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The Relationship Between a Dominant Culture and a Microculture and Its Impact on the Organization and the Members: A College and Its NCAA DIII Football Team

Donald Kaminski

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A DOMINANT CULTURE

AND A MICROCULTURE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE

ORGANIZATION AND THE MEMBERS:

A COLLEGE AND ITS NCAA DIII FOOTBALL TEAM

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Donald B. Kaminski

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Sociology

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Donald B. Kaminski

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

_____

_____
Christian A. Vaccaro, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Sociology, Chair

_____

_____
J. Beth Mabry, Ph.D.
Professor of Sociology

_____

_____
Alex Heckert, Ph.D.
Professor of Sociology

ACCEPTED

_____   _____
Randy L. Martin, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: The Relationship Between a Dominant Culture and a Microculture and Its Impact on the Organization and the Members: A College and Its NCAA DIII Football Team

Author: Donald B. Kaminski

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Christian A. Vaccaro

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. J. Beth Mabry
Dr. Alex Heckert

This case study evaluates the organizational relationship between a dominant culture and a microculture, specifically: how a microculture might reflect, refract, or diffuse the dominant culture; as a counterfactual, the dominant culture might respond in like manner to the microculture. This can be a one-time exchange; it can also be matrixed and evolutionary or parallel and dismissive. How this cultural dialectic impacts the shared population is of particular interest.

The relationship between a private, religiously-affiliated college located in the Northeastern United States and its intercollegiate football team formed the backdrop to this study. With a preponderance of racial and socioeconomic at-risk student athletes, this NCAA Division III institution presented an excellent subject. Using Schein's (2010) model and an organizational ethnographic approach, extensive field observations over a fourteen-week season were combined with semi-structured interviews of administrators, coaches, and student athletes to identify and decipher the cultural relationships on multiple levels.

Theorists (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Geertz, 1973: Martin & Siehl, 1983; Schein, 2010) argue that the conditions that create a dominant culture often produce multiple subcultures and microcultures. Various models (Hofstede 1990; Ott, 1989; Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 2010) and interpretations of the symbology (Blumer, 1969) associated with

the traditional cultural factors (artifacts, norms, values, and assumptions) have been used to explain this relationship. This particular organization was also impacted by the socioeconomic subgroups, the NCAA, its geographic location, and the landscape of higher education.

The research identified that while the College is focused on surviving the challenges facing higher education, the student athletes are focused on their need to identify as intercollegiate athletes. These two reflect and refract each other as they seek to satisfy their individual core assumptions and espoused values in a shared identity. The student athletes gain from their association with both cultures; however, the number of at-risk groups combine to negatively impact the College's retention and graduation rates.

This study is applicable to any institution of higher education that wants to study the relationship between itself and its student athletes; however, it is also applicable to any organization with a shared population that spans multiple cultural divisions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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THE PROBLEM

While attending a football game at my alma mater, I am intrigued how the colors of the team's uniforms, the athletic mascot, and the traditional Scottish garb worn by the band combine to reflect the cultural heritage of this university. Intercollegiate football has been played here since the institution's founding in the early 1900s. Football reached its zenith during the 1930s but was de-emphasized after World War II. The institution subsequently joined the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) Division III (DIII) when the NCAA reorganized in 1973. Today, the intercollegiate football team prospers, fielding a competitive team of true student athletes who reflect the dominant, academically-oriented culture of this university.

Similar events transpire at small colleges and universities across the nation. Financially unable or philosophically unwilling to compete at the Division I (DI) level, they secure homes for their athletic programs in DIII. Two cultures subsequently emerge within those institutions: an academic culture that focuses internally on research and education and an athletic culture that focuses externally on competition. Today, a half century later, the ongoing relationship between academics and athletics at the DIII level provides an interesting study in organizational culture and collegiate leadership.

I selected one such institution, a small college in the Northeast United States, to investigate how the dominant academic culture of the college and the subculture of athletics create a shared identity. With the espoused value of helping student athletes reach their full potential through student development, the college simultaneously addresses its core objective: to survive the shifting sands of higher education.

Purpose of Research

My research evaluates the relationship within an organization between a dominant culture – a college – and one of its subcultures – athletics, hereinafter represented by one microculture, the intercollegiate football team. My belief is that a microculture either reflects, refracts, diffuses, or parallels the dominant culture; there is also the possibility that a counterfactual exists. A *counterfactual* is defined as an event that has not happened but could, an event that is contrary to normal beliefs or expectations. In this instance, the dominant culture might reflect, refract, diffuse, or parallel the microculture. By assessing this interaction and determining what is occurring in-situ, I will contribute to the sociological and leadership perspectives of organizational culture in higher education.

The terms used throughout my research and my propositions to describe my beliefs are analogous to the propagation of light and sound waves. As we know from physics, waves encountering a change in media may reflect and replicate the point of origin, a mirror or an echo being the exemplars of this phenomenon (Whealy, 2016). The waves may diffuse, move through the media, and fill the space with enhanced light or sound in some areas while disappearing in others, as in an auditorium or concert hall (Whealy, 2016). They may, however, refract, or bend, as they pass through and respond to the media; an example would be how a pencil appears to change its angle of entry when viewed sticking halfway into a glass of water (Lucas, 2014). Finally, the waves might pass through unhindered, such as light traveling through a vacuum (Siegal, 2017).

It is my position that cultural influence moves through an organization comparable to the way light and sound waves travel. When the influence of the dominant culture encounters a microculture, it might be reflected, indicating absolute cultural

congruence with the dominant culture. It might, however, be refracted, modified to accommodate the microculture while maintaining the original intent of the dominant culture. It might also be diffused by the microculture, animating parts that would otherwise remain dormant while others disappear as if non-existent. Finally, the microculture might be indifferent to the dominant culture and develop a parallel ideology of its own. As a further set of counterfactuals, the phenomena of cultural influence might occur in reverse. In this instance, the microculture generates the cultural influence which the dominant culture then reflects, refracts, diffuses, or parallels. The response to the cultural influence from either the dominant culture or the microculture, or both responding concurrently to the other, in whole or in part, contributes greatly to the establishment of a shared identity.

Finally, the individuals who comprise the population of the microculture – the student athletes – are also encompassed within the population of the dominant culture – the college's overall student population. Therefore, as a part of my research, I hope to understand the impact of this cultural dialectic upon those individuals and whether it enhances or detracts from their experience with the organization.

Benefits of Research

My research directly benefits any institution of higher education which seeks to understand the relationship that exists between the dominant culture of the college and the subculture of athletics and its impact on their shared identity. That relationship cannot be easily dismissed: The headlines broadcast athletic programs that have gone astray, tarnishing the reputations of coaches, administrators, and academic institutions. It is therefore imperative for an institution to ensure that the cultural identity and ideology it

wishes to promote are inculcated throughout all subcultures and microcultures on campus or those affiliated with the institution.

Comparable to what has occurred between athletics and the academe, theorists argue that all cultures have a propensity to fragment along functional lines and to differentiate (Martin, 1992; Martin, 2002; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 2010); they also agree that the greater the strength of congruence between the parts of a culture – dominant culture, subcultures, and microcultures – the greater the effectiveness with which the culture functions (Cameron & Freeman, 1991). My research, therefore, transcends the collegiate ranks, benefitting any organization that has a dominant culture and multiple microcultures with individuals who are simultaneously members of both. Those organizations can be found in both the private and the public sectors. The headlines that broadcast the questionable activities of athletic miscreants also broadcast the sordid details of mismanagement and malfeasance within those and within all organizations. An analysis of the interaction between a college, its athletic programs, its football team, and its student athletes clearly has implications that extend beyond the campus.

