

E-Sports. The athletic department has not finished in the top 100 in the Learfield

Director's Cup rankings in the past five years. The institution focuses on academic

achievement in the awarding of financial aid for athletes and awards far less than the

maximum allowed by the NAIA. Administration believes that the NAIA aligns with their

mission and values and is proud of their membership. Student athletes at Student-

Centered University are successful academically and these achievements are celebrated

through displays of team GPA's and academic all-Americans outside the athletic offices.

This success is heavily promoted on the athletic department webpage and through the

department and individual team social media platforms.

Mission College

Mission College is located in a small town in a rural area. Undergraduate

enrollment has continued to decrease over the last three years while the number of

student athletes has increased. Table 5 illustrates the changes in undergraduate enrollment

and student-athlete enrollment from 2013–2015. The percentage of student-athletes

within the undergraduate enrollment was believed to be 75% by interviewees; however,

this number was slightly lower in the Equity in Athletics data that was reported to the

Department of Education.

Table 5

Mission College Undergraduate and Student-Athlete Enrollment

Population	2013	2014	2015
Undergraduate Enrollment	442	377	380
Total Student-Athletes	218	261	275
Student-Athlete Percentage of Undergraduate Enrollment	49.32%	69.23%	72.37%

The academic curriculum is a broad-based liberal arts education from a Christian worldview. The institution primarily offers undergraduate degrees; two online graduate degrees are also offered. Admission standards require an incoming student to have a 2.0 GPA and a score of 18 on the ACT. Mission College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities as well as the National Association of Independent College and Universities.

Mission College is well over 100 years old and has reinvented itself many times to fill the church's needs and adapt to the higher education climate. The school has even changed denominational affiliations. The campus is small, simple, well maintained, and slightly disjointed. For example, the office of the president is across the street from the main campus, and there is a converted dormitory that is now faculty and staff offices.

The athletic department at Mission College is a member of the NAIA. Mission College offers 16 varsity sports, seven for men, seven for women, and two co-ed sports. The male sport offerings are baseball, basketball, cross-country, golf, soccer, track and field, and wrestling. The women's sport offerings are basketball, cross-country, golf, soccer, softball, track and field, and volleyball. The coed sports are cheer and dance. They were recently accepted into a new conference that is more competitive athletically

than their previous conference. The AD also serves as the Vice President of Enrollment.

Mission College has experienced athletic success, which is demonstrated by numerous

conference championships and national tournament appearances, but their national

athletic profile is not as prominent as that of Evangelical University, which is

demonstrated by the fact that only have one Top 100 finish in the Learfield Cup rankings

in the past five years.

Findings

The findings are organized using the four elements of intercollegiate athletic

department culture developed by Schroeder (2010). These four elements were

institutional culture, external environment, internal athletic department environment, and

leadership and power. The process by which the researcher determined how to organize

the findings was described in Chapter Three. Schroeder (2010) provides one of the only

models for organizing and assessing intercollegiate athletic department culture. Nite et.

al. (2013) organized their findings based on themes of the data but did not provide a

model to be utilized by others. Therefore, Schroeder's (2010) model was utilized to

organize the findings and analysis.

Interviewees described topics that fit within the four elements of the model.

However, the elements were experienced and described differently by different

interviewees. For example, structure was mentioned by some interviewees when referring

to institutional culture, while others referred to structure in their comments about

leadership. Therefore, the same topics emerged when interviewees were discussing

different elements of organizational culture based upon their experiences. These topics

were not only identified within one of the four elements of intercollegiate athletic

department culture but also across multiple elements. This researcher originally did not

intend to organize the findings in this way; however, after completing the whole-part-

whole data analysis and cross-case synthesis, the researcher found that the model aided in

organizing the findings in a clear and understandable way in order to communicate the

important factors of organizational culture.

Institutional Culture

Institutional culture was the starting point for understanding athletic department

culture because the former provides the boundaries and parameters for which athletics

operates within the institution (Schroeder, 2010). Within institutional culture, three

primary themes emerged throughout the institutions: the definition of common values,

organizational structure, and *standing in the gap (*also "stand in the gap", "stands in the

gap", "stood in the gap", and "the gap"). Standing in the gap was a term used by several

interviewees in describing the importance of having individuals serve as a connection

between athletics and other parts of the institution. Stood in the gap was also used as a

verb by individuals when talking about specific instances when they served as a

connector between athletics and other parts of the institution

Common values. Throughout the interviews, the terms mission and values were

often used interchangeably. Each institution possessed its own distinct culture and

defining values based on its context and mission. While only Mission College

interviewees could consistently and accurately recite their actual mission statement,

interviewees at each institution were aware of and believed in the important values of

their institution. Evangelical University valued faith, Student-Centered University valued

student-centeredness and inclusivity, and Mission College valued their faith-driven

mission and community. These values were consistently emphasized by leadership and are the stated cornerstones of institutional decision-making. These were not the only important values discussed at each institution. There were common values of student-centeredness, academic excellence, community atmosphere, and others, but the above-mentioned values of each institution were the primary drivers of the institutional culture.

These values were demonstrated through artifacts on campus at Evangelical University and Mission College. At Evangelical University, there were Bible verses on the walls of many campus buildings and meetings rooms. In the basketball gym, a large banner displaying a Bible verse was displayed prominently. At Mission College, the mission statement hung on the wall in nearly every room I visited. The mission was a uniting factor for employees. It was something they all knew well and professed to believe in deeply.

When discussing the primary values of the institution, the president at Evangelical University discussed the importance of faith by stating, "If the institution doesn't reflect the description of a follower of Jesus Christ in the whole, then we aren't being who we've been called to be." This belief was a unifying factor for the interviewees at Evangelical University. Interviewees were overtly Christian, cited Biblical texts in interviews, and spiritualized their work. The AD described the culture as caring, servant-minded, and prayerful. He explained that many faculty members and coaches began their classes or practices with a prayer. The coaches highlighted the spiritual growth they witnessed among their student-athletes as examples of the effect that the institution's caring Christian culture has. One described the experiences of student-athletes from his team by stating,

…if I could've written out the stories of the stuff that's happened within my team, because I have such a huge diversity of kids. I have everything from Muslims, to atheists, agnostics, to kids that were in the church every single Wednesday, Sunday morning, Sunday night, VBS, revival. I have this spectrum, and I've seen every single kid influenced (spiritually).

In discussing the primary value of Student-Centered University, the president assuredly stated, "Our ethos here really is a very student-centric philosophy. We make our decisions based around how does it serve students." This ethos was best exemplified in the institution's recent investments, which were focused upon the student experience. The newest building on campus was a student center that housed the athletic offices and provided a comfortable and modern space in which students could socialize and relax.

Two other recent examples were highlighted as illustrations of being student-centered and responsive to student needs. During the past three years, a significant investment was made to improve the wireless Internet based on student complaints. Additionally, they changed food service providers in response to student complaints. This change led to a higher cost provider, but it was viewed as worthwhile investment because students reported a 92% satisfaction with the new food service company.

When describing the institution's values, the president at Mission College talked about what he advised coaches at their fall meeting each year. He stated, "I don't care whether you win a game all year, but if you aren't making an impact on those kid's lives, then you don't belong here." He acknowledged that he cared if they win games, but winning was not the institution's primary motivator or accountability tool. For Mission College, the primary focus was changing lives through faith. The institution's academic

aspect, like athletics, was only a vehicle for executing this mission. In fact, there was a strong focus on athletics because the coaches spent the most time with the student-athletes and a majority of the student-body were athletes. Whereas faculty members spent a couple hours per week with the student-athletes, coaches spent a few hours per day. Therefore, athletics was seen as a very important vehicle for executing the institution's mission. Interviewees mentioned that they believed this role might be abnormal for a college of university, but it worked for them. The president described it like this:

> It took a couple years before we really rolled out the fact that you realize our mission is no longer education. Education is the means by which we meet our mission. For faculty, that was kind of a different spin to them.

Interviewees at all three institutions discussed their institutions' faith foundation when discussing values. While interviewees commonly recognize its importance, each institution interpreted its faith values differently based upon institutional culture and denomination. All interviewees wanted guidance about what these values meant for how they did their job. Lack of clarity about what it meant to be a Christian institution causes frustration and confusion for some interviewees. They wanted to clearly understand what the expectations were for the Christian environment they are in that they believed was part of their mission.

At Evangelical University, this lack of clarity was evident in how some of the coaches assumed they are working more intently at developing the faith aspect of their programs than others. One coach notes that in the past he has felt like a "black sheep" when he valued recruiting mission-fit student-athletes and mentoring them spiritually. Another coach said he did not think that other coaches valued spiritual transformation the

way he did. This feeling was not supported by other interviewees, but a lack of communication and community within the athletic department created a lack of awareness about the work other people were doing. The new AD was actively working to improve communication through consistent athletic department meetings that coaches were required to attend and developing a common mission and values statement.

Several interviewees at Student-Centered University were looking for clarity regarding what exactly the faith element of the institution means for their work. Some were unsure if it meant anything and had seen the emphasis change as leadership had transitioned throughout the years. Mission College provided the clearest context for this result with their focus on character, a Christian lifestyle, and daily chapel. The expectations were clearly defined, and interviewees understood the process of putting the mission into practice. Student-Centered University and Mission College are not as well defined in this regard.

Even though some institutions struggled with a lack of clarity, the most important factors of mission and values were recognized as among the most important factors of institutional culture. All the institutions had their own unique values that defined them. Coaches wanted and expected leadership to provide this clarity.

Organizational structure. An organization's structure is central to defining what it is and how it operates (Cunningham & Rivera, 2001). Interviewees regularly mentioned organizational structure when referencing institutional culture, the internal athletic department environment, and leadership. While a final section in the findings examines leadership, the reporting structure and role alignments distinctly affects the institutional culture and how the athletic department operates within the institution at all three

institutions; therefore, that topic is discussed here under institutional culture rather than later in the section on leadership.

When discussing organizational structure, interviewees referred to the reporting hierarchy within the organization and the structure as well as the membership of institutional committees and decision-making groups. Coaches at each institution considered structure a vital part of their definition of organizational culture, while administrators primarily discussed how mission and values influenced organizational culture. The organizational structure appeared to affect coaches because they were not in an institutional leadership role. The expectations and communication coaches received from their ADs are vital for understanding their job expectations.

At Evangelical University, coaches did not mention involvement outside of the athletic department, and their voice within the athletic department regarding decision-making was minimal. This isolation led to the assumption by some that administrators were not being forward thinking or were not trying to help the institution make progress. The AD was working to involve coaches more, to give them a greater voice on campus, and to use them to build relationships with other departments on campus.

At Evangelical University, the AD was not a member of the executive leadership team but reported directly to the president. I did not find evidence that the AD was active on any institutional committees or across campus. This was a relatively new structure for the institution in which the AD reported to the president and not a vice president. It was perceived that this structure was an impetus for improved funding and an increased focus on athletics at the institution. One coach said,

The (former) AD fought really hard to get a direct report to the president and so

he became cabinet level. And I think when things started changing. When he had

a direct report there was no insulator between him and the president. That allowed

him to recommend things, to push on things, to have no real insulation and that's

when things really started changing.

The athletic department at Evangelical University had a perceived "us vs. them"

mentality that could have developed because of this structural isolation. Interviewees

described a perception on campus that athletics were trying to get as much for their

department as possible while not giving back to the rest of campus. During a time when

budgets were tight and substantial cuts had been made in recent years, the institution

made a significant investment in athletics, and success followed. The coaches

interviewed understood this problem and believed that faculty understood it. They also

believed the decision was justified because the coaches were responsible for recruiting

40% of the student body. This attitude was not as prevalent at Mission College or

Student-Centered College even though coaches there were responsible for recruiting a

much larger percentage of the student body. The AD at Evangelical University brought a

fresh perspective to the isolation of the athletic department in his attempts to build

relationships across campus. One coach described this fresh perspective by saying,

I think culture and just that the athletic department, from what I understand,

supports the mission. Does it get bigger? Does it do its own thing? Does it go

rogue? It's here to be a team player and part of the organization not just to get as

big and be as successful as it can.

This perspective of athletics serving the broader organization was a key element at Student-Centered University and Mission College, but not at Evangelical University. At Evangelical University, the attitude was to win while working to have a spiritual effect on student-athletes. While the other two institutions also focused on the institution's core mission and values, interviewees there appeared to understand the broader picture of helping the institution be successful, even if success sometimes came at the expense of the athletic program. As an illustration of this sacrifice, a coach at Mission College discussed how he would sometimes recruit a more students in the summer, even when he did not need them, if he heard that the institution might be short on enrollment goals.

One of the important elements that emerged regarding organizational structure was the AD's level of peer accountability. At Student-Centered University and at Mission College, the AD sat on the institution's executive leadership team and was involved across campus on various committees. The AD at Mission College was also the Vice President of Enrollment. The ADs at each of these institutions went to faculty meetings to give updates and to take questions and were involved in a wide variety of campus groups and committees. This level of integration was helpful in developing relationships across departments. It also created, or was perceived to create, an understanding that everyone is committed to the institution's mission. Further, by placing the AD on the executive leadership team, the institution illustrated the importance of athletics while providing accountability at the highest levels of leadership. The ongoing emphasis of utilizing athletics for enrollment at Student-Centered University and Mission College allowed athletics to maintain their importance at the institution while accountability did not allow them to move into a role of primacy.

