

An Exploratory Study of Leadership and Organizational Culture within an NCAA

Division I Sports Team

DISSERTATION

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By

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## Abstract

There are many aspects to consider when understanding leadership and organizational culture. Leadership and organizational culture are essential for a sports organization to reach its desired goals and objectives. A learning process must occur to achieve an organization's high-level desired outcomes within a sports organization. Riemer and Chelladurai's (1995) well-renowned leadership concepts were central to understanding a Multidimensional Model of Leadership. Aspects of leadership have been connected to different outcomes produced by leadership. By utilizing Chelladurai's (1995) Multidimensional Model of Leadership for this dissertation, the impacts of leadership on the cultural aspects of the team organization for team personnel and staff members involved in the organization can be better understood.

Additionally, using the process model Steers (1976) developed, organizational effectiveness can be further investigated. The process model highlights the internal processes and operations of an organization. Steers' (1976) process model allows for a better understanding of complex topics relevant to leadership and organizational culture, such as organizational effectiveness. Chelladurai's (1995) Multidimensional Model of Leadership and Steers' (1976) process model will be used to study leadership and organizational culture within a NCAA Division I sports team.

Intercollegiate athletics in the U.S. offers a unique platform for understanding leadership and organizational culture. Many aspects and personnel went into making up the organizations within these intercollegiate athletic sports teams. Aspects such as the different relationships on the team, leadership characteristics, and the values and beliefs of the organization that contributed to creating culture all played a critical role. The purpose of this dissertation was to do an exploratory study of leadership and organizational culture within a NCAA Division I sports team.

This dissertation primarily used qualitative methods. The study participants were 11 members from the team's organization: the head coach, three staff members, three team captains, and four other team members. One team member was selected from each class, also known as the year in school. This group included one freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. Each participant was asked to participate in a focus group interview aside from the head coach, who participated in a one-on-one interview. All the research study participants were members of the same large, Division I Midwestern National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) institution sports team in the U.S. These participants experienced leadership and organizational culture in varying degrees within their organization in the same window of a 1-year timeframe. Merriam's (1998) thematic analysis was used to transcribe the interviews. Based on the analysis of the findings, the following themes were identified; *Relentless, Family, Knowing the Goal, Communication, Demanding Environment, Relationships, Love for the Organization, and Buy-in*. Upon completing the document research analysis using the team handbook, there was a strong alignment with these theme findings. No follow-up interviews were

necessary as each participant provided detailed answers that contributed to discovering the exploratory study's themes.

In conclusion, the final theme of buy-in was found to be the most significant among the other seven. The reason was that without the buy-in from all members of the organization, the other themes of *Relentless*, *Family*, *Knowing the Goal*, *Communication*, *Demanding Environment*, *Relationships*, and *Love for the Organization* would not be able to function as well as they did when looking at this specific culture within the environment. The theme of *Buy-in* was the key to allowing the leader to have all members of the organization on the same page and all pull in the same direction to strive for the desired goals of the organization.

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all my most incredible supporters in my life. I am fortunate to have a long list of people who have supported me throughout this chapter of my life. I want to acknowledge my family, friends, teammates, former coaches, and co-workers. So many have gone above and beyond to support me throughout this journey. To my husband, parents, dissertation committee members, and former coach, thank you for all your encouragement, love, and support, as I could not have done it without your continued support.

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## Fields of Study

Major Field: Kinesiology

Specialization: Sport Management

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

Many aspects can influence individual members of a team and the team organization as a whole. Leadership is one of those critical aspects that can be very influential. Important aspects explored for this dissertation was to surround leadership aspects and the impact leadership made on the organization's team culture. Specifically, this dissertation explored how leadership characteristics and organizational culture impacted a sport's team. It was central to understand more the roles leaders and critical team members play within the team organization. It was also essential to understand the aspects that influence individual team members, and equally important to understand the aspects that affect the organizational culture of a team.

Through qualitative methods, this dissertation utilized a Midwestern NCAA Division I institution. The 11 Midwestern NCAA Division I participants included members of the team organization who were a part of the institution at least three years ago. The participants included the head coach, three staff members, three team captains, and four team members. One member was selected from each class, which consisted of one freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior team member. All the research study participants were members of the same institution's sports team. They participated in various interviews. These participants experienced leadership and organizational culture varyingly during the same one-year timeframe within the organization. Chelladurai's

(1995) Multidimensional Model of Leadership and Steers's (1976) Process Model was used to examine leadership and organizational culture.

### **Theoretical Framework**

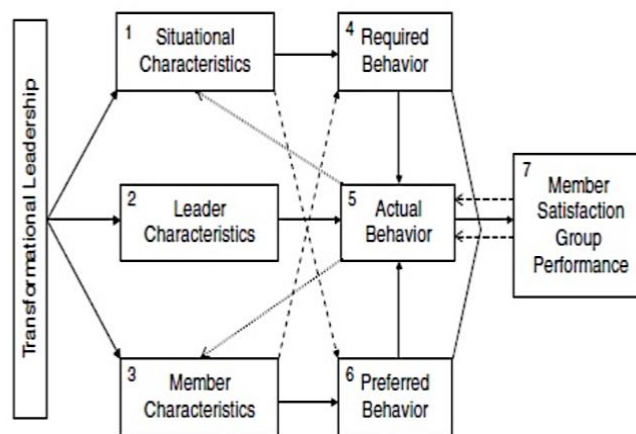
This dissertation's central focus was to explore and better understand leaders' impacts on organizational culture and how these impacts have implications that can affect the team members. This dissertation focused on expanding upon Riemer and Chelladurai's (1995) well-renowned concepts that surround leadership. Considering the central focus of the dissertation, it was essential to understand Chelladurai's (1995) Multidimensional Model of Leadership because it was one of the first to make connections to understand the many aspects that go into leadership. These aspects have been connected to leadership with different outcomes that can be produced when leadership is used effectively or ineffectively. By utilizing Chelladurai's (1995) Multidimensional Model of Leadership for this dissertation, a better understanding of the impacts of leadership on the culture of the team organization for team and staff members involved in the organization could be discovered.

After exploring the early stages of research in academia regarding leadership studies, Riemer and Chelladurai (1995) applied the Multidimensional Model of Leadership to the test. Through the process, Riemer and Chelladurai (1995) determined critical factors that focused on how coaches who held the positions of leaders within their team organization needed to understand how to impact their players and teams positively. Suggestions included using positive feedback behavior, emphasizing instructions, and



how coaches need to understand better the team’s democratic behaviors, autocratic behavior, and social support. The research completed by Riemer and Chelladurai (1995) has helped contribute to the research of this dissertation. It has helped to understand further how to motivate individual personnel within the team to succeed and create positive cultures. As a result, the background knowledge of leadership, after exploring different concepts that began in 1995 by Riemer and Chelladurai, were a fundamental concept to consider. When taking the next research step, these principal considerations were vital to making valuable contributions within this specific area of research in academia that aimed to help advance leadership effectiveness and organizational culture. As a result, this research aimed to enable the ability to produce higher achieving outcomes for sports organizations and within the sports industry.

**Figure 1 Multidimensional Model of Leadership**



**Figure 1** Multidimensional Model of Leadership

Source: Adapted from Chelladurai, P. (2007). Leadership in sports. In G. Tenenbaum & R. C. Eklund (Eds.), *Handbook of sport psychology* (p. 17). New York: Wiley. Used by permission.

In Figure 1, the most up to date Multidimensional Model of Leadership is presented (Chelladurai, 2007). One significant modification made to the model involved the concept of transformational leadership. The updated model was developed from new found knowledge of the leadership style demonstrated by coaches who focused on striving for excellence. Through the process of striving for excellence, individuals had the potential to transform from average individuals to high-level achieving individuals. As a result of this new concept, Chelladurai (2007) expressed that, in many cases, successful coaches displayed transformational leadership. With that, incorporating this into the model was critical. In short, coaches who held the roles of leaders can transform member characteristics, aspirations, and attitudes, which can change situational needs by formulating new goals and objectives. Transforming member characteristics, aspirations, and perspectives motivated the members of the team and organization. As a result, great success was found when the whole group strived for the same goals the leader set.

Also, in Figure 1, you can see that transformational leadership influenced leadership characteristics (Box 2). An example is when the head coach was working to transform specific attributes of the assistant coach, similar to how they would work to change the players on the team characteristics. Another example of the Multidimensional Model of Leadership was when there was only one coach. This would mean that the coach would work towards changing their characteristic to fit the transformational mold and modify the member's situational factors and attributes. The member is represented in Figure 1 by the dotted arrows flowing from actual behavior (Box 5) to situational characteristics (Box 1) and finally to member characteristics (Box 3).

It was made apparent by researchers, such as Tod et al. (2017), that two key factors were shown to dictate leadership and culture. These two factors included the team personnel, which included the shared characteristics and attributes within the organizational culture, and the leaders at the top. These leaders had goals and objectives to lead the team. The organization's leader and group leaders worked together to either instill a culture or attain the existing one. This was done through consistency and accountability, starting at the top with the leader down to the team which embedded it into the organizational culture as a primary goal by sharing the leadership responsibilities and duties among the various roles within a team-like organization. As a result, Tod et al. (2017) elaborated on leadership and culture by considering top-down and shared leadership. In this article, Tod et al. (2017) shared that “leadership can be “shared” and is a dynamic mutual process involving the emergence of both formal and informal leaders” (p. 94). Tod et al. (2017) went on to further explain that “both approaches to leadership (i.e., top-down, shared) are present within athlete leadership” (p. 94).

For the purpose of this dissertation, it will be important to gain an understanding of how leadership impacts organizational culture to result in organizational success or how leadership impacts organizational culture to result in an unsuccessful organization. There was a wide range of aspects to explore regarding the culture created by the group internally and by the leaders using the top-down approach. This was understood by studying how the leaders of the organizations were impactful.

Culture is 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).

Organizational Culture is the “deep-rooted beliefs, values, and assumptions widely shared by organizational members that powerfully shape the identity and behavioral norms of the group” (Wallace & Weese, 1995, p. 193).

There was always some form of a leader at the forefront of establishing the cultural norms and values. The leaders were the individuals who facilitated how things should be operated to produce the desired outcomes that were being strived for success. Schilling's (2009) article connected how ineffectiveness leads to negative impacts. Schilling (2009) focused on leadership by looking at the significance of negative leadership and how we can better determine what contributed to the positive or negative aspects of leadership.

Steers (1976) discussed the process model. Steers (1976) explored when an organization was effective and explained the process model approach to understanding effectiveness. The process model places a strong emphasis on the internal processes and operations of an organization. The process model of effectiveness from Steers (1976) contained three central components: goal optimization, a systems perspective, and an emphasis on human behavior in organizational settings. Steers (1976) explained that using this multidimensional approach had numerous advantages. As a result, it provided a better understanding of complex topics, such as organizational effectiveness, that were relevant to leadership and organizational culture.

Martz (2008) explored organizational effectiveness in-depth and explained the process model:

In a process model, goals evaluate the organization's effectiveness, but goal optimization, not goal achievement, is the focus. Goal optimization considers the desired goal based on the constraints facing the organization. However, it should be distinct from suboptimization, where less-than-optima goals are intentionally pursued. Instead, goal optimization attempts to recognize environmental realities that limit or prevent specific targets from being fully realized. Goal optimization also considers the differential weighting aspect of goals based on identified constraints that can impede progress toward goal attainment. (Martz, 2008, p. 42)

Steers (1976) recognized four critical types of influences on effectiveness:

"Organizational characteristics, such as structure or technology; environmental characteristics, such as economic and market conditions; employee characteristics, such as level of job performance and job attachment; and managerial policies and practices" (p. 59). The last few points are essential when understanding and concluding why the process model is valuable. The process model approach factors in how individual behavior affects organizational performance. For example, "if employees agree with the organization's objectives, they will have stronger support for and contribute toward helping the organization meet them. This suggests that the goals of the organization and the employee's personal goals must be in harmony" (Martz, 2008, p. 43). The process model does not require standards for effectiveness; instead, it emphasizes the

development of becoming effective. It draws on the aspects of individual behavior and organizational performance.

The process model approach defined organizational effectiveness as a continuous practice rather than an end state. After careful consideration, the process model was the best fit for this dissertation on organizational effectiveness when striving to implement a model that was most relevant to researching leadership and organizational culture within the sports industry when exploring all that is embedded within a sports team and all that encompasses the environment that made up the organization and culture.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For this dissertation, the research study addressed the literature gap on leadership and organizational culture in the sports industry using a Midwestern NCAA Division I (DI) institution. Understanding more about the impact leaders made on a team's organizational culture and the individuals who made up the organization was essential. To address this research problem, the main question used for this dissertation was how leadership affects the organization's culture within this type of NCAA DI sports team organization.

### **Significance of the Study**

This research study on organizational culture and leadership is important because if leaders within sports organizations and the sports industry want to be impactful, they must understand what concepts are important to be mindful of within their leadership

style as well as within the organization. Leaders should be educated on the characteristics that enhance the organization and enhance the leader's ability to lead the organization in the direction that is desired to achieve the goals of the organization. This research study will identify central themes and concepts that will be able to help better educate leaders on what characteristics and components are effective in creating an impactful and high-functioning organization.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This dissertation explored the leadership role in a Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team. For this study, the research considered the different aspects of leadership and organizational culture within a specific Midwestern Division I NCAA institution sports team. This research strived to better understand how leaders impact this type of organization. This study explored whether leadership affects the cultural component of the Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team.

### **Research Question**

For this dissertation, this research question aimed to understand the topic and aspects surrounding leadership effectiveness. This qualitative research explored how leadership impacted an organization's culture and created different organizational outcomes. Leadership characteristics, styles, and desired organizational cultures can create different outcomes. These aspects of leadership characteristics, style, and desired organizational cultures are discovered within situational-based settings and lived through

experiences. This dissertation's research critically examined how leadership effectiveness impacted organizational culture to result in different organizational outcomes. The central objective when exploring these critical aspects of leadership and organizational culture was that they are all significant aspects of the research study for this dissertation. In conclusion, the central research question for this research study and dissertation was: How does leadership affect the organization's culture within an NCAA DI sports team?

### **Delimitations**

The research study's delimitations included narrowing the focus to a certain parameter. The participants included those from a specific sports team environment. They were also placed into specific groups for the focus group interviews, which included four focus groups and 12 participants from the same Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team. The scope of this research study was important to gain the necessary insights for the research study itself.

### **Limitations**

There are a few limitations to this research. One limitation was that only one organization was used. More studies on leadership and organization looked at multiple organizations and leaders and their different approaches to leadership. The other limitation of this study was that only one Division I sports team was used. Other sports teams within organizations may use leaders' and members' input when exploring the study of leadership and organizational culture within an NCAA Division I sports team. It would be beneficial to include more support staff members, such as the organization's



Athletic Director, the team Trainer, the team equipment manager, and others. Research that includes more organization members could provide a more holistic view of the leadership and organizational culture would be beneficial.

### **Definition of Terms**

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).

Group Dynamics refers to the interactions between people who are talking together in a group setting. Any time there are three or more individuals interacting or talking together, there are group dynamics (Nazzaro & Strazzabosco, 2009).

Leadership: “to focus on a potential change by establishing direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring” (Kotterman et al., 2006, p. 71).

NCAA Division I: The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in the United States. NCAA Division I is the highest level of intercollegiate athletics. NCAA Division I has elaborate facilities that receive high media attention, generate revenue, and provide financial scholarships to student-athletes and high salaries to sports coaches.

Organizational Culture: “deep-rooted beliefs, values, and assumptions widely shared by organizational members that powerfully shape the identity and behavioral norms of the group” (Wallace & Weese, 1995, p. 193).

## **Overview of Remaining Chapters**

Chapter 1 introduced leadership and organizational culture in the sports industry. This first chapter included the theoretical framework, the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research question, and the definition of terms.

Chapter 2 includes a literature review. Essential aspects of literature that highlight and includes examples of leadership, critiques of leadership, organizational culture and effectiveness within intercollegiate athletics, organizational culture construct, organizational culture versus organizational climate, leaders' influence on organizational culture in sport, organizational effectiveness construct, organizational effectiveness models, the relevant model for organizational effectiveness, and the leaders' influence on organizational effectiveness.

Chapter 3 includes a detailed description of the qualitative methodology and research design selected for this dissertation. It consists of the research design details of the case study method and the participant information. The chapter includes the data collection and analysis strategy, followed by the important topics of the study's trustworthiness, my positionality and reflexivity, ethical considerations, the timeline of the research study process, and the participant descriptions.

Chapter 4 includes the research findings completed through the qualitative research study methods. The findings aimed to learn and understand more about leadership and organizational culture using the perceptions of 11 Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team members. Based on the perceptions of the 11 Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team members and staff, themes were identified.

Chapter 5 addresses, utilizing a discussion format, the 11 Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team participants' perceptions of the research question below. How does leadership affect the organization's culture within an NCAA Division I sports team? This chapter concludes with a discussion of the research study findings.

## Chapter 2. Review of Literature

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the literature on the applied theory of leadership and organizational culture and includes research that presents examples of leadership and the critical roles that leaders play in creating both positive and negative experiences for team members, a critique of leadership, and considered views on the subject of leadership: articles on leadership critiqued to understand more about the impact that leaders make. The literature review also includes organizational culture and effectiveness within intercollegiate athletics, organizational culture as a construct, organizational culture distinguished from organizational climate, and leaders' influence on organizational culture in sports. As well as a review of organizational effectiveness as a construct, the different organizational effectiveness models includes the goals model, system resource model, multiple constituency model, competing values framework, and process model. This is followed by an examination of which organizational effectiveness model is most relevant to leadership and organizational culture for the study, and the literature review concludes by applying leaders' influence on organizational effectiveness in sports.

### **Examples of Leadership**

This section explores a range of research articles that present examples of leadership and the critical roles leaders play in impacting experiences for team members

within the organization. Leaders are able to be highly impactful. Leadership is researched in various ways, and as we critique the articles on leadership, we were able to understand more about the impacts that leaders make.

Research on leadership has been studied for numerous years. This section begins with Riemer and Chelladurai (1995), who explored two hypotheses when examining leadership and athletics. Their study investigated “(a) the differences between the offensive and defensive personnel of football teams in preferred leadership, perceived leadership, and satisfaction with leadership, and (b) the relationships among preferred and perceived leadership, their congruence, and satisfaction with leadership” (Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995, p. 276). Chelladurai’s (1995) multidimensional model of leadership’s reputation continues to be applied in academic research and recognized as “foundational research.”

Riemer and Chelladurai (1995) determined that coaches who held leadership positions on teams must understand how to impact the athletes and teams positively. Riemer and Chelladurai (1995) suggested using positive feedback, emphasizing instructions, and deeply understanding the team’s democratic behaviors, autocratic behaviors, and social support structures. Their research validated that this knowledge could help leaders understand how to motivate each athlete to succeed and create a positive learning environment and culture.

Weese et al. (1996) explored the importance of culture and how impactful of a role culture played. Leaders in organizations should be the most influential people in the group and do the organization justice by leading the people in the right direction. Weese

et al. (1996) examined how organizational effectiveness, leadership, and culture work together. The most significant discovery in the study was that there was a considerable difference “uncovered in both conferences for executive transformational leadership and organizational effectiveness. However, no significant relationship was uncovered between transformational leadership and organizational effectiveness. A significant relationship was discovered between organizational culture strength and organizational effectiveness” (Weese et al., 1996, p. 197).