Question and Propositions

I want to understand how the relationship between a dominant culture and a microculture develops and whether the culture of either one is reflected, distorted, or disregarded by the other. Culture is not driven top-down nor, as a counterfactual, bottom-up; rather, the symbols and actions assumed to be unique to either the dominant culture or the microculture may be influencing the other in an ongoing evolution along a continuum on multiple levels where the two intersect. Ultimately, I want to understand how they

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derive a shared identity and how their relationship impacts their shared population. This leads me to postulate four propositions, or possibilities, described below and represented graphically in Figure 1:

1. The dominant culture is (a) reflected, (b) refracted, or (c) diffused by the microculture;

2. The microculture is (d) reflected, (e) refracted, or (f) diffused by the dominant culture;

3. Some combination of a-f occurs; or

4. The two coexist in parallel neither impacting nor being impacted by the other.

On a subsidiary level, I also examine a fifth proposition:

5. The microculture of intercollegiate football (h) augments or (i) detracts from the student athletes overall collegiate experience.
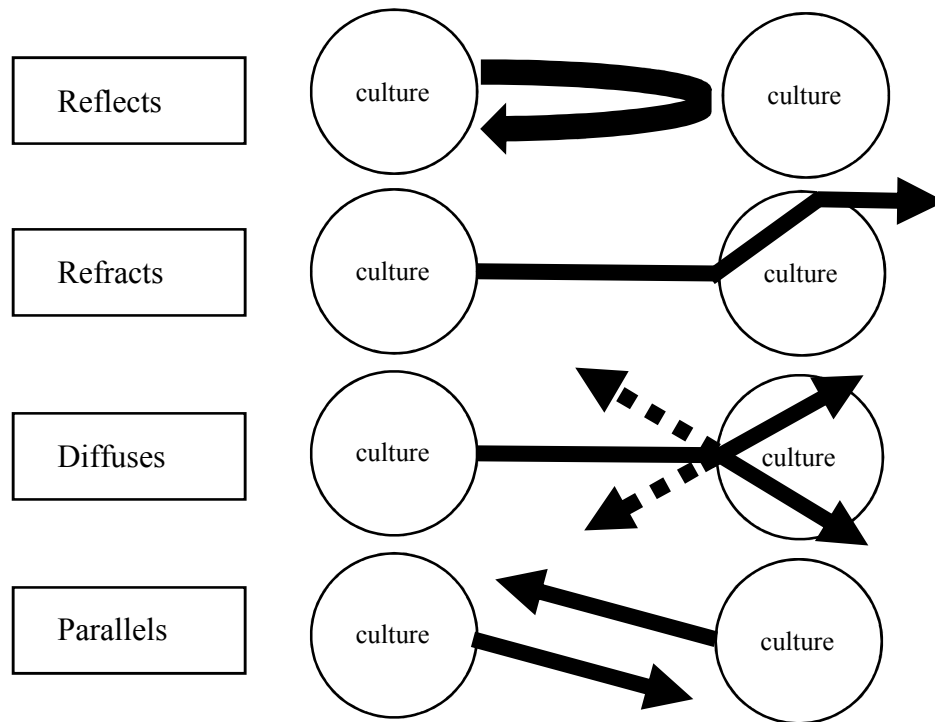
Figure 1. Graphic representation of propositions.

Method

To investigate my propositions, it was important to select the proper methodology. Many theorists suggest a case study approach (Krane & Baird, 2005; Patton, 2002; Schein, 2010; Schroeder, 2010; Yin, 2003) to resolve "how" questions such as mine as well as those surrounding cultural interaction. By combining organizational ethnography (Ybema, Yanow, Wels, & Kamsteeg, 2009) with Schein's (2010) three-layered model of culture I researched my subject, located the artifacts, espoused values, and core assumptions, placed my findings in the proper relationship, and arrived at logical conclusions to the five propositions which my question generated.

Subject

I conducted ethnographic research on a small, private, religiously-affiliated liberal arts college with an enrollment of approximately 1,000 undergraduates; it grants bachelor's and associate's degrees but currently offers no graduate programs. The College's stated values include helping students and student athletes reach their full potential through intense student development and support. I gave this college the pseudonym "Northeast Christian College," and throughout my research, I alternately refer to it by its full pseudonym or simply as "the College" or "NCC." Coeducational since its founding over a century and a half ago, but bounded by its rural location, physical plant, curriculum, size, and philosophy, the College can be considered vulnerable to the enrollment and cultural issues that plague higher education. Like all colleges and universities, the changing demographics of college-age students, increasing costs of a college education, and the value of a liberal arts degree are issues of concern (Farber, 2016; Juday, 2014; Marcus, 2017; Thompson, 2017). The perspectives on

religion and religiously-affiliated colleges may exacerbate these factors, particularly when those colleges are located away from major population centers (Andringa, 2009).

Further analysis of the student population reveals multiple subcultures within the boundaries of NCC; each of these, in turn, is further subdivided into microcultures. For example, Greek life, which involves almost 30% of the students, is subdivided into an equal number of sororities and fraternities. Athletics, with over 50% of the students, is subdivided among 20+ men's and women's intercollegiate teams.[1] Time and distance limited my analysis of the athletic subculture; consequently, my efforts were focused on one team as representative of that subculture, the intercollegiate football team, which I alternately refer to as either "the football team" or simply "the team." NCC has played intercollegiate football for over 120 years, almost as long as the college has been in existence. Averaging 100 student athletes, 10% of the student population, football is the largest microculture within the subculture of athletics and the boundaries of this campus and is therefore a valid representative of the athletic subculture. The large percentage of student athletes in this microculture will prove to be significant to my investigation.

NCC competes in an academically-oriented NCAA DIII athletic conference with 11 other small colleges, 10 of which also field football teams. Spanning four states, the member institutions are very diverse in their size, their academics, their locations, and their missions. Within the conference, six of those colleges are religiously affiliated, three have endowments in excess of $100,000,000 each, and at least two are prestigious

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[1] Numbers of fraternities, teams, and students participating are rounded and generalized to protect the identity of the participating institution without losing the magnitude of students involved in those activities.

research universities. NCC is one of the two smallest within this conference in both

enrollment and endowment.

As Table 1 illustrates, NCC is very different from the average NCAA DIII

institution. While smaller than the average NCAA DIII institution in terms of enrollment,

it exceeds the average DIII institution in number of intercollegiate athletic teams it

supports, the percent of student athletes in the student population, the number of first-

generation students on campus, and the amount of financial aid it provides to students.

Table 1

Comparing the Subject Institution to the Average NCAA DIII Institution (2015-2016)

Comparable Factors	Northeast Christian College	NCAA Division III
Average Undergraduate Enrollment	+/-1,000	4,084
Median Undergraduate Enrollment	+/-1,000	2,758
Average Number of NCAA Sports Sponsored	>20	18
Percent of Undergraduates Competing in Intercollegiate Athletics	>50%	26%
Median Number of Student Athletes at an institution that Sponsors Football	>500	537
Percent of Students Receiving Financial Aid	>90%	75%
Percent of First Generation Students	40–50%	15%

Note. The number of student athletes is not exact and depends upon when the census is taken; e.g. football had 120 athletes at the beginning of the season and 99 at the end. All data for this chart provided by the NCAA (n.d.-b, 2016a) and NCC. The numbers for NCC have been modified to ranges and generalities to protect the identity of the institution.

The further breakdown of the general student population at Northeast Christian College compared to the student athletes on the NCC football team is also quite interesting as shown in Table 2. Four *at-risk groups*, a term defined by both the Glossary of Education Reform ("At Risk," 2013) and the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], 2016a), make up the student population of Northeast Christian College. The term is used to describe individuals who either graduated from poorly performing schools or who come from certain ethnic, demographic, and socioeconomic groups. In my research, at-risk is not used disparagingly; rather, it is a term "used to describe students or groups of students who are considered to have a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school. The term may be applied to students who face circumstances that could jeopardize their ability to complete school" ("At Risk," 2013, para. 1).

Table 2

Comparing Percentages of the NCC College Population to the Intercollegiate Football Team Population (2016 Season)

Groups Represented	Northeast Christian College Total Student Population	Northeast Christian College Football Team
Male Students	>50%	100%
Female Students	<50%	
Caucasian Students	80%	60%
African American Students	>10%	<40%
Hispanic Students	5%	<5%
Asian Students	2%	<2%
First Generation Students	40–50%	>50%

Note. Statistics supplied by NCC Athletic Department and website. The numbers for NCC have been modified to ranges and generalities to protect the identity of the institution.