Coaches and athletic department members had varying degrees of involvement on institutional committees and in decision-making groups. The level of involvement appeared to affect the perspective of departments outside of athletics. At Student-Centered University, an intentional committee structure had been developed to integrate the employee body. Faculty served on various committees involving athletics, and coaches participated in committees that involved academics and other important institutional decisions. The decision-making processes at Student-Centered University were often slow, because they were committee driven. The two primary leadership groups with decision-making ability were the executive leadership team and the institutional direction committee. The latter comprised 18 representatives including chairs from the executive leadership team and academic divisions, other staff members in middle management, and a coach. This group was charged with recommending approval for polices and budgets. The coaches interviewed appreciated having a voice in broader campus decisions, but the slow pace of decision-making proves could be frustrating. One coach interviewed noted appreciation for the ability to be involved but expressed his exasperation when he exclaimed, we "have more committees than Notre Dame!"

While issues arose between athletics and academics at Student-Centered University, all of the interviewees believed the relationship overall was healthy. None of the interviewees perceived much tension between athletics and academics. However, the story was different between the admissions and financial aid offices. Interviewees described a frustration that the institution was not providing enough scholarship dollars for athletes and that the standards for those scholarship dollars were too stringent when compared to other institutions within their conference and within the NAIA.

At Mission College, campus involvement was primarily by the AD. However, because of the institution's size and nature, faculty and staff appeared to interact informally, building bridges between the groups. In this context, more official interaction might not be necessary. However, it was noted by some that more interaction might be helpful for new coaches who were not from the denomination to build relationships with others on campus while also aiding in cultural understanding.

Outside of the obligations within the eligibility process, FAR job structures and responsibilities were informal but serve an important role for communication at each institution. FAR responsibilities were dictated by the NAIA, were primarily clerical in nature, and constituted the role's formal obligations. However, outside of that, the role was informal and each FAR had a different perspective about how to operate. All FARs acted to connect athletics and academics. They provided a communicative avenue between athletics and academics to facilitate discussion and answer questions for either faculty or coaches.

The Evangelical University FAR, who also served as an assistant coach in the past, described the position by saying, "I feel comfortable with that. I've been in both worlds. I've been passionate about mathematics. I've been passionate about athletics my whole life. It's ... I feel comfortable going back and forth between those two." The Student-Centered University FAR described his role as informally acting "as a go-between for faculty and coaches occasionally." The FAR at Mission College described his role as standing in the gap between athletics and academics. Although informal, employees at each institution used the FAR as a means of answering questions and communicating concerns about athletics.

Standing in the gap. The term standing in the gap was used in many interviews in reference to individuals or structures that served as connectors between athletics and other departments on campus. Individuals who stood in the gap attempt to create understanding and common ground between athletics and the rest of the institution. Interviewees at each institution bridged the gap differently, but they all recognized the need to communicate and build relationships between athletics and academics.

Organizational structure played a key role in standing in the gap. Committee representation for athletic department members and AD representation on the institution's executive leadership team provided formal avenues for athletics to have a voice. However, these were not the only ways that people stood in the gap. Individuals at each institution who stood in the gap were FARs, alumni, and others who have long connections with the denomination. A denominational connection or alumni status appeared to be helpful at both because individuals trusted them across campus because they were perceived to understand the cultural context.

Evangelical University was in a different place in of individuals and structures that connected athletics to other areas of the institution. They had a FAR that was a long-time employee and former coach who was able to stand in the gap. At the time of the interview, he was working on ways to create a more formalized system that would allow greater faculty and athletic involvement through the development of a committee. This committee would be called upon to advice the AD and athletic department, but would not necessarily have the power to make changes. Faculty voted on and approved the idea and would be working through its structure and exact role during the next school year.

Beyond the FAR, the AD was also working on building relationships with faculty, something that had not been done under the previous AD. At Evangelical University, coaches had a perception that faculty believed athletics was "getting too much," which caused resentment both ways. One of the first tasks of the new AD, according to the president, was to build the relationship between academics and athletics. The president said that the new AD was working hard on this problem and had been instrumental in improving it. He said, "I think leadership makes a huge difference, and our current AD is working at that very hard. And I think the past AD did as well, but (the current AD) has really taken on the task." The president held a campus forum about athletics during the year in which he answered questions and attempted to build understanding about athletics and their place at the institution. The event was well attended and was believed to have resulted in helpful conversation, but it was unclear what would happen next. However, there may not have been a broad awareness of the event, as any other interviewees did not mention it.

EVANGELICAL UNIVERSITY

Figure 2. Evangelical University organizational chart that illustrates the structure of the athletic department within the institution and identifies roles that stand in the gap.

At Student-Centered University the AD stood in the gap due to his role as vice president. He visited faculty meetings once each semester to engage faculty and took questions, and he invited faculty to athletic department meetings. He was organizationally gifted and helped the athletic department plan and communicate. He also facilitated coach involvement in different institutional matters like the institutional decision-making committee, financial aid committee, and other groups that dealt with institutional matters.

Other than the AD, two interviewees at Student-Centered University stood in the gap: a coach who was an alumnus and the FAR. The coach had a naturally trusting

relationship with the faculty, likely because many of the faculty had him as a student. He

had also been at the institution through several ADs and presidents and was considered

loyal. The FAR did not have any previous athletic background at the institution, but he

was asked to accept the position because administrators thought he would serve

effectively in the role, and he had already been serving an unofficial role as someone who

occasionally stands in the gap. He described the relationship between academics and

athletics as good, and said, "I hear grousing on both sides, but never anything mean

spirited. It seems like everybody really is working together for the good of the students."

This clear and common understanding across the institution of operating from a student-

centered perspective appeared to be one of the reasons for positive relationships between

academics and athletics. The common understanding was derived, in part, from an

integrated organizational structure in which many of the coaches, as well as the AD,

participated in campus committees and institutional decision-making processes that

allowed for an understanding of other parts of the institution outside of athletics.

At Mission College, the FAR, the AD, and a coach primarily took on the role of

standing in the gap. All three of these individuals are alumni who had long and deep

connections to the institution as well as the denomination. They had pre-existing

relationships with many faculty members from the time they spent as students at Mission

College, and they understood the culture of the institution a well as the denomination.

Except for the AD sitting on the executive leadership team, no other official structures

were in place to stand in the gap and integrate athletics with the campus. They simply

tried to be accessible and to work with one another, which appeared to be possible due to

the institution's small size. Mission College was by far the smallest of the three

institutions, with fewer than 500 students. When intentional conversations occurred in

meetings, the AD or the coach took part.

STUDENT CENTERED UNIVERSITY

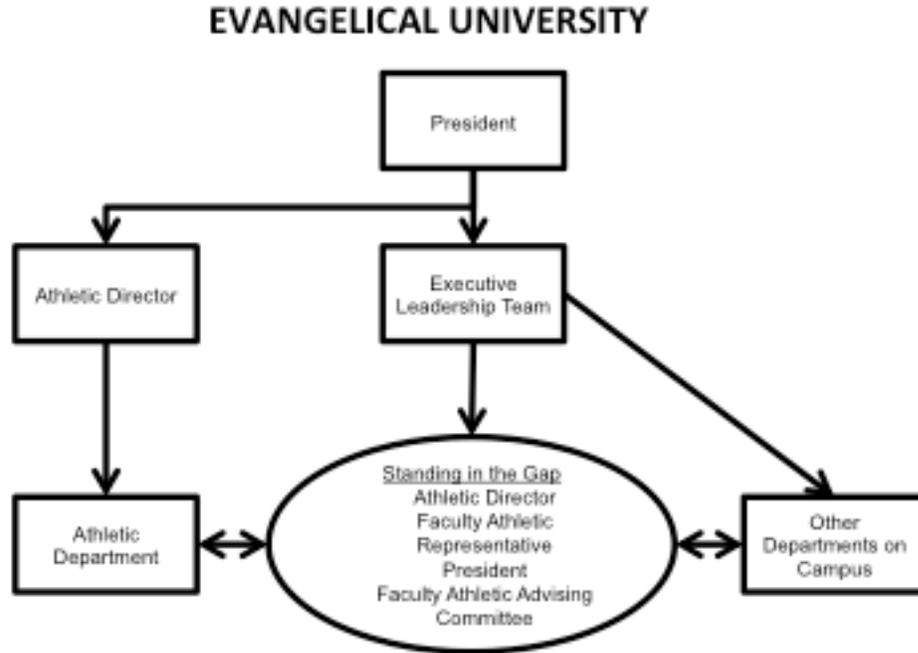*Figure 3.* Student-Centered University organizational chart that illustrates the structure of the athletic department within the institution and identifies roles that stand in the gap.

At Mission College, the FAR, the AD, and a coach primarily took on the role of

standing in the gap. All three of these individuals are alumni who had long and deep

connections to the institution. They had pre-existing relationships with many faculty

members from the time they spent as students at Mission College, and they understood

the institution's culture. Except for the AD sitting on the cabinet, no official structure was

in place to stand in the gap. They simply tried to be accessible and to work with one

another, which appeared to be possible due to the institution's small size. Mission

College was by far the smallest of the three institutions, with fewer than 500 students. When intentional conversations occurred in meetings, the AD or the coach took part.

   The coach, who was also a long-time denominational member, was invited to a faculty meeting to discuss some issues that were happening between academics and athletics. She described the meeting by saying,

> We felt that [tense] energy, but then when they saw it was me, it was like, oh man our daughter's here. Sometimes they look at me like, this is like, and this is ours. She's ours. And questions were addressed, nice, very nicely….Most of them before they spoke said, "We love you. You know we love you, this isn't against you but some of the coaches," it was very lovingly done.

   This coach said she understood why she was invited to the meeting since she was an alumna and a denominational member, but she also expressed discomfort at being the athletic department's representative for working out difficult issues with faculty. She preferred to have other coaches participate as well, but they were not yet doing so, at least to her knowledge, even though she encouraged leadership to do so. Therefore, she was one of the only coaches mentioned in interviews that bridged the gap between faculty and athletics.
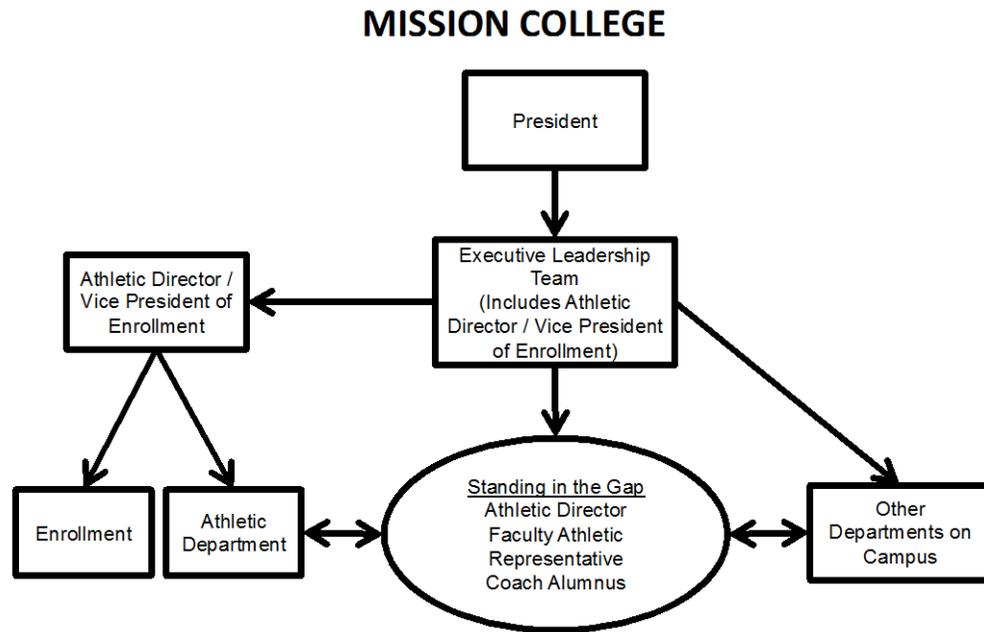
MISSION COLLEGE

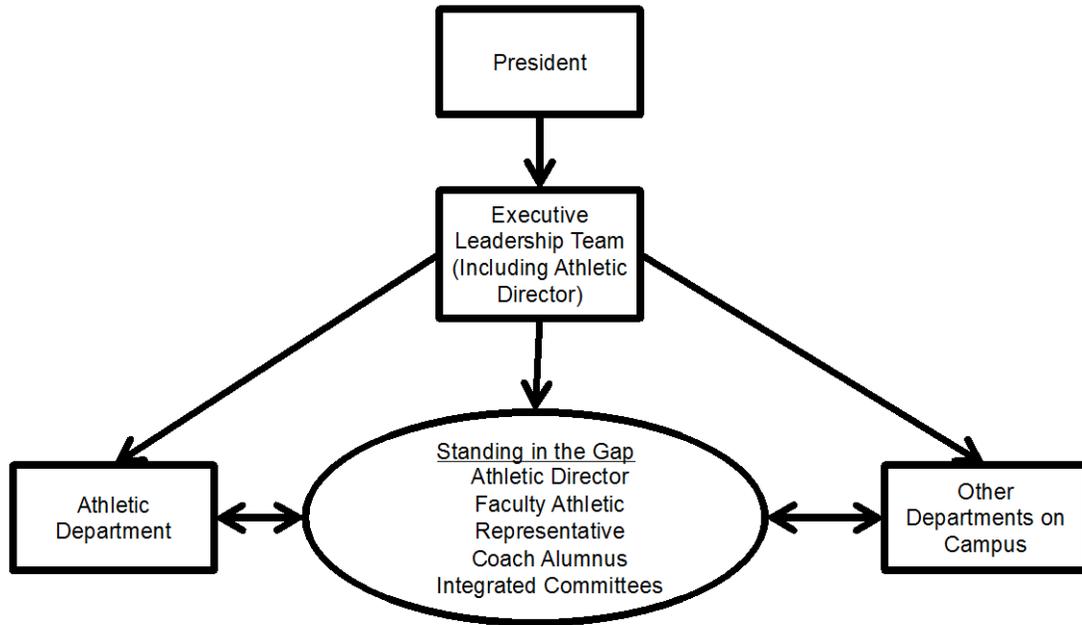*Figure 4.* Mission College organizational chart that illustrates the structure of the athletic department within the institution and that identifies roles stand in the gap.