Judge et al. (2002) explored personality and leadership. The research article on character and leadership provided many valuable takeaways when looking at personality traits that are in common with leadership traits. In short, the research in this study explored the trait perspectives in leadership by utilizing a qualitative review method; a meta-analysis followed the qualitative review. An organized framework was discovered and established when nearing this research study's conclusion through the meta-analysis.

The framework was organized into a five-factor model. In the simplest form, when breaking down the five-factor model, the five personality factors and traits compared with leadership included neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. “Results indicated that the relations of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, and Conscientiousness with leadership generalized in that more than ninety percent of the individual correlations were more significant than 0. Extraversion was the most consistent correlate of leadership across study settings and leadership criteria (Judge et al., 2002, p. 765).

Bolden et al. (2004) reported on research that surrounded leadership. The research report aimed to offer an overview of concerns in the research field of leadership. The problems discussed included how to define leadership, what leadership is, how leadership can be measured, and what impacts leadership can have on performance. Since leadership in this current era has been identified as one of the most talked about concepts in terms of its importance in organizations, it is imperative to understand the implications of positive versus negative leadership. Bolden et al. (2004) used significant examples in the research report to display various scenarios to understand the effects and impact. Some concluding remarks included that “there is no widely accepted definition of leadership, no common consensus on how best to develop leadership and leaders, and remarkably little evidence of the impact of leadership or leadership development on performance and productivity” (Bolden et al., 2004, p. 3). The research conducted by Bolden et al. (2004) is essential for its efforts to define leadership better. As a result, to provide and improve the understanding of positive and negative leadership implications.

Allan et al. (2006) examined practices of power by utilizing a leadership framework. Allan et al. (2006) began by expressing how “countless authors, both popular and scholarly, have studied the concept of leadership and have attempted to define it, quantify it, and ideally provide “a set of principles that are universal to leadership which can be then adapted to different situations” (p. 41). Allan et al. (2006) went on to explain the following.

However, the scholarship of leadership rarely considers how discourses—constellations of words and images circulating in broader society—operate to

construct images of leaders and leadership. These images are not simply passive products of discourse but also contribute to shaping dominant discourses and, in turn, influence beliefs about leadership. They may even constrain the performance of leadership. Identifying dominant discourses that reflect and shape contemporary images of leadership in higher education can provide another lens for understanding leadership and how it functions in a given context. It may also contribute to helping leaders be more strategic about how they are/position themselves in dynamic and complex college and university environments. (p. 41)

This concept from Allan et al. (2006) is essential to understand when considering leaders in sports, performance levels, and occupations in the sports industry. Similarly, this research is highly beneficial to help understand the perceptions about leadership in these specific organizational settings and environments.

Bolden and Gosling (2006) explored essential leadership competencies for leaders to understand. The study emphasized how leaders must learn to adapt as society and trends evolve. The study pointed out that using the competency leadership style approach can lead to feelings of refrain and how this mindset needs to be transitioned. Bolden and Gosling (2006) believed the “competency approach could be aligned more closely with the current and future needs of leaders and organizations. In particular, we argue that a more discursive approach that helps reveal and challenge underlying organizational assumptions is likely more beneficial if organizations are looking to move beyond individualistic notions of leadership to more inclusive and collective forms” (Bolden & Gosling, 2006, p. 2).



Kotterman et al. (2006) reviewed the concepts of leadership and management, where the two were compared to determine if they are different or work together. In the research analysis, Kotterman et al. (2006) revealed that some believed the two concepts were synonymous, whereas others thought the two were the opposite. In questioning this and contrasting the two concepts, the researchers noticed that management and leadership have two distinct functions. “Management and leadership do share many similar duties, which consist of working with people and influencing others to achieve goals. Management skills are used to plan, build, and direct organizational systems to accomplish missions and goals. In contrast, leadership skills are used to focus on a potential change by establishing direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring” (Kotterman et al., 2006, p. 71).

Bryman et al. (2007) strived to create a conclusive summary of some of the most fundamental findings regarding leadership. The summary examined the different types of leadership styles, approaches, and behaviors and discovered a direct correlation in terms of the effectiveness of an organization, and leadership through higher education organizational settings. Bryman et al. (2007) proposed a two-step approach to augment the research study's findings. Step one of the research project investigations applied a systematic search of literature that critically reviewed leadership and its effectiveness in higher education. Step two, this research applied multiple semi-structured interviews to further validate the research findings.

The research by Bryman et al. (2007) was built around the question of what styles or approaches to leadership are associated with effective leadership. “What seems to lie at

the heart of this list is the need for leaders to create an environment or context for academics and others to fulfill their potential and interest in their work. The significance of fostering a collegial climate of mutual supportiveness and maintaining autonomy seems to be a particular desiderata in the academic context” (p. 2).

Irving et al. (2007) explored leadership behaviors contributing to team effectiveness. In evaluating the research on team effectiveness, Irving et al. (2007) established six essential servant leadership concepts that fit into the main topic of team effectiveness. Their research used a regression model based on specific items in organizational leadership and found that: “The essential servant leadership variables identified were (a) providing accountability, (b) supporting and resourcing, (c) engaging in honest self-evaluation, (d) fostering collaboration, (e) communicating with clarity, and (f) valuing and appreciating” (Irving et al., 2007, p. 98).

Anderson et al. (2009) recognized a need for more research in leadership to understand what it means to be a servant leader and what a servant leadership style looks like. Anderson et al. (2009) bridged the concepts of leadership and management by implementing the servant leadership style. However, with servant leadership being relatively new to the research of leadership, Anderson et al. (2009) concluded that the results found from the study and the information to understand servant leadership are limited and lacking in many aspects. They also learned that the positive effects of servant leadership on organizational outcomes have many impactful outcomes.

Schilling (2009) connected leadership concepts of how ineffectiveness leads to what was described as destruction. Schilling’s (2009) research examined leadership from

a qualitative study (using a semi-structured interview technique) and looked at the significance of negative leadership by examining manager roles. The interviews focused on questioning the managers' notions of leadership as people with manager-like roles within their work field, and also examined the antecedents and consequences that tag with negative leadership. “Results show that the concept of negative leadership is associated with eight behavioral categories: insincere, despotic, exploitative, restrictive, failed, laissez-faire, and active- and passive-avoiding leadership” (Schilling, 2009, p. 102).

Fletcher and Arnold (2011) analyzed performance leadership and management in elite sports through a qualitative study. The research study by Fletcher and Arnold (2011) explored the concepts of leadership and management in high-level sports. The study used qualitative research, also used interview methods to conduct their research. The interview process utilized thirteen national-level performance directors in Olympic sports. Four main themes resulted from investigating performance leadership and management.

The four main themes recognized and categorized were: vision, operations, people, and culture. From these central themes, there were common problems identified in operations which included: financial management, strategic competition and training planning, athlete selection for competition, and upholding rules and regulations. The issues surrounding people included: staff management, lines of communication, and feedback. Lastly, cultural issues included establishing role awareness and organizational and team atmosphere (Fletcher & Arnold, 2011).

Swanson and Kent (2014) discussed the many challenges leaders face in sports organizations and the overall complexity of this role. This research raised the question of how the followers on a team can play a significant role in creating the so-called “need” for a leader within an organization. There was undoubtedly a need for the positions of leaders and followers within any organization. What was interesting when considering the followers’ view of leadership was that “leadership can be seen as a perceptual phenomenon where what matters most is what people see in the leader, which does not necessarily need to be an accurate depiction” (Swanson & Kent, 2014, p. 1). These insights can be integrated by further recognizing credibility has important characteristics which are determined by leadership characteristics and leading figures. These leadership characteristics include: the leader’s knowledge, capabilities, and ability to earn the followers’ trust.

Swanson and Kent (2014) also identified what most followers within organizations were consider and construct regarding what the ideal leader should do and how the leader should present him or herself. This study determined that it is essential for leaders to be not only great leaders but also to have specific knowledge and credibility to gain their followers’ respect. Great followers who buy into their ideal leader are equally important as the leaders play an imperative role in impacting an organization.

Cranmer and Myers (2015) examined sports teams as organizations through the lens and perspective of the leader-member exchange theory. Their research used the leader-member exchange theory which explored the perspective of players’ (team members) communication and looked at both communications with their coaches and

teammates. As stated, “sports teams by definition can be considered a type of organization; yet the incorporation of an organizational perspective has not been utilized to examine athlete’ interactions” (Cranmer & Myers, 2015, p. 100.). The study also used leader-member exchange theory (LMX) as the theoretical perspective to explore athlete-coach communication's impact on relationships and communication with coaches and teammates.

After completing the research with the same group using 158 former high school athletes, they found that “athletes within-group relationships with coaches report more satisfaction and symmetrical communication with coaches, and more task cohesion, social cohesion, and cooperative communication with teammates. These results highlight the importance of athlete–coach communication for influencing perceptions of relationships and communication with coaches and teammates” (Cranmer & Myers, 2015, p. 100.). Essential components gained from the research study included concepts such as: cohesion, communication symmetry, cooperative communication, leader-member exchange theory (LMX), and sports communication.

Cranmer and Myers (2015) also explained LMX and its importance in supporting the development of a wide range of theoretical perspectives and approaches to adequately understand sports teams as organizations and the role leaders play in these environments. It was mentioned in the article by Cranmer and Myers (2015) that “communication with leaders is a crucial component to an organizational member’s experiences and forming of social relationships” (p. 101.).

Though there are other theoretical approaches to studying communication between leaders and subordinates (team members), LMX has become a highly used theoretical approach for studying and understanding sports teams as organizations. With the implementation and examination within an organization, LMX has been identified to understand better and learn about the complexities that often occur and exist within team environments/organizations. Cranmer and Myers (2015) identified many other statements highlighting the value of utilizing the theoretical perspective of the leader-member exchange (LMX).

LMX is a widely utilized theoretical perspective often applied within organizational settings (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). However, using this theoretical perspective to examine novel contexts like sports teams could provide insight into how the dyadic exchanges between athletes and a single coach influence subsequent communication and perceptions of relationships with a coach or teammates. Sports practitioners could use to increase the quality of the communication and relationships between athletes and their coaches or teammates, an increasingly salient goal of sports organizations (Billings et al., 2012). Additionally, given that coaches serve as managers and teachers (Billings et al., 2012; Turman, 2003a, 2008), the importance of the athlete-coach relationship is ubiquitous for athletes' experiences—meaning an understanding of this particular relationship could be used to foster prosocial experiences for athletes. In addition to these considerations, the current

examination could have theoretical implications for athlete–coach and LMX research. (Cranmer & Myers, 2015, p. 101)

Furthermore, implementing LMX, an organizational theory, to the framework of sports teams is central because sports teams are by characterization organizations.

Quarterman (2003) found that “while the definitions of organizations differ, they do share the following five features: (a) a collection of individuals and groups, (b) goal orientation, (c) deliberative structure, (d) deliberate coordination, and (e) identifiable boundary . Likewise, sports teams are comprised of individuals (e.g., athletes, coaches, and trainers) who share collective goals” (Cranmer & Myers, 2015, p. 101).

Duguay et al. (2016) found various dynamics within female varsity athletes who hold leadership positions on their teams. Interestingly, this study found key differences in how formal team leaders are viewed versus informal leaders. Even when select individuals or small select groups of team members are formally identified and put into these leadership roles, what was noteworthy is the following finding.

Athletes believed over 85% of teammates should display some leadership role, with 19% of teammates holding a formal leadership role and 66.5% fulfilling an informal leadership role. The commonality among the three studies above is that they all emphasize the shared nature of athlete leadership. Leadership is a team effort carried out by formal and informal leaders. (Duguay et al., 2014, p. 154)

This is important to note from the Duguay et al. (2016) research study because it presented an inside viewpoint of team aspects and structure within the team culture and organization. When a large majority of the players contribute in some way, either

formally or informally, it was determined that both are equally important and necessary for a team to work together and operate as a unit. Though there are many cases where individuals may possess more natural leadership abilities and characteristics than others, it is not to say these skills cannot be learned and developed. Mentoring, teaching, and guiding are all imperative components to implement and offer coaching to the athletes.

Burton et al. (2017) expanded on leadership in finding that using a servant leadership style can also be a successful way to lead. The servant leadership style can be highly impactful when creating a positive culture and environment in various sports organizations. In reflection, to further critique this research study, as we consider society and how we operate/work together, the new generations advancing into athletics and sports organization can benefit from a servant leadership style. Servant leadership emphasizes promoting and creating a more ethical environment, limiting conflict, friction, and differences. The servant leadership style's main objective is to put the people first and create a people-centered approach to the system. As mentioned, the next generation believes being part of the conversation is essential. They feel they have the ability to add value. Therefore, incorporating a servant leadership style to foster this type of environment could become vital for current and future leaders to support our future talent's physical, and mental well-being.

Arnold et al. (2018) researched the implications that leaders and managers within the industry of sports managers/leaders make on the environments, the organizations, and the athletes they work with. As mentioned in many research study articles, such as Riemer and Chelladurai (1995) and Tod et al. (2017), people fortunate enough to be in



leadership roles can make a major impact. With this type of power, there is an opportunity to make positive and impactful changes. This privileged opportunity to have such power internally needs to be taken very seriously and used appropriately, as we have learned from Olympic athletes about this concept and their personal experiences regarding the different types of impacts made by leaders in the sports organization. Olympic athletes from the Arnold et al. (2018) article described these types of leaders as dark leaders and used characteristics to describe them such as manipulative, inauthentic, self-focuses, haughty self-belief, and success-obsessed (Arnold et al., 2018).

Medenica et al. (2019) examined the relationship between leadership styles and organizational culture in sports organizations. This research identified that “the relationship between leadership styles and organizational culture in sports organizations is interdependent, while organizational culture affects the manager’s choice of leadership style, with time, the manager himself shapes and changes the organizational culture” (Medenica et al., 2019, p. 85.). After the research study on the relationship between leadership styles and organizational culture was conducted in 2019, there was a trend to learn more about these connecting concepts. This became desirable for research to study in more depth because of the central focus on how leadership style in an organization can directly correlate to the structure, strategy, management, and other relationships in organizations.

The research conducted by Medenica et al. (2019) specifically aimed to determine which leadership style could be found when exploring a single individual sports

organization. To follow, when looking at a single sports organization, what organizational culture could be found within?

The ultimate goal of the study was to identify and discover a good leadership style that would improve the overall quality of sports organizations. As a result of conducting this study, where the researchers were able to gain an understanding and insight into a particular sports organization, it was learned that there was a dominant leadership style and the corresponding organizational culture, which influences both achieving results and the level of motivation and loyalty of the sports organization's member (Medenica et al., 2019).

Lower-Hoppe et al. (2020) also made several noteworthy findings that "Performance excellence is a core value in athletic teams. A team's intraorganizational network has been considered an important determinant of team performance" (p. 77). Lower-Hoppe et al. (2020) went on to state later in the research study that "research on athlete leadership indicates that team processes (e.g., team communication, team identification) and team outcomes (e.g., team performance, team cohesion) can be positively influenced by athlete leaders" (Lower-Hoppe et al., 2020, p. 78). Many points hit the core of how impactful leaders can be in positively impacting a team and sports organization. These leaders are a vital variable to the success surrounding the concept of organizational effectiveness and performance.

Finally, Lopez et al. (2020) research examined leadership and how leaders could make positive and negative impacts. What was different about the Lopez et al. (2020) study was how it looked at student-athletes through a self-evaluation in both males and

females. This research concluded that if a lower level was found using the self-evaluation, the negative impact of leading was more detrimental to the student-athlete. It was also discovered that females generally were more subordinate on the self-evaluation scale. Therefore, any abuse or mistreatment would increase regarding female student-athletes. In turn, the female student-athletes' ability to perform to the best of their ability at the highest level was severely decreased. If leaders could recognize this and learn how to help their student-athletes, the research study determined this would reflect high levels of performance and reduce most of the negative impacts and implications that lower the core self-evaluation results. The goal was to be able to achieve a high self-evaluations score outcome.

### **Critiques of Leadership**

The critical review of this research on leadership primarily focused on the identifiable findings that pertained to leadership and the role leadership played in the sports industry. There are many valid research findings to consider for future research and for future literature contributions in the leadership knowledge domain.

Wallace and Weese (1995) adopted the definition used by culture scholars, defining organizational culture as the “deep-rooted beliefs, values, and assumptions widely shared by organizational members that powerfully shape the identity and behavioral norms of the group” (p. 193). The head coach is the team leader and plays a significant role in cultural development, shaped by the business environment, values, heroes, rites and rituals, and cultural networks within the organizational culture. Strong

organizational cultures are built over time (Shein, 1993), leading to increased job performance (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). These critical views have resulted from the comprehensive literature review. The research articles that are now analyzed show strong examples of how leaders' impact organizations such as the sports industry.

Rierner and Chelladurai (1995) determined that coaches holding leadership positions on teams must understand how to impact their players and teams positively. As identified by Rierner and Chelladurai (1995) these leaders must be educated on how they are or are not being impactful in a positive way. Weese et al. (1996) explained how the leaders in organizations, the most influential people, are and should do the organizations justice by leading the people in the right direction. The key is highlighting the impact leaders have or how effective they are.

Bolden and Gosling (2006) explored various essential leadership competencies for leaders to understand and how leaders need to learn to adapt as society evolves. This article emphasizes the importance of being educated even as a leader who might already hold a high leadership position. Bryman et al. (2007) created a conclusive summary of some of the most fundamental findings regarding leadership, which included leadership styles, approaches, and behaviors, and a direct correlation in terms of the effectiveness of an organization was discovered. Effectiveness is a term that has yet to be used throughout this paper. However, effectiveness is connected to leaders' impact within an organization. If leaders are influential, in most cases, the people within the organization follow the leader's direction.

Furthermore, Irving et al. (2007) explored leadership behaviors that contribute to team effectiveness. Schilling (2009) explains how ineffectiveness leads to what was described as destruction, which supports how effectiveness is connected to the impact that leaders make within an organization. Swanson and Kent (2014) discussed the many challenges leaders face in sports organizations and the overall complexity of this role. Their research elaborates on a prime example of leaders while we learn about the many challenges leaders face in sports organizations.

Cranmer and Myers (2015) examined sports teams as organizations through the lens and perspective of the leader-member exchange theory. The research using the leader-member exchange theory aimed to explore the perspective of team members' communication by looking at both communications with their coaches and teammates. This insight allows leaders to discover how essential a communication concept is when linking it to leadership and positive leadership skills to enhance a person's ability to lead in a positive/impactful way. Duguay et al. (2016) research was to learn more about the various dynamics within female varsity athletes and how some hold leadership positions on their teams. These different types of dynamics within the sports industry environment help leaders understand more about the role they play as a leader on a team within the dynamics of the organization.

Arnold et al. (2018) went into more depth regarding the implications of leaders on: the environments, the organizations, and the athletes they work with. The implications are noteworthy as they impact the people within any environment or organization. Medenica et al. (2019) examined the relationship between leadership styles

and organizational culture in sports organizations. This research conducted helped to determine which leadership style could be found when exploring a single individual sports organization. It is essential to underscore that no one size fits in terms of leadership and the leadership style one possesses and strives to lead with. Leadership style is often dictated by many factors, such as the people a leader directs. It can also be dictated and appropriate to use diverse leadership styles in different types of environments or situations that may arise.

In Lower-Hoppe et al. (2020), there were a significant amount of core components to note on how impactful leaders can be in positively impacting a team and sports organization. Leaders are indeed a key attribute to the success surrounding the concept of organizational effectiveness and leading to positive impact. Furthermore, the article by Lopez et al. (2020) consistently stated how leaders could make both positive and negative impacts and how significant the effect is to be aware of as a leader.