The term at-risk is generally applied to all student athletes who must overcome multiple obstacles in-excess of those encountered by nonathletic students (Kroshus, 2014) as well as African American and Hispanic minorities (Smith, 2015). Depending upon one's perception of intercollegiate athletics, the term *student athlete* either has dark roots in the NCAA's past or it is an enlightened term that defines the amateur relationship that these young scholar athletes maintain with their college. Branch (2011) researched the term and traced it back to the earliest days of intercollegiate football where it was allegedly used to protect both the NCAA and the colleges from lawsuits initiated by severely injured athletes (and is being used again today to protect the NCAA and those same colleges from attempts to organize the players into unions). I will instead rely upon a more neutral definition: that the term refers to students in DIII who attend college but also compete in intercollegiate athletics absent scholarships.

Minorities and certain socioeconomic groups are included within the at-risk category. A *minority* is defined by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) as one of four groups who share race, color, or national origin and are less in number than the dominant white, or Caucasian, population (United States National Archives and Records Administration, 2016). Students from *low-income* families (Butrymowicz, 2015) are also included in the at-risk population and can be defined as those students on Federal Pell Grants. Pell is a federal grant provided to undergraduate students from families who either earn less than $30,000 to $40,000 a year or have a high debt load; the grant does not require repayment (Butrymowicz, 2015; Fulciniti, 2015). Finally, *first-generation* students are also included (Education Advisory Board, 2016; Riggs, 2014). These are defined by Balemian and Feng (2013), the College Board (2018),

and the NCAA (2016a) as students who are the first in their family to attend college with neither parent having attended or graduated from college.

At NCC, all four of these groups are represented. First, the number of student athletes comprises well over 50% of the student population. Second, the number of first-generation college students is estimated to be between 40–50%. Third, the number of low-income students, defined as the number receiving Pell Grants, is between 40–50%; in addition, over 90% of the students attending NCC receive some type of financial aid. Fourth, while the population of minorities as a percentage of the general population reflects the minority population in the state, the number on the football team is three times that amount. Finally, because NCC accepts 60–70% of all applicants, this leads to a possible fifth at-risk group. The average ACT and SAT scores of all applicants combined is equivalent to the national average. This means that while a percentage of the students who are accepted have academic abilities in excess of the average college student, an equivalent amount has abilities that are below average for college students nationwide. Each of these groups has an equivalent or higher representation on the football team, as noted in Table 2.

Examining retention and graduation rates, NCC is in the average to below average category. With a 60–70% freshman retention rate, NCC's retention rate is reported as either being above the national average for private, nonprofit institutions, 61–63% (Engelmyer, 2017; United States Department of Education [DOE], 2017) or immediately below the freshman retention rate of 71% (College Factual, n.d.[2]). Both four and six-year

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[2] This citation and its accompanying reference, as well as all others in this chapter that refer to the college or town data, refer to a general website; this is deliberate to avoid revealing the participant.

graduation rates are reported with six years being a federal requirement for any recipient

of federal student aid. NCC graduated just over 40% of the students who began their

programs six years' prior (College Tuition Compare, 2018). This is below the national

average of 59% for all institutions (Engelmyer, 2017; DOE, 2017), 66% at less selective,

non-profit, private institutions (defined as those who accept more than 25% of applicants)

(DOE, 2017), and 68% of student athletes at DIII institutions (G. Brown, 2012). Only

30–40% graduated NCC on-time in four years (College Tuition Compare, 2018). Both

the retention and graduation outcomes indicate with alarm the challenges that must be

overcome at any institution of higher education. The population at NCC is graphically

represented in Figure 2 which approximates the proportions noted in Table 2.
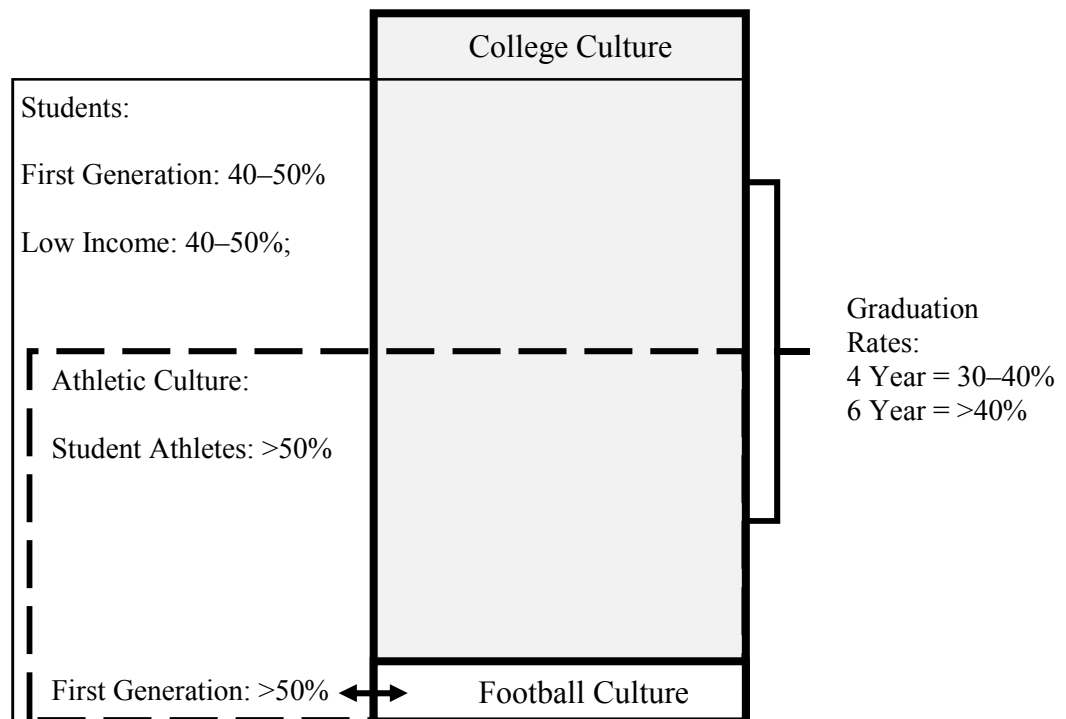
Figure 2. Graphic representation of the NCC culture.

Reflections of Society

Colleges and universities have been considered microcosms, reflecting the social and racial mores of the larger society in which they are embedded and from which they draw students (Sweet, 2001). Similarly, both professional and intercollegiate sports have also been considered microcosms, "neither isolated nor insulated from broader social currents" (Leonard, 1998, p. 54). Beyer and Hannah (2000) argued in support of that statement, noting that "university athletics is thus influenced by, and reflective of, the culture of the surrounding society" (p. 106). Because athletics mirror the surrounding society in which they are embedded (Leonard, 1998), anyone interested in the culture of a society would be well served to analyze its athletic subculture (Eitzen, 2005). Eitzen and Sage (1997) argued that "sport is an institution that provides scientific observers with a convenient laboratory within which to examine values, socialization, stratification, and bureaucracy to name a few structures and processes that also exist at the societal level" (as cited in Leonard, 1998, p. 54). Further, Eitzen and Sage (1997) claimed, "sport provides us with a microcosm of the society in which sport is embedded" (as cited in Leonard, 1998, p. 54). Sports has therefore emerged as a field of study within the broader context of sociology (Loy & Kenyon, 1969). Embedded within the college, the subculture of athletics represents the college which, in turn, represents the larger society in which it is embedded: a microcosm within a microcosm.

History provides us with multiple examples where the combination of a college education and intercollegiate athletics profoundly impacted society. Two centuries ago the Duke of Wellington observed that "The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton" (Leonard, 1998, p. 51). The legendary Rough Riders in the Spanish-

American War were both gritty western cowboys and intercollegiate football players from Ivy League universities (Roosevelt, 1998). The words of General George C. Marshall, US Army Chief of Staff in World War II, memorialized on a bronze plaque at Michie Stadium at West Point, acknowledge the unique talents of intercollegiate football players: "I want an officer for a secret and dangerous mission. I want a West Point Football player." Corporate executives are likely to have been intercollegiate student athletes, and the earning power of former intercollegiate athletes typically outshines non-athletes (Beyer & Hannah, 2000).