External Environment

External influences affected the organizational cultures of the institutions' athletic departments. External stakeholder groups that influenced athletic departments could have different values and competing priorities. The NAIA, the affiliated denomination, and the current environment of higher education emerged as the primary external influences for the three institutions. It was helpful for leaders to determine what it meant for their institution to be an NAIA member, what it meant to be an institution that was part of a Christian religious denomination, and how they operated and remained viable in the difficult environment of higher education. The most prominent, and complex, competing values that emerged during data analysis were related to the external environment.

NAIA. The NAIA is the national athletic governing body of all three institutions. Although it was not an often-mentioned theme through site visits and interviews, it affected the institutions' cultures because of the eligibility requirements. When the NAIA was mentioned in interviews, different institutions described different aspects of the NAIA, but the recruitment of NAIA student-athletes was the prominent theme among the interviewees that impacted the athletic department culture. The eligibility requirements appeared to put coaches and institutions in difficult spots when choosing who to recruit due to lax transfer rules and academic eligibility standards. The problem was especially evident at Evangelical University as coaches grappled with recruiting student-athletes that could help them win athletic contests while balancing recruiting students who fit the institution's mission and values. These two things were not mutually exclusive; some student-athletes were highly talented and fit the institution's mission. However, interviewees shared a belief that these types of student-athletes were rare in the NAIA. Student-Centered University required higher entrance requirements for transfer student-athletes than the NAIA. This caused frustration for some coaches because they felt it limited their ability to maintain athletic competitiveness, and the rationale for the requirement was not evident or explained by administration.

The NAIA facilitates a program called Champions of Character, whose mission is "to provide training to instill values that build character so that students, coaches, and parents know, do and value the right thing on and off the field" (National Assiociation of Intercollegiate Athletics [NAIA], n.d.). The five core values of the Champions of Character program are integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship, and servant leadership. There is a yearly competition within the NAIA to accumulate points for

demonstrating these core values through service, academic achievement, positive

behavior in competition, and other actions. Athletic departments or athletic programs can

receive recognition from the NAIA for accumulating a certain amount of points. Some

coaches viewed this program as another administrative hoop to jump through because of

the need to fill out various forms and complete community service reports. At

Evangelical University and Student-Centered University, coaches perceived that the

commitment to Champions of Character, and the subsequent community service, made

the administration and the institution look good as opposed to focusing on the positive

outcomes it could bring. In fact, the amount of community service expected, according to

a Student-Centered University coach, left the student-athletes overworked and strayed

from the institution's student-centered focus.

The Champions of Character program was only mentioned once at Mission

College in reference to pressure they received from their new conference to be active

with it. However, they utilized a character development curriculum that all coaches were

required to use that is designed to teach important values by sport. This curriculum was

developed by an external organization and purchased by the athletic department. It was

not part of the Champions of Character programming. Each value was taught for two

straight weeks at the same time by every coach, providing a common experience and

language for coaches and student-athletes. The school had some discussion about

developing their own curriculum for the following year so they would have something

that would be more pertinent to their student-athletes and that would align more closely

with the institution. This approach was similar to Champions of Character but was more

closely linked to the college's mission and values. The program may have contributed to the athletic department's clear mission alignment.

Denominational environment. The changing denominational landscape affected these institutions. Evangelical University and Mission College had long been dependent on their denominational churches sending students to their institutions to sustain enrollment. However, over the past 10–15 years, the number of denominational students that had chosen to attend the two institutions dropped significantly. Most of the institutional leadership was still part of the denomination, but the majority of the students were not. Leadership that came from the denomination allowed the influence and culture of the denomination to be present at the institution even as denominational student enrollment continues to fall. Finding new avenues to recruit students while also remaining loyal to the denomination, its core beliefs, and the school's denominational students could be a complex task.

Both Evangelical University and Mission College approached this change from an evangelical and mission perspective. They viewed themselves as an arm of the church— not the denominational church, but the broader Christian church. Their theological beliefs were rooted in the denominational tradition, but the denominational ties were deemphasized. Instead broader and less denominationally driven Christian language was used when the institution and its members talked about matters of faith. A long-time coach at Evangelical University who came from the institution's denominational background felt strongly that this change in emphasis was needed. He stated:

> We've gotta take the titles off. Break the walls down, take the fences, take this
> Christianity and this faith that we used to put in a box, check boxes, all that, we

gotta break all that apart, and we can't do that until we basically strip aside this "[denomination] thing" you know what I mean?

He believed that the denomination had put Christianity in a box and that this needed to be changed. The institution, and the Christian faith, could no longer afford to be limited by the constraints of denominations because students were coming from such diverse backgrounds but also because this generation of student did not care as much about denominations. This particular coach came from a family who had been a part of the denomination for generations and felt he had the credibility to speak about the needed change because of this background. He continued by saying,

> I say that, and I say it at the risk of being disrespectful to the [denominational] Church, and I don't mean that, because the tradition of the denomination and what it stand for and what it's done worldwide is important… I believe we've gone away from where the gospel actually leads us.

The president's perspective at Evangelical University was similar in terms of viewing the institution's mission beyond denominational boundaries:

> In our case, to truly be the church, everything I'm hearing right now is a church that's exclusive is going to die. It's not God's plan for the church or the body of Christ. We're here to share the good news. If you only share it with people who have already heard the good news, then you haven't done anything.

The AD at Mission College had a similar perspective. In talking about the increasingly diverse student body that was not coming from the denomination, he said, "What I have tried to do is really share with other professors on campus…It's our job to transform them, how they come. We can't pick everything about who they are." Since the

entire faculty came from the denominational background and many were alumni, this

change in perspective was a significant shift in the campus environment. However, even

coaches who were not from the denomination understood its importance and the reason

many of Mission College's employees came with denominational ties. One coach, not

from the denomination, described this perspective like this:

> I'm actually not [from the denomination]. I'm one of the few coaches here that
>
> are not. Right now they typically only hire from the denomination…first I didn't
>
> get it when I first started here. It doesn't matter to me what denomination you are
>
> but it is a [denominational] school. If you're a Catholic school, they'd be looking
>
> for Catholics to coach. That's just the reality of it, which I'm okay with that. But
>
> also here they have a better way to background check people. Like if you're from
>
> the denomination, it's pretty tight knit. I've realized over the years they know
>
> kind of everybody. So it's safer hires.

Student-Centered University has had a lower denominational enrollment for at

least 30 years and possibly longer. The enrollment records they had on file went back

only a limited time. During the time for which data was available, students from the

denomination had never consisted of more than 17% of the student body. Further, none of

the employees interviewed had a long-standing involvement with the denomination. The

president had the closest ties because he was now attending a denominational church and

had worked at another denominationally affiliated institution. However, even he did not

have a life-long relationship with the denomination. The FAR believes that his

experience did not feel odd because both the institution and the denomination were

inclusive by nature. He stated, "It's [the institution] a bunch of different people with

different religious perspectives that all seem to work pretty well together. As an outsider,

that seems to be very [denomination] to me."

Climate of higher education. All of the institutions studied understood the

difficult environment of higher education for small institutions with small endowments.

The AD at Student Centered University noted that their institution was working to

"solidify their place in higher education." He went on to say, "I think there's a sense of,

in private education, that its [future existence] not guaranteed to everyone. There's an

urgency to figure out how, what we would need to do to grow and to thrive when others

might fall away." While most did not state it as explicitly as this particular AD, a general

consensus appeared to be that survival is at stake for many institutions, and the pressure

to attract students was difficult and intense. The Evangelical University president noted

the difficult environment in higher education by stating,

> The world is in chaos. Higher education is chaotic. The old rules don't apply. It's
>
> difficult within your own power to figure out where it's going…and so in terms of
>
> what I see in people [leaders at other institutions] that I admire is that
>
> characteristic of faithfulness and obedience in the midst of almost biblical
>
> obstacles.

One of the biggest problems interviewees identified was the belief that the cost of

higher education was too high for their students, and that students were becoming more

debt averse, especially for a degree from an institution that was not nationally recognized.

Each institution provided different levels of financial aid: Evangelical University had the

highest financial aid packages and Student-Centered University offered the lowest.

Coaches at all three institutions believed that their schools were not giving enough

scholarship money to student-athletes. They felt athletics could be used to attract students

and many in the region were using athletics as one of the primary drivers of enrollment.

Mission College and Student-Centered University had enthusiastically used athletics for

enrollment while Evangelical University was hesitant. One coach at Evangelical

University commented:

> So the model that hasn't broken is players still want to play college sports. And so
>
> you've seen schools go to models within athletics to help enrollment. …You
>
> inherit problems when you go to an enrollment-driven process driven by athletics.
>
> You're gonna have retention issues, you're gonna have cultural fit issues,
>
> especially at a Christian school. But again, I don't think you have to sell your soul
>
> to the devil to make it work.

Internal Athletic Department Environment

The internal environment of the athletic department mediates the department's

cultural development and the institution's influence (Schroeder, 2010). Natural

competing values can arise between the athletic department and the institution. In

general, the athletic departments in this study exhibited an intentional effort to represent

the institution's values within their department. Still, the common values in some of the

athletic departments aligned with the values of the institution, while the common values

in others were perceived to be in conflict with overarching institutional values. The

primary themes that emerged in relation to the internal athletic department environment

were common values, clear expectations, and community.

Common values. An important theme that emerged at all institutions was

common values between the athletic department and institution. A commitment to the

mission and values of the institution was important in maintaining an identity as an institution and keeping athletics in the proper perspective. The Student-Centered University president stated the challenge was to ensure that "Athletics maintains its importance at the institution without moving into a role of primacy." Each institution grappled with this in different ways but the institutions with consistent values across the institution were able to manage it more effectively as they navigated internal and external challenges. The challenges included enrollment pressure, decreasing denomination loyalty, and a passion for affecting the lives of students in a positive way. However, the Evangelical University AD noted that times were difficult and cultural shifts were happening. He said,

> Culture and Christian education is probably a moving target right now, I'm gonna guess. So I think it's important that we hire really good people that fit the mission, but understand that diversity is where our Christian institutions are headed. Kids no longer will be able to be fit or placed into a box…. And being able to accept those kids without compromising who you are and the principle of who you are, I think, is a lost art.

Among the most essential elements of athletic department cultures at the three institutions was the ability to identify common missions and values between the institutions and the athletic departments. Evangelical University had been bound together under the previous AD by the pursuit of winning. However, the previous AD did a good job of hiring coaches who believed in the institution's Christian mission and implemented it into their work. Further, the job application process stressed the Christian mission, because all job applicants were required to complete a faith statement to even apply. The

tension between accomplishing this mission and winning was difficult. It led to conversations about coaches' intentions, specifically whether their priority was to share Christianity with student-athletes that did not come from a Christian background or to help Christian student-athletes grow in their faith.

Some coaches at Evangelical University perceived that they were isolated in their work to help student-athletes grow on a spiritual level, a perception that was not found at Student-Centered University or Mission College. This feeling of isolation may have developed because the athletic department had not been intentional about meeting together or developing relationships within the department. Meetings were uncommon under the previous AD, and there was no mention of how relationships were built among staff except for casual conversations around the office.

The coaches and administrators at Evangelical University cared deeply about the ministry opportunity they had as coaches and educators. However, with little formalized communication among coaches and a lack of clearly articulated expectations beyond winning, each coach was left to wonder if they were the only one who cares about aspects of the job beyond winning. In working to develop a mission statement for the athletic department, the AD asked each coach to send him what they thought were the most important distinctions of the athletic department. "Christ-like" was the most mentioned distinctive mentioned by a vast majority of the coaches, showing that value alignment is present but not communicated.