### **Organizational Culture and Effectiveness within Intercollegiate Athletics**

To explore organizational culture within intercollegiate athletics, I address the following topics deemed essential to understanding the organizational culture within the context of intercollegiate athletics. Part one of the exploration includes a review of the organizational culture construct, and it will define organizational culture and distinguish organizational culture from organizational climate. The main components for discussion synthesize the research investigating leaders' influence on organizational culture in sports. Part two reviews the construct, defines organizational effectiveness, describes the

different organizational effectiveness models, discusses which is most relevant to leadership and organizational culture, and synthesizes the research investigating leaders' influence on organizational effectiveness in sports.

### **Organizational Culture Construct**

Maitland et al. (2015) explored all that encompasses organizational culture in sports by completing a systematic review. His research paper focused on researching the paradigms, methods, interests, perspectives, and definitions of organizational culture. What is unique about the systematic review is how the authors outlined the variety of studies in sports through research that included factors such as athlete development, the link between the strength of culture and organizational performance, and understanding the forces that drive organizational diversity. The study used to explore the topics listed above ultimately aimed to deepen the understanding of specific approaches used in the sports industry within the organizational culture. Coaches and athletes were identified as valuable participants of interest in gaining critical insights into the organizational culture in sports. It was stated in the research article that "sports organizations and their coaches, athletes, and members seem to be good subjects for the study of organizational culture. Sports organizations are commonly associated with specific values and various symbols, stories, myths, and rituals. These characteristics are viewed as some of the principal components of an organization's culture" (Maitland et al., 2015, p. 514).

One of the studies in the systematic review included the research conducted by Martin (1992), which explored the different organizational cultures. In the review, three

perspectives were identified. Martin (1992) began by explaining “that the notion of "organizational culture" is far too vague, fuzzy, and empirically untestable to yield significant insights into organizational behavior” (Martin, 1992, p. 156). The analysis in the paper is based on the development of three perspectives on organizational culture: integration, differentiation, and fragmentation.

The integration perspective is most used in organizational culture research. From the integration perspective, organizations are characterized by: consensus, consistency, and clarity. This perspective suggests that the organizational life in a culture is balanced and uniform. Researchers who use this perspective tend to search for organization-wide consensus and, consequently, overlook conflict sites (Martin, 1992).

The differentiation perspective explored the idea of cultural similarity. The differentiation perspective observed the organizations and their characteristics being made up of co-existing groups. In these types of organizations, the groups often co-exist, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in conflict, and sometimes in indifference. This type of research aims not to present organizational culture as seamless and unchanging. It demonstrates how groups interconnect in a complex dynamic, creating an organizational landscape that often needs more consistency. Compared with the integrationists, differentiationists are much more familiar with issues of power and politics (Martin, 1992).

The fragmentation perspective avoids any notions of a balanced culture. It could be characterized by consensus or conflict. In the fragmentation perspective, there is a central argument for focusing on ambiguity and recognizing that organizational cultures



consist of competing interpretations that do not constitute a clear picture. As a result, there is no one-size-fits-all. In conclusion, since there is no one-size-fits-all, as researchers, we must determine the best method for the wide range of sports organizations within the industry and society today (Martin, 1992).

Cole and Martin (2018) explored organizational culture within developing a winning sports team culture by looking at the organizational culture in theory and practice. The “case study reviews strategies for identifying, establishing and influencing sports team culture and leadership, based on Edgar Schein’s three-level theoretical model of organizational culture integrating artifacts, values and beliefs and core assumptions” (Cole & Martin, 2018, p. 1204).

Cole and Martin (2018) stated that “key findings include the need to formally recognize culture, including establishing and reinforcing values, as a tangible element of sports team management practice. A flat organizational structure has helped facilitate a suitable environment for collective leadership to flourish. Implications for sport and business teams are the need to acknowledge culture as a core component and conduct a culture audit to establish the current and desired culture through an aligned combination of informal and formal transformational leadership” (Cole & Martin, 2018, p. 1204).

Cole and Martin (2018) further explained, “when establishing organizational culture, it is important to consider the components it consists of or its values. At any point, a culture can be influenced by both informal and formal leaders, and it is thus important to ensure that both are aligned with what is viewed as appropriate (Cole & Martin, 2018, p. 1205). Schein (1990) outlined that “culture can be identified as

prominent and clear with a strong influence on direction. An organization's culture, according to Schein (2010), depends on four elements: stability, depth, breadth, and integration" (Cole & Martin, 2018, p. 1206). Stability is "present when the culture and its associated values are constant and hard to change despite personnel turnover" (Cole & Martin, 2018, p. 1206). Breadth "occurs when the culture is present in an organization's functional areas from top to bottom" Cole & Martin, 2018, p. 1206). Lastly, "integration refers to how well cohesion is achieved between behaviors, values, and rituals" (Cole & Martin, 2018, p. 1206).

Jeong et al. (2019) examined the structural relationships among organizational culture, empowerment, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) of professional sports organizations. The research study "findings revealed that all of the sub-factors of organizational culture (i.e., clan culture, adhocracy culture, and market culture), with the exception of hierarchy culture, were positively influential of perceived empowerment, which was in turn positively influential of OCB" (Jeong et al., 2019, p. 1). Jeong et al. (2019) went on to "further revealed that perceived empowerment partially or fully mediated relationships between the sub-factors of organizational culture and OCB" (Jeong et al., 2019, p. 1). In particular, "the findings of this study contribute to sport management practices by uncovering the mediating function of empowerment on the relationship between organizational culture and OCB, indicating the importance of empowering employees when managing professional sports organizations" (Jeong et al., 2019, p. 1).

Mitrovic et al. (2019) explored the relationship between leadership styles and organizational culture in sports organizations and helped to define organizational culture better. Organizations like sports organizations are specific in organizing, setting goals and tasks, and even succeeding can be seen through their members' success. Mitrovic et al. (2019) stated that "organizational culture is interactive, and it is the leader who – with their values, beliefs, and behavior – creates a foundation for making an organization's a culture. Organizational culture has many definitions; one is a complex system of values that an organization's members follow when making decisions and simply behaving. Values, such as creativity and efficiency, work as a foundation for the organization's culture, creating its identity and setting it apart from the competition" (Erhardt et al., 2016). Also, according to Schein (1996), "organization culture is a series of assumptions that a person makes about the group in which they participate; these assumptions are grouped into three levels: artifacts, espoused beliefs, values, and fundamental underlying beliefs" (Mitrovic et al. 2019, p. 86).

### **Organizational Culture versus Organizational Climate**

When striving to provide clarity around organizational culture distinguished from organizational climate, Armstrong (2009) wrote that organizational culture is an "organizational or corporate culture is the pattern of values, norms, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions that may not have been articulated but shape how people in organizations behave and things get done. 'Values' refer to what is believed to be important about how people and organizations behave. 'Norms' are the unwritten rules of behavior"

(Armstrong, 2009, p. 384). Armstrong (2009) stated that organizational climate “as defined by Ivancevitch et al. (2008), organizational climate is: ‘A set of properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by the employees, that is assumed to be a major force in influencing employee behavior.’ The term ‘organizational climate’ is sometimes confused with organizational culture, and there has been much debate on what distinguishes them from one another” (Armstrong, 2009, p. 385).

Denison (1996) aimed to determine organizational culture and climate differences. In his efforts to distinguish between organizational culture and organizational climate, it was noted that “climate refers to a situation and its link to thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of organizational member. This is temporal, subjective, and often subject to direct manipulations by people with power and influence. Culture, in contrast, refers to an evolved context (within which a situation may be embedded). Thus, it is rooted in history, collectively held, and sufficiently complex to resist any attempts at direct manipulation. The two perspectives have generated distinct theories, methods, and epistemologies and a distinct set of findings, failings, and future agendas” (Denison, 1996, p. 644).

After Denison (1996) completed the analysis to distinguish between organizational culture and organizational climate. He concluded that organizational culture and organizational climate should be viewed as differences in interpretation rather than differences in the phenomenon. Using this approach created a stronger foundation for integrating the held belief that culture and climate are different and are a non-overlapping phenomenon. This research stated that culture researchers should explore the

concept of organizational life because it is understood by those who experience it. The major finding in this research area is a better understanding that the evolution and influence of social context in organizations.

Ehrhart et al. (2016) defined organizational climate as “the shared meaning organizational members attach to the events, policies, practices, and procedures they experience and the behaviors they see being rewarded, supported, and expected” (p. 69). Ehrhart et al. (2016) found that there is a converse that organizational culture is broader than organizational climate. Ehrhart et al. (2016) defined in the article organizational culture “as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by [an organization] as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel about those problems” (Ehrhart et al. 2016, p. 23). Therefore, organizational climate is typically defined by the feelings, perceptions and attitudes of people working in an organization. Organizational climate can be built by commonly held beliefs, values, and traditions entitled organizational culture (Ehrhart et al. 2016).

### **Leaders’ Influence on Organizational Culture in Sport**

Weese et al. (1996) explored culture and how impactful it can be. Leaders in organizations should be the most influential contributors and do the organization reasonably by leading in the right way. Weese et al. (1996) examined how organizational effectiveness, leadership, and culture work together. They discovered a significant

difference “in both conferences for executive transformational leadership and organizational effectiveness. However, no significant relationship was uncovered between transformational leadership and organizational effectiveness. A significant relationship was discovered between organizational culture strength and organizational effectiveness” (Weese et al., 1996, p. 197). Transformational leadership can be crucial while making cultural changes to enhance organizational cohesion and effectiveness. It appears to bring a sense of belonging to the people working within an organization. With a sense of belonging, people are inclined to work together toward common goals and often share the same values and beliefs. This helps an organization thrive and succeed in meeting measurable, attainable goals.

Kent and Chelladurai (2001) studied two proposals regarding perceived transformational leadership, organization commitment, and citizenship behavior within the context of intercollegiate athletics. This study suggested that “(a) perceived leader-member exchange quality (LMX) between second-level managers (e.g., associate, assistant athletic directors) and their subordinates would be associated with perceived transformational leadership behaviors (TL) of the athletic director, and (b) subordinates’ organizational commitment (OC) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) would be correlated with both perceived TL and LMX” (Kent & Chelladurai, 2001, p. 135). The study used correlations and regression analyses to demonstrate that components of transformational leadership were strongly correlated with the leader-member exchange. The study also found that transformational leadership and leader-member exchange were differentially related to organizational commitment and behavior.

Allan et al. (2006) examined how to rethink practices of power by utilizing an extensive leadership framework. Allan et al. (2006) mentioned several authors, who have studied leadership and have tried to define it. Allan et al. (2006) went on to explain the following.

However, the scholarship of leadership rarely considers how discourses—constellations of words and images circulating in broader society—operate to construct images of leaders and leadership. These images are not simply passive products of discourse but also contribute to shaping dominant discourses and, in turn, influence beliefs about leadership. They may even constrain the performance of leadership. Identifying dominant discourses that reflect and shape contemporary images of leadership in higher education can provide another lens for understanding leadership and how it functions in a given context. It may also contribute to helping leaders be more strategic about how they are/position themselves in dynamic and complex college and university environments. (Allan et al., 2006, p. 41)

Allan et al. (2006) research findings are insightful to more fully understand when considering leaders in sports, performance levels, and occupations in the sports industry. Similarly, this research helps increase the perceptions about leadership in specific organizational settings and environments.

Bolden and Gosling (2006) explored various essential leadership competencies for leaders to understand. The study emphasized how leaders need to learn to adapt as society evolves and identified out that when using the competency leadership style

approach this can lead to feelings of a refrain and how this mindset needs to be transitioned out. Bolden and Gosling (2006) believed the “competency approach could be aligned more closely with leaders' and organizations' current and future needs. In particular, we argue that a more discursive approach that helps reveal and challenge underlying organizational assumptions is likely more beneficial if organizations are looking to move beyond individualistic notions of leadership to more inclusive and collective forms” (Bolden & Gosling, 2006, p. 2).

Kotterman et al. (2006) reviewed the concepts of leadership and management, where the two were contrasted to determine if they are different or work together. Kotterman et al. (2006) revealed that some believed the two concepts were synonymous, whereas others thought the two were the opposite. In questioning this and contrasting the two concepts, the researchers noticed that management and leadership have two distinct functions. “Management and leadership share many similar duties, including working with people and influencing others to achieve goals. Management skills are used to plan, build, and direct organizational systems to accomplish missions and goals. In contrast, leadership skills are used to focus on a potential change by establishing direction, aligning people, and motivating and inspiring” (Kotterman et al., 2006, p. 71).

Bryman et al. (2007) strived to create a conclusive summary of some of the most fundamental findings regarding leadership such as: different leadership styles, approaches, and behaviors and discovered a direct correlation between an organization's effectiveness. Bryman et al. (2007) research looked at leadership through a higher education organizational setting.



Their research proposed a two-step approach to explore the research study's findings. Step one of the research project investigations was by utilizing a systematic search of literature that explored leadership and the effectiveness of leadership in higher education. Step two was through multiple semi-structured interviews. This research study was built around the question of what styles or approaches to leadership are associated with effective leadership. “What seems to lie at the heart of this list is the need for the leader to create an environment or context for academics and others to fulfill their potential and interest in their work. The significance of fostering a collegial climate of mutual supportiveness and the maintenance of autonomy does seem to be a particular desideratum in the academic context” (Bryman et al., 2007, p. 2).

Czekanski and Turner (2014) studied the role of coaches when establishing positive relationships within team dynamics and various relationships within teams. The key finding was how important it is to create a sense of community/belonging in organizational environments to be successful, as we see in this research study about intercollegiate-level student-athletes. In efforts to develop this sense of community/belonging, social interactions are imperative when positively or negatively impacting the group. However, if positive interactions and relationships can be established, the outcome likely be positive. “Altogether, it was hypothesized student-athletes’ perceptions of their exchange relationships with their coaches and teams would influence the amount of commitment they felt to each, which, in turn, would affect student-athletes’ role fulfillment” (Czekanski & Turner, 2014, p. 376). This result revealed noteworthy findings worth mentioning in concluding this research study. The

general findings would be necessary for any organization to be made aware of when working in teams and groups working toward achieving common goals. As the study points out, the environment constructed, created, and established by the organization leaders could be explained as one of the essential variables regarding whether a team and organization can be successful. One concept also determined as a variable defined in detail by Czekanski and Turner (2014) was the importance of feeling like you are a valuable member of the team and organization. With this feeling of being valued comes a greater sense of belonging. This led the researchers to believe the following result, which added a factual finding to refer to as a significant critique.

An examination of the items also reveals the importance of team dynamics. When teammates value each other's contribution to the team, care about each other's well-being, and take pride in each other's accomplishments, a family-like environment is created. This environment causes athletes to be more emotionally invested in the team and have a superb drive to return the favorable treatment they receive. As a result, athletes perform their given role on the team at a higher level and seek to perform additional tasks outside their role. (Czekanski & Turner, 2014, p. 385). Of leadership roles, 19% of teammates hold a formal leadership role, and 66.5% fulfill an informal leadership role. The commonality among the three studies mentioned above is that they all emphasize the shared nature of athlete leadership. Leadership is a team effort carried out by formal and informal leaders. (Duguay et al., 2014, p. 154.)

This concept is essential because it presents an inside view of team aspects and structure in a team culture setting. When many of the players contribute in some way,

either formally or informally, it was determined that both are equally necessary for a team to work together and operate as a unit. Though there are many cases where individuals may possess more natural leadership abilities and characteristics than others, it is not to say these skills cannot be learned and developed. Mentoring, teaching, and guiding are all imperative components to be implemented and offered to the athletes.

Arnold et al. (2018) explored the implications that leaders and managers in the sports industry have on the environment, organization, and athletes. As mentioned, people fortunate to be in leadership roles have an unbelievable ability to make an impact. With this type of power, there is an opportunity to make positive and impactful changes. Still, there is also the possibility that this power can be taken advantage of and abused. This can directly correlate to creating a hostile environment, which can be toxic to the organization and athletes. On the other hand, this privileged opportunity to possess leadership power must be taken seriously and used appropriately. This study exemplifies this through Olympic athletes and their personal experiences regarding the different types of impacts made by leaders in sports organizations.

Buchanan and Huczynski (2004) directed their work toward students and instructors to provide information on a multidisciplinary methodology considering organizational behavior. To understand organizational behavior, Buchanan and Huczynski (2004) displayed the concept through theories, models, and frameworks representing organizational behavior. The key insights garnered from this research were:

- possible implications for organizations to be aware of skill sets that are necessary to have due to the digital age we live in,

- the importance of team building, becoming more accepting of our attitudes towards others' image,
- identifying different management options and
- structures for organizations to consider, what successful organizational change looks like, and
- how great leaders need to look to bend the rules to create change.

Burton and Peachey (2014) highlighted the importance of ethical leadership in intercollegiate sports. The research study highlighted the many challenges faced when striving to remain honest. They explored the many opportunities and proposed future directions that leaders and organizations should consider. The focus of this study was to raise awareness of the significant issues leaders face when involved in and exploring the concepts from an intercollegiate sports context. In short, leaders need to ensure they are leading and behaving ethically. Not only does this research article put significance on the need for ethical leadership in intercollegiate sports, but it also expands on how to enhance ethical leadership and ethical decision-making. The last consideration was understanding the need for how unethical behavior can be reduced within intercollegiate athletics.

Swanson and Kent (2014) looked at the challenges leaders face when leading in sports and the complexity of this role in terms of the perception placed on leaders. The study explored how followers can play one of the most significant roles when creating a “need” for a leader within an organization and creating a perception of this leader. What was interesting when considering the follower's view of the perceptual phenomenon was that “leadership can be seen as a perceptual phenomenon where what matters most is

what people see in the leader, which does not necessarily need to be an accurate depiction” (Swanson & Kent, 2014, p. 81). This can be integrated into recognizing credibility through specific important characteristics determined by leadership examples. These leadership characteristics included knowledge, capabilities, and the ability to earn the followers' trust. As a result, this research study outlines what followers in organizations consider and construct in their minds about what the ideal leader should do and how they should behave. With this type of mentality around leaders in sports organizations, it would be necessary for the leaders to have specific knowledge to gain the credibility and respect of followers. Great followers who buy-in and believe in the leaders are equally imperative for leaders and organizations to be successful.

Balwant et al. (2016) demonstrated a meta-analytic review and research agenda that evaluated transformational instructor leadership in higher education teaching.

The findings indicated that transformational instructor-leadership was positively associated with students' motivation, satisfaction, perceptions of instructor credibility, academic performance, affective learning, and cognitive learning. Moderator analyses revealed that culture, course delivery, instrument, and gender were all significant moderators of the relationship between transformational instructor leadership and specific student outcomes. The findings also showed substantial differences between the transformational leadership dimensions, thus supporting the notion that each dimension is conceptually distinct. (Balwant et al., 2016, p. 20).

Burton et al. (2017) expanded on leadership by adding that using the servant leadership style can be a successful way to lead. The servant leadership style can be impactful, creating positive cultures and environments in various sports organizations. In reflection, considering society as a whole and how we operate and work together, younger generations in athletics and sports organizations could benefit from using the servant leadership style. Servant leadership emphasizes promoting and creating a more ethical environment to limit conflict, friction, and differences. The objective is to put people first, which makes a people-centered approach to the system.

Sisodia et al. (2018) investigated a leadership style called conscious leadership. Sisodia et al. (2018) explained the ability of mindful leadership and how being a conscious leader can enhance organizational effectiveness to be successful. Conscious leadership plays a significant part in developing organizational culture because of how impactful a leadership style is on the culture. With this leadership, meaningful changes can be made in the long term. It is a method that has been exposed to work in making organizations thrive because of the community, like culture, environment, and structure.