Those of us who played collegiate football while wading through four years of college as student athletes recognize the dual influence of both our chosen college and our chosen sport upon us. My former small college teammates are now successful engineers, businessmen, lawyers, and surgeons, and I am certain that Edmundson (2014) speaks for all former intercollegiate student athletes when he reflected:

> For a long time I thought I had shed one skin for another. Once a jock, I became a thinker (or tried to be) and then (if only in aspiration) a writer. I believed that I left the game behind. But now, looking back, I'm not so sure. More and more I believe that football helped establish the basic elements of my identity and that when I went off into my other life I took my football self with me. It was a fundamental part of what I was about. So it is, I suspect, for anyone who has played the game seriously. And I was serious – inept, but serious. I sometimes think that for me (and maybe a lot of other men too) football was what the economists call the base. All the rest was superstructure. (p. 210)

My findings will help determine how the dominant organizational culture in higher education is influenced by an athletic microculture, the impact of that cultural influence on the student athletes, and why colleges sponsor athletics. The implications for my research extend beyond higher education where any microculture could be substituted for athletics and any population for students and student athletes.

Use of Terms and Definitions

Geertz (1973) defined *culture* as, "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life" (p. 89). His definition augments Schein's (1990) definition of culture as:

> A pattern of shared assumptions learned by a group as it solves 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 in relation to those problems. (p. 18)

Both definitions readily serve to describe culture as it applies to my research.

Within an organization, a *dominant culture* evolves and is defined as:

One that is able, through economic or political power, to impose its values, language, and ways of behaving on a subordinate culture or cultures. This may be achieved through legal or political suppression of other sets of values and patterns of behavior, or by monopolizing the media of communication. ("Dominant Culture," 1998)

Sociology notes that such dominance is predicated on power; by exercising power, a dominant culture can establish the norms for the society even though it is not the majority in numbers or population ("Dominant Culture," 1998; Neuliep, 2017).

Abercrombie and Turner (1978) argued that the dominant culture imposes a *dominant ideology,* which has more impact on the dominant culture than on the subordinate cultures. These subordinate cultures create a different ideology based upon their unique interests. This contributes to multiple cultures, subcultures, and even microcultures with different ideologies within the same organization or society.

Schein's (2010) definition of *subculture* notes that is "shared assumptions…that often form around the functional units of the organization. They are often based on similarity of educational background in the members, a shared task, and/or a similarity of organizational experience" (p.55). This definition could apply to both business organizations and athletic teams. Sociologists, however, consider subcultures in the broader context of culture and define them as "social groups organized around shared interests and practices…perceived to deviate from the normative standards of the dominant culture…[which] differentiate within themselves and in so doing create hierarchies of participation, knowledge, and taste" (Herzog, Mitchell, & Soccio, 1999, p. 2). Schein (2010) noted a great deal of similarity between subcultures and *microcultures* which he defined as "small groups that share common tasks and histories" (p.67).

Throughout my research, I referred to the NCC intercollegiate football team as a "microculture." While many researchers refer to athletics as a "subculture" (Sedlacek, 1996; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992), Schein (2010) specifically referred to a football team as a "microculture," stating:

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Microcultures evolve in small groups that share common tasks and histories.

Shared assumptions will arise especially in groups whose task requires mutual

cooperation because of a high degree of interdependency. Perhaps the best

examples are football teams that clearly develop certain styles of playing based on

many hours of practice under the tutelage of a coach. (p. 67)

Therefore, to avoid conflicts in terminology, I also refer to the football team as a

microculture. This did not, however, preclude my use of relevant information on

subcultures; it simply recognized that not all authors refer to individual athletic teams as

microcultures and often attribute their research to the entire athletic subculture. I also

apply this practice to the concept of organizational culture.

Schein (2010) also argued that an *organizational culture* was one of the four

cultural groups to which an individual could belong; he defined it as the culture that was

confined to and associated with an institution. Within my research, I refer to Northeast

Christian College as the dominant culture; however, it is also the organizational culture,

an "institution" of higher education. To facilitate readability, I avoid using and

interchanging multiple terms and instead refer to the dominant, organizational culture as

the "college culture." Similarly, I refer to the microculture as the "football culture" and

the athletic subculture as the "athletic culture."

Schein (2010) further argued that organizational culture was largely defined by

the norms, values, and assumptions of the members. *Norms* are formed around authority

figures first then as a consensus by group members (Kelley, 1952; Schein, 1996, 2010).

Values are both non-debatable, covert "assumptions" and debatable, overt espoused

"values" (Schein, 1984). The culture is then visibly represented by s*ymbols* defined as

objects, the product of symbolic interaction. These are subsequently placed into three

categories: physical objects (both natural and manmade), social objects (titles given to

people), or abstract objects (philosophical ideals and concepts) (Blumer, 1969). Symbols

align with both cultural artifacts and espoused values.

Various theorists describe *artifacts* as symbols and objects. They include visible,

tangible phenomena that our senses perceive whenever we establish contact with an

organization or culture. These include the physical environment, language, documents,

archives, titles, logos, and any items that reinforce thought processes and behaviors (A.

Brown, 1995; Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; J. S. Ott, 1989; Schein, 2010). Specifically,

Trice (1984) defined artifacts as "material objects manufactured by people to facilitate

culturally expressive activities," and a physical setting as "those things that surround

people physically and provide them with immediate sensory stimuli as they carry out

culturally expressive activities" (as cited in Trice & Beyer, 1984, p. 655).

Direct observation of cultural symbols and artifacts provides insight into the

espoused values. These are the overt norms, values, and beliefs that guide behavior and

determine their importance (J. S. Ott, 1989; Schein, 2010; Schroeder & Scribner, 2006).

While theorists often subdivide the espoused values into two or three categories (J. S. Ott,

1989; Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 2010), they nonetheless concur that culture and

symbolism are intertwined, and the shared values are symbolic (Charon, 1979; Shibutani,

1955). Tying back into and closing the loop on the definition of organizational culture,

the *core assumptions* are defined as the covert beliefs that were once espoused values but

have faded into the organization's subconscious; adherence is assumed and failure to

adhere brings immediate retribution (Schein, 1996, 2010).

Finally, there are the terms I use: *reflect*, *refract, diffuse*, and *parallel*. Apart from the analogies provided earlier, these are similar to but different from *enhancing, orthogonal,* and *counter cultures* (Martin & Siehl, 1983). An enhancing subculture zealously accepts the values and beliefs of the dominant culture; the acceptance is so profound that it may demonstrate traits in excess of those found in the dominant culture (Martin & Siehl, 1983). A culture that reflects another, however, is its mirror; it sends back an image of the dominant culture, neither enhancing nor diffusing it. What is seen in one is seen in the other and one is an absolute representative of the other.

Orthogonal cultures and refracting cultures are similar in definition. Oetting and Beauvais (1991) wrote that orthogonal cultures do not exist in opposition; identification with one does not imply decreasing identification with the other. Martin and Siehl (1983) argued that an orthogonal culture embraces the values of the dominant culture while maintaining their own unique values and interpretations. Similarly, a refracting culture bends some aspect of another culture to conform to the refracting culture's need.

A counter culture embraces parts of both a diffusing culture and one that exists in parallel. My research assumes that a small college would not tolerate the existence of a counter culture, which is defined as one that holds values and acts in opposition to the dominant culture (Martin & Siehl, 1983). A parallel or diffusing culture, however, could exist. A parallel culture does not oppose the dominant culture; rather, it exists alongside the dominant culture, ignoring it as much as possible. It might also diffuse the dominant culture, taking and enhancing the parts it accepts while ignoring the parts it rejects.

An Overview of the Research

How the college culture and the football microculture interact to develop a shared identity in the current climate of higher education is the focal point of my research. Equally important to my research are the student athletes, members of both cultures. Peripherally, during the course of my research, other issues emerged; I will therefore introduce those concepts in this section and discuss each in detail in Chapter Two.

Culture and Microcultures

Every organization is a unique, non-transferable culture. This culture develops differently within each organization based upon the symbols around which each organization evolves, the strength of the interaction among members, and the collective experiences of the individuals in pursuit of those symbols. Consequently, no two cultures, even those in pursuit of the same objectives, are alike (Bellot, 2011; Druckman, Singer, & Van Cott, 1997; Geertz, 1973; Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983; Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 1984).

Culture is generally pictured as being multi-layered (Kopelman, Briet, & Guzzo, 1990; Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 1984). The core assumptions, the invisible but dogmatic precepts to which all members are expected to adhere, lie buried beneath at least two external layers of visible artifacts and espoused values (M. Ott, 2011; Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 2010). This structure exists within every culture, and the methods to decipher both culture and structure are the same and just as complex regardless of where they are applied (Donnelly, 1985; Schein, 2010).