The common values at Student-Centered University were student-centeredness and inclusiveness. Both of these values were informed by the denomination. Administrative decisions were based on serving students well and creating a positive

experience for them. The president succinctly described this approach by noting that decisions were made based upon serving students. A coach affirmed that the institution placed the student first, stating that he believed leadership made every decision in a student-driven way. When asked what he held coaches accountable for, the AD very quickly answered, "Student-athlete experience, number one."

However, interviewees did not agree upon the institution's faith values. The most often faith value mentioned was inclusiveness. Ironically, this value made it unclear for some interviewees what it meant for Student-Centered University to be a faith institution. In this regard, one interviewee stated, "I don't know if we have defined very well what that means." The lack of clarity about how faith affected the way employees do their jobs caused confusion in the athletic department. Some interviewees perceived that the institution was working to determine exactly how faith should affect their work beyond the fundamental value of inclusiveness that was paramount to the institution and the denomination. According to the FAR and a coach, this lack of clarity was evident in the student body's polarized opinions; some felt that the school was too secular, while others felt it was too religious.

At Mission College, the institutional emphasis of mission was evident in the fact that everyone interviewed could recite it (and claimed all employees could recite it) and it was displayed in nearly every room. Also, everyone understood that enrollment and character were the institution's most important values. Interviewees appreciated these common values and clear expectations as well as the ways they were integrated with the institutional culture. There was little doubt among interviewees about which values were important to the athletic department and institution.

Clear expectations. Coaches and athletic departments at different institutions experienced different degrees of clarity in expectations. At Evangelical University, winning had been the primary expectation within the department under the previous AD. Coaches feared that if they did not win enough games, they would lose their jobs. When I attempted to talk with the interviewees about important expectations beyond winning, numerous values and standards were discussed, but the only consistent answer beyond winning was cultivating an environment where the student-athletes would grow in their faith. The new AD at Evangelical University wanted to develop a culture in which winning was important but not the primary focus. He knew that accomplishing this would take time and it be a process in which he would provide need to provide a more defined focus on specific values. He said, "My responsibility will be to begin to slowly infuse that same attitude and mentality in each one of the head coaches, which will hopefully translate to their assistance and hopefully translate to the student athletes."

At Student-Centered University, the primary expectations were providing a quality student experience and meeting enrollment goals. However, these expectations were not clearly defined. During the interviews, no specifics were communicated about the definition of a quality student experience other than putting the student first in the decision-making. Athletics developed a scorecard they used to benchmark different parts of the athletic experience to know what they were doing well and what needed to be improved. The president described the rationale for this scorecard by saying,

> One of the things that I've asked the Athletic Department to do is to put together
> what a model NAIA program looks like, so what are the benchmarks and
> measurements that would show a stellar program and how do we work towards

those? We're very strong in a number of areas, but what should we be doing intentionally to grow, what we are doing in terms of community outreach and service to our community with our athletes? What are we doing to make sure GPAs remain strong and focused? How many awards have we won?

No coaches mentioned this scorecard system, but it was likely that they would welcome the clarity of expectations the system would bring. The interview with the president of Student-Centered University was the only discussion at any of the institutions about an objective measurement of success for the athletic department or other individual programs apart from meeting enrollment goals or winning. And winning was discussed extensively only at Evangelical University. This is not to suggest that winning was not important at the other institutions, but it was not a primary value or focus of Mission College or Student-Centered University.

At Mission College, the coaches clearly understood that winning was secondary to meeting enrollment goals and demonstrating high character in the form of a Christian lifestyle. The president stated, "What we emphasize is that character is more important. We want all these kids to come to Christ. Waving a Bible in front of them is not going to do that." Interviewees from Mission College believed that demonstrating high standards of character was the first step in being able to lead student-athletes to the Christian faith.

At Mission College, interviewees understood that consistently hitting recruiting numbers and maintaining high character standards are mandatory. In contrast, while at Student-Centered University interviewees recognized enrollment was important, the coaches also perceived an inconsistency in the ways people are held accountable. This perception frustrated the coaches who were meeting their goals. Several coaches

mentioned that a coach was recently fired because he had not met his recruitment goals. The coaches did not express frustration with the AD for making the decision. Instead, when they talked about it, they described it as a reality for them and their institution even though they liked and cared for the fired coach. The coaches at Mission College appreciated the concrete expectations, while some of the coaches at Student-Centered University were frustrated with what appeared to be a lack of accountability.

Community. All institutions discussed how they were a close-knit community and how this was an important part of their culture. At Student-Centered University and Mission College, some interviewees described their environment as a family one. Interviewees from all institutions spoke a great deal about community and family atmosphere. All of their websites promoted these values, which also served as a main selling point to both prospective students and employees. The promotion of a small, tight-knit community was present on the main home page of all three-institution websites. Many of the interviewees from each institution promoted the family atmosphere of the institution and the athletic department as an important cultural factor.

In particular, Evangelical University and Student-Centered University highlighted times of crisis in which the institution supported and cared for students or employees who were going through difficult times. At Mission College, this atmosphere was highlighted by the time spent together as an entire campus community at chapels, athletic department coffee breaks, and lunches in the cafeteria. Interviewees with all of the schools highlighted stories about times people told them how special the community environment was at their institution. These stories about having a special community gave interviewees a sense of pride in the work they were doing.

The AD at Evangelical University spoke about the need to reach out across campus to build relationships with others to show that the athletic department was committed to the institution's mission. When asked about power and influence at the institution, he said, "I don't think you have power unless you have an engaging group of coaches and assistant coaches that will engrain themselves in the mission of the university across campus." This valuing of the institution's community and mission allowed some people to gain influence and respect at their institutions.

However, there was also a need to build community within the athletic department. In an attempt to create awareness of common values, the new AD had recently asked coaches to send him what they wanted to be the five "distinctives" of the athletic department and the athletic teams at Evangelical University. Overwhelmingly, Christ-likeness was the most mentioned value. In the AD's opinion, there was mission and value alignment among the coaches that they may or may not have been aware. The previous AD had hired coaches who aligned with the institution's Christian mission but did not cultivate an environment in which coaches identified the common desire they shared for the Christian mission and values of the institution.

Mission College interviewees were more specific in their discussion of community building. They highlighted the weekly coffee breaks; daily chapels; and how faculty, staff, and students intermingled in the dining hall as examples of some of the ways that they engaged in building community. Coffee breaks were held once per week and were primarily a social event with families and assistant coaches. Also, many faculty and staff ate lunch in the cafeteria with the students. It was not uncommon for coaches to

each lunch with student-athletes from other programs or with students that were not athletes.

The AD at Mission College was intentional about and protective of the community. He was intentional about a close-knit community based upon common values and relationships. He said,

> I'm very protective of our athletic department culture. And that doesn't mean that everybody's the same, and it certainly doesn't mean that anybody's perfect, but you do see some common threads in each person that makes it so that group of people…there are some assumed values.

Of these assumed values, commitment to mission and relationships with one another were of the utmost importance. One of the ways that Mission College built community was to spend time with one another in purposeful ways. Intentional meetings, coffee breaks, and other social activities built camaraderie among the staff. The AD made these times a priority. The coaches considered the other coaches in the department to be their closest friends.

Mission College had thus created an environment that was not present at Evangelical University or Student-Centered University. The only coach interactions mentioned at Evangelical University during interviews were casual office conversations about their athletic programs. At Student-Centered University, athletic departments meetings were mentioned as a gathering time, but otherwise no strong emphasis appeared on meeting together. One coach said that while they called it a family environment, it was not, because of the lack of a clear emphasis on faith or other unifying values.

Even in a close-knit community atmosphere, competing values arose. Mission College was upfront about this problem. They acknowledged that they had fired numerous coaches over the AD's current tenure. He explained that he had to make such decisions to protect the community because the institution required a coach's ability to recruit and retain student-athletes to survive. If a coach was not able to fulfill this requirement, then it was the AD's duty to make changes and find someone who could to help the institution be successful. In fact, he believed that if he did not terminate a coach who was not meeting these standards, he would not be fulfilling his obligation to the institution and the community.

Student-Centered University experienced a similar situation, but it was not explained in terms of protecting the institution's community. Leadership in this case did not connect the values of student-centeredness and inclusiveness to the accountability for accomplishing job expectations. However, the actions of leadership did exhibit these values. The AD and president both believed that they needed to provide training resources and opportunities to help coaches perform their jobs more effectively while also communicating that the institution was dependent on athletics for students to be financially stable. If the coach were still not able to meet job expectations after receiving help, they would then be relieved of their duties. However, this would likely not happen until they worked to try to help the coach improve.

Mission College also demonstrated the value of community creating influence. A coach at Mission College who was not an alumnus talked about how it took some time to gain trust within the community. He said he felt like he gained trust and was accepted by the institutional community when he proved he wanted what was best for the school and

not just his athletic program. Another coach mentioned that he was an adopted member

of the community because he had demonstrated his commitment over 16 years of service.

This dynamic was present for individuals at each institution because those who were

alumni or members of the denomination perceived themselves as insiders while those

who were not perceived themselves as adopted or as outsiders. This perception was

largely in regards to the institution's culture rather than that of the athletic department.

Leadership and Power

Schroeder (2010) asserted the elements of athletic department culture are

interactive, are not necessarily exclusive to a single element, and influence one another;

an observation that becomes evident when evaluating the overall themes of this studies

research data. The leadership element of the athletic department cultures was already

evidenced within institutional culture, external environment, and internal athletic

department environment. In particular, interviewees when discussing the element of

institutional culture described many of the themes related to leadership and power. Also,

the discussion of denominational environment within external environment included

leadership elements, because much of leadership at both the executive level and on the

board came from the denomination.

Denominational leaders were also the ones with the power to choose the executive

leader of the institution and to make policy decisions that affect the institutional and

athletic department culture. At Evangelical University and Mission College, the Board of

Directors was all from the denomination. Student Centered University did not have this

requirement but there was a strong denominational presence on their Board of Directors

as well. The Board of Directors at each institution held significant power as they ultimately had the power to choose the president of the institution.

This concentration of leadership provided an environment of potentially competing values because students from the denomination were in the minority on campus, and coaches were increasingly coming from more diverse religious backgrounds. The system allowed for important denomination influence and oversight, but only two of the nine coaches interviewed grew up in or attended the church within their institution's denomination. Institutional leadership was increasingly not representative of the student body and staff. However, through the power held at the highest level, the sponsoring denominations of each institution still held power and influence.

At each institution, the president was considered the most powerful leader, and ultimately all institutional decisions went through that person for approval. However, even with this power, it was expected that the president would develop a close-knit, caring community. Each institution's culture and leadership took on the characteristics of the affiliated denomination's core attributes and the presidents possessed the demeanor and cultural understanding to navigate the current context and challenges of their particular institution.

At Evangelical University, the denomination was evangelistic and focused on a person's individual relationship with Jesus Christ. Within the institutional culture, leadership allowed individuals to operate autonomously but was understanding and enthusiastically supportive of the institution's faith focus. The AD and president were men of faith who believed deeply in the institution's Christian mission.

At Student-Centered University, the focus on inclusivity and respect for everyone's faith journey led to a collaborative and inclusive leadership model within the institution. Student-Centered University had been through several leadership transitions over the last decade, and the current president gained respect from the community for his willingness to listen and to involve more people in decisions than his predecessors.

At Mission College, the current context determined the leadership needed. When the current president was hired nine years prior to this study, the institution was in a dire financial situation. The previous president attempted to lead by consensus with the faculty, a system that had proven ineffective by the end of his tenure. When hired, the current president clearly defined reporting structures and decision-making roles. All decisions that were traditionally made by the executive leadership team now came from him. The leadership team would discuss issues and advise him, but he would make the final call. The president explained this leadership and decision-making approach by saying, "How that works out in culture is I think everybody has now felt where their space is and where they have decision-making ability."

ADs and coaches at each of these institutions held significant power because of the number of students that coaches recruited to the campus. The Mission College FAR said, "Some people might tell you that coaches have power because the recruiting that they do is a big sustaining factor of who we are." The ADs were in charge of hiring and firing coaches as well as developing culture, so ultimately, they held power over the coaches who bring in the recruiting numbers. Vital characteristics of the AD were to have an institutional perspective and consistent value alignment with the institution.

The AD at Student-Centered University, when discussing the hiring of his current football coach, talked about how it was essential he hire the correct coach for the institution because nearly every class on campus would have a football player in it. The AD at Mission College was also the Vice President of Enrollment; therefore, he made strategic decisions about enrollment strategy and financial aid. The FAR stated, "Because [the AD] is our athletic director and director of enrollment, because he wears both hats, I think that is advantageous for athletics."