Weese et al. (2018) explained the many vital concepts surrounding leadership. Reflection noted that when leadership is not present, it is noticeable and can reflect poorly on an organization. Weese et al. (2018) shared that five components have been categorized to make leaders the best at what they do. These five qualities included credibility, compelling vision, charismatic communication, contagious enthusiasm, and culture building. Weese et al. (2018) explored how leaders can implement these five components in their organizations to create more cohesive cultures and environments and

see tremendous success in all areas of the organization. Strategies incorporated energizing colleagues to do the problem-solving. As the leader, it is vital to be engaged as a partner and participate in the leadership process, develop a community of leaders who are also committed to the vision, and lastly, create space for greater clarity, alignment, and effectiveness to establish a positive work culture to achieve desired results and goals of the organization.

Lopez et al. (2020) summarized the topic of leadership by being consistent with how leaders can make positive and negative impacts. Lopez et al. (2020) explored male and female student-athletes in a core self-evaluation. It was discovered that when student-athletes had a lower-level core self-evaluation, the negative impacts of leadership were deemed more detrimental. It was also revealed that females were consistently lower on the core self-evaluation scale. Therefore, their ability to perform at the highest level would severely be decreased. If leaders could recognize this early and learn how to help student-athletes more accurately, it was presented in the research study that this could produce higher levels of performance and reduce negative implications that lower the core self-evaluation results. The goal would be to achieve high core self-evaluations.

### **Organizational Effectiveness Construct**

After several research studies and books about organizational effectiveness, what has been made evident by Cameron et al. (1983) begged the question of whether one model or several models should be incorporated to study and understand organizational effectiveness. Cameron et al. (1983) compared multiple methods of organizational

effectiveness. When conducting the comparison, the authors mentioned in this article, “all acknowledge that little agreement exists regarding what organizational effectiveness means or how properly to assess it” (Cameron et al., 1983, p. 1). It has become a frustrating concept to many that there is no meaningful definition of organizational effectiveness or a theory of effectiveness. However, Cameron et al. (1983) explained the theoretical, empirical, and practical reasons for this. It was said that “theoretically, the construct of organizational effectiveness lies at the center of all organizational models. All conceptualizations of the nature of organizations have embedded in their notion of the nature of effective organizations and the difference between effective and ineffective organizations” (Cameron et al., 1983, p. 2).

Hartnell et al. (2011) explored organizational culture and effectiveness through a meta-analytic investigation using the competing values framework’s theoretical beliefs. This was investigated by applying Quinn and Rohrbaugh’s (1983) competing values framework (CVF). The CVF was used to test hypotheses concerning the relationship between three culture types and three significant indicators of organizational effectiveness. These three primary indicators of organizational effectiveness included employee attitudes, operational performance, and financial performance. The CVF framework tested the nomological validity and proposed internal structure, such as the interrelationships among the culture types. The study determined that cultures are differentially and positively associated with the effectiveness criteria, leading to mixed results when using CVF. It was later recommended that an alternative theoretical



approach would be better for future research. A unique find to highlight is the Figure 2 table, which provides supporting material for understanding organizational culture types.

**Figure 2 The Competing Values Framework**

Culture Type	Assumptions	Beliefs	Values	Artifacts (behaviors)	Effectiveness Criteria
<b>Clan</b>	Human affiliation	People behave appropriately when they have trust in, loyalty to, and membership in the organization.	Attachment, affiliation, collaboration, trust, and support	Teamwork, participation, employee involvement, and open communication	Employee satisfaction and commitment
<b>Adhocracy</b>	Change	People behave appropriately when they understand the importance and impact of the task.	Growth, stimulation, variety, autonomy, and attention to detail	Risk-taking, creativity, and adaptability	Innovation
<b>Market</b>	Achievement	People behave appropriately when they have clear objectives and are rewarded based on their achievements.	Communication, competition, competence, and achievement	Gathering customer and competitor information, goal-setting, planning, task focus, competitiveness, and aggressiveness	Increased market share, profit, product quality, and productivity
<b>Hierarchy</b>	Stability	People behave appropriately when they have clear roles and procedures are formally defined by rules and regulations.	Communication, routinization, formalization, and consistency	Conformity and predictability	Efficiency, timeliness, and smooth functioning

Figure 2. The competing values framework’s four culture types. Hartnell, C. A., Ou, A. Y., & Kinicki, A. (2011). Organizational Culture and Organizational Effectiveness: A Meta-Analytic Investigation of the Competing Values Framework's Theoretical Suppositions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(4), 677-694.

Before exploring the five different organizational effectiveness models in detail, it is fundamental to understand organizational effectiveness by developing a definition and appropriate criteria for exploring it. Georgopoulos et al. (1957) researched organizational effectiveness. The authors defined organizational effectiveness by explaining how the concept of organizational effectiveness is commonly used to refer to goal attainment, meaning that organizations endeavor to achieve goals by attaining objectives. Therefore,

a clear definition of organizational effectiveness should be understood to develop and apply goal attainment.

Georgopoulos et al. (1957) stated that “the objectives of organizations and the means through which they sustain themselves and attain their objectives, particularly those means that usually become functionally autonomous (i.e., that come to assume the character of and function as organizational goals). In short, the study of organizational effectiveness must contend with the question of organizational means and ends” (p. 535). As a result, Georgopoulos et al. (1957) defined “organizational effectiveness as the extent to which an organization is a social system” (p. 535). In this organizational social system, specific resources and means fulfill its objectives without turning off its means and resources and placing unnecessary strain upon its members.

### **Organizational Effectiveness Models**

This dissertation focused on the organizational effectiveness models, including the Goals Model, System Resource Model, Multiple Constituency Model, Competing Values Framework, and Process Model. To clarify the organizational effectiveness models, Table 1 assists in defining and simplifying these commonly used models of organizational effectiveness provided within Cameron's (1986) effectiveness as paradox and the consensus and conflict in conceptions of organizational effectiveness research article. Cameron (1986) provided a breakdown of the models. This dissertation focused only on the Goals Model, System Resource Model, Multiple Constituency Model, Competing Values Framework, and Process Model.

**Table 1 Commonly Used Models of Organizational Effectiveness**  
**KIM S. CAMERON**

**TABLE 1**  
*Commonly Used Models of Organizational Effectiveness*

Model	Definition	When Useful
	An Organization is effective to the extent that . . .	The model is most preferred when . . .
Goal Model	It accomplishes its stated goals.	Goals are clear, consensual, time-bound, measurable.
System Resource Model	It acquires needed resources.	A clear connection exists between inputs and performance.
Internal Processes Model	It has an absence of internal strain with smooth internal functioning.	A clear connection exists between organizational processes and performance.
Competing Values Model	The emphasis on criteria in the four different quadrants meets constituency preferences.	The organization is unclear about its own criteria, or change in criteria over time are of interest.

Table 1. Cameron, K.S. (1986). Effectiveness as paradox: Consensus and conflict in conceptions of organizational effectiveness. *Management Science*, 32(5), 539-553.

### Goals Model

Cunningham (1977) examined different approaches to exploring organizational effectiveness. One of these approaches was the goals model. Cunningham (1977) expressed the importance of selecting the proper foundation to explore organizational effectiveness. It is well-recognized how challenging of a task it can be for researchers to successfully choose the best approach to explore organizational effectiveness. “There are no generally accepted conceptualizations prescribing the best criteria. The literature abounds with criteria ranging from productivity and efficiency considerations to behavioral factors such as morale, organizational flexibility, and job satisfaction. Criteria

are selected based on an author's particular interest or especially” (Cunningham, 1977, p. 463).

The goals model approach focuses on the organization’s ability to achieve its goals. The reasoning for applying the goals model approach is to implement purposeful evaluation criteria created from the definition of the goal the organization is anticipated to achieve. “An organization's goals are identified by establishing the general goal, discovering means or objectives for its accomplishment, and defining a set of activities for each objective. The organization is evaluated by comparing the activities accomplished with those planned for. The process is valuable in defining the organization's accomplishments or achievements relative to specific activities, objectives, and goals” (Cunningham, 1977, p. 465). The criteria that decide the goals must be determined by factors within the organization. The identified factors need to be implemented to achieve the organizational goals.

### **System Resource Model**

Cunningham (1977) also examined the system resource model. Author Cunningham (1977) states that “the systems resource model defines the organization as a network of interrelated subsystems. The outputs of one subsystem may become the inputs of another subsystem; the organizational system functions effectively to the degree that its subsystems are in harmony and are coordinated to work together” (Cunningham, 1977, p. 465). The question that should be considered before using of the systems resource model is “how close does the organization’s allocation of resources approach an optimal

distribution among the various subsystems?” (Cunningham, 1977, p. 465). A notable takeaway to gain a better understanding of the system resource model was that “this approach, strives to survive and satisfy the needs of its components. In this context, it needs to refer to the requirements subsystems must meet in order to survive” (Cunningham, 1977, p. 465).

The best way to explore the group's needs using the system resource model is to explore from two principal points. These two points include the efficiency and the stress of the group’s needs within the organization. In conclusion, in the Figure 2 table by Cunningham (1977), the two models discussed above, the goals model and the systems resource model, are outlined to summarize the approaches to evaluating organizational effectiveness. The table displays an organizational situation, a central focus or purpose, an assumption, and the model's limitations.

**Table 2 Summary of Organizational Effectiveness Approaches**

Organizational Effectiveness Model	Organizational Situation	Central Focus or Purpose	Assumption	Limitations
Rational Goal	Evaluation of performance of organizational structures.	Determine degree to which organizations are able to achieve their goals.	An organization is rational if its activities are organized to achieve its goals.	The model frequently shows that organizations do not reach their goals. There is also a difficulty in identifying and defining organizational goals.
Systems Resource	Evaluation of performance of organizational structures.	Determine decision-maker's efficiency in allocating and utilizing resources for fulfilling various systems needs.	An organization, in order to survive, must satisfy some basic needs: 1. Acquiring resources, 2. Interpreting the real properties of the external environment, 3. Production of outputs, 4. Maintenance of day-to-day internal activities, 5. Coordinating relationships among the various subsystems, 6. Responding to feedback, 7. Evaluating the effect of its decisions, 8. Accomplishing goals.	Measures of all systems needs are difficult to develop.

Table 2. Cunningham, J. B. (1977). Approaches to the Evaluation of Organizational Effectiveness. *The Academy of Management Review*, 2(3), 463–474. <https://doi.org/10.2307/257702>

### Multiple Constituency Model

Zammuto (1984) compared the multiple constituency models of organizational effectiveness. Four multiple constituency models were compared. Zammuto (1984) established how the perspectives demonstrate that the construct of organizational effectiveness is value-based and time-specific. Zammuto (1984) found that with the development of the multiple constituency models of organizational effectiveness, the goals and systems models were less desirable when understanding organizational effectiveness. The perspective was how organizations were viewed as intersections of particular influence loops. Unlike the goals and systems models, the multiple

constituency models developed criteria for evaluating effectiveness from the preferences of various constituencies for organizational performance outcomes.

Zammuto (1984) took the practice further by generalizing the value-based and time-specific variables that can be integrated into the definition of organizational effectiveness. Organizational effectiveness refers “to human judgments about the desirability of organizational performance outcomes from the vantage point of the varied constituencies directly and indirectly affected by the organization. Organizational effectiveness fundamentally is a value-based concept in that the whole evaluation process requires the application of value judgments, from selecting constituencies and weighing their judgments to developing recommendations for future organizational performance” (Zammuto, 1984, p. 614). As a result, the multiple constituency models of organizational effectiveness allow us to establish better and address questions regarding how organizations can improve their performance and effectiveness.

### **Competing Values Framework**

Quinn et al. (1981) explained the competing values approach to organizational effectiveness. The best way to understand the competing values approach to organizational effectiveness is to understand the theoretical framework that meets the following conditions. Quinn et al. (1981) identified seven needs for the competing values approach to organizational effectiveness, which included the seven components listed to follow. 1) the framework should be at one level of analysis; 2) the framework should integrate theoretical perspectives and thereby provide a more holistic view; 3) the

framework should resolve the problem of multiple criteria by presenting a parsimonious and well-defined set; 4) the framework should provide assertions (amenable to empirical test) about the relationships between criteria; 5) the framework should recognize the coalitional and dynamic nature of organizations and the variability of criteria across time and perspective; 6) the framework should provide an analytical tool that can be applied in specific settings while facilitating comparison and generalization of findings across studies; 7) the framework should explicitly define effectiveness. (Quinn et al., 1981). In summary, the seven components can help further understand the main issues within the research area of organizational setting using the competing values approach to effectiveness.

To understand what was described above, Quinn et al. (1981) developed criteria for organizational effectiveness broken into three sets of competing values. “The first set of values is related to organizational focus, from an emphasis on the well-being and development of people in the organization to an emphasis on the well-being and development of the organization itself. The second set of values relates to organizational structure, emphasizing stability and flexibility. The third set of values is related to organizational means and ends, from an emphasis on important processes (e.g., planning and goal setting) to an emphasis on final outcomes (e.g., resource acquisition)” (Quinn et al., 1981, p. 131).

In conclusion, Quinn et al. (1981) aimed to fill the void for the concern of there being no “accepted definition of organizational effectiveness, we offer the following:



organizational effectiveness is a value-based judgment about the performance of an organization” (Quinn et al., 1981, p. 138).

### **Relevant Model for Organizational Effectiveness**

Steers (1976) researched the final process model and explored when an organization is effective and explained the process model approach to understanding effectiveness. This process model, builds from the goals and systems model, where a strong emphasis is placed on the internal process and operations of the organization. The process model of effectiveness from Steers (1976) contains three central components: goal optimization, a systems perspective, and an emphasis on human behavior in organizational settings. Steers (1976) explained that using this multidimensional approach has numerous advantages compared to the goal and systems models. As a result, it can provide a better understanding of complex topics, such as organizational effectiveness relevant to leadership and organizational culture.

Martz (2008) explored organizational effectiveness in-depth and explained the process model.

In a process model, goals evaluate the organization's effectiveness, but goal optimization, not goal achievement, is the focus. Goal optimization considers the desired goal based on the constraints facing the organization. However, it should be distinct from suboptimization, where less-than-optima goals are intentionally pursued. Instead, goal optimization attempts to recognize environmental realities that limit or prevent specific targets from being fully realized. Goal optimization

also considers the differential weighting aspect of goals based on identified constraints that can impede progress toward goal attainment. (Martz, 2008, p. 42)

Steers (1976) recognized four critical types of influences on effectiveness:

"Organizational characteristics, such as structure or technology; environmental characteristics, such as economic and market conditions; employee characteristics, such as level of job performance and job attachment; and managerial policies and practices" (Steers, 1976, p. 59). The process model is key as its approach factors in how individual behavior affects organizational performance. For example, "if employees agree with the organization's objectives, they will have stronger support for and contribute toward helping the organization meet those objectives. This suggests that the goals of the organization and the employee's personal goals must be in harmony" (Martz, 2008, p. 43). The process model does not require standards for effectiveness; instead, it emphasizes the development of becoming effective. It draws on the link between individual behavior and organizational performance.

### **Leaders' Influence on Organizational Effectiveness**

Chelladurai et al. (1987) and others were among the first to develop research on organizational effectiveness and performance. Their study used a model to examine the different perspectives of organizational effectiveness. They pointed out how complex and challenging it is to research organizational effectiveness, given the many factors and variables that must be considered. Chelladurai et al. (1987) developed four applicable research models that have all become well-recognized in efforts to explore the diverse

methodologies of organizational effectiveness. The four models by Chelladurai et al. (1987) include the goals model, the system resources model, the process model, and the multiple-constituency model. In an attempt to define organizational effectiveness in the simplest terms, Chelladurai et al. (1987) explained that “if we focus on the notion of an open system operating dynamically, the criteria of effectiveness could relate to any one point in the input-throughput-output-feedback cycle of that system, and the indices of effectiveness derived at various points in the cycle should be equivalent” (Chelladurai et al., 1987, p. 41). In summary, Chelladurai et al. (1987) expressed that within the diverse methodologies of organizational effectiveness, the models can be integrated into a comprehensive system-based framework, which Chelladurai et al. (1987) detailed in their study. In addition, Chelladurai et al. (1987) put significant emphasis on the concept of the “prime beneficiary” from Blau and Scott’s (1976) criterion.

Riemer and Chelladurai (1995) explored two hypotheses when examining leadership and athletics. Their study aimed to investigate “(a) the differences between the offensive and defensive personnel of football teams in preferred leadership, perceived leadership, and satisfaction with leadership, and (b) the relationships among preferred and perceived leadership, their congruence, and satisfaction with leadership” (Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995, p. 276). Chelladurai’s (1995) multidimensional leadership model seems to have produced conclusive findings. The multidimensional model of leadership’s reputation continues to be greatly respected.

Riemer and Chelladurai (1995) determined that coaches holding leadership positions on their teams must understand how to impact their players and teams

positively. They suggested methods such as using positive feedback, emphasizing instructions, and deeply understanding the team's democratic behaviors, autocratic behaviors, and social support structures. This knowledge can help coaches understand how to motivate each player to be successful and create a positive learning environment and culture.

Bolden et al. (2004) reported on the research that surrounded leadership. Their research provided an overview of some significant concerns in the research field of leadership. Some major problems included how to define leadership, what leadership is, how leadership can be measured, and what impacts leadership can have on performance. Since leadership in this current era has been identified as one of the most talked about concepts in terms of its importance in organizations, it is imperative to understand the implications of positive versus negative leadership. Bolden et al. (2004) used significant examples in the research report to display various scenarios to understand the effect and impact. Some concluding remarks included that "there is no widely accepted definition of leadership, no common consensus on how best to develop leadership and leaders, and remarkably little evidence of the impact of leadership or leadership development on performance and productivity" (Bolden et al., 2004, p. 3).

Soebbing et al. (2016) explored the concept of compensation and how it can be explored when looking at performance. The research study's objective was to find a correlation between the expected and actual performance variables and how these variables can affect the total compensation. The core factors incorporated on-field performance, athletic education success, and athletic program ethics. These factors

significantly contributed to evaluating the actual organizational performance compared to organizational performance expectations. As a result, these core factors observed that: “coaches that receive a promotion are generally highly effective and exceed expectations regarding performance, whereas coaches who fail to meet expectations regarding performance are dismissed. The purpose of the present research was to understand further the role of performance expectations in the total compensation of coaches” (Soebbing et al., 2016, p. 78).

It has become understood by many authors, such as Juravich et al. (2017), Czekanski and Turner (2014), Soebbing et al. (2016), and others, that organizational effectiveness and performance within the field of the sports industry rely heavily on the overall environment. The leaders within these types of organizations create and affect the environment. As seen throughout multiple research studies, all factors and variables that come into play in these various situations are directly correlated. One variable can directly impact another variable, so we see an immediate correction and causation time after time.

Kite and Nevill (2017) targeted their research study toward three main objectives that were explored within a professional soccer team and their ability to be successful. The three main objectives that were explored include the three following points. “1) directly compare the performances of a professional soccer team over three seasons, 2) identify key variables that discriminated between a successful or unsuccessful performance, and 3) identify variables that best predicted success” (Kite & Nevill, 2017, p. 157). To put this research into context to fit the concept and theme of organizational

effectiveness and performance within the field of the sports industry, it could be concluded that there are important variables when looking at performance in sports that contribute and are essential for the success of sports organizations. This research study is about a professional soccer team organization. The research study discovered that playing a direct style of play, meaning fewer passes, would result in higher opportunities to get the ball to the net for more chances on goal. This would mean a higher rate of opportunities to be successful. This mentality of being goal-directed and having a target in mind can also impact other sports organizations.