Martin (2002) argued that culture forms along three perspectives: integration, differentiation, and fragmentation. Referencing Martin (2002), Schein (2010) observed

that absent integration, cultures differentiate or fragment from the primary, or dominant, culture and seek to integrate within themselves, noting that "culture formation, therefore, is always, by definition, a striving toward patterning and integration" (p. 18). The same process that leads to the development of a dominant culture also leads to the development of subcultures and microcultures which could enhance, modify, or oppose the dominant culture or each other (Martin, 1992; Martin & Siehl, 1983). Schein (2010) continued:

> Many problems that are attributed to bureaucracy, environmental factors or personality conflicts among managers are in fact the result of the lack of alignment between these subcultures. So when we try to understand a given organization, we must consider not only the overall corporate culture but also the identification of subcultures and their alignment with each other. (p. 65)

The majority of research on organizational culture is focused on corporations (Schein, 2010). The corresponding study of organizational culture in collegiate athletics, however, is limited, possibly due to the diversity of cultures in and among the 2,000+ four-year colleges in the United States (Duderstadt, 2000; Schroeder, 2010). The research that does exist on intercollegiate athletics, however, demonstrates that when the dominant culture of the college is institutionalized in the subculture of athletics it results in cultural congruence between academics and athletics (Cameron & Freeman,1991; Charlton, 2011; Schroeder, 2010; Schroeder & Scribner, 2006; Southall, Wells, & Nagel, 2005).

The NCAA

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) represents three major divisions in intercollegiate athletics: DI, DII, and DIII. The emphasis is different in all three divisions and the student athletes in DIII are ineligible for athletic scholarships or

athletically-motivated financial aid. With over 450 institutions, DIII is the largest of the divisions in terms of number of participants and competing institutions (NCAA, 2017b). According to Federal rates, the NCAA (2017a) reports that 68% of student athletes graduate, as opposed to 62% of non-athletic students. The four-class NCAA academic success rates (where academic success is defined as graduation) for institutions in DIII voluntarily participating in a pilot program, but statistically representative of DIII, is holding at 87% per year (NCAA, 2017a).

The Student Athlete and the Head Coach

Prior research into NCAA DI and DII reveals that if the student athlete aspires to either turn professional or complete his education debt-free or debt-reduced, he must defer to the head coach, the individual with the power to award, continue, enhance, or remove his athletic scholarship (Adler & Adler, 1991). The student athlete often displays an intense loyalty to that individual, knowing that he is the one who controls his destiny (Adler & Adler, 1988). Ultimately, this develops into a dyadic relationship with the head coach expecting adherence from the student athlete in exchange for playing time and athletic financial aid. Those who embrace this relationship become part of the "in group;" those who dissent belong to the "out group" where the rewards (playing time and additional scholarship money) may be less lucrative (Adler & Adler, 1988; Barnhill & Turner, 2014; Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen, 1976; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Consequently, for the student athlete, the head coach is more than an important intermediary – he represents the institution; if there is to be congruence between the student athlete and the institution, the head coach as an intermediary must impart the institution's cultural perspective (Schroeder & Scribner, 2006).

Student Athlete Pressures

The pressures exerted on student athletes by their chosen sport extend beyond the playing fields, where practice times are limited by the NCAA. The student athletes are often expected to put in time on their own either preparing for their sport or representing their team and the university to the public. As a result, they have little time for activities or anyone outside of their athletic pursuits (Duderstadt, 2000).

Student Athletes At-Risk

Student athletes often arrive from high school unprepared for the intensity of practices, competition, and the academic rigors of college, all of which wear on them physically (Adler & Adler, 1991; Carodine, Almond, & Gratto, 2001; Simons, Van Rheenen, & Covington, 1999; Snyder, 1985). The resulting physical fatigue contributes to an inability to study, straining relationships with faculty. Student athletes, assumed to be members of the socializing collegiate subculture, are ostracized as "dumb jocks" by both faculty and the more academically-inclined students (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Clark & Trow, 1966; Duderstadt, 2000; Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Leach & Connors, 1984; Parsons, 2013; Sperber, 2000).

Student athletes generally differ not only in physical size but in socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity, each of which falls into the "at risk" category ("At Risk," 2013; Kroshus, 2014), where they either draw unwarranted attention or fail to obtain the proper consideration. The success rate of low-income and first-generation students and student athletes – where the success rate is defined as graduating from a four-year college with a degree – is low (Choy, 2001; Smith, 2015; Tabor, 2011; Thayer, 2000). African American student athletes draw particular ire, since it is often presumed that they are

accepted into the institution solely on their athletic ability and in opposition to their

lackluster academic abilities (Comeaux, 2010; Harrison, 2000; Kroshus, 2014). Student

athletes with a learning disability, often comprising up to 50% of the student athlete

population, have an additional hurdle to overcome: While colleges provide support

services, advisors are often unqualified to identify and direct those with particular

disabilities. Unfortunately, dealing with learning disabilities is not a high priority in many

colleges and universities (Stokowski, Blunt-Venti, Hardin, Goss, & Turk, 2017).

Collectively viewed as a possible at-risk group, student athletes are subject to the

stresses that accompany their sports, the normative behaviors of their teammates and

coaches, and the baggage that accompanies their socioeconomic and racial subgroups in

addition to the routine stresses of collegiate academics and social life (Kroshus, 2014).

They bear these intense pressures and stereotypes first individually then collectively

(Valentine & Taub, 1999); ultimately, the preponderance of shared experiences combines

with a common ideology and leads to the development of an athletic subculture

(Schroeder, 2010; Trice & Beyer, 1993).

The Changing Demographics of Higher Education

The demographics of college-aged students in the United States are changing

rapidly. There are two primary reasons behind this change. First and foremost, the

number of available teenagers in the United States has dropped by 2,400,000 over six

years and, second, there are more open seats available in colleges than students (Farber,

2016; Juday, 2014; Marcus, 2017; Thompson, 2017). As a result, DIII colleges in

particular are recruiting more first-generation, low-income, and racial or ethnic minorities

as well as adding sports to enroll males and to bring in large numbers of student athletes

to fill the residence halls and classrooms (Marcus, 2017; O'Shaughnessy, 2011).

Rural and Religious Colleges

Of the approximately 900 religiously affiliated colleges in the country, many are

considered fragile or "on the brink" (Andringa, 2009). To be religiously affiliated means

that some aspects of the college (e.g., bylaws, mission, or curriculum) serve a religious

purpose or include a religious presence (Andringa, 2009, p. 169). Many of these colleges

are located away from the cities, far off of the interstates in small, rural towns. Those

locations, while quaint, negatively impact the resident colleges in three ways: first, jobs

for students and graduates are scarce; second, it is difficult to recruit faculty whose

spouses require jobs and whose children require good schools; and, third, college students

generally want to be part of institutions with larger populations (Andringa, 2009).

Religiously-affiliated colleges tend to be small and unable to sustain intense engineering

and science majors and must therefore remain liberal arts institutions; course offerings

are slim, and there are intense prohibitions on alcohol and sexual experimentation

(Sherkat, 2007).

Parental Influence

The parents of student athletes can have a negative impact on their students'

maturation process (Rochman, 2013; Schwanz, Palm, Hill-Chapman, & Broughton,

2014), affecting self-assurance (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014; Givertz &

Segrin, 2012; Gray, 2015; Parietti, 2015) and their ability to select colleges further away

from home (Engle, 2007). Parents can also negatively impact their student athletes'

perceptions of their athletic abilities, all of which indirectly impacts the college in multiple ways (NCAA, 2016a).

Researcher Positionality

As the son of a blue-collar family, I played football from grade school through high school, loving the game but also knowing that it would be my only way to obtain an education. A first-generation student athlete, I was recruited to play DI football but arrived unaware of either the institutional or athletic expectations; consequently, that experience was less than successful and very disheartening.

Fortunately, I connected with a highly regarded coach in a prestigious DIII university, and that proved to be a turning point in my life. Football led directly to my acquisition of a superb education. I was privileged to play on a very successful team for an outstanding coach, and my teammates became lifelong friends. That same coach later helped me secure a graduate assistant position at a DII university where I earned my master's degree. I played semi-pro football, volunteered as an assistant coach for two teams, and supervised collegiate athletics on an interim basis. I officiated football from youth leagues through high school and the NCAA for 27 years. Football was my passion and my escape, the catalyst for my education and later my chosen avocation.