Analysis and Synthesis of Findings

The research question of this study sought to identify what the perceptions are of athletic department members of the important factors of organizational cultures in athletic departments at three small Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States. The presentation of the findings provided a detailed description of important factors of the organizational cultures in the athletic departments in this study. However, the researcher does not suggest that the research question has been fully answered. To suggest that the important factors of a phenomena are fully identified, especially a phenomena as complex as culture, would be inaccurate. This section provides further analysis and synthesizes the findings to offer insight into the important factors of athletic department cultures in a more succinct manner.

Athletics, as a peculiar institution in higher education, can be difficult to marry with the academic mission of higher education (Thelin, 1994). However, at the three small Christian institutions studied here, the combination did not appear peculiar. Although each school experienced challenges, interviewees also expressed an understanding that athletics existed to serve the institution. When asked how the athletic

department culture interacted with the institutional culture, one president responded,

"Well, I think that's a difficult question about a persisting challenge." This statement

proved true at all institutions selected for this study. Smart, well-intentioned

administrators, FAR's, and coaches grappled with this question and persisting challenge

in different ways. All had varying degrees of success in achieving this goal. However, at

all institutions, organizational structure and congruency of values were interwoven

among the themes that emerged as important factors of the organizational cultures of

athletic departments at these small Christian institutions.

The organizational structure affected the athletic department cultures at these

institutions. Evangelical University genuinely sought to provide a faith-driven student-

athlete experience in which student-athletes contributed to the broader campus. However,

the organizational structure hindered this endeavor, because the AD reported directly to

the president and did not serve on the executive leadership team. Although athletics could

make progress in terms of funding and visibility, interviewees perceived that these

functions caused a divide between themselves and the rest of the campus. The AD was

working to bridge this divide. One coach, who expressed deep care for the institution and

denomination throughout his interview, hesitated in saying that an integrated culture was

worth the sacrifice. His program had sustained on-field success and integration might

threaten that. He said, "It's all results-driven for me. Is it worth the effort [campus

integration]? If you have to sacrifice getting things done here to provide that…no."

The previous AD at Evangelical University ingrained this attitude into the culture

by emphasizing winning to the exclusion of all else. If this attitude prevailed throughout

the athletic department, it would make it difficult, if not impossible, for the new AD to

change the culture. And whether this attitude was the prevailing one or not, it remained

problematic because the coach who emphasized winning over integration was one of the

more successful and well-respected coaches in the athletic department. The coach

illustrated this point further by stating,

> If you acquiesce to what the other side of campus' perception is, which is we have
>
> too many resources, and so then you say, "Okay, well, that's fine, to massage that
>
> relationship, we'll ask our coaches to cut a scholarship." No, it's not worth it.

However, other interviewees at Evangelical University believed that bridging this

gap was important. Another coach summarized his feelings by saying,

> You wanna do what's best. You want the campus as a whole to be thriving and I
>
> think that made ... Yes we're successful [as an athletic department] but the school,
>
> this may not be what's best for them. I think that made me feel very
>
> uncomfortable.

The athletic departments at Student-Centered University and Mission College

were more integrated into the institutional culture because the ADs there were members

of the executive leadership team, and the values of the athletic department were clearly

aligned with the values of the institution. In fact, the organizational structure highlighted

the values of both the institutions and the athletic departments. Student-Centered

University created a clear structural alignment that allowed interdepartmental

collaboration and communication to accent the institution's inclusive nature and to

provide an institution-wide focus on student-centeredness. Mission College made an

intentional decision to use athletics as a primary means for recruiting students. This

expectation was aligned with an organizational structure in which the AD was also the

Vice President of Enrollment and a member of the institution's executive leadership team. Therefore, coaches' enrollment expectations were clear and well defined.

The important factors of each individual athletic department organizational culture were unique, but they were similar in the motivation to serve the institution. Athletic departments could easily stray off course if they were not held accountable to the institution's values by leadership through a clear organizational structure that integrates the athletic department within the rest of the institution. A coach at Evangelical University summarized this tension well by saying,

> I think culture and just that the athletic department, from what I understand, supports the mission. Does it get bigger? Does it do its own thing? Does it go rogue? It's here to be a team player and part of the organization not just to get as big and be as successful as it can.

Summary

The chapter began with a profile of the research data and each institution. The institutional profiles provided descriptions of each institution overall and then their athletic departments. The findings were organized using the four elements of athletic department culture as described by Schroeder (2010). These four elements were institutional culture, external environment, internal athletic department environment, and leadership and power. The important factors within institutional culture were common values, structure, and standing in the gap. The external environment influenced the athletic department through the institutions relationship with the NAIA, the sponsoring denomination, and the current climate of higher education. The internal athletic department environment included common values, clear expectations, and the

development of a close-knit community. Lastly, the leadership and power element influenced and interacted with the other three components, most notably with organizational structure, values, and the influence of the denomination. Throughout these themes, organizational structure and congruency of values were interwoven.

The findings of this multisite case study revealed important factors of athletic department cultures at the three small Christian institutions through the themes within the four elements of organizational culture. These findings are used in Chapter Five to provide recommendations for accomplishing the aim of this study. The aim is to develop evidence-based recommendations for the development of athletic department cultures at small Christian institutions. The recommendations provide leaders at small Christian institutions with ideas in how to not only understand the current institutional and athletic department culture but also structural recommendations to promote an integrated and collaborative environment in which the athletic department is integrated with the institution. These recommendations are based on the academic literature and important factors described in the findings. Chapter Five concludes with implementation ideas for the proposed solutions, implications for leaders, and suggestions for implementation of the recommendations are also provided.

CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Chapter Five provides recommendations based on the findings of this study and existing academic research. The recommendations seek to accomplish the study's aim, which is to provide evidence-based recommendations for leaders at small Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States about the important factors of athletic department cultures. Also included in this chapter are implications for implementation, research and leadership implications, and final recommendations.

Balancing the educational goals of higher education with athletic programming that complements the student-athlete's educational experience has been difficult for colleges and universities (Buer, 2009). Intercollegiate athletics within Christian higher education face a unique environment because of the added dimension of faith. The athletic departments in this study had varied levels of engagement with the institution but all sought to serve the institution's mission, not simply the athletics mission. Further, each institution in this study utilized athletics as an important part of the enrollment management plan. This multisite case study sought to begin to fill this gap in the academic literature. Each institution in this study possessed a distinctive athletic department culture that functioned in a unique way depending on its context and leadership. Leaders at each institution were focused on aligning the athletic department cultures with that of the institution's mission and values. The athletic departments in this study achieved varying levels of alignment with the institutional culture and values. Complete alignment, while a worthy goal, is likely one that can never fully be accomplished. Chapter Five highlights the important factors that emerged among the

three institutions and attempts to provide practical recommendations and implications that can be useful for leaders at small Christian institutions.

Study Recommendations

The findings of the study as well as existing literature provide information about the important factors of the organizational cultures in athletic departments at small Christian colleges. Although no research is available about this particular institutional population, important connections can be made between the findings of this study and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two to help provide recommendations.

Although cultures are "complex, inaccessible, fuzzy, holistic phenomena" (Alvesson, 2002, p. 14), several important factors of athletic organizational cultures emerged at the three small Christian colleges. These important factors provide insight into the research question of this study and are identified in Chapter Four. Understanding, developing, and nurturing organizational culture can be undertaken with the same level of effort and attention to detail as any other important endeavor attempted at an institution or in an athletic department. Cultural management and development are at the core of a leader's job and should be closely tended to by leadership (Schein, 2010). The following recommendations can be completed in sequential order, but some recommendations may be undertaken independently from others depending on the institution's context and situation. These recommendations are offered to provide leaders with strategies for understanding and developing athletic department culture that supports the institutional mission and the development of a supportive athletic department environment. In the following section, the recommendations are explained. Following each recommendation, support is provided based upon the research findings and academic literature.

Institutional Cultural Analysis

It is first recommended that institutions clearly define and understand the bounded system within which the athletic department operates. To this end, an interdepartmental committee can be formed to perform a cultural assessment of the institution. It is recommended that every pertinent area of the institution have representation on the committee and members of the operator, engineering, and executive subcultures have representatives on the committee. Representation from the following groups is recommended: faculty, student affairs, residential life, athletics, auxiliary services, admissions, and a member of the executive leadership team.

The institution can also consider inviting a leader from the church denomination to participate. Depending on the institution's structure, it may be appropriate for the employee charged with institutional research to lead this process. This committee can have representatives who have worked at the institution for a short time as well as long-serving employees to represent the institution's diversity of perspectives. The history and tradition of the institution is important to consider because it led to the development of the values and assumptions of the institution (Chafee & Tierney, 1988). Depending on the institution's structure, this list may not be all-inclusive because each institution has its own structure and unique context; however, those listed comprise the minimum involvement recommended to provide representation to various departments on campus. The *Competing Values Framework Assessment* of Cameron and Quinn (2006) could be used for this assessment. Berquist and Pawlak (2008) could be a helpful resource to use in understanding the institution's cultural context. Additionally, this group could identify the most important values, beliefs, and underlying assumptions that guide the work of the

institution. It is not recommended that this group facilitate change at the institution but provide information and analysis about the current context.

Findings can be reported to the executive leadership team to solicit feedback and allow input. Following this feedback, it is recommended that the findings are communicated to the entire campus community. The goal of this report is to clearly understand and define the institutional context.

Support. The importance of understanding the values of the institution and athletic department emerged as an important factor of athletic department culture at all of the institutions in this study. To this end, it appears important to clarify the culture, and potential competing values, that the institution could deal with. Every culture is bound by its context, and athletic departments are bound by the institutional culture (Beyer & Hannah, 2000; Schroeder, 2010). Therefore, clearly understanding the institutional culture and values is an important place to begin. It is likely that small Christian institutions have a strong clan culture present (Obenchain et al. 2004) and possibly a hierarchical culture that is often present in church culture (Henck, 2011). Burke (2014) noted that, during times of organizational change, it is important to emphasize what will remain the same as much as what will change. This communication tempers the fears and anxiety of people within the organization. This first recommendation is analytical and does not suggest change. Instead, it accents the culture and values that provide context for the institution and athletic department.

Characteristics of both the clan and hierarchical culture types appeared to be present at the three institutions in this research. The operations of each institution were driven by unique core values. While clan culture is likely present at most institutional

cultures (Obenchain et al., 2004), this fact cannot be assumed. At each institution, characteristics of multiple cultures were present (Henck, 2011). Athletic departments are not expected to have the same culture as the institution and may develop a differentiated and orthogonal culture. In fact, they will likely not have the same culture because the job responsibilities in relation to coaching, recruiting and decision-making are markedly different. Aligned values are important, but the athletic department could have a different culture than the institution. For example, Student-Centered University had a clear understanding that their culture was driven by student-centeredness. However, there was confusion about the interaction with the faith element of the institution and how that impacted student-centeredness. Clarifying this would be helpful for the members of the athletic department that were interviewed because there was not clarity in this matter.

Athletic Department Cultural Analysis

It is recommended that the athletic department also perform an organizational culture analysis using Cameron and Quinn (2006) to understand its own departmental culture. The entire athletic department can perform this analysis with input from an academic representative, preferably the FAR, and as well as another campus leader. Not all values are expected to be identical. However, it is important that they are congruent and complementary while emphasizing the institution's broader mission. It will likely be helpful for incongruent values to be noted and discussed.

Support. This step is important because each athletic department has its own unique culture that operates within the context of the institution in its own way. Because of the distinctiveness of each culture, it is advised that athletic departments complete this recommendation to understand its culture and internal environment. Schroeder and

Paredes-Scribner (2006) suggest that intercollegiate athletic departments may have cultural values and assumptions that can differ from those held by the institution. Further, it is recommended to have a campus leader from outside of athletics as part of this group to avoid an assumption of cultural homogeneity (Rehman, 2002) and provide another perspective from outside the department. This step allows the athletic department's culture to be assessed to see how it is similar to or different from the institution.

Because a culture includes the beliefs, values, and underlying assumptions of an organization (Schein, 2010), identifying the similarities and differences between the athletic department and the institution is helpful. By first understanding the institution's organizational culture, leaders are better equipped to understand the parameters which bound the athletic department culture (Schroeder & Paredes-Scribner, 2006). This understanding is essential because Nite et al. (2013) identify leadership oversight as key in emphasizing and prioritizing cultural values. The institutional and athletic department cultural analysis could equip leaders with the knowledge to ensure the values are emphasized and prioritized and there is an awareness of the differences.

Evangelical University evidenced a shared value of Christian faith. However, competing values also existed: winning, recruiting student-athletes that fit the institution's mission, and competing for resources. Under the new AD's leadership, the athletic department was beginning to have conversations regarding these competing values and the ways athletics could serve the institution. In contrast, all interviewees at Mission College seemed to understand that the athletic department's highest priorities were recruiting student athletes and living their lives with high character. This clarity

provided a sense of stability at Mission College, while the competing values at

Evangelical University appeared to cause frustration and anxiety.