Irving et al. (2007) explored leadership behaviors that contributed to team effectiveness. In evaluating the research topic of team effectiveness, Irving et al. (2007) established six essential servant leadership concepts that fit into the central issue of team effectiveness. Irving et al. (2007) used a regression model based on specific items in the organizational leadership assessment to determine the findings and conclude the study. “The essential servant leadership variables identified were (a) providing accountability, (b) supporting and resourcing, (c) engaging in honest self-evaluation, (d) fostering collaboration, (e) communicating with clarity, and (f) valuing and appreciating” (Irving et al., 2007, p. 98).

Anderson et al. (2009) recognized a need for more research in leadership to understand what it means to be a servant leader and what a servant leadership style looks like. Anderson et al. (2009) bridged the concepts of leadership and management by implementing the servant leadership style. However, with servant leadership being relatively new to the research of leadership, Anderson et al. (2009) concluded that the

results found from the study and the information to understand servant leadership are limited and lacking in many aspects. Anderson et al. (2009) learned when exploring the positive effects of servant leadership on organizational outcomes that there are many impactful outcomes to be understood that could be applied to future research.

Wells et al. (2014) shifted directions when exploring the different leadership concepts. The research study explored the differences in relationships when using the transformational leadership style while incorporating the differences that gender roles play. It was discovered by using structural equation modeling (SEM) that there was a “significant gender difference in the strength of the relationship between leader effectiveness and voluntary organizational turnover intentions” (Wells et al., 2014, p. 64).

Alagaraja et al. (2015) research study explored the mediating role of leadership and people management practices on human resources development and organizational performance. It was discovered in the research that both strategic value and transaction effectiveness displayed the ability to enhance organizational performance significantly. Alagaraja et al. (2015) “found leadership and people management practices as a significant predictor of the relationship between strategic value and organizational performance, which suggests that organizational performance is affected by the combined effect of leadership and people management practices” (p. 220).

Asencio and Mujkic (2016) used evidence from the United States federal government to understand research components of leadership behaviors better and trust in leaders. In summary, their research explored the effectiveness of various leadership behaviors that allowed for interpersonal trust to be built in organizations. The leadership

factors explored were the perceptions of transactional and transformational leadership regarding their behaviors and how they could directly correlate to positive relationship-building with leaders. It was learned in the study that transformational leadership behaviors could build more vital interpersonal trust with the employees in the organization. At the end of the study, Asencio and Mujkic (2016) questioned if it should become increasingly important to utilize the suggested transformational leadership behaviors to motivate employees, which could result in higher organizational performance.

Lower-Hoppe et al. (2020) made several noteworthy findings within the research study as we near the end of critiquing this topic. Lower-Hoppe et al. (2020) mentioned boldly in the first sentence of the abstract that “Performance excellence is a core value in athletic teams. A team’s intraorganizational network has been considered an important determinant of team performance” (Lower-Hoppe et al., 2020, p. 77). Lower-Hoppe et al. (2020) went on to state later in the research study article that “research on athlete leadership indicates that team processes (e.g., team communication, team identification) and team outcomes (e.g., team performance, team cohesion) can be positively influenced by athlete leaders” (p. 78). So many points hit home and to the core of how impactful leaders can be in positively impacting a team and sports organization. These leaders are a vital variable to the success surrounding the concept of organizational effectiveness and performance.

To highlight some key research findings from the articles focused on the central concept of organizational effectiveness, there are undoubtedly main points to reflect on to



conclude this subject matter. Chelladurai et al. (1987) opened the idea of organizational effectiveness by providing helpful explanations and background information on the different types of models that can be used to explore the effectiveness of organizations. Rocha and Turner (2008) used several variables to determine the overall findings regarding the research. The variables established by Rocha and Turner (2008) were all different items that could assist in measuring many different dimensions and complexities that aligned with the research study's goals and objectives. Czekanski and Turner (2014) brought into the conversation the central theme for this critique about the many positive outcomes if organizational effectiveness and the environment created are implemented correctly. A key result of organizational effectiveness used positively is the high levels of achievement and performance from both the group and the individuals. People need to feel that they can add value and be valued in efforts to make meaningful contributions and be impactful positively.

Soebbing et al. (2016), like Czekanski and Turner (2014), used many variables to make observations about their research studies and concluded significant findings by implementing these well-thought-out variables into the study. Juravich et al. (2017) fit the common theme of exploring how many different variables within the sports industry and organizations can impact organizational effectiveness and success. Kite and Nevill (2017) took another direction when exploring the success of sports organizations regarding the topic. However, viewing issues from various theories and perspectives is always helpful in gaining a well-rounded and more developed critique of crucial subject matters within the sports industry. In closing, as mentioned, Lower-Hoppe et al. (2020) followed up by

explicitly examining how leaders in organizations can impact and influence organizations. The research study also discussed some strategies that can help strive to achieve success. Effective leadership communication was one example of a method utilized to explore this.

## Chapter 3. Methodology

This dissertation aimed to understand the aspects that surround leadership and the impact leadership can have on the organization's culture. This research explored how leadership characteristics and organizational culture impact a sports team at a Midwestern NCAA Division I institution. The main objective was to understand more about leaders and key team members' roles within the organization. It was essential to understand the aspects that influence individual team members and the aspects that affect the organizational culture of a team. This chapter provides a detailed description of the qualitative methodology and research design selected for this dissertation. This chapter includes why I decided to utilize Merriam (1998) as my qualitative paradigm and my role as the researcher. It consists of the research design details of the case study method and the participant information. The remaining sections of the chapter consists of the data collection and analysis strategy, followed by the important topics of the study's trustworthiness, my positionality and reflexivity, ethical considerations, the timeline of the research study process, and the participant descriptions.

### **Positionality**

My experiences as a former student-athlete and my time as the director of operations in athletics led me to research this for my dissertation. I must acknowledge my positionality in the researcher role for this dissertation as I am a current member of the

organization being explored with some former relationships with the participants being interviewed. To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, it is essential that, as the researcher, I am self-aware and can monitor how my experiences shape the research design and interpretations. The process of reflexivity is portrayed by Cresswell (2013). Being mindful of reflexivity is acknowledging any personal influences or biases that could occur due to past experiences with the issues being raised within the research.

To discuss my positionality, what could be considered a power relationship becomes vital to acknowledge. Miller and Pessach (2009) outlined the dynamics of power that can occur when doing qualitative research. Miller and Pessach (2009) highlighted many important concepts worth mentioning. It is essential to understand that as the researcher and all participants in the research study, there is a strong chance that many could feel high levels of involvement throughout the research, even more so during the interview phase. The reason is that the participants feel involved because the study examined their personal experiences. As a researcher with personal experiences within this type of Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team organization, I know there were also high levels of involvement. Understanding and having close involvement within this type of organization enhanced the research because, during the personal collection of data, the interviewer/observer as the researcher, a welcoming, non-threatening environment in which the interviewees were willing to share personal experiences and beliefs to tell their story and be their authentic selves can be created. “A feeling of empathy for informants” that enables “people [to] open up about their feelings” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 48).

Certain power relations and dynamics in qualitative research allow and enhance the researcher's ability to establish a foundation where trustworthiness can be created and credited within the research study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the “trustworthiness” of a study as the naturalist’s equivalent for internal validation, external validation, reliability, and objectivity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained how trustworthiness is achieved by credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative research. Whittemore et al. (2001) followed by analyzing 13 writings about validation and, by doing so, came up with crucial validation criteria. Whittemore et al. (2001) classified these criteria into what they described as primary and secondary.

The four primary criteria included (1) credibility (are the results an accurate interpretation of the participants’ meaning?), (2) authenticity (are different voices heard?), (3) criticality (Is there a critical appraisal of all aspects of the research?), (4) integrity (Are the investigators self-critical?). The secondary criteria included explicitness, vividness, creativity, thoroughness, unity, and sensitivity. The research completed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Whittemore et al. (2001) is imperative to understand how to build awareness of the threats to internal validity, external validity, and reliability procedures that can arise in qualitative research.

Connelly (2016) spoke more about trustworthiness in qualitative research. “Trustworthiness or truth value of qualitative research and transparency of the conduct of the study is crucial to the usefulness and integrity of the findings” (Cope, 2014, p. 435). “Trustworthiness or rigor of a study refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study” (Pilot & Beck, 2014,

p.435). To establish a foundation of trustworthiness, it was imperative to create the protocols and procedures for the research to be considered worthy of consideration by readers.

As mentioned, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) were central to establishing trustworthy research. Techniques that were used to establish credibility included using a reflective journal throughout the study and, more specifically, debriefing after each focus group interview. Procedures for dependability consisted of a process log with notes of all activities during the study and decisions about aspects of the study, such as whom to interview and what to observe. Confirmability methods included maintaining methodological memos of a log with detailed notes of all their decisions and their research as it progresses. I supported the study's transferability with a detailed description of the context, location, and people studied and was transparent about analysis and trustworthiness. For authenticity, I aimed to select appropriate people for the study sample and provide a detailed description.

In conclusion, what is most important to mention within my role as the researcher in terms of my positionality statement, with my former experience as a student-athlete at a Division I NCAA institution as well as my current role as the Director of Operations, also at a Division I NCAA institution, provides me with a lens and platform to understand the leadership and organizational culture within this specific sports organization setting at a deeper level. Experiencing and being a part of this type of organization from both sides of the spectrum, the student-athlete, and the staff side as the Director of Operations, allowed for an opportunity to again interpret the research findings on a deeper, more

meaningful level within the ability to also use the internal lens and view of the organization.

## **Paradigm**

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described a paradigm as a “loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research” (p. 24). For this dissertation, out of the four paradigms of interpretivism, positivism, criticism, and poststructuralism, the paradigm best suited is the interpretivism paradigm. Willis (2007) described that interpretivism usually seeks to understand a particular context, and the core belief of the interpretive paradigm is that reality is socially constructed. Willis (2007) went on to explain that interpretivism also includes “accepting and seeking multiple perspectives, being open to change, practicing iterative and emergent data collection techniques, promoting participatory and holistic research, and going beyond the inductive and deductive approach” (p.583). Schwandt (2001) expressed how researchers using an interpretive approach strive to uncover meaning to understand the topic involved better.

This dissertation used the interpretive paradigm by Merriam (1998) and her epistemological stance. The epistemology that is best suited for this qualitative case study is constructivism. Merriam (1998) explained, “The key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds” (p. 6). “That reality is not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality” (Merriam, 1998, p. 22).

## **Research Design**

Lowhorn (2007) explained the main difference between qualitative and quantitative research and how to choose the best research design based on the information you seek to gain from conducting the study. Lowhorn (2007) described quantitative research as “establishing statistically significant conclusions about a population by studying a representative sample. The population consists of the entire group being studied. It does not matter if the population is broad or narrow, only that it includes every individual that fits the description of the group being studied” (Lowhorn, 2007, p. 1). It is essential to recognize that quantitative research commonly is one of two types—experimental or descriptive. Lowhorn (2007) defined qualitative research as “describing an event in its natural setting. It is a subjective way of looking at life as it is lived and attempting to explain the studied behavior. Rather than design an experiment and artificially control the variables, qualitative researchers use anthropological and ethnographic methods to analyze the participants” (Lowhorn, 2007, p. 3). The main difference between the two research methods is that quantitative research aims to confirm a theory by conducting an experiment and analyzing the results numerically. In contrast, qualitative research looks to prove a theory that explains the behavior observed. Deciding which research method is best for a study's research design and methodology should depend on the outcome the researcher seeks to gain.

In efforts to examine current leadership within an NCAA DI sports team organization and to consider the different dynamics of leadership and culture within a specific NCAA Division I sports team, there are critical factors to consider when striving



to produce reliable research. To make an informed choice to enhance the reliability and validity of this research and after careful consideration, the research design and methodology was developed using qualitative research. Using qualitative research to conduct this study helped create a theory explaining the observed behavior.

The methodology of this qualitative study relied heavily on the interview process using various focus groups and procedures to achieve the study's significant findings. Selecting a sports team at a Midwestern Division I NCAA institution to study these different dynamics further is the best-suited practice to explore to achieve important findings on whether leadership can affect the culture and the organization. As a result, this can dictate the organization's achievement of successful outcomes and a positive culture. After receiving approval to further this research study on these different dynamics, we can discuss leaders' significant role in organizational culture.

The interviews were conducted using former student-athlete team members and team personnel/staff members. All participants were asked to complete a written informed consent before being able to participate in the research study. The interviews were conducted in focus groups using a semi-structured interview style, with loose topics, themes, and questions to be asked and to keep in mind throughout the interview process/allotted time for each participant. As a lead qualitative researcher, one must consider oneself an instrument since all observations, interpretations, and analyses were filtered through the lead qualitative researcher. Follow-up interviews were conducted if the researcher felt it was necessary after all the initial focus group interviews and the interview with the head coach had been completed.

Rierner and Chelladurai's (1995) well-renowned concepts that surrounded leadership, as well as Steers's (1976) process model, both played critical roles in influencing the methods and research design of this study. Rierner and Chelladurai (1995) contributed to identifying themes within the research. Rierner and Chelladurai (1995) allowed the themes that were related to leadership behaviors and characteristics to be discovered when doing the thematic analysis. Steers's (1976) process model was influential in identifying themes within the research that were related to organizational characteristics and cultural characteristics within the organization. Both enhanced the research findings when specifically looking to discover themes of leadership and organizational culture in this type of sports team environment.

## Participants

For the present study, 11 team members at a Midwestern Division I NCAA institution sports team were selected to participate. For this study, the participants had to be members of a Midwestern Division I NCAA institution sports team.

**Table 3 Participant Information**

*Participant Information*

Participant (Pseudonym)	Role on the Team	Year on the Team
Coach	Head Coach	6
Assistant Coach	Assistant Coach	2
Director of Operations	Director of Operations	1
Strength and Conditioning Coach	Strength and Conditioning Coach	3
Senior	Senior Team Member	4
Sophomore	Sophomore Team Member	2
Junior	Junior Team Member	3
Freshman	Freshman Team Member	1
Captain 1	Team Captain	5
Captain 2	Team Captain	4
Captain 3	Team Captain	4

## Qualitative Approach

For this dissertation, I selected Merriam's (2009) holistic description and analysis of a bounded system in combination with Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis. Merriam's (2009) case study approach was selected for this dissertation because it allows multiple sources of evidence to support the details and descriptions collected within the

bounded setting. To follow, Thematic Analysis was explained by Braun and Clark (2006) as “a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed yet complex account of data” (p. 5). The stages within the Thematic Analysis by Braun and Clark (2006) provide flexibility, complexity, and structure to understand the data collected.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis uses six data collection and analysis stages. Below is the six-stage data collection and analysis from Braun and Clarke's (2006) Recursive phases.

- (1) Collect the data: Refer to all the data collected as the data corpus.
- (2) Engage with the data: Become familiar with the data by reading and re-reading transcripts, listening to audio recordings, and noting any initial observations.
- (3) Code the extracts from the data: Generate initial codes and labels to represent essential data features relevant to the research questions.
- (4) Generate the code categories from the codes: Identify ideas and concepts that inform the semantic content of the data.
- (5) Conceptualize the themes from the categories coded extracts: Search for themes as coherent and meaningful patterns in the data and define the nature of each theme in the existing literature.
- (6) Contextualize and represent the findings: Weave together the analytic narrative and vivid data extracts to inform the findings.

The data collection stages and analysis levels by Merriam (2009) are outlined below.

- (1) Engage with the data: Scan transcripts and jot down notes, comments, observations, and queries as memos.
- (2) Code the extracts from the data: Identify data units that are potentially meaningful segments to reveal information relevant to the research questions.
- (3) Generate the code categories from the codes: Name categories that are abstractions derived from the data to reflect the data.
- (4) Conceptualize the themes from the categories coded extracts: Consolidate and reduce data to make meaning by linking interrelated elements in the data.
- (5) Contextualize and represent the findings: Interpret to make meaning and develop a model of interrelationships to build a framework.

As a result of the guided steps outlined above, the case study method (Merriam, 1998, 2009) was used to plan, design, prepare, share, analyze, and collect the appropriate information for the research study. The alignment of the case study design by Merriam (2009) endorses the trustworthiness of the methods and findings of the research to allow the reader to be confident about the rigor of the knowledge claims made. Case study research is context-specific and situationally time-bound. The importance of trustworthiness for this study is understanding how the findings can be duplicated. Through transparency, the audit trail in the evidence during data collection and analysis.

In conclusion, Peel (2020) elaborated on how “case study research design to explore real-life, contemporary issues in-depth within a bounded system. The alignment of the philosophical assumptions of the research with the qualitative paradigm positions

researchers to implement a data collection and thematic analysis approach for a diversity of topics, issues, and contexts” (p. 13).

With the use of Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis and Merriam's (2009) analysis stages and data collection when conducting the final analysis from the data collected from the focus group interviews and the supplemental document, the themes of the research could be identified. More specifically, as the researcher, I was able to arrive at the themes after the appropriate data was collected by looking at each individual focus group interview and engaging with the data by reading the transcripts and reflecting on the corresponding journal entry as well as any important themes from the document analysis that were related. From there, I was able to identify key concepts from each individual focus group interview. I looked for patterns with all four focus group interviews that were identified as a common theme throughout all four focus group interviews. As a result, the themes were discovered from the focus group interviews and the document analysis.

## **Methodology**

Examining the current situation of leadership's role within a Midwestern Division I NCAA institution sports team organization and considering the dynamics of leadership and culture within this specific team organization are critical factors of the research. To make an informed choice and enhance both the reliability and validity of the study, after careful consideration, the research design and methodology was developed using

qualitative research to confirm a theory that explains the behavior observed and was conducted using a qualitative research method.

The methodology of this qualitative study relied heavily on the interview process and procedures to achieve the study's significant findings. Selecting a Midwestern Division I NCAA institution sports team organization to study these different dynamics further is the best-suited practice to explore to achieve significant findings on whether leadership can affect the culture. As a result, this can dictate the organization's achievement of successful outcomes and a positive culture. After receiving approval from the Midwestern Division I NCAA institution to further this research study on these different dynamics, we investigated leaders' significant role in organizational culture.

All participants were asked to complete a written informed consent before being able to participate in the research study. The interview style was known as a semi-structured interview style, with loose topics, themes, and questions to be asked and to keep in mind throughout the interview process/allotted time for each participant. As a lead qualitative researcher, one must be considered an instrument since all observations, interpretations, and analyses was filtered through the lead qualitative researcher.

Focus groups via Zoom web meetings occurred in private (password-protected) sessions that were audio-recorded and lasted between 60 and 120 minutes. Following IRB approval, written consent for participation in the study was obtained from all student-athletes before participating in focus groups. In addition to participation in a focus group, each participant completed a demographic questionnaire.

## **Interviews**

The focus group method was used to understand this phenomenon better. Four focus group interviews were conducted. The head coach, three staff members, three team captains, and four team members were used for the focus groups, which required selected participants to meet together to discuss from personal experience the impact of coach turnover on their team dynamic (Powell & Single, 1996). Focus groups were chosen for the current study because they encourage honest sharing of potentially critical personal views and negative experiences (Powell & Single, 1996). Focus groups were conducted via online web meetings (i.e., Zoom), which were determined to be a neutral meeting space without significance to the research undertaken (Powell & Single, 1996).