I have also studied organizational culture, directly as a part of my chosen vocation but also indirectly as a byproduct of that vocation. In response to the economics of the time, my career weaved through operations and human resource management, in multiple industries, across various regions of the country, where I was exposed to diverse organizational and community cultures, subcultures, and countercultures. I was also recently impacted by the changing demographics in higher education: Several dozen staff

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and I lost our positions due to dwindling enrollment and escalating costs at a small, rural, religiously-affiliated college. Forty years of work and experience, combined with 50 years of football as a player, coach, and official, now informs my research and provides me with an insight which most researchers' lack.

I originally approached an institution with which I had strong connections; they first accepted but later withdrew for fear of being identified through our close affiliation. I then turned to Northeast Christian College (NCC) where I had officiated several football games and maintained professional relationships with the former head coach and a faculty member in whose classes I occasionally guest-lectured. They were very agreeable, and although I had those pre-existing relationships, I did not agree to share or withhold findings prior to the release of this dissertation or fabricate, falsify, or plagiarize results for the benefit of their organization. NCC derived the same benefits that any other institution derived from my research. My research was also self-funded; NCC neither supported me financially nor provided me assistance beyond granting me unlimited access to their institutional grounds and practices, directing me to publicly available reports and data, and coordinating my requested focus groups and interviews.

My background clearly opened doors which might have proven inaccessible to other researchers. Athletic administrators knew me from my days as an official; due to my position in another college, I had credibility with the administrators at NCC which helped me gain access to interview their vice presidents. As a former small college official and player, I immediately connected with the student athletes; one observer noted that the upperclassmen accepted me almost as a "peer." I must also admit that I found NCC to be inspirational: I was captivated by the philosophy of the college, their will to

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do whatever was required to remain viable, and the intensity of feeling demonstrated by the administrators, coaches, faculty, parents, and student athletes who proudly claimed this small college as their own.

My experience and background now serve as a source of both insight and bias. I have an obvious affinity for small college football: I enjoy interacting with intelligent student athletes, and I hold in highest regard those colleges that simultaneously promote a culture inclusive of both athletic achievement and academic excellence. As a former first-generation, blue-collar student athlete, I empathize with student athletes who walk a similar path: I know the obstacles they face but also the rewards that await them.

I therefore took several affirmative measures to keep my personal feelings and experience from unduly influencing my research findings. The most critical measures have been delineated within my methodology in Chapter Three, Assurance of Quality. The other measure appears within this subsection wherein I have openly stated my background, connections, position, and bias.

To be completely transparent, my beliefs and experience led me to anticipate at the outset that the football culture would reflect the college culture in a DIII institution where administrators, coaches, and student athletes interact on a daily basis. I expected that cultural mores would be socialized into the student athletes by the faculty, the coaches, and the staff, all of whom support the college culture. At the DIII level, the student athletes participate because football is integral to their identities, and while they spend most of their time with other student athletes, they are also involved in fraternities, clubs, and academic pursuits. At the DIII level, I expected that the student athletes' majors and their grade point averages would mirror the non-athletes. What I did not

anticipate were the challenging demographics I uncovered, the paternalistic nature of the College, the level of student development, the counterfactuals that manifested themselves in the espoused value of helping the student athletes reach their full potential, and the impact of those counterfactuals on the cultures' shared identity.

My expectations also coincide with the NCAA, which notes that DIII student athletes participate in non-NCAA sports and activities in greater number than non-athletes; they participate in academic-related activities at the same level and volunteer in the campus community in excess of non-athletes; and, finally, they graduate at a higher rate than non-athletes (NCAA, 2015b, 2017a, 2018b). The values and the skills taught to these student athletes are commensurate with those of business, leading many to later become successful in the business world (Beyer & Hannah, 2000).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

My research describes an organization's culture, the relationship between the dominant culture and a microculture, and the impact of that relationship on the members of the organization. A meaningful and trustworthy analysis of this participant required unbiased objectivity within the parameters of my research. Those parameters are further defined by the assumptions of my investigation, the limitations of my research, and the delimitations on the scope of my research.

Assumptions

I assumed that all individuals at the participating institution – administrators, coaches, and student athletes – responded to my interviews as honestly as possible, providing me with clear opinions and information in response to my queries. Complete access was given to me by NCC provided I complied with their minimal guidelines. The

head coach and the athletic director permitted, and in fact invited, my attendance at practices and at games, and I was able to meet with officials [referees, umpires, etc.] at the end of the games. I assumed that my presence did not change the participants' responses either way.

Limitations

Theorists argue that to emically understand a culture, a researcher must interact with those who are part of that culture within their environment (Patton, 2002; Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 1996; Stake, 2006; Thomas, 2011). While research on the NCAA often relies upon quantitative surveys and statistical inference, I wanted to hear the participants describe their world, "smell the sweat," as opposed to analyzing their mechanical compliance to generalized statements which I provided (Geertz, 1973; Schein, 2010; Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2011). My objective was to try and understand their culture from the inside-out as opposed to an assessment of it from the outside-in.

By necessity, mine was a cross-sectional case study, a "snapshot" (Thomas, 2011) bounded by both time (a single season) and place (a unique college), of both the football culture and the college culture. For 14 weeks, I conducted intense weekly observations of practices and games. I spoke with parents and fans in the parking lots at pregame tailgate parties and in the stands during games. I interviewed the administrators and the head coach employed by the college during that season. I sampled the underclassmen (freshmen and sophomores) and the upperclassmen (juniors and seniors) in stratified focus group interviews. I then compressed the views of multiple student athletes to develop a comprehensive perspective of a student athlete at NCC. Combining all of these, I created a "snapshot" of one football season in NCC's history.

This contrasts with a longitudinal study, one which takes place over an extended period (several seasons) or beyond the confines of one location (multiple colleges). A longitudinal study might include following one class through four seasons, from freshman to senior year, and sampling them at intervals (before, during, and after each of the four seasons) from matriculation to graduation. Those would be combined with multiple samples of administrators and coaches, recognizing that those who were there in the first season might be different than those who were there in the fourth season. A longitudinal study could also envelope multiple colleges, teams, and administrators over that same period. Unfortunately, limitations of my own time prohibited a study of that breadth and depth and required me to compensate with the techniques presented above.

Delimitations

It is said that American society is addicted to sports (Gerdy, 2002). Assuming that to be true, and if a college and its football team are indeed microcosms of the larger societies in which they are embedded, then the theories that apply to American society and its relationship with sports as a whole will also apply to an individual college and its relationship with its sports teams (Coakley, 2007).

I could have selected any number of sociological or leadership theories to analyze the relationship between a college and its sports teams: For example, the theories regarding power and power relationships might apply to administration, trustees, and coaches; leader member exchange theory might apply to coaching and student athlete relationships. In fact, intercollegiate athletics and the college culture could form the basis of a comprehensive organizational/leadership study; however, mine is not a sociological treatise on intercollegiate athletics nor is it an attempt to prove or disprove a theory.

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Finally, I could have focused my research on other NCAA divisions or institutions where athletic scholarships, conference affiliations, marketing, strict religious overtones, and collegiate finances impact the cultural relationships; however, I was not interested in studying the effects of external influences on football or college cultures.

I deliberately chose NCAA DIII where culture and microculture are the same population and the student athletes are not lured by scholarships or the possibility of lucrative professional athletic contracts. There are no TV contracts or multiple sets of uniforms from which to select for the TV broadcast. In DIII, the student athletes receive the same financial aid as non-athletes. They share the same facilities. They attend the same classes. They can opt into any of the multiple microcultures, and they can opt out of the microculture of football since they are not bound by scholarship money to athletics. These student athletes are crucial to my analysis of the microculture and its relationship with the dominant culture.

NCAA DIII has different objectives than DI. The NCAA acknowledges that in DIII, the emphasis is on the student athlete (NCAA, 2018b). The intensity of football at the DI level may also be different than the DIII level; however, there is no difference in the desire to play, win, or excel on the part of either the college or the student athletes.