Clear Values

       After analyzing the culture, the institution can make its overarching values and

those of the athletic department known to everyone. Leaders who possess this critical

knowledge are enabled to emphasize and prioritize the culture's important values. It is

possible, and maybe even likely, that these have already been made clear. It is important

that the institution's values are also evidenced in the athletic department. However, the

athletic department may have additional values that are emphasized. The institution's

primary values can be made clear through communication from leadership, the

institution's mission statement, and job descriptions and evaluations. The athletic

department's sub values could also be accented within job descriptions, evaluations, and

through emphasis from leadership. The AD can ensure that there is alignment in all these

areas for department members. Institutional values can be reinforced through physical

artifacts throughout the campus and consistently referenced and stressed by institutional

leadership. Athletic department sub values could also be reinforced while the overall

institutional values are promoted.

       Support. It is helpful for the institution to clearly articulate its values and ensure

they are understood by employees to align the athletic department culture with the

institution. Mission College did this effectively. There was a clear understanding from all

interviewees about the important values and they were able to clearly articulate them.

Physical artifacts are important because they provide and reinforce the institution's

purpose (Bolman & Deal, 1990). Further, identifying and creating a clear understanding

of the institution's unique culture can create an alignment of values and lessen the risk of

different subcultures developing. This clear understanding is important as countercultures

can develop because athletic departments can operate within insulated cultures that value

acting similarly (Fink, Pastore, & Hiemer, 2001). Further, Lok, et al. (2005) noted that

subcultures could garner more loyalty from employees than the overall culture; thus, this

alignment could be helpful.

Mission College developed a clear understanding of their mission and an

understanding of job expectations. They reinforced the mission through displaying it all

over campus. These clear understandings created a close-knit culture in which all those

interviewed felt like an important part of the institution, not just part of the athletic

department. The size of the institution may also be a factor as it was the smallest

institution of the three in this study. The athletic department garnered support from the

rest of the institution through demonstrating its clear support of and alignment with the

mission. This support aligns with Schroeder and Paredes-Scribner (2006) and Nite et al.

(2013) in that values alignment created support for the athletic department and its

leadership. The athletic department does not need to create a mission for their

department. In fact, Mission College did not develop a separate athletic department

mission statement. Only Student-Centered University published an athletic department

mission statement on its website, but it was not mentioned during any interviews.

Defined Athletic Goals

It is recommended that institutions identify their assumptions regarding the

purpose and function of intercollegiate athletics at their institution and determine the

goals for their athletic departments. They can do so through an executive leadership

group conversation or by involving the entire campus. When identifying assumptions, the

viewpoints discussed by Sack (2009) may be helpful to guide the conversation. However,

it is important that the goals for athletics at the institution be clear and explicit. These

goals are defined by the institution and can vary in focus. However, it is important that

they fit within the institution's context and is congruent with its mission and values. In

this study, the institution's goals for athletics included enrollment building, whole-person

development, spiritual transformation, helping to build the institution's academic profile,

and developing winning athletic programs.

      Support. Schein (2010) identifies espoused beliefs and values as an important

level of culture. The beliefs and values are the culture's substance (Trice & Beyer, 1993).

The cultural substance provides the meaning and justification for actions. Therefore,

athletic goals need to be clearly defined because they will drive the beliefs and values and

justify actions. Further, beliefs and values are informed by assumptions so in

understanding the assumptions about intercollegiate athletics at the institutions, the goals

can be defined and understood within the cultural context of the institution. All three

institutions had beliefs and values regarding athletics. The goals of Evangelical

University were winning and making a spiritual impact on their student-athletes.

However, these were not clearly stated and appeared to be in conflict with one another at

times. Student-Centered University athletics were guided by the primary goals of helping

build enrollment and providing a student-focused experience. Mission College also

focused upon enrollment and maintaining a focus on their faith-driven mission. These

goals were most explicitly stated at Mission College and Student-Centered University.

This clear understanding appeared to aid in an understanding of the culture and

expectations of the institutions. Their approach was similar to the academic capitalistic

perspective described by Sack (2009). Athletics was viewed as performing the function

of non-academic education but also utilized to increase enrollment and aid in the

financial sustainability of the institutions. However, these assumptions and goals were

not always explicitly stated and at some institutions there was no clear understanding

existed of what was expected or why.

Integrated Organizational Structure

It is important for institutions to make a thoughtful decision about where to place

the athletic department within the organizational structure of the institution. It is

recommended that the AD be a member of the institution's executive leadership team and

report directly to the president. This structure would allow the AD to develop an

institutional perspective while also having peer accountability from other executive

leaders that are members of the executive leadership team. Further, this structure

communicates a commitment and accountability for athletics. An environment that is not

isolated appeared to provide a perspective and focus that was helpful in focusing upon

and aligning with the institutional mission.

Support. An institution's structure is central to its identity and functioning

(Cunningham & Rivera, 2001). Within the three small Christian institutions of this study,

it was considered important to create an integrated and collaborated environment so that

departments did not operate in isolation. This was most effective at Student-Centered

University and Mission College as their organizational structure was more integrated and

collaborative than Evangelical University. Evangelical University was searching for ways

to integrate their structure. One example of this effort was the academic athletic advisory group that the FAR was developing.

However, the nature of higher education leads to departments having a level of independence and autonomy so integration will be something that will need to be consistently attended to (Frey, 1994). It is wise for institutions to be careful about allowing too much autonomy because it can lead to differentiated subcultures and the development of values that are different than the institution. Nite et al. (2013) and Jayakumar and Commeaux (2016) suggested that conflicting values can be present in athletic departments, and the research data can be shown to reveal numerous potential conflicting values. Further, stated values may not align with the athletic department practices (Jayakumar & Commeaux, 2016). It is critical that institutional leaders understand the powerful nature of subcultures and pay careful attention to aiding in the development of an interdependent environment that is focused on the institution's core values and mission through developing an integrated organizational structure and close-knit community. This isolated environment was present at Evangelical University and led to winning becoming the most important value.

The ADs at Student-Centered University and Mission College served on the institution's executive leadership team and were active in different areas of the institution. The athletic departments at these institutions showed a deeper understanding of the institution's inner workings and the need for and benefit of an integrated and collaborative environment. In contrast, at Evangelical University, each interviewee cared deeply for the institution's Christian mission and values. However, elements of a differentiated subculture were evident in the athletic department's emphasis on winning

and the fear of losing resources that could weaken the department's ability to win. A contributing factor to the development of this differentiated subculture was the organizational structure. The AD reported directly to the president but was not a member of the executive leadership team and was minimally involved in other interdepartmental work at the institution.

Standing in the Gap

It is recommended that each institution identify individual roles and committees that can stand in the gap. Formalizing these roles and groups with the organizational structure and job descriptions could allow for clear communication between athletics and other areas of the institution. One way to create clear communication between athletics and the rest of the institution to have the AD serve on the executive leadership team. However, other roles and committees can be designated at lower institutional levels to integrate the culture as well.

The FAR's job description can include an expectation that the FAR act as an intermediary between the athletic department and faculty. The FAR can frequently attend athletic department meetings, meet individually with the AD regarding policy development, and answer questions from faculty or athletics personnel when needed. The AD can also attend faculty meetings once per semester to report on athletics and field questions. These meetings can accent important mission-related work as well as addressing concerns and taking questions. Academic leaders can also consider visiting athletic department meetings as well. Other groups that stood in the gap at the institutions in this study included the athletics faculty advisory committee, the financial aid committee that included a coach, an all-campus open forum to discuss athletics, and

faculty members going on road trips with athletic teams to get to know student-athletes and support the team.

Support. Subcultures are inevitable in organizations and are neither good nor bad (Trice & Beyer, 1993), but they negatively impact an institution if the subcultures interpret the overall cultural values differently than intended (Schein, 2010). Then, subcultures can cause conflict within an institution. As stated by Schein (2010) and as found within the research data, this conflict is often misdiagnosing or understanding what is actually happening. Avoiding this misunderstanding is important for a healthy institutional and athletic department culture.

Standing in the gap was an expression that was used by interviewees at all institutions. This is not an academic term found in the literature, nor did the researcher prompt it. Instead, it was a term that surfaced at multiple institutions during interviews. It illustrated the understanding at each institution that there was a gap between athletics and the rest of the institution and communication channels need to exist between athletics and other departments. The department mentioned most often was academics. Each institution provided many examples of standing in the gap. All of the FARs in this study all took on this task, although it was not part of their job description nor did all refer to it as standing in the gap. The president at Evangelical University attempted to stand in the gap through an open campus forum. The AD also worked on this role by developing strategies for the coaches to integrate into campus. At Student-Centered University, coaches were integrated into campus committees, which committees aided in communication and integration. The school's small size as well as the fact that it employed many alumni appeared to create relationships between departments on campus at Mission College, but

at least one coach noted it would be helpful if there were more formal structures for interdepartmental communication.

Supportive Athletic Department Community

It is recommended that the AD work to intentionally create a supportive community within the athletic department. One way to do so would be for members of the athletic department to consistently meet with one another and to attend campus events. It is recommended that the athletic department gather as a group once per week. Additionally, it is important for the AD meet individually with athletic department members on a consistent basis throughout the year. These meetings can be social because formal meetings may not be necessary each week. Further, campus events that are widely attended could be required for athletic department members. These events can include chapels, staff meetings, and any other major events.

Support. A caring, close-knit community was referenced as important at each institution in this study. This finding aligned with the findings of Obenchain et al. (2004) regarding how clan culture is present at many Christian institutions. However, not all schools were intentional in how they cultivated this type of environment. The closest-knit culture in this study was Mission College. They gathered once per week for coffee, and they attended chapel nearly every day. The department had camaraderie that led to a feeling of support and a "we are all in this together" mentality. Further, these practices appeared to lead to greater dedication to the mission.

At Evangelical University, the lack of community building led coaches to feel isolated. While the coaches held common values, some were not aware of it due to the lack of understanding about how each coach was leading his or her programs. However,

all the individuals that were interviewed conveyed passion and excitement for leading

their programs in a mission-related, faith-focused way, but they did not know how their

fellow coaches were operating. The AD discovered this finding when he surveyed the

athletic department about the distinctive values they hoped for in the athletic department.

They were not spending consistent time with one another, building relationships, and

sharing their work methods.

Factors and Stakeholders Related to the Solution

Multiple departments and stakeholders could be impacted as the study

recommendations are implemented. Multiple stakeholder groups within the institution are

affected by a change in organizational structure. The institution's executive leadership

team is affected and will need to lead their respective areas in the rationale and

importance of integrating athletics into the institution's leadership and committee

structures. This group could champion the entire process of cultural assessment and

realignment while communicating that athletics are important to the institution but not in

a role of primacy.

Another stakeholder group that are impacted is the faculty. Athletics can hold a

more prominent place at the institution if the AD is a member of the executive leadership

team and athletic department members are more present on institutional decision-making

committees. This feeling could lead faculty to feel fearful of the athletic department

becoming a central focus for the institution. Consistent and ongoing messaging from

leadership is important for everyone to understand that athletics are an important part of

the institution but not the primary focus. This could serve the institution well in creating a

bridge, or standing in the gap, between athletics and the rest of the institution as there is

the potential for a disconnect between faculty and athletics as evidenced at both the

institutions in this study.

Policies Influenced by the Recommendations

Every organization has a unique organizational saga that guides the development

of its identity and the formation of underlying beliefs and assumptions that guide

behavior and decisions (Clark, 1972; Schein, 2010). It is important that any

recommended policy or structural changes be well reasoned, communicated clearly,

aligned with the institution's core identity, and have the support from important decision

makers and influencers. Structural changes may be perceived as a threat to culture

because many institutional practices have likely been passed down for many years. These

practices likely persist because they have worked in the past and any change is perceived

as disruptive to the system (Schein, 2010; Trice & Beyer, 1993). The core of the

recommendations relate to integrating the athletic department with the institution to

create as integrated a culture as possible. To some extent, this practice changes the

institution's current practices.

For this reason, the first recommendation asks for an inter-departmental group to

assess their institutional culture using the framework established by Cameron and Quinn

(2006). Understanding the institution's culture helps the athletic department understand

its own context and culture within the institution and will better integrate institutional

structures. This understanding could be helpful in a higher education environment that

has becoming increasingly fragmented and internally complex and that experiences a

multitude of external pressures (Buer, 2009; Chaffee & Tierney, 1988). As the athletic

department emerges to have a presence on the executive leadership team or on multiple

committees, it could be seen as a threat, but the institution can create more openness to a stronger athletic presence through internal understanding, establishing roles that stand in the gap, and clearly stating mission and values.

Potential Barriers and Obstacles to the Recommendations

Two important factors of athletic department organizational cultures at the small Christian institutions in this study were organizational structure and alignment with the common values. Therefore, many of the recommendations presented in this chapter include individuals and departments from outside the athletic department. In an environment where characteristics of the clan culture are likely to exist, it is important that a collaborative effort be undertaken to in align athletics with the institution. Although the process may be slow, an inclusive and collaborative approach in which key voices from multiple departments of the institution are helpful for any suggested policy or structural changes to be effective and lasting (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). This process also could lead to potential barriers and obstacles to successfully implementing the recommendations, because changes need to be embraced by the entire institution, not just the athletic department. It may be difficult to ask employees to take on extra tasks that may not be directly related to their primary job. Leadership can identify individuals on campus who can be influential champions for the recommendations and communicate their value to their peers (Rogers, 2003).