To gain insight into how leadership might affect an organization's culture and environment, focus group interviews were conducted and included members from the same window of a 1-year timeframe. The head coach, three staff members, three team captains, and four team members which included one freshman, one sophomore, one junior, and one senior were selected. The research study participants were members of the same large, Division I Midwestern National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) institution in the U.S. They participated in various focus group interviews. These participants experienced leadership and organizational culture in varying degrees within their organization in the same 1-year timeframe. Within the four identified focus groups, the participants, again, have all been team members of one another for one year.

The interviews were done through semi-structured focus group interviews to have the participants describe their experiences of the culture within the team environment and



talk about the leadership within the organization. These interviews aim to understand leadership characteristics that impact the organization. This research explored the ways leadership impacts organizational culture. Follow-up interviews were conducted if the researcher felt it was necessary after all the initial focus group interviews and the interview with the head coach have been completed. The population of interest was through the lens of an NCAA Division I sports team. The participants consisted of the head coach, three staff members, three team captains, and four team members. The interviews with the participants for this study aimed to gain a holistic understanding of the team's/organization's culture within the NCAA DI sports team environment.

The interviews were conducted through the Zoom platform and lasted approximately 60 to 120 minutes for each group or participant. Answers were recorded using the video and audio Zoom recording feature, where participants were asked to agree to the recorded session. The interviews were transcribed, and a thematic analysis was conducted. This involved coding all the data before identifying and reviewing themes. Each theme was examined to understand participants' perceptions and experiences. With the use of a semi-structured interview style, there was an opportunity for flexibility in how the questions were asked for new ideas or patterns to emerge. This setting was natural to help enhance the conversation, allowing for meaningful insights into how participants describe experiences, feelings, and perceptions.

## Table 4 Focus Group Interviews

### *Focus Group Interviews*

Focus Group 1	Freshman Team Member, Sophomore Team Member, Junior Team Member, and Senior Team Member
Focus Group 2	Team Captain 1, Team Captain 2, and Team Captain 3
Focus Group 3	Assistant Coach, Strength and Conditioning Coach, and Director of Operations
Focus Group 4	Head Coach

### **Purpose of Interviews**

The interviews were done through focus groups using a semi-structured interview to have the participants be able to describe their lived experiences of the culture within the team environment/organization and talk about the leadership within this type of organizational team environment. These interviews aimed to understand leadership characteristics that impact the organization. This research explored the ways leadership impacts organizational culture. The participants and the population of interest were through the lens of an NCAA Division I sports team. The interviews with the participants for this research study aimed to understand better the team culture within the NCAA DI sports team environment. Below, is the recruitment script, informed consent form, and the participant demographic questionnaire to help demonstrate how the interviews were conducted from start to finish to ensure that the information gained for this research study was valuable.

## **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was emailed to the participants one week before their interview. The questionnaire asked the participants about their gender, age, race, and how many years of experience they have in college sports.

## **Interview Questions**

1. Tell me what your role was on the team.

Today's goal is to understand better leadership's role on an NCAA Division I sports team.

I want to learn more about your experience on the team. Tell me what your NCAA Division I sports team experience was like.

2. Did you have any meaningful experiences that you can describe to me?
3. Can you tell me a time when any individuals impacted you on the team?

The following questions will be on the leadership roles on the team. As well as the aspects of leadership and culture within the team.

4. Please tell me how you would describe leadership on the team that year.
5. Can you describe what the team culture looks like or how individuals may have acted?
6. Describe to me how leadership played a role in impacting the team culture.
7. What were the desired team culture and outcomes that year?

8. Describe the team's cultural characteristics, values, and beliefs. Were any of them most important for the team to possess to achieve the desired culture and outcomes?
9. Describe the characteristics most important for a leader to possess to achieve the desired culture and outcomes.
10. Please tell me how you define what success looks like within a team.
11. Are there any reflections or experiences yet to be addressed that impacted your time as part of your NCAA Division I sports team?

Thank you for your time today throughout this interview. Do you have any final questions for me before we conclude our time together today?

### **Document Analysis**

The document analysis method outlined by Bowen (2009) includes a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating the team handbook documents provided to the coaching staff at the beginning of the year. For this qualitative research, the document analysis strived to examine and interpret to understand better and develop observed knowledge. The documents served a variety of purposes as part of the research; the documents provided supplementary research data. Information and insights from documents can be valuable additions to a knowledge base. The document analysis provided supplement data from other sources, such as the focus group interviews and observation. In sum, documents provide background and context, additional questions to be asked, supplementary data, tracking change and development, and verifying findings.

This document analysis occurred after the focus group interviews had been completed to discover if what the coaching staff aims to implement at the beginning of the year aligns with the type of organizational culture created at the end of the year. This allowed the opportunity to discover any aligned topics or themes that could arise and be connected to better support the research study.

The document analysis occurred after the interviews had been completed. This was because, as the researcher, going into the interviews with an open mind was necessary. The document analysis might dictate how I respond and ask follow-up questions. I wanted to gain important information from the interviews and look for aligning themes in the document analysis post-interview.

### **Researchers Journal**

I journaled to enhance honesty and maintain an integrative approach to the research. This journaling and reflection process helped guide any axiological assumptions, which enhanced the study of the nature and criteria of values and value judgments, especially regarding the study's ethics. The research journal was used after each interview to reflect on the conversation. The process of keeping a journal throughout the research had multiple meaningful intentions. As the researcher, it allowed me to be mindful of interviews by reflecting upon them immediately when they concluded. It also allowed me to see if any gaps in the research needed to be added to the ability to answer the main research questions when using the interview-guided questions throughout each

interview. The journal was most helpful when referring back to the reflection process of each interview to conclude the final chapter, Chapter 5.

Before each focus group interview, I started my journal entry with who I was interviewing within the focus group. Throughout the interview, I took some notes when and if an important follow-up question came to mind or simply if something a participant said stood out to me as an important concept to refer back to when conducting the final stage of identifying the different themes and central findings of the research. The majority of each journal entry took place after the focus group interview had concluded. This allowed me time to reflect on the conversation and look to see if any important further follow-up questions might be necessary to set up a second interview with any of the participants for that specific focus group interview. In the end, each journal entry from the four different focus group interviews was vital to refer to and reflect back upon with pulling out and identifying the final themes and findings from the research study.

### **Threats to Internal, External Validity, and Reliability Procedures**

Threats to internal validity include history, maturation, instrumentation, testing, selection bias, regression to the mean, social interaction and desirability, and attrition bias. The main threats to the internal validity of this research study that could be foreseen include the history of unrelated events that could have occurred before the study. These unrelated events could change the results. The maturation of the natural amount of time each participant from the study could vary and affect the outcome.

The threats to external validity within the research study might include testing, sampling bias, history, observer bias, Hawthorn effect, and situation effect. For example, the sampling bias could not represent that group appropriately—the history of unrelated events that could have occurred before the study. Observer bias could unintentionally change the outcomes, leading to biased results. With the Hawthorn effect, the participants could change behaviors since they know they are being studied. Lastly, the situation effect is simply a result of several elements, such as setting, time of day, location, and researchers' characteristics, which can limit the generalizability of the research's results. (Kirk & Miller, 1986)

The reliability procedures for this qualitative research study were essential to strive for stability within the responses when completing the coding and data sets. The reliability procedures during the interview process to gather the research for the study heavily relied on an online platform called Zoom. Interviews with the participants were recorded using the video and audio Zoom recording feature, where the participants were asked to agree to the recorded session. The next step was to transcribe the interviews and conduct a thematic analysis. The process of transcribing included coding all the data to identify and review themes. Each theme was examined to understand participants' perceptions and experiences. This process regarding reliability procedures for the study is essential to ensure comprehensive notes can be developed by using the Zoom recording feature and transcribing the digital files after the interview has concluded (Kirk & Miller, 1986). The process of transcribing was conducted on all four focus groups after the interviews were completed. The transcription from the recorded focus groups was edited

line by line to ensure it matched what each participant spoke about within the allotted interview time. Once completed, the themes could be identified, and the rest of the process could be completed.

### **Timeline**

The timeline for this dissertation began in October when I proposed my research to my dissertation committee. After the proposal, I was approved by the committee to submit for IRB approval, which I received in November. Once IRB approval was received, I contacted the participants for the interviews. This was done using the recruitment email (Appendix B). The interview time slots were scheduled. The interviews occurred in November. All participants read and agreed to the emailed consent form, completed the questionnaire, and emailed it back before the interview. After conducting the interviews, November transcription occurred since no follow-up interviews were necessary. After completing the transcription of the interviews, I analyzed the data, followed by the document analysis to look for any alignment of themes.



## Chapter 4. Findings

The study was completed using the qualitative case study method to learn and understand more about leadership and organizational culture using the perceptions of 11 Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team members. The 11 participants, which included the head coach, three staff members, three team captains, and four team members; all experienced leadership and organizational culture varying during the same 1-year timeframe within the organization at least three or more years ago. The participants' perceptions offered valuable insight into leadership and organizational culture and allowed for some meaningful findings to be discussed in this section. The research question aimed to explore how leadership affects the organization's culture within an NCAA Division I sports team.

### **Participant Breakdown**

The 11 participants ( $N = 11$ ) from the same Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team were all in the same window of a one-year timeframe within the organization at least three or more years ago. Of the 11 participants, ten were female, and one was male—additionally, all 11 participants identified as Caucasian. The age range of the participants was from 18 to 43 years old. The years of experience of college sports involvement ranged from 1 year to 6 years. The 11 participants within the organization included the head coach, three staff members (assistant coach, strength and conditioning

coach, and director of operations), three captains, and the four team members (one freshman, one sophomore, one junior, and one senior team member). Table 2 in Chapter 3 summarizes the participant demographic information in this study.

## **Findings**

As previously mentioned, the method used for this qualitative study was from Merriam (1998). Merriam's (1998) method was used in the analysis of this study, which allowed a focus on the main themes and subthemes that were gained from the perceptions of the 11 participants. These themes were identified through the semi-structured interviews and the document analysis that followed. Based on the perceptions of the 11 Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team members and staff, the following themes were identified to answer the research question: *Relentless*, *Family*, *Knowing the Goal*, *Communication*, *Demanding Environment*, *Relationships*, *Love for the Organization*, and *Buy-in*. Upon completing the document analysis using the team handbook, there was a strong alignment with these themes.

### **Relentless**

The first theme identified was *Relentless*, which was a vital aspect of the leadership and organizational culture of the team across the organization as a whole. The Junior team member expressed how the word relentless was a word “on the blueprint that stuck out, it was the relentless pursuit of perfection.” The Junior team member went on to say that “every day, you need to be able to look at yourself in the mirror and say I did everything I could today, and we always talk about win or lose.” The Junior team

member said the coach always talked about “whatever the athletes need we will get it for them—her commitment, passion, and dedication to our team are contagious. Playing for her makes you want to give her your best because she shows us her best daily.”

The Assistant Coach stated, "They were relentless; being relentless embodied our program for that year." The Strength and Conditioning Coach supported the statement by explaining how “our culture was to be relentless in everything we did, essentially to be tough, outwork, and execute in our preparation, the opponents we played, who we recruited against, and who we were training against and training for. It was a relentless blue-collar, hard-working, demanding culture. That's why we're successful.” The document analysis also supported this; the language in the team handbook also referred to the relentless pursuit of perfection.

The Head Coach of the organization spoke from a relentless mentality by explaining how it is essential to hold steady and be relentless even through adversity.

I believed in what I was doing; the team saw that I sacrificed a lot personally for them. They saw that I'd always have their back, good or bad. They saw that I would hold them accountable if they were out of line or stepped away from our cultural team handbook's code, our moral compass. As a leader, you protect who we are as a culture, and once the team saw the sacrifices I made in choosing them over me, it was impactful. As a leader, you have to have goals and know the steps on how to achieve those goals. But the thing is, you can't steer from the path, even when things don't go well. There could be something that happens within the team that could be a distraction. If you steer and stay the course and, again,

hold to the common goal for everybody, which is hard to do because people want to bend sometimes the rules and the expectations to feel liked by their team.

Leaders refrain from steering away from the course even when things get ugly, or people question or doubt the goals. This was the path that I believed was going to take us to excellence.

Through the quotes above, we discovered the significance of having a relentless mentality. The organization's members spoke about the importance of relentless effort and mentality within the organizational culture and its impact. This concept of being relentless was a factor that enhanced the organization's ability to push through challenges and thrive to receive the outcome they were striving for. The way the organizational members spoke about being relentless, we can connect to being a critical aspect that that team believed in and implemented into their daily actions.

## **Family**

*Family* was discovered to be a theme that played a significant role in impacting the cultural aspect of the organization. The family was something that all members of the organization lived and breathed. It was valued among all. The Sophomore team member explained how the "culture was family-oriented, and it was obvious that this worked from the staff down."

The Senior team member made a bold statement about this family-like culture.

Everyone felt that their role was essential and that their role was valued. The family aspect was important, especially when bringing in many new people from

different schools who have had different experiences. We had to mesh quickly, and it didn't need to be forced. The family aspect was more important that year because, again, we had a lot of transfers. We were a unit, and all bought into the plan. We cared about each other; we all wanted the same thing. Being a family was important.

The Junior Team Member said, "We would always hang off the ice as a group. It didn't matter who you were or where you came from. The whole group was tight-knit, and it felt like a family. Everyone was committed to each other and would take a bullet for anyone on this team." Captains 2 and 3 spoke up about the family culture; Captain 3 stated, "From a cultural piece, we all genuinely like being close and made efforts to be together. It was a fun group because we were all genuinely friends and people you wanted to spend time with when he didn't have to." Captain 1 followed suit by explaining how "everyone felt part of the team and didn't feel like an outsider just because maybe they weren't contributing as much on the ice. We made it a point whether you're getting one shift or 20 shifts, you're just as essential and bring that much more to our team. That was a huge aspect of making everyone feel welcome."

The family aspect ran deep through the team, from the team member to the staff member. The Director of Operations expressed that "all the players are very strong-willed and minded because the culture comes from a place of doing this for the girl next to you. You're playing for the girl next to you, and it's a sisterhood. It's not just teammates, but it truly is your family member. The culture is very family-oriented, where we do things because we know it's best for each other and the team, and they support each other."

Similar language supports this throughout the team handbook, which refers to the term choice, which explains how it is a choice to play for her and to be a unified front.

The Head Coach spoke about her role in the theme of family. The Head Coach stated, “As the Head Coach, I’m going to love you, and I’m going to take care of you; I’m going to have your back, and loyalty is essential.”

As we can identify from the members’ words within the organization, family was an important aspect that allowed this organization to build something powerful internally. They could take the experiences, bonds, and connections they had gained with one another inside and outside the organization on their time. It was recognized how this resulted in and allowed the organization to be more robust when working towards their common goal because they genuinely cared for one another and wanted the best for each individual, which would help the organization as a whole to be stronger.

### **Knowing the Goal**

The third theme that was found throughout the process of this study was the theme of *Knowing the Goal*. Knowing the goal, also described as being on the same page, was an aspect that contributed to the alignment of achieving the desired outcomes. The Sophomore team member explained that “we all knew the goal and were on the same page, which drove us to where we ended up. Everyone knew what we were working towards. There wasn’t a gray area, and that’s important when we have a lot of new people.” The Senior team member supported this by saying that “we knew our goal and what we were trying to accomplish, and getting on the same page and sticking to it as a

unit helped us. Winning a national championship was always a goal, but it took a lot to reach that point. We should have focused on something other than that. Each weekend was a new week, and we needed to take care of business that weekend.” The Junior team member explained how “there are no gray areas of what was expected or the team’s goal. Every aspect of what was expected was laid out for us, and people just hopped on and met those expectations. Finally, the Freshman team member said, “It was clear from the beginning where the bar was set. You knew what had to be done, and there were so many examples, not just from the captains or the seniors, of how you needed to get the job done.

This theme, like the others, ran consistently throughout the organization as a whole. From the team members, the captains, the staff members, the coach, and finally, into the handbook. As we can see, Captain 2 explained that “all three of us [three team captains] had the same goal and objective; if one of us did something or made a decision, the other two had your back.” Backed up by Captain 3, that “everyone was on the same page across the staff. Everyone was on the same page with the staff. That was very comfortable because we weren't hearing different things from staff members. That made our job as captains to relay the message easier.”

From the staff perspective, the Strength and Conditioning Coach explained how “it started from the top down, whether it was our captain as the player or her understanding of what it was and what it needed to take and coach with her work ethic, trickled down and trickled throughout to create our culture.” The Director of Operations provided great details on this particular theme.

From a leadership standpoint, the coach set the goals and remembered them in our everyday work. The coach constantly reminded, saying, this is why we're doing this. Everyone in that organization is continuously reminded to be on the same page every day; this is why we're doing it, where we always keep our goals in our everyday work. From leadership, the coach treated the players constantly, reminding them that these were goals and this was the path. Whether a first-year or a fifth-year team member, you're held to those standards and that culture. No one person gets to break the rules, and the others don't, or this group gets away with this; it's very black and white, and the rules and the culture are what they are. Strong discipline: if you follow the rules, you will get the desired outcomes, so everyone is very committed to achieving those goals.

The Head Coach explained, "At the end of the day, we all had the same understanding of the mission because the mission was clear. Everybody understood the common goal. As a leader, you have to make things black and white. It is easier to live by the culture because the people understand it. It has to be very concrete about your goal, mission, and expectations of excellence for people to fall in line."

It is essential to highlight the concept of no gray area, which many of the organization's members alluded to. They emphasized that from the leadership, it was always black and white, which allowed them as a whole the ability to be on the same page. This theme of *Knowing the Goal* is a central component that starts at the top with the leaders on how they drive the organization and the direction they are choosing to lead.



With this, the team can know the expectations of what they need to do to excel, which allows the organization to function at a very high level.

## **Communication**

*Communication* within the organizational culture and leadership was a characteristic that played an essential role in how this organization operated. The type of effective communication described in the situational experience below was vital throughout all layers of the organization. The communication layers included the leaders, all staff members, and all team members. The Senior team member explained how it “goes back to communication between the different layers of the team. Between the coaches, they had to facilitate that conversation and then also look out for the team. Each layer had to communicate effectively with the staff, players, and teammates.”

The Assistant Coach said, “Our team captain took on that role and was well-respected by everybody. She felt comfortable speaking up, bridging the gap, and being the team's extension to the coaching staff and vice versa. Our core staff group was so strong. We had effective communication. The coach would ensure she met with the captains every Monday and had them in their office. Sometimes, it was about the team, and sometimes, it was about catching up, but I felt like nothing was forced. There were, like, organic situations that came up through that that helped. That helped the flow of communication and trust.”

The Director of Operations stated, “From a leadership standpoint, the coach set the goals and remembered them in our everyday work. The coach constantly reminded,

saying, this is why we're doing this. Everyone in that organization is continuously reminded to be on the same page every day; this is why we're doing it, where we always keep our goals in our everyday work. From leadership, the coach treated the players constantly, reminding them that these were goals and this was the path.”

The Head Coach expressed in terms of communication, “The mentality is always the same. I am honest, fair with them, and treat everybody the same way.”