Balance of Research

The balance of my research is devoted to answering my five propositions. My conclusions to those five propositions, summarized below, will be illustrated in my succeeding chapters; suffice it to say, they will reveal how NCC is attempting to survive the challenges facing higher education. First, the football culture both reflects and refracts the college culture. By sharing artifacts and espoused values, the football culture reflects

the college culture. More importantly, the student athletes in the athletic and football cultures are at the center of the college culture's core assumption: survival. The college culture's core assumption is subsequently refracted by the football culture to satisfy the student athletes core assumption: their need to identify as intercollegiate athletes. Second, as a counterfactual, the college culture reflects both the athletic and the football cultures: it adopted their symbols and espoused values with an emphasis on the college culture's desire to help the student athletes reach their full potential. Third, this interaction occurs along the continuum where the two cultures intersect. Fourth, there is no evidence of a parallel or counter culture; the two cultures align in apparent cultural congruence. Finally, the student athletes largely benefit from their association with intercollegiate football; unfortunately, because they also simultaneously belong to multiple at-risk groups, that association is tempered by their lack of success (defined as graduating with a degree).

My succeeding chapters demonstrate how I deciphered this culture and arrived at my conclusions. In Chapter Two, I review all the relevant literature associated with the college culture, the athletic culture, and the football culture to develop a basis for comparison. In Chapter Three, I present in detail my methodology – a case study using organizational ethnography – to delve into the cultures that exist at NCC. Chapter Four presents the core assumptions of both cultures, and Chapter Five details the artifacts and espoused values that make identification of the core assumptions possible. Finally, in Chapter Six, I present my findings and compare them to my propositions.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

While the literature on culture is extensive, research relevant to my topic, the relationship between a dominant culture (higher education) and a microculture (an intercollegiate athletic team), is less prevalent. It was therefore necessary for me to lay a foundation based on the knowledge of cultures and subcultures applicable to all organizations: the formation of cultures, subcultures, and the role of symbols in cultural formation. As my research progressed, I revisited the literature and built on that foundation to include items relevant to my topic: religiously-affiliated institutions, the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) Division III, the changing demographics of higher education, the collegiate culture, the athletic subculture, the roles of various groups, and, finally, the ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds of the at-risk students being recruited.

This chapter provides a background against which I can contrast and compare my findings on the college culture and the football microculture of Northeast Christian College (NCC). The reader should also emerge with an idea of what can occur when the college culture engages with both the athletic and football cultures. This will also determine where NCC corroborates or contradicts the current research.

Cultures and Subcultures

Culture is paradoxical and resistant to direct observation, but nonetheless forms patterns that allow the observer to verify its existence (Bellott, 2011; Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Druckman et al., 1997). Schein (1990) noted that, "culture is to a group what

personality or character is to an individual. We can see the behavior that results but we often cannot see the forces underneath that cause certain kinds of behavior" (p. 8).

Depending on the theorist, culture has been described variously as either a shadowy reflection of invisible and unconscious assumptions that evolved to solve problems and avoid issues (Schein, 1984) or normative beliefs coupled with physical manifestations of those beliefs (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988). The substance of culture, the ideologies, are a philosophical set of interrelated, emotionally charged, shared norms, values, and beliefs that bind people together to make sense of their world. This "ideational," or "non-material," culture consists of intangibles and is represented by "symbols, attitudes, beliefs, language, values, and norms" (Leonard, 1998, p. 54). This is complemented by the "material culture," which, in the case of athletics, consists of stadiums, athletic facilities, grounds, and uniforms (Leonard, 1998, p. 54). These are the tangible, physical manifestations through which members communicate the substance of their culture to each other (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Individuals are not born with a genetic predisposition toward a particular culture but acquire the trappings of a culture from the social environment in which they are engaged (Hofstede, 1991). All of these – symbols, values, language, and beliefs – are learned or modified by group behaviors.

Theorists used multi-tiered models to represent culture with the hierarchical pyramid, the iceberg, and the concentric circles of the "onion" model being the favored images (Druckman et al., 1997; Hofstede, 1991; Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 1984). Schein (2010) combined parts of the ideational culture with the material culture into the outer layer of his model and referred to them as artifacts, the physical and symbolic manifestations of the culture. These include both the tangible, man-made things that can

be touched as well as those that are (e.g., rituals and traditions) (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Druckman et al., 1997; J. S. Ott, 1989; Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 1990). Schein (2010) then spread the balance of the ideational culture into his inner two layers. His second layer holds the espoused values, the norms and beliefs which the organization publicly proclaims; these manifest as the overt operating procedures, the philosophy of the organization. They guide behavior and are either a true reflection of the culture or merely the chant which the organization promotes. Some of these norms, values, and beliefs become axiomatic and covert, where they form the mysterious third layer of culture, the core assumptions, the unwritten and irrefutable rules and dogmatic beliefs which determine how members truly think and feel, act and react (Rasmussen, 2013; Schein, 1984).

Other theorists shared this logic but often added, removed, or consolidated layers. J. S. Ott (1989) subdivided his outer layer into artifacts – material and nonmaterial objects – and patterns of behavior – indirect methods that communicate values and ways of doing things. Martin and Siehl (1983) added a fourth layer, management practices, which includes organizational history, stories, and ceremonies. Hofstede (1991) also promoted a four-layered model but introduced the concept of the "hero" as a cultural role model which, along with rituals and symbols, is incorporated under the general category of "practices." Finally, Rousseau (1990) argued five-layers: artifacts and patterns of behavior were her first two layers, behavioral norms and priorities comprised her third and fourth layers, and fundamental assumptions formed her core. She subdivided her model into external physical manifestations and internal organizational beliefs (as found in Ehrhart, Schneider, & Macey, 2014; and Southall, et al., 2005).

As illustrated in Figure 3, Schein's (2010) description of a three-layered model formed the basis for my research and understanding; other theorists, however, expanded upon my knowledge of culture, enlarging and enlightening my understanding of the need for various layers, their contents, their definitions, and the utility of having one-layer build upon another. With that knowledge, I modified the onion model generally used to depict Schein's (2010) description and transitioned it to a three-layered model.
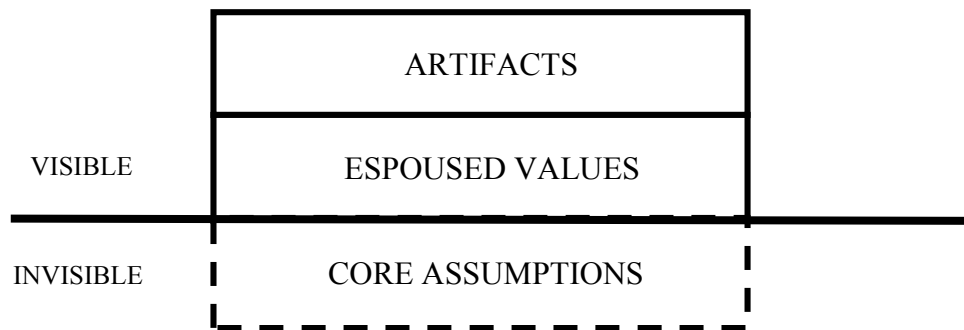
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                  ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                  │          ARTIFACTS          │
                  │                             │
  VISIBLE         │      ESPOUSED VALUES        │
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  INVISIBLE       ┆      CORE ASSUMPTIONS       ┆
                  └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘
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Figure 3. Three-layered model of culture. Adapted from *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (4th ed.) (pp. 23-33), by E. H. Schein, 2010, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2010 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

In my interpretation of Schein's (2010) description, the core assumptions serve as the footer, the unseen layer on which the entire culture stands. The espoused values are the visible foundation, the base on which the structure is built, and the artifacts are the structure itself, the visible image which is associated with a particular culture. If the footer is not strong, the culture collapses. If the footer is strong, however, the foundation and the structure interlock and the culture – like a well-built building – stands firm.

The Formation of Culture

Culture is difficult to decipher because it is difficult to define (Davison & Martinsons, 2003, as cited in Jackson, 2011). Multiple definitions exist, and all

researchers cite Olie (1995) and his research identifying over 160 definitions of "culture" (p. 128). It is explained variously as being habitual and traditional, collectively programmed into individuals, distinguishing one group from another (Hall, 1959; Hofstede, 1993; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). While most have multiple interpretations, theorists generally concur on six aspects of culture: (a) culture is a group phenomenon; (b) it engages both emotion and intellect; (c) it develops over time through shared experiences; (d) it becomes the group's history; (e) it is permeated with symbols and symbolism; and (f) it is inherently ambiguous, paradoxical, and subject to change (Druckman et al., 1997; Geertz, 1973; Schein, 1984; Welsch & Vivanco, 2015). Culture forms around common ideologies (Druckman et al., 1997; Schein, 1984; Schroeder, 2010; Trice & Beyer, 1993) that reflect the values, norms, and beliefs that guide the behavior of a group (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Rousseau, 1990) as they adapt and integrate, manage uncertainty and ambiguity, and create order out of chaos (Schein, 2010).