All employees likely have an opinion about the peculiar institution of intercollegiate athletics within higher education. Further, the attempt to integrate athletics into the institution where autonomy is valued to at least some level could also cause concern for some employees. It is incumbent upon leadership to champion the process

and clearly articulate why it is necessary and important. Further, the interdepartmental working group in the first recommendation can broaden the endeavor's scope and hopefully allow it to not be seen as a top-down decision. Miscommunication or misinformation about the intent of these recommendations could cause the process to be derailed and possibly ineffective.

Financial Issues Related to the Recommendations

Time and money are among are valuable resources at any organization. This is particularly true of small, nonprofit Christian institutions with small endowments that are enrollment driven. Employees often serve in multiple roles and are stretched for time. Many of these recommendations ask for a time commitment that likely goes above and beyond the current role of an employee. Institutions need to assess if the time spent should be paid or is able to be performed within the strictures of the contract. However, as the data from this study illustrated, these institutions are filled with people who care deeply for their institutions and will likely be willing to engage in this process. The Mission College FAR essentially performed his role for free. So, employees may be willing to take a part in this process.

The building of community and relationships within the athletic department also take time. More meetings and intentional programming take time for coaches. In many cases, coaching positions at these types of institutions are not full time. Therefore, if athletic department members are asked to be more engaged and to participate more on campus while integrating into institutional operations, coaches may request full-time contracts. Each institution can examine its own context to discern what can work and what would be fair.

Other Stakeholders Related to the Recommendations

Each institution in this study was affiliated with a Christian religious

denomination and was also a member of the NAIA. Each religious denomination had its

own distinct values and beliefs that influenced how they support and govern the

institution. In this study, board representation, executive leadership positions, and many

faculty held positions from the denomination. As these institutions became less

dependent on denominational students, employees and board members from a

denominational background may have lamented the change more than others due to the

loss of the close-knit denominational environment that used to be present at the

institution. No matter the outcome of this process in the way an institution chooses to use

athletics, it is important that the board be informed of the rationale for overarching

changes in the structure and goals for athletics. Further, depending on the institution's

context, providing the board an opportunity for input regarding the institutional and

athletic culture could prove beneficial. None of the institutions in this study were founded

to emphasize athletics, so if athletics were used for enrollment, it would likely be helpful

for the board to receive explicit communication about the decision's rationale and how

the institution will remain true to its mission and values.

Another stakeholder group that can impact the recommendations is the NAIA. All

of the institutions in this study were NAIA members and members of conferences with

peers from their region. The outcome of these recommendations could impact their

competitiveness, financial investment in athletics, and even their alignment with their

conference and the NAIA. For example, eligibility requirements and transfer rules for the

NAIA lax compared to the NCAA. An institution may make a decision to require higher

academic standards for their student-athletes than the NAIA. This decision could lessen

the ability of teams to compete at a high level, although it would need to be justified and

communicated to all affected populations.

Change Theory

Depending on the current structure and overall approach to athletics at an

institution, these recommendations may present major changes for the institution. Change

theory likely plays an important role in implementing the recommendations. Changes in

structure and philosophy could be a shock to the institution. Adopting new ideas and

ways of operating is difficult, even if obvious positive outcomes result (Rogers, 2003).

For successful implementation of these recommendations, it is important for leaders to be

cognizant of the readiness of their institution for change and the pace of change that the

institution is able to accommodate.

The pace of change will be important for the institution. Depending on the state of

readiness of the institution and the magnitude of the change will be important

considerations for leaders as they decide which recommendations to implement and

when. As outlined in the proposed solutions, an analysis of institution and athletic

department culture can provide the foundation for change and allow time for leaders to

understand the current state of the institution and also allow individuals to participate in

the process. There are many change models that can be utilized to prepare for,

understand, and implement change processes. There are many models that can be utilized

by leaders in preparing for and executing change. Kritsonis (2005) provides a summary

and comparison of change theories models that could be beneficial for leaders to

understand. Rogers (2003) also provides helpful information regarding change processes. All stress the importance of planning, process, and being data informed.

While the institution's fundamental values do not change if these recommendations are implemented, the manifestations of those values can if an institution implements the recommendations. Leaders may face criticism, as it could appear they are changing the very nature of the institution. It is important for leaders to emphasize and create understanding that the change process will be beneficial to the institution. Further, the selection of leaders is of the utmost importance as the leaders themselves are seen as representative of the core identity of the institution (Haslam, et. al., 2011). Leaders do not necessarily need to be representative of the denomination, but understanding the culture, values, and history of the institution and being able to represent that, is important for AD and other leaders. It is important for institutional leaders, and especially the AD, to be engaged in conversation with individuals outside of athletics and the executive leadership team promoting the change that is happening and discussing the concerns of employees. During the change process, emphasizing not only what is changing but also what is staying the same is important. This approach allows employees to better grasp and deal with the changes that may follow (Burke, 2014). Integrated within this chapter are principles of change management, because the recommendations advocate for changing structures and ways of operating. However, it is helpful for leaders to keep in mind that no matter how well planned, change is difficult and complicated (Burke, 2014).

Implementation of the Recommendations

The list of recommendations attempts to align athletic department culture with institutional culture. Among the important factors that emerged from the data was that at the small Christian institutions in this study, value alignment between the athletic department and institution was important. For that reason, the recommendations start with developing a clear understanding of the institutional culture through an analysis by an interdepartmental group. The more clearly this culture is defined and communicated, the better the subsequent recommendations will proceed. Then, with this clear understanding of culture, institutions can identify ways to ensure engagement across the institution to allow for successful execution of these recommendations. A primary goal of the recommendations is that the institution's important values are reflected in the athletic department. If the recommendations of this study are implemented, an athletic department culture may develop that aligns with the values of the institutional culture. Further, organizational structures could be developed that create opportunities for integration to help institutions balance mission, academics, and athletic success.

Leader's Role in Implementing the Recommendations

To implement the recommendations, it is suggested that multiple leaders on campus undertake a collaborative effort. First, it is important for the leader to gain support and buy-in from the institution's president and executive leadership team. In this study, all three ADs believed that their president was supportive of the athletic departments' work. The support of the president for the athletic department work may be critical of gaining the support of the executive leadership team. For this reason, a decision on the structure of athletics within the institution is important. Without the support of the

president and executive leadership team, successful implementation is unlikely (Burke,

2014) because without their support, a cultural analysis of the entire institution may not

happen. The AD's relationship with the academic leaders will be essential in developing

positive relationships and a willingness to engage one another. The AD and Vice

President of Academics/Provost could identify leaders within both of their departments to

serve as early adopters of interdepartmental collaboration and work. Depending on the

changes that are undertaken by an institution, it would also be important to include

someone from the business office of the institution that could bring insight into the

budgeting and financial implications of changes.

It is incumbent upon the leader to have a trustworthy and transparent process to

implement the recommendations while understanding that the process is likely to be

difficult and may not proceed in a linear fashion (Burke, 2014). The AD and president are

likely to be the initial champions of the process, but the executive leadership team also

needs to serve in a leadership capacity to undertake the recommendations effectively. The

executive leadership team can make a determination in relation to who will be the process

leader; the researcher recommends the president fulfill this role. At each of the

institutions in this study, the president held the most power and had the ultimate decision-

making authority.

Building Support for the Recommendations

Building support for implementing these recommendations begins with the

president and the executive leadership team. Without their support, most of the

recommendations will not be accomplished. It is suggested that these recommendations

not be pursued unless the entire executive leadership team endorses it. Because many of

the institutions within the population of this study are highly dependent on the recruitment and retention of student-athletes for enrollment, an initial level of buy-in from the executive leadership team is expected. However, to execute the recommendations, it is important that the commitment extends beyond enrollment and to a culture that includes athletics in the pursuit of culture that is as integrated as possible.

If the executive leadership team supports to the recommendations, these leaders can then work to gain buy-in and support from key leaders on campus. Asking employees to undertake the extra work of cultural analysis may be difficult. It is incumbent upon leaders to clearly communicate the advantages of undertaking this process and actively recruit individuals who believe in the process to help build campus-wide support. The overall result could be a healthier organization with an in-depth understanding of the institution's culture and important values, which can lead to greater organizational commitment to goals and values, increased ethical behavior, and greater feelings of personal success for employees (Posner, et al. 1985).

Evaluation and Timeline for Implementation and Assessment

The evaluation and timeline for assessment could vary greatly based on the situation and context of individual institutions. Some of the recommendations are straightforward. For example, are core values identified and written into job descriptions and evaluations? Has the institution defined the goals for the athletic department? Has the AD met consistently with the athletic department both as a group and with individual members? Have roles and committees been identified stand in the gap? Some of these concrete recommendations can be evaluated on a biyearly or yearly basis in relation to effectiveness and sustainability.

Rogers (2003) noted that the consequences of innovation and change are difficult to judge, because they are subjective and driven by values. Individuals from different cultures each judge the consequences of change differently. Consequently, a change within higher education can be difficult to judge because of the numerous semiautonomous cultures that can be present (Duderstadt, 2000; Frey, 1994). Therefore, to judge the effectiveness of the recommendations' overall implementation, an interdepartmental working group or the executive leadership team can evaluate the effectiveness of each recommendation. This structure matters because the changes affect the entire institution, not just the athletic department, because the changes infuse the athletic department into different parts of the institution. Implementing the recommendations could take time, so an exact timeline is difficult to determine. However, ongoing evaluation is recommended.

Implications

Practical Implications

The most apparent practical implication is that this study provides information for a population of institutions that have been the subject of a minimal amount of academic research. Further, virtually no academic research has been conducted regarding athletic departments or culture within the study population. There are 45 Christian institutions with fewer than 1,500 undergraduate students offering athletics in the Midwestern United States. Although not part of the sample, many more of these institutions in the United States are of similar size, have Christian foundations, and are committed to athletics. These institutions are facing difficult challenges in today's denominational and higher education climates, in which students are not attending their denominational institutions,

the general population is price sensitive, and the possibility of closure is real (Thomason, 2015). Because these institutions use athletics as part of their enrollment and survival strategy, they need guidance on the important factors of organizational culture for their athletic departments. Therefore, this information could be most helpful in aiding institutions and their athletic departments to develop a culture that faithfully executes their Christian mission and represents its values.

This study provides practical recommendations to help institutions balance values and organizational culture in athletic departments at small Christian institutions. It is recommended that the athletic department be integrated into the institution and support the institution's mission and values, and a close-knit community be formed within the athletic department. The recommendations provide practical steps in which structural alignment and integration can be pursued. If successful, not only will the athletic department attain alignment and integration with the institution, but the student experience will also be enhanced.

Implications for Future Research

The opportunities for future research are vast because academic research has not been performed on this population of institutions. Future research on high-impact practices and roles for standing in the gap would be helpful to practitioners. This researcher found a need for individuals and structures to accomplish both. The recommendations provide ideas for how to do so, but specific research on practical approaches would be useful as well.

Another area for future research is the balance between faith and the coach's character at Christian institutions. Mission College appeared to have the most congruent

culture in which the mission and expectations were clearly understood. When describing expectations, most interviewees first mentioned character, not faith. This finding is surprising. Future researchers can explore if the character or faith of a coach is more influential in supporting the institution's mission. This finding could have broad implications in terms of hiring processes and job expectations.

Another possibility for future research is investigating the faculty perception of intercollegiate athletic department culture. For the recommendations of this study to be effective, it is advantageous that athletics have a certain level of buy-in from faculty about the important role athletics plays at the institution. A weakness of this study is that it only captures the faculty perspective from the FAR. An important next step in the research would be to examine the perspective of faculty about the important factors of intercollegiate athletic culture. Researchers could use a similar approach as in this study but with a focus primarily on faculty.

Finally, research regarding the incorporation of intercollegiate athletics into the institution's educational and mission-related outcomes creates opportunities for future research. This question has been grappled with in higher education since the beginning of intercollegiate athletics in the 1850s. Institutions have had a difficult time integrating athletics with the institution's mission and education outcomes. However, the results of this study could encourage administrators that it is possible to meet this challenge. Although this study did not examine educational outcomes, athletic departments that could demonstrate they achieved specific institutional educational outcomes would be well received at their institutions. All interviewees viewed athletics as both an important part of the institution for enrollment and as key to developing the whole person.

However, this perspective was not measured, nor was it clear if those in other

departments shared this perspective.

Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice

This dissertation in practice adds to the limited research on athletic department

culture at Christian institutions. This study is different because it provided evidence-

based recommendations for the development of athletic department cultures at small

Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States as opposed to only reporting

analysis of particular institutions, athletic departments, or athletic teams. While the

research data illustrates the importance at these institutions of congruent values

throughout the organization, cultural integration may not be possible. Still, it is a worthy

goal. This study suggests that creating a culture that is as integrated as possible by

focusing on common values and mission will lead to a more focused athletic department.