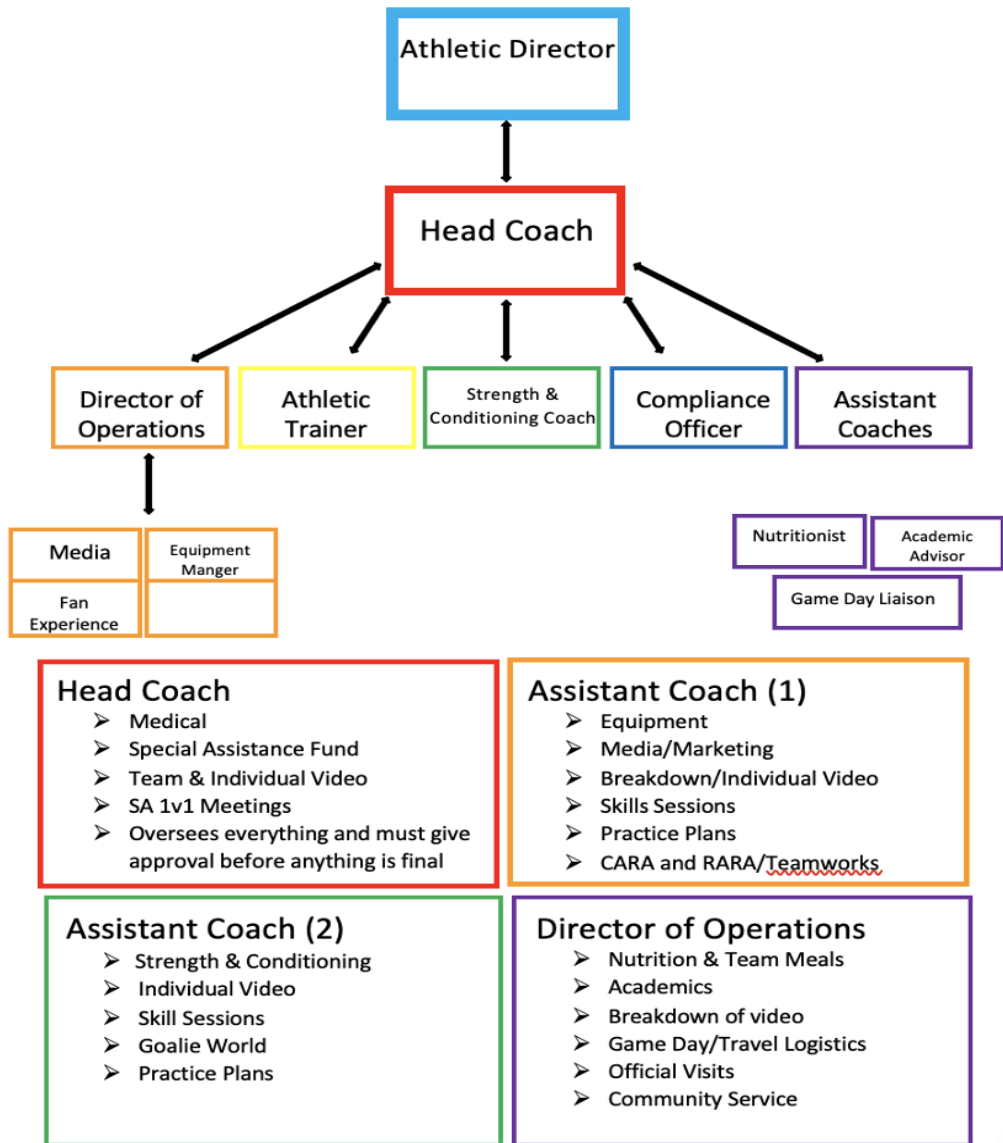
The handbook emphasized communication on almost all pages of the team handbook; a few examples include:

- It is your responsibility to check with your instructors to be sure they received the letter and to discuss any make-up work that may be necessary. Be sure to do this before the week of the travel.
- Meet with your college academic advisor at least once per semester, preferably before you schedule classes for the following semester.
- Players who require medical attention, therapy, or rehabilitation must **communicate** injuries efficiently and follow all instructions from the Athletic Trainer. A phone call is required. No email and no text!
- Check attitude and frustrations outside. Speaking to one another and coaches constructively and respectfully is required.

The most prominent example of communication with the handbook was on the very last page when, through imagery, it showed the lines of communication. The lines of communication allowed the organization to operate at the highest level. You can see below that each staff member has a direct line of contact and communication that all

funnels back up to the head coach at the top as the leader. This allows the leader to facilitate and build trust and ways to be in the know of what is going on.

**Table 5 Lines of Communication**



This theme of communication was a diverse aspect that contributed in many different ways. The concepts of communication, how it is used, what it looks like, and the outcomes it can produce vary. We can see how dynamic it is through the quotes from the organization's members. Most importantly, when we look at it specifically from a leadership and organizational culture aspect, the communication forms allowed the organization to feel valued. It created an open environment where all members of the organization felt valued. This cultural environment within the organization creates a safe space for people to be empowered to be their most authentic and best version. This is a vital aspect contributing to a highly functioning organization. This theme of communication is intertwined into all themes throughout the process of breaking down and analyzing all themes discovered within the qualitative research study. Lastly, with the lines of communication with team members within the organization, they could support all aspects of the organization with no one being left behind.

### **Demanding Environment**

The *Demanding Environment* was a central theme. The daily adversity and challenges the organization's members faced were a significant part of how this organization operated. The Sophomore team member explained how “it is a grind, but you know the things she does have our best interests, what she truly thinks is best for our team, and what will help us succeed.” The Junior team member spoke about how the team “always embraces the productive discomfort, and there's a lot of discomfort that season in practices. Our culture demands Everyone to give their very best.” The Team

Captain stated, “With how challenging that environment is, it forces you to be close. It forces you to lean on each other and trust each other. We know the demands of it; that's something that the three of us brought to the table. I tried to be good at reading when it's essential to get on your team and when you have to calm people down because it's an intense environment, and we expect a lot, and the coaches expect a lot, there's a lot of pressure. Keeping that perspective of knowing what your team needs to hear is essential. Emotional management of that season was critical. It is no longer a sacrifice but a choice.”

From the staff's perspective of the demands of the organization, the Assistant Coach said, “There was a lot of responsibility on me, and I liked that Coach put that pressure on us as a staff to make sure that all of our ducks were in a row so that she could take things wherever she needed to deal with them. The Strength and Conditioning Coach stated, “It was very demanding and a shared suffering. Everybody knew what it took and invested in that sacrifice, and it started with the leaders. The Director of Operations touched on some significant details regarding the demands of the culture.

Embracing productive discomfort where you're pushing yourself to the limit. You're doing it because you're doing it for the girl next to you, and you're doing it for the team. The coach pushes players and will make them as hard as possible before breaking. Coach brings a leadership style that will push you, and there will be hard days, but you're doing it because you want to be a champion. The culture playbook is embracing productive discomfort. Start to learn how to push yourself past any boundaries you think you have in your head. Team embracing the

productive discomfort both physically and mentally pushing yourself. No tolerance exists for anyone, whether you're a staff member, a star player, a freshman, or involved in this organization. These were our standards, expectations, and rules; the coach will hold everyone accountable. Whether it was a staff member or a player, it was all very efficiently laid out of what was expected of you.

The Head Coach mentioned, “There will be hard days when you will be trained differently. Expectations are high academically, culturally, and community. Those are standards you have to live by. The leaders did an excellent job of holding themselves and the team accountable for how to be grateful.”

Similar findings with the team handbook referred to how it was a “choice” and “embracing productive discomfort.” Below are some examples of this :

- Don't be late for your scheduled workouts. Be on time--Being on time means being inside the weight room or assigned area with shoes tied, dressed for a workout, and 100% mentally ready to begin. You will be considered late if you are late getting into the weight room or if you are not prepared when the warm-up starts. Unexcused absence or tardiness will result in a Dawn Patrol.
- Practice with pride. Make every moment count, as you are all fighting for a position each weekend. Every Monday is the start of a weekly tryout to dress and play in the weekend series. Compete to play. Your effort will also benefit your team and help elevate their game.

Though certainly a challenging environment and culture to be in regularly, the organizational members and leaders on the team saw the value of this type of demand. The expectations being set extremely high sometimes meant tough days. However, the outcome on the other side of the hard work was worth the adversity. With the shared suffering, the bond of sticking together was formed. This allowed room for learning how to support one another. By the organizational members learning to embrace the good and the bad, they were able to create an organization that was strong together, both physically and mentally, ready to face and overcome any new challenges. It forces them to learn how to become the best version of themselves individually, allowing the organization to be the best possible from a holistic perspective.

### **Relationships**

The *Relationships* within the culture became central to the leadership, the team members, and the staff members within the organization. This is something that carried them both internally and externally in terms of the organization, and it is something that help build the culture even more robust. Recognizing how building this positive relationship outside the organization allows the organization to thrive internally. The Sophomore team member spoke about how “it was evident that the team and staff relationships were solid and that we cared for each other. We all hung out a lot outside of the rink. Everyone made an effort to connect on more than just a hockey level. And that went a long way. It was a more profound connection than just being teammates.” The Senior team member elaborated how “the coach cares a lot and wants us to succeed. I

also think she wants to continue developing you as a person and player, which only some coaches do when you get to the collegiate level. It shows how much she wants you to succeed and truly cares about you.” The Junior team member emphasized how it “is a trickle effect. The team Captain respects the coach and has a perfect relationship with her. Like our coach, having a good relationship with our captain created that transparency.”

The team Captain spoke about how “it was relationships and building that locker room into a safe space for people, no matter where they came from.” Captain 2 stated, “Knowing everybody's temperament, when they needed encouragement, they noticed when people might need not to be yelled at, but constructive criticism or somebody will say it's okay. It would be best if you were good at different styles of that. We were reading how everyone was different, adapting to those situations for the best outcome and not necessarily acting on our emotions.”

The Assistant Coach and other staff members offered the valuable insight that “getting to know our players more was a huge emphasis within our staff. Building those relationships and enlisting trust in them to us so that when we do ask them to do something hard, they know that we love them, and we're there for them, and we support them, and we're also doing our best to get to know them as people. Some could take criticism less, some could be blunt, and others might take a different approach to get the most out of them. We did an excellent job of getting to know our players and finding what they bring with them.”

The Strength and Conditioning Coach explained how “the [head] coach did a great job of empowering the people, supporting their roles, and informing the girls that



each support staff member's role was vital. She empowered us and helped us in whatever role that was. Our leaders were able to connect with our players, which was important with many things we did. That connection and the relationships were essential.” The Director of Operations spoke about how the “coach has close relationships with the captains and the team, is very open with them, and uses the captains to help bring the culture to life within the locker room when she isn’t around.”

The Head Coach spoke about the relationship within the organization, “Camaraderie. It goes back to what I was saying: nobody felt better than the next person, and they played for the girl beside her. There was no me and no one more important than the brand than the team. They cared for each other. They did it for each other and played for her and her, meaning the girl next to her. It was the camaraderie amongst that team.”

In essence, these relationships also contributed to building up the organizational culture. The various relationships within the organization all played a vital role in offering something different to this idea of building up the team culture. Relationship building came from all areas of the organization. It came from the leaders, the team members, and the staff members, who all valued the different relationships they could make within the organization. This time spent together connecting allowed them to get to know one another better. Knowing your personnel within the organization is central to understanding how people operate and function best. When we know this, especially from the leadership perspective, we can see, using examples explained in the above quote, how it allows leaders, team, and staff members to help everyone reach their great potential to contribute to the team in the most meaningful way possible.

## **Love for the Organization**

The organizational members all expressed a *Love for the Organization* through the use of different descriptors. The Sophomore team member said, “The coach is very passionate. It is pronounced, not just about her job, but everything she does, she does it full-heartedly and 100%.” The team Captain stated, “The amount of pride we had in that team and seeing things all the way through. We all genuinely love that program. We also encouraged people to feel that way, no matter how long they were there; creating that family environment is super important when you're in a challenging environment.” Captain 3 expressed how “you have to be so passionate. We want to win so badly that we are willing to do more than some leaders are willing to do. We were ready to take on the challenges. We expected it to be challenging. We were passionate about our team, our family, and the culture that we had going. We had so much support around us. The staff believed in and trusted us.” The Captain 2 spoke about “passion, pride, and loyalty. We are all so grateful and honored to be a part of the team and for what we accomplish.”

From a different point of view, one of the staff members, the Strength and Conditioning Coach, provided a slightly different way of showing love, pride, and passion for the organization.

What was remarkable about our program was how to be successful in competition and life outside of competition. Our leadership emphasizes making sure you're successful in your academics, internships, and stuff like that. There are two sides to success in our program altogether. Athletically, our success was measured by winning, and then outside of our sport, it was how we excelled academically and

professionally with internships, job placement, and stuff like that. You can look at that look at it in two different aspects.

The Head Coach expressed her love for the organization: "Loyalty can encompass honesty and truthfulness. I'm very honest with our team, upfront, and loyal. I am very loyal to the brand and the opportunity that this athletic department provides to athletes. The loyalty to the program is where my decisions come from. It's nothing personal. It's always about what's best for the team, even with my staff, if there's something that we could fix. It's the loyalty to the program, the brand."

The handbook mentioned honor and how important it is to leave a legacy and to have integrity for your team. Love can be displayed through all different aspects. Some organization members described it as passion, pride, and honor, representing that love for the organization. With such a bond statement made by many different organizational members, we can see how these various expressions of love go a long way when impacting the organizational culture and impacting members of the organization both internally and externally. It also created impacts, bonds, and connections to the organization that will last a lifetime. The contributions to the organization through the words and actions of the members will be lasting and more significant.

### **Buy-in**

The final theme is the *Buy-in* of the members within the organization. The buy-in from the leadership perspective is essential. Captain 2 explained how "all the new people had such different roles on their team, and they had to buy into our team and make a

choice with their attitude.” The Assistant Coach stated that the “people in leadership within our team felt like there was complete buy-in. From the top down, as long as we stayed strong as a staff, we were united. It directly reflected what was going on with the rest of the team, and the girls bought in. The team believed in our process and prepared to buy into what we needed. It takes the right individuals, and no ego was attached to our leadership group because those girls were leading the right way. The team all bought into what they were doing. Our leadership group respected the staff, and we had full buy-in there.” The Director of Operations said that “a giant piece was clear standards, expectations, and goals, and then, in our everyday lives, constantly being reminded of those. That instilled the belief and buy-in from all staff and players that this is our direction, and we all want to go in that direction. For the final finding, the handbook talked about honor, which as a behavior was to be all in all the time as well as being grateful and earning your spot on the team.

From the Head Coach's perspective, “The philosophy of who we are didn't change. We're always going to be grateful. We're always going to honor the jersey. We're always going to make choices and sacrifices. Either you want to do this, or you don't want to do this. There's no ill will if you want to or don't want to, but we're going in this direction you have to all be in. Nobody's more significant than the brand. Choices were a big behavioral piece to the buy-in of the program. You chose to embrace our culture; you chose to embrace the productive discomfort, and you chose to buy-in. Once people saw the change, they believed I was competent and in the mission. I think that sometimes it's hard for people to stay true to what the mission is in their belief when times are tough.”

A subtheme of this theme of *Buy-in* is Leadership and being able to *lead by example*. Leadership is a central concept to this organization and culture; the leaders in place must understand the importance of buy-in.

*Leading by Example* as a subtheme. The Senior team member stated, “The leaders on the team lead by example. We had different personalities, but they all did the right things and showed everyone else what we needed and how to do it correctly. All three captains lead by example. You never saw them cheat in a drill or get off easy somehow. It was important to show everyone else around them what was to be expected and how they did it. The Freshman team member explained how “coach wanted the team to succeed, and knowing that your coach is willing to do that for you makes it easier to play for that or her leadership by showing us that example. It trickles down throughout the team.” The team Captain agreed that “the three of us captains lead by example. The Director of Operations expressed the “leadership style where the coach leads by example with the right energy and attitude, holding the team to the culture playbook that makes the program what it is.

The Head Coach expressed, “Leaders want to come in and blow up walls and expand and have a vision and make change for the better, and it's ever-evolving. Ever-escalating bars always continue to be high. Leaders will be followed because of their creativity, innovation, and belief in the end goal.”

This use of leading by example in combination with the buy-in from the team can be identified as a combination all leaders and organizations should seek to establish within their organizations. If a leader can get all members of the organization to buy-in,

the members will work together and be empowered by the direction the leader is taking them. When organizations pull in the same direction towards common goals, the outcome in efforts to achieve the desired outcome will be a much stronger pull, allowing these outcomes to be met. The ability of members to work together instead of individually is much more powerful.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings in this chapter gave the participants perceptions of their own lived-in experiences within the organizational setting. The central themes were identified based on the perceptions of the 11 Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team members and staff. The themes were analyzed from the data collected using the semi-structured interviews in which questions were answered using their prior knowledge and own personal experience in this type of organization. Themes were also analyzed from the data collected when completing the document analysis of the team handbook. The identified themes included *Relentless, Family, Knowing the Goal, Communication, Demanding Environment, Relationships, Love for the Organization, and Buy-in*. The findings in this chapter have been individually identified. However, the discovered themes from the findings align with one another and build on top of one another. All the themes mentioned above support one another in various aspects and layers. One theme would not be able to exist successfully with others. The themes layer and work together, which allows for a strong foundation that makes up this team's organizational culture and leadership abilities.

When we think about the research question: How does leadership affect the organization's culture within an NCAA Division I sports team? The eight themes again include *Relentless, Family, Knowing the Goal, Communication, Demanding Environment, Relationships, Love for the Organization, and Buy-in*. We can apply the concept of how leadership was impactful in affecting the organization's culture within an NCAA Division I sports team organization. For the theme to exist within the culture, it had to have started somewhere with someone influential and by someone who made an impact; big or small examples of this were mentioned within each theme. For instance, in *Relentless*, team members discussed why they chose to be relentless. One was when the team members played for the head coach; they wanted to give their best because that is what the coach did. She was relentless, and she gave her very best. When discussing the theme *Family*, the team captain expressed the importance of making everyone on the team feel welcomed and valued no matter what their role was on the team. That year, the team captains thought it was essential to create this safe space, which many new team members had entered the organization.

Another important theme that was discovered that was impactful in affecting the organization's culture was the theme of *Knowing the Goal*. For example, it was described as always being on the same page, with no grey area; it was very black and white, and the organizational members knew the goal and what they were working towards. This type of alignment within the organization could exist because the leadership group and head coach communicated consistently. Consistency was vital just as much as continuously reminding the team members within the organization daily. With constant messages

enforced, the members felt like they knew what to do to be successful and reach the desired goals set by the leader. This builds into the theme of *Communication*. With the organizational culture created, all, not just the leaders, valued communication. However, the leaders made the space for all to feel loved to speak up and voice their opinions.

Additionally, the lines of communication allowed the organization to operate at the highest level due to all the touch points with all the team members and staff members always staying in the know. No one could be left behind or fall through the cracks. All the communication lines funnel up to the head coach leading the group as the head coach values being in the know, instills trust and respect for the people who work with her, and supports her within her role within the organization.

To exemplify the theme of the *Demanding Environment*, the team members spoke about the expectations set by the leaders. Though, at times, there was a lot of discomfort. However, knowing that the Head Coach as the leader had the team members' best interest and that she was always doing what was best for the team, the organization members believed in embracing the discomfort because it would make them better. The members wholeheartedly thought it was worth it. From a leadership perspective, knowing how to push people the correct amount is central to developing and progressing the organization forward and in the right direction. *Relationships* were a theme seen in many different ways within the organization. Analyzing how leadership affected the organization's culture within an NCAA Division I sports team organization, we gained insight into the importance of getting to know all the members that make up the organization. This is an essential aspect from the leadership perspective because, as mentioned, knowing your



personnel within the organization is central to understanding how people operate and function best. If leaders know the members and understand how they best work, they can get the most out of each individual. As a result, this allows the organization to operate at the highest level possible.