By teaching these methods to new members, the group affirms the culture; to be viable, something of value must be passed on to succeeding generations (Schein, 2010; Trice & Beyer, 1993). The fact that NCC's culture, like all cultures, carries on recursively for generations, and is passed down both internally (among faculty and staff) and externally (through alumni), solidifies the culture (of the college as an "institution").

Culture and the Role of Symbols

Symbols are constructed by groups based upon shared experiences, the artifacts and espoused values that help define their culture (Bellott, 2011). Geertz (1973) argued that symbols are important to both anthropology and sociology because they convey

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meaning, tying them to organizations where people give and receive meaning through symbols.

How individuals respond to a symbol depends upon the meaning that those individuals assign to that symbol. Symbolic interaction – a highly regarded theoretical perspective in the field of sociology – is predicated on three propositions: first, an individual acts toward things on the basis of the meaning that those things have for him; second, the meaning of those things arises out of the social interaction that the individual has with others; and, third, those meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by that individual in dealing with the things he encounters (Blumer, 1969). Through shared interaction with others, these individuals develop symbolic cultures and subcultures. They define themselves by what they are seeing, feeling, and sensing, actively participating in the present according to their past (Charon, 1979).

Colleges and universities in general, and intercollegiate football in particular, are rich in symbolic culture. Football is often interpreted by fans as a physical manifestation of the institution's power: the grandeur of the stadium, uniforms, and training facilities bespeak of money and prestige (Weisbrod, Ballou, & Ashe, 2008); Michener noted that stadiums have "symbolic significance transcending their utility" (as cited in Leonard, 1998, p. 54). NCAA Playoff appearances, bowl games, championships, and even the mascot are physical manifestations of success. Games are social events; they become a reason for people to gather and celebrate decades-old traditions. The institution's association with a conference of academically powerful institutions further reflects on them. In an abstract display of superiority, game winners outshine the defeated (Cheska,

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1972). When the institution's athletic teams defeat those of the other institutions, their student athletes are touted as being superior and the transference extends to their academic programs (Barratt & Frederick, 2015; Chalfin, Weight, Osborne, & Johnson, 2015; Geertz, 1973; Kraatz, 1998; Lifschitz, Sauder, & Stevens, 2014).

Dominant Cultures and Subcultures

There are at least four cultures to which an individual can simultaneously belong: macrocultures, which are more global in nature; organizational cultures, confined to specific institutions; subcultures, smaller divisions and groups within cultures; and finally microcultures, smaller, more specific and intimate subdivisions of subcultures (Schein, 2010). All four of those evolve in the same way: high levels of interdependence and shared experiences lead members to develop their own distinct histories and ideologies (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Because each is a distinct symbolic domain, individuals can simultaneously belong to more than one.

A dominant culture emerges that is linked to the predominant internal environment (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988) but also simultaneously helps to create that environment by expressing its core assumptions and its espoused values physically and visually through artifacts that members are assumed to share. The degree to which those core assumptions and espoused values are shared determines the depth and structural stability of the culture (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Schein, 1984). Consensus on this dominant culture may vary and may be based upon suppositions that are questionable: that culture is monolithic, that is it is transmitted throughout the organization, and that culture integrates and unifies the organization (Martin & Siehl, 1983). The dominant culture forms a dominant ideology believing that the tenets of that ideology are agreed to by all.

In reality, the organization may differentiate according to the natural and functional divisions therein, varying by group and division, each developing its own ideology, assumptions, and values (Abercrombie & Turner,1978; Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Martin & Siehl, 1983). In reality, the dominant culture may not even represent the majority of the total culture. Dominance is predicated on power, and power may be held in the hands of a minority of the population (Abercrombie & Turner, 1978).

The resulting culture may be interpreted through one of three lenses or perspectives. First, integration occurs when members are believed to have consensus and mutually consistent interpretations throughout all levels of the organization (Kramer & Berman, 1998; Martin, 1992; Martin & Siehl, 1983). The level of integration appears to be impacted by the strength or the intensity of the attraction among the cultural levels (Rousseau, 1990), the absence of which might lead to the next perspectives. Second, differentiation, or ambiguity, is perceived to occur when consensus exists at the outer level, but at the inner levels the subcultures and microcultures possess different values and assumptions which may conflict with each other or the dominant culture. Different groups exercise varying degrees of influence on the members of the culture and the subcultures (Kramer & Berman, 1998; Martin, 1992; Martin & Siehl, 1983). Third, fragmentation appears to occur when the subcultures and microcultures have different understandings about the culture, and the perception is that those understandings are malleable, constantly moving and shifting. The organization is decentralized and amorphous, ambiguous, and lacking in leadership (Kramer & Berman, 1998; Martin, 1992; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Meyerson, 1991; Rousseau, 1990; Southall et al., 2005). Both differentiation and fragmentation account for the development of multiple cultures

(subcultures) within a culture, particularly where differentiation is promoted by the organization through work, hierarchy, or function (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988).

Subcultures develop within cultures as groups; with distinct perceptions, they segregate themselves from the dominant culture and the other subcultures which are part of the same organization (Martin & Siehl, 1983). For subcultures to develop and solidify, three conditions must be present. The first condition is differential interaction: Some individuals have greater affiliation than other individuals within the dominant culture; they share communication and have intense, continuous contact with others who share similar beliefs. They also tend to be isolated from other groups within the organization (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Trice & Beyer, 1993). This differential interaction can be vertical, where individuals at various hierarchical levels within the organization pursue goals collectively, or it can be horizontal, where individuals align with the norms of their particular subgroup (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988). Second, these individuals share experiences and, over a period of time, develop their own unique sense-making apart from the dominant culture. Third, they share demographics such as age, ethnicity, training, or social class (Martin & Siehl, 1983).

One of three subculture types emerge from the dominant culture. The first is the enhancing subculture which fervently adheres to the core ideology, core assumptions, and the espoused values of the dominant culture. Second, the orthogonal subculture adheres to the core ideology, core assumptions, and the espoused values of the dominant culture but tends to develop different, but not conflicting, subcultural interpretations and values. Finally, there is the counterculture, drawing dissidents and non-believers seeking to subvert the core ideology, core assumptions, and the espoused values of either the

dominant culture or the other subcultures (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Martin, 1992; Martin & Siehl, 1993; Southall et al., 2005).

Each subculture creates boundaries, defines acceptable actions and thoughts, and adheres to a dyadic process separating insiders from outsiders. To associate with fellow members of a subculture, to share their attributes, and to engage in conversation using their unique language makes the individual an insider; those who are not intimate with the members of the group are outsiders. The more an insider demonstrates the commonalities of that subculture, the more the insider is drawn in (Adler & Adler, 1988; Andrews, 2014; Barnhill & Turner, 2014; Dansereau et al., 1975; Falk, 2005; Graen, 1976; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

College athletic teams meet the criteria necessary to form a subculture. An intercollegiate football team, composed of adult males 18- 24 years old, spends at least three hours together every day for the four consecutive months of the season and possibly two hours per day together during offseason conditioning. They study together in mandatory study halls, they engage in highly physical and competitive games every Saturday, and they converse in their own unique language. They share experiences with other young men and women representing other teams, and the genesis for both a football microculture and an athletic subculture within the dominant college culture emerges.

Specific Issues Affecting the College

Northeast Christian College is religiously-affiliated, small, remote, and a part of NCAA Division III athletics. While all of these impact the college, the changing landscape of higher education, the faculty who teach, the staff who support, and the

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coach who recruits the student athletes also impacts the culture. This section discusses those subtopics.

Religiously-Oriented Colleges and Universities

There are over 900 religiously affiliated colleges and universities in the United States, representing 20% of all colleges and universities in the country ("Colleges," n.d.; VanZanten, 2011). Turchioe (