Many coaches in this study wanted leaders, and more specifically ADs, to tell

them what was expected. The ADs were key to cultural integration as they set the

expectations for coaches as well as the tone for the relationship between athletics and the

rest of campus. An integrated organizational structure was important, but it also appeared

to be incumbent upon ADs to promote cultural integration through a commitment to the

values and mission of the institution. To do this well, ADs needed to understand the

culture and understand the expectations of leaders within the culture (Northhouse, 2013).

Each institution within this study exhibited a unique cultural context from which leaders

operated. The ADs who understood and demonstrated key factors of the culture, like the

Mission College AD through his commitment to community, were able to successfully

stand in the gap and build an athletic department culture that integrated with campus.

Subcultures will emerge within organizations, but by integrating athletics into

institutional leadership and leaders exemplifying the mission and values of the institution,

groups can help create collaborative environments where the institution's primary values

are held at the forefront.

   Beyer and Hannah (2000) suggest that cultural change within intercollegiate

athletics has been difficult because leaders have not dealt with culture appropriately. The

management and development of culture are at the core of a leader's job (Schein, 2010).

Leaders play an essential role in the alignment of values, beliefs, and attitudes with that

of an organization and helping create an environment that promotes individuals and

departments that view themselves as an important part of the institution (Haslam et. al.,

2011). This study provides recommendations that constitute a process providing leaders a

plan by which they can understand and develop athletic department culture through

working to create integrated organizational structures and consistent values throughout

the institution. Within the cultures of the three institutions studied, it was important to

provide opportunities for many groups to collaborate and provide input. In embarking on

any of these recommendations, it is helpful for leaders to be open and transparent.

   Because small colleges and universities continue to face difficult challenges of

viability and survival (Thomason, 2015), it is important for leaders to determine how

their institutions need to adapt to survive. These strategies can be informed by the

institutional and athletic department cultures. The recommendations provided in this

chapter have implications for leaders at small Christian institutions in the areas of cultural

development and alignment as well as effectively managing change.

Summary of the Study

This multisite case study explored the perceptions of athletic department members of the organizational cultures of athletic departments of three small Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States. Six individuals at each institution participated in semi structured interviews during the process of data collection. From these interviews, as well as the examination of institutional documents, artifacts, and researcher observations, several important factors of athletic department organizational culture emerged. The findings were organized using the four elements of intercollegiate athletic department culture that were developed by Schroeder (2010): institutional culture, external environment, internal athletic environment, and leadership and power. The important factors of institutional culture included common values, structure, and standing in the gap. The external environment factors that influenced culture were the NAIA, denominational engagement, and the climate of higher education. The internal athletic department environment included common values, clear expectations, and the development of community. The leadership and power element was informed by and interacted with the three other components, most notably organizational structure and the denominational influence.

Chapter Five presented a list of seven recommendations with support from the research data and academic literature. These recommendations begin with an institutional cultural and value analysis to develop a clear contextual understanding that provides the athletic department boundaries. Further recommendations suggest performing an analysis of athletic department culture, identifying important values, defining the goal of athletics,

and developing an institutional structure that includes athletics in important leadership groups and committees and improves interdepartmental communication.

The aim this dissertation in practice was to develop evidence-based recommendations to develop an athletic department cultures at small Christian institutions in the Midwestern United States. This study contributes to a population of institutions and athletic departments that are the subject of minimal academic research. In presenting these findings, leaders within this population of institutions are provided important information about the factors of athletic department organizational culture. It is my hope that the information in this study is a resource for the many caring, hard-working, mission-focused individuals that work at small Christian colleges.

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Appendix A

"The Peculiar Institution? A Multisite Phenomenological Case Study of Athletic Department Culture at Small Christian Institutions" [1]
Principal Investigator: Rob Ramseyer
Creighton University-Interdisciplinary EdD Program in Leadership

Athletic Director,

Thank you for considering participation in my dissertation research. The research is titled: "The Peculiar Institution? A Multisite Phenomenological Case Study of Athletic Department Culture at Small Christian Institutions". The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of athletic department members of organizational culture in athletic departments at three small, Christian institutions. I am seeking to understand the perceptions of individuals of important factors of organizational culture within this context.

There has been very little research performed on athletic departments at small, Christian institutions. It is my hope that this research will benefit this subset of institutions as they seek to provide a positive experience for their student-athletes that aligns with the mission of Christian institutions.

If <institution> would agree to participate in this research, I will ask your help to organize interviews with the following individuals: yourself, who you report to, the faculty-athletic representative, and three athletic team coaches. One of the coaches should be the coach of the sport with the most student-athletes on its roster and the two other coaches should be individuals that you consider leaders within the department.

---

[1] This study began as a multisite phenomenological case study. However, it was changed to a multisite case study after data collection and analysis. The title of the study was altered when this change happened. The appendices list the initial title for the study because this is what as was sent to participants.

Additionally, I request that while I am on campus that I am allowed to take a tour of campus, observe on my own, and obtain copies of institutional handbooks and other guiding documents that you are willing to share.

There will be no compensation provided for participation in this study. I will gladly share my analysis at the completion of the project.

Thank you again for your consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions. I will plan on following up with you in a few days.

Sincerely,

Rob Ramseyer
Doctoral Student
Creighton University Graduate School
█████████

Appendix B

Participants Invitation to Participate in Research

"The Peculiar Institution? A Multisite Phenomenological *Case Study of Athletic
Department Culture at Small Christian Institutions"*[2]
Principal Investigator: Rob Ramseyer
Creighton University-Interdisciplinary EdD Program in Leadership

Dear Participant.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my dissertation research. The

research is titled "A Multisite Phenomenological Case Study of Athletic Department

Culture at Small Christian Institutions". The purpose of this study is to explore the

perceptions of athletic department members of organizational culture in athletic

departments at three small, Christian institutions.

Information will be collected through interviews, examination of institutional and

departmental documents, and observation. Your responsibility in this process will be to

be available for an interview when I am on campus and answer follow up questions as

needed. Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw from participation

at any time. There are no known risks associated with your participation in this study.

There has been little research performed on small, Christian institutions. It is my

hope that this research will benefit these institutions as they seek to provide a positive for

experience for their student-athletes.

All information and notes developed during interviews will be transcribed through

a secure website (rev.com) and stored on password protected files that only I will have

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[2] This study began as a multisite phenomenological case study. However, it was
changed to a multisite case study after data collection and analysis. The title of the study
was altered when this change happened. The appendices list the initial title for the study
because this is what as was sent to participants.

access to protect confidentiality of participants. The findings of the study will be reported

in a way that allows for confidentiality of all institutions and participants. There will be

no compensation provided for your participation in this study.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns regarding this

research. You may also contact the Creighton University Institutional Review Board at

402-280-2126 if you have questions about your rights as a research subject. I appreciate

your willingness to participate. I will gladly share the results of my analysis once the

project is complete.

Sincerely,

Rob Ramseyer
Doctoral Student
Creighton University Graduate School
█████████

Enclosure: Bill of Rights for Research Participants

Appendix C

Creighton University Research Informed Consent

Title: A Multisite Phenomenological Case Study of Athletic Department Culture at Small Christian Institutions[3]
IRB Number: TIRB20067
Principal Investigator: Paul Ramseyer, Creighton University Graduate School
█████████

Phone: ████████

Introduction

This form is called a Consent Form. It will give you information about the study so you can make an informed decision about your participation in the research.

The dissertation research is titled: "The Peculiar Institution? A Multi-Site Phenomenological Case Study of Athletic Department Culture at Small Christian Institutions". You were selected for participation in the research due to your work at the institution with the athletic department. I am available for any questions that may arise during our interview or afterwards.

Study Purpose and Procedures

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of athletic department members of organizational culture in athletic departments at three small, Christian institutions. This study involves research. Information will be collected through interviews, examination of institutional and departmental documents, and observation. Your responsibility in this process will be to be available for a 30-60 minute interview and respond to any follow up questions after I review interview transcripts. Participation

---

[3] This study began as a multisite phenomenological case study. However, it was changed to a multisite case study after data collection and analysis. The title of the study was altered when this change happened. The appendices list the initial title for the study because this is what as was sent to participants.

in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw from participation at any time.

Interviews will be recorded on an Olympic Audio Recorder. The interviews will be stored on my password-protected computer. Interviews will be transcribed through a secure website (rev.com) and stored on password protected files that only I will have access to protect confidentiality of participants. At the completion of the study or if you decide to withdraw from the study before its completion, the audio file of your interview will be deleted. The findings of the study will be reported in a way that allows for confidentiality of all institutions and participants. I will do everything I can to keep your records confidential. However, this cannot be guaranteed, as certain information is required to be reported by law if it comes up.

Benefits of Participating in the Study

There are no known benefits to participating in this study.

Risks of Participating in the Study

The risks of this study are minimal. The disclosure of confidential or critical information could cause discomfort. Another possible risk involved in this study involves the potential social and psychological risks associated with accidental disclosure of confidential information from the data collected throughout the study. Methods of storing and securing data are designed to minimize this risk.

Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to keep your records confidential. However, it cannot be guaranteed. We may need to report certain information to agencies as required by law. Both records that identify you and this consent form signed by you may be looked at by others. The list of people who may look at your research records are:

- The investigator and his dissertation advisor

- The Creighton University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and other internal

  departments that provide support and oversight at Creighton University

The research findings may be presented at professional meetings or published in

relevant journals. However, your name, address, or other identifying information will

always be kept private.

Compensation for Participation

There will be no compensation provided for your participation in this study.

Contact Information

You are welcome to contact the investigator with any questions or concerns.

Contact information for the investigator is as follows:

Rob Ramseyer

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.

2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.

3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.

4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.

5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.

6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.

7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.

8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research subject.

9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:

    a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.

      b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.

10. If the study involves treatment or therapy:

      a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.

      b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

"The Peculiar Institution? A Multisite Phenomenological Case Study of Athletic Department Culture at Small Christian Institutions"[4]
Principal Investigator: Rob Ramseyer
Creighton University-Interdisciplinary EdD Program in Leadership

Demographics:
Date/Time:
Length of Interview:
Location:
Interviewer: Rob Ramseyer
Interviewee Code Number
Email Address:
Institution:
Role:
Gender:
Length of Service:

Introduction

My name is Rob Ramseyer and I am a doctoral student at Creighton University

working on my dissertation research titled: "The Peculiar Institution? A Multisite Case

Study of Athletic Department Culture at Small Christian Institutions". Thank you for

your willingness to be interviewed on this subject. The information you provide will aid

in the exploration of the phenomena of organizational culture in athletic departments at

small, Christian Institutions.

This interview will last between 30 minutes and 60 minutes. All your comments

will remain confidential. I will record our conversation to be transcribed to ensure

---

[4] This study began as a multisite phenomenological case study. However, it was changed to a multisite case study after data collection and analysis. The title of the study was altered when this change happened. The appendices list the initial title for the study because this is what as was sent to participants.

accuracy. Please let me know if you need a break during this interview. Do you have any

questions?

Interview Questions and Prompts

1. What is your definition of organizational culture?

2. Tell me about your experiences with the organizational culture of your

institution.

3. Tell me about your experiences with the organizational culture of the athletic

department.

4. How do you see the organizational culture of the institution interacting with

that of the athletic department?

5. In what ways do you see the leadership of the institution influencing the

organizational culture of the athletic department?

6. What do you see as the most important values of the institution? How do you

experience and live out these values?

7. Tell me about your work with the athletic department.

8. In what ways does your work support the mission of the institution?

Map of room:

Field Notes

Description	Reflective Notes

Appendix E

Coding List

Code	Sub Code	Description
Athletic Department Culture		References to the culture or organizational culture of the athletic department
	Interviewee Definition	Definitions provided by interviewees of the athletic department organizational culture
Denomination		Overarching references about the culture of denomination
Denominational Beliefs		Specific references to the denomination and its theology
Enrollment		References to recruitment of students
	Pressure	References to the enrollment pressures experienced by the institution
	Athletics	References to the impact of athletics on enrollment
External Environment		Factors outside the institution that impact the institution
	NAIA	References to athletic governing body of the institutions
	Climate In Higher Education	References to current climate of higher education in region and country
Faith		References to the influence of faith in the work of institution or individual interviewee
Finances		References to the financial situation of the institution
Institutional Culture		References to the culture or organizational culture of the institution
	Interviewee Definition	Definitions provided by interviewee of institutional culture
	Mission	References to mission when discussing institutional culture
	Community	The importance of community in reference to institutional culture
Leadership		Reference to institutional leadership or style
Lessons from Athletics		References to the lessons that can be learned from participation in athletics
Mission		References to the mission of the institution

Organizational Culture		Definitions provided by interviewee of organizational culture
Organizational Structure		References to role and committee hierarchy and structure
Power		Reference or discussion of power
	Coaches	Discussion of the power of coaches within the institution
	Denomination	Discussion of the power of the denomination over the institution
Rules		Lifestyle expectations of the institution for staff or students
Success		References to how interviewees define success for athletics
The Gap		References to the separation between athletics and other parts of the institution
	Student Life	References to the separation between athletics and the student life department
	Academics	References to the separation between athletics and the academic departments
Values		References to personal or institutional values