The following two themes are closely related, with a subtheme branching off. The themes of *Love for the Organization* and *Buy-in with Leading by Example* as the subtheme displayed acts of passion, love, and believing in something bigger than yourself. The team members described the theme, *Love for the Organization*, as having so much love for the organization that it gave them pride to want to work hard and see things through. This type of love and passion enhances the member's motivation within the organization to want to work hard. In the end, when the love was built within the organization, it lasted a lifetime and stuck with them in their lives outside the organization, helping them to be the best people in all aspects of life. The internal organizational love goes beyond just the jobs they are asked to do and the role they are expected to perform.

In conclusion, this leads us to the final theme of the *Buy-in*. From a leadership perspective, motivating and inspiring the organization's members within the buy-in aspect would not be possible. However, it takes leading the right way; in a way, the member responds to motivate and inspire them to buy-in. Once there is buy-in, as we can see in the examples mentioned above, a leader can take the step to lead them in the desired direction. When talking about leading the right way, a significant emphasis was placed on leading by example. When the organization's leaders were doing the same things that

they were asking the team members, the organization members wanted to follow them. It is sometimes about saying the right thing. As a leader, you must also do the right things through actions for the organization's members to gain buy-in and want to follow.

## Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

In reflection, the purpose of this dissertation was to learn and understand more about the surrounding concepts of leadership and the impact leadership makes on the organization's team culture. Specifically, this dissertation explored how leadership characteristics and organizational culture impact a sports team. It was a central focus to strive to understand more about the roles leaders and critical team members play within the team organization. The chapter addressed, utilizing a discussion format, the 11 Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team participants' perceptions of the research question below. How does leadership affect the organization's culture within an NCAA Division I sports team? Riemer and Chelladurai's (1995) well-renowned leadership aspects to understanding leadership aspects with the help of Chelladurai's (1995) Multidimensional Model of Leadership drove this qualitative research study and helped to develop the research question above. Steers' (1976) process model was also used to better explore and study leadership and organizational culture within an NCAA Division I sports team. Merriam's (1998) case study method was then used to analyze the findings in Chapter 4, which worked to answer the central research question found using the information the participants shared through their interviews as well through the shared team handbook when completing the document analysis after the interview portion of the research has concluded. The main themes identified included *Relentless, Family,*

*Knowing the Goal, Communication, Demanding Environment, Relationships, Love for the Organization, and Buy-in.*

This chapter concludes with the following findings: a) Being relentless was a factor that enhanced the organization's ability to push through challenges and thrive on receiving the outcome they were striving for; b) as a family, they genuinely cared for one another and wanted the best for each individual, which would help the organization as a whole to be more robust; c) knowing the goal, the organizational members know the expectations of what they need to do to excel, which allows the organization to function at a very high level; d) communication within a cultural environment within the organization creates a safe space for people to be empowered to be their most authentic and best version; e) A demanding environment enhances the organization's ability to operate at a high level; it is central to look at how to meet the demands and come together to meet the desired outcome; f) The relationships within and aspects of knowing the members of the organization within are central to understanding how people operate and function best; g) Having love for the organization was deemed central because love goes a long way when impacting the organizational culture and impacting members of the organization; h) When organizations buy-in and work towards common goals, the outcome in efforts to achieve the desired outcome there was a much stronger pull, allowing these outcomes to be met. Leading by example enhances a leader's ability to convince and motivate the organization's members to buy-in. Lastly, the implications and limitations of the study, as well as future research directions, are discussed.

## **Discussion**

When we circle back to the original research question, how does leadership affect the organization's culture within an NCAA Division I sports team? The findings of the study suggest that members of the organization in leadership roles, as well as the organizational culture and the team members that help instill and create the desired organizational culture that the leaders are looking to build, are all essential aspects when looking at a Midwestern NCAA Division I sports team organization.

The benefits of this exploratory study of leadership and organizational culture within an NCAA Division I sports team were found to be positive and make meaningful impacts on the individuals within the organization. Being relentless taught them how far they could push themselves and allowed them to develop past anything they thought possible to result in individual growth. Being a part of a family provides members of the organization with a sense of belonging. Knowing the organization's goal allowed the organization to be on the same page. Various forms of communication enhanced all areas of the organization to operate better and understand each member better. The demanding environment, like being relentless, helps to learn how to embrace discomfort with high expectations set by the leaders for the organization's members to reach. Relationships within the organization allow the organization to operate at a high level, with various relationships being formed. This creates a positive work environment for all members. The love for the organization, like having passion and pride, built lasting and more significant experiences. Buy-in from the leadership aspect is the most critical piece. However, to receive buy-in, it was found that the leaders must lead by example. These

essential pieces to leadership and organizational culture were learned through the perspective of the organization's members and through the team handbook, with themes of all aspects threaded throughout.

The central themes of *Relentless*, *Family*, *Knowing the Goal*, *Communication*, *Demanding Environment*, *Relationships*, *Love for the Organization*, and *Buy-in* relate to prior research. When we think about each theme identified, it is essential to connect to the research within this dissertation.

Buchanan and Huczynski (2004) directed their work toward students and instructors to provide information on a multidisciplinary methodology considering organizational behavior. A critical insight from this research was how great leaders need to bend the rules to create change, which could be described as being *Relentless*.

When we consider the theme of *Family*, it was described by Czekanski and Turner (2014) that teammates value each other's contribution to the team, care about each other's well-being, and take pride in each other's accomplishments; a family-like environment is created. This environment causes athletes to be more emotionally invested in the team and have a superb drive to return the favorable treatment they receive. As a result, athletes perform their given role on the team at a higher level and seek to perform additional tasks outside their role (Czekanski & Turner, 2014).

The theme of *Knowing the Goal* is a central component that starts at the top with the leaders on how they drive the organization and the direction they are choosing to lead. The goals model approach focuses on the organization's ability to achieve its goals. The reasoning for applying the goals model approach is to implement purposeful evaluation

criteria created from the definition of the goal the organization is anticipated to achieve. “An organization's goals are identified by establishing the general goal, discovering means or objectives for its accomplishment, and defining a set of activities for each objective. The organization is evaluated by comparing the activities accomplished with those planned for. The process is valuable in defining the organization's accomplishments or achievements relative to specific activities, objectives, and goals” (Cunningham, 1977, p. 465).

The theme of communication was a diverse aspect that contributed in many different ways. Lower-Hoppe et al. (2020) went on to state later in their study that “research on athlete leadership indicates that team processes (e.g., team communication, team identification) and team outcomes (e.g., team performance, team cohesion) can be positively influenced by athlete leaders” (p. 78). Riemer and Chelladurai (1995) suggested using positive feedback, emphasizing instructions, and deeply understanding the team’s democratic behaviors, autocratic behaviors, and social support structures. Their research validated that this knowledge could help leaders understand how to motivate each athlete to succeed and create a positive learning environment and culture.

For the *Demanding Environment* theme, Czekanski and Turner (2014) brought into the conversation the central theme for this critique about the many positive outcomes if organizational effectiveness and the environment created are implemented correctly. A key result of organizational effectiveness used positively is the high levels of achievement and performance from both the group and the individuals. People need to

feel that they can add value and be valued in efforts to make meaningful contributions and be impactful positively.

Regarding the theme of *Relationships*, Cranmer and Myers (2015) found that “athletes within-group relationships with coaches report more satisfaction and symmetrical communication with coaches, and more task cohesion, social cohesion, and cooperative communication with teammates. These results highlight the importance of athlete–coach communication for influencing perceptions of relationships and communication with coaches and teammates” (p. 100.).

For the theme of *Love for the Organization*, Czekanski and Turner (2014) studied the role of coaches when establishing positive relationships within team dynamics and various relationships within teams. The key finding was how important it is to create a sense of community/belonging in organizational environments to be successful, as we see in this research study about intercollegiate-level student-athletes. In efforts to develop this sense of community/belonging, social interactions are imperative when positively or negatively impacting the group. However, if positive interactions and relationships can be established, the outcome will likely be positive. “Altogether, it was hypothesized student-athletes’ perceptions of their exchange relationships with their coaches and teams would influence the amount of commitment they felt to each, which, in turn, would affect student-athletes’ role fulfillment” (Czekanski & Turner, 2014, p. 376). One concept determined as a variable defined in detail by Czekanski and Turner (2014) was the importance of feeling like you are a valuable member of the team and organization. With this feeling of being valued comes a greater sense of belonging.



Lastly, regarding the theme of *Buy-in*, Wallace and Weese (1995) adopted the definition used by culture scholars, defining organizational culture as the “deep-rooted beliefs, values, and assumptions widely shared by organizational members that powerfully shape the identity and behavioral norms of the group” (p. 193). The head coach is the team leader and plays a significant role in cultural development, shaped by the business environment, values, heroes, rites and rituals, and cultural networks within the organizational culture. Strong organizational cultures are built over time (Shein, 1993), leading to increased job performance (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there were several consistencies in the perceptions of the 11 Midwestern Division I NCAA sports team members regarding their thoughts on how leadership affects the organization's culture within an NCAA Division I sports team. There were many aspects to consider in understanding leadership and organizational culture. We learned that the central themes of *Relentless*, *Family*, *Knowing the Goal*, *Communication*, *Demanding Environment*, *Relationships*, *Love for the Organization*, and *Buy-in* all played an essential role in the leadership and organizational culture within an NCAA Division I sports team. A better understanding of the impacts of leadership and organizational culture within sports team organizations allowed valuable information to college athletic departments, sports organizations, and leaders within these types of organizations to consider when striving to create the desired organization and outcomes they are looking for. Results showed that the themes found regarding the leadership and

organizational culture within a sports team organization impacted the organization and the members of the organization positively. It created experiences and situations that allowed them to learn, grow, and develop within being a part of the organization.

In the end, the results of this research study on organizational culture and leadership do relate back to Riemer and Chelladurai's (1995) well-renowned concepts that surrounded leadership, as well as Steers's (1976) process model. They both played critical roles in influencing the methods and research design of this study and as a result, they were influential in identifying the themes and findings of the research study. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Riemer and Chelladurai (1995) contributed to identifying themes within the research that were related to leadership behaviors and characteristics to be discovered when doing the thematic analysis. Steers's (1976) process model was influential in identifying themes within the research that were related to organizational characteristics and cultural characteristics within the organization.

### **Implications**

The findings of the study suggest that the leaders and the organizational culture within a collegiate athletic organization highly impact members of the organization. Leaders should consider their impact on each member of the organization and the organization as a whole. The benefits of this exploratory study of leadership and organizational culture within an NCAA Division I sports team were found to impact the individuals within the organization. While there are undoubtedly many benefits to this type of organization, such as developing yourself as an individual or the organization,

being a part of a family-like environment, being on the same page as other members within the organization, having the opportunity to share thoughts, opinions, and perspective welcome by all, no member of the organization is ever left behind, have a support system and a various of different relationships to help on the demanding days, being able to have love, passion, and pride for what you are a part of and believing in the process and the direction of the leader of the organization. As seen with the participants in this study, having strong leadership and a culture instilled into the organization, the team's outcomes and environment are consistent and reliable.

To combat the potential adverse effect of the demanding environment and being pushed to almost your breaking point with the relentless mentality, the present study suggested that because all members of the organization were in it together, they had a support system that allowed them to want to do it where they believed that being relentless and pushing themselves was more than worth it. The present study also suggested that though it was deemed a demanding environment and the expectations were extremely high, members of the organization appreciated how it allowed them to develop as people and shape them to be the best version of themselves. The organization loved to embrace the product discomfort within this type of culture.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Although multiple results were found with this study, there are a few limitations to this research. One limitation was that only one organization was used. More studies on leadership and organization looked at multiple organizations and leaders and their

different approaches to leadership. The other limitation of this study was that only one Division I sports team was used. Other sports teams within organizations may use leaders' and members' input when exploring the study of leadership and organizational culture within an NCAA Division I sports team.

Future research should also explore including more support staff members, such as the organization's Athletic Director, the team Trainer, the team equipment manager, and others. We found this area impacted the members of the organization significantly. For example, one team member noted that the staff members were a huge reason for the organization's outcome that year and critical members when it came to supporting one another and the organization as a whole. Research that includes more organization members to provide a more holistic view of the leadership and organizational culture would be beneficial.

Overall, this research aimed to explore and study the leadership and organizational culture within an NCAA Division I sports team organization. It has been noted that current research exists on leadership and organizational culture within NCAA Division I sports. However, there was a void to be filled when examining the impact that leadership makes on an organization's culture and the critical aspect of its culture within these types of environments as it relates to the organization's desired outcomes. There is knowledge to be gained when in the position of a leader. Leaders within sports organizations must understand how leadership can impact the organization's members in which all members coexist. As a result of the research, there is a direct link to leadership,

organizational culture, and how the leaders and all members within the organization shape it.

This dissertation aimed to help advance leaders and members of sports teams' organizations to learn how and become knowledgeable of the organizational change that can be implemented to allow the organization to receive the desired outcomes and achieve more significant outcomes. Through the findings mentioned above, we have discovered several areas that could help address the themes that have been focused on. This dissertation explored how to obtain high levels of the desired organizational outcomes, resulting in the overall increase of organizational satisfaction in terms of the created culture by the leadership and the organization's members. An organizational culture can create an environment for its members to be at their best to thrive. If the members within the organization are thriving and working towards common goals, the organization would meet their desired goals and succeed. When the leaders within the organization can learn to be more impactful to make meaningful changes through daily interactions, it can become contagious for the organization as a whole. As a result, a culture can be built from a more solid foundation of values and beliefs. Leading by example through leadership impacted the culture in the intended direction. This type of leadership can create change, make a difference in members of the organization's lives, and develop the organizational culture. This leader would do it correctly and create a lasting, impactful culture. Lastly, as we think about future research, we learn about essential organizational culture characteristics. It would be valuable to consider what leaders do to ensure they create the desired culture.

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## Appendix A.

### Interview Questions

1. Tell me what your role was on the team.

Today's goal is to understand better leadership's role on an NCAA Division I sports team. I want to learn more about your experience on the team. Tell me what your NCAA Division I sports team experience was like.

2. Did you have any meaningful experiences that you can describe to me?
3. Can you tell me a time when any individuals impacted you on the team?

The following questions will be on the leadership roles on the team. As well as the aspects of leadership and culture within the team.

4. Please tell me how you would describe leadership on the team that year.
5. Can you describe what the team culture looks like or how individuals may have acted?
6. Describe to me how leadership played a role in impacting the team culture.
7. What were the desired team culture and outcomes that year?
8. Describe the team's cultural characteristics, values, and beliefs. Were any of them most important for the team to possess to achieve the desired culture and outcomes?
9. Describe the characteristics most important for a leader to possess to achieve the desired culture and outcomes.
10. Please tell me how you define what success looks like within a team.



11. Are there any reflections or experiences yet to be addressed that impacted your time as part of your NCAA Division I sports team?

Thank you for your time today throughout this interview. Do you have any final questions for me before we conclude our time together today?

## Appendix B.

### **Recruitment Script**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Lauren Spring, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Sport Management Program at The Ohio State University. I am conducting a research study examining student-athletes and staff members within a National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Division I sports team to understand how leadership impacts organizational culture, focusing on how it plays a significant role in influencing the culture of these types of organizations. As a former Division I student-athlete or staff member of the team, you have valuable insight into how college student-athletes learn and how the organization or individuals can be impacted based on leadership and organizational culture.

I am inviting you to participate in this research studies interview process. The interview is anticipated to take about 60 to 120 minutes and will be conducted virtually on Carmen Zoom. The interview will be recorded and transcribed through Carmen Zoom. The interview discussion seeks to understand your experience as a college student-athlete and the impact that experience had on you. The interview will be scheduled during a time that accommodates participants' schedules. Only researchers will have access to the information from the interview, and any reference to you and the other participants will be anonymous.

This is an excellent opportunity for you to share your insight on being a college student-athlete and the impacts of your experience. By completing this study, I want to understand better how you and other college student-athletes navigate collegiate athletics regarding the leadership

and organization's culture, otherwise known as your team environment. With this understanding, I can help address the literature gap regarding how college athletic departments, coaches, and staff can better support college student-athletes through leadership and the organization's culture with athletic teams. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will not remain anonymous or confidential during and after the study; however, information gathered during the interview will remain private and be used solely for this study. Thank you for considering participating in this study. If you decide that you would like to participate and if you agree, you are invited to participate in a one-time interview. Please email me back at [spring.100@osu.edu](mailto:spring.100@osu.edu).

I look forward to working with you.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study or want to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone not part of the research team, you may contact the Ohio State University Office of Responsible Research Practices at 614-688-8457.

Thank you,

Lauren Spring

If you have any questions, feel free to contact my advisor. Principal Investigator: Dr. Brian Turner ([turner.409@osu.edu](mailto:turner.409@osu.edu)).

Appendix C.

**Consent Form**

**The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research**

**Study Title:**

An Exploratory Study of  
Leadership and  
Organizational Culture  
within an NCAA Division  
I Sports Team

**Researchers:**

Lauren Spring  
Brian Turner

**Sponsor:**

None

**This is a consent form for research participation.** It contains essential information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

**Your participation is voluntary.**

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

**Purpose:** You are being asked to participate in this research study because of your unique insights into the experiences of being a Division 1 college student-athlete or staff member. This research aims to understand the impact of leadership and organizational culture within an NCAA Division I sports team as it relates to leadership and organizational culture.

**Procedures/Tasks:** Focus groups will be conducted and include questions related to your experiences as a college student-athlete or staff member, the team culture, and the leadership. If

you consent, the focus groups will be video/audio recorded. Any recordings will only be used for academic research. Participants will be asked to complete a demographic survey.

**Duration:** The focus groups should take approximately 60-120 minutes. The demographic survey should take approximately 15 minutes.

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

**Risks and Benefits:** There are no benefits to you as a participant other than advancing research meant to benefit student-athletes and intercollegiate sports. While we ask other group participants to keep the discussion in the group confidential, we cannot guarantee this. Please keep this in mind when choosing what to share in the group setting.”

### **Confidentiality**

Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. We will work to make sure that no one sees your online responses without approval. But, because we are using the Internet, there is a chance that someone could access your online responses without permission. In some cases, this information could be used to identify you.

Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- Authorized Ohio State University staff not involved in the study may be aware that you are participating in a research study and have access to your information and
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

### **Future Research**

Your de-identified information will not be used or shared for future research.

**Incentives:** You will not be paid to participate in the research.

### **Participant Rights**

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of research participants.

### **Contacts and Questions**

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation, you may contact the investigator or advisor if you have any questions about the study after you leave here. Investigator: Lauren Spring ([spring.100@osu.edu](mailto:spring.100@osu.edu)) or Principal Investigator: Dr. Brain Turner ([turner.409@osu.edu](mailto:turner.409@osu.edu)).

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

### **Signing the Consent Form**

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

<hr/> <b>Printed name of participant</b>	<hr/> <b>Signature of participant</b>
	<hr/> <b>Date and time</b> <b>AM/PM</b>
<hr/> <b>Printed name of person authorized to consent for participant (when applicable)</b>	<hr/> <b>Signature of person authorized to consent for participant (when applicable)</b>
<hr/> <b>Relationship to the participant</b>	<hr/> <b>Date and time</b> <b>AM/PM</b>

**Investigator/Research Staff**

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed name of person obtaining consent**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of person obtaining consent**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date and time** **AM/PM**

Appendix D.

**Participant Demographic Questionnaire**

**Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability:**

1. What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Trans-male
  - d. Trans-female
  - e. Non-binary
  
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ years old
  
3. What is your race?
  - a. Hispanic or Latino
  - b. American Indian or Alaskan Native
  - c. Asian
  - d. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - e. Black or African American
  - f. White
  - g. Two or more races
  
4. How many years of experience do you have in college sports? \_\_\_\_\_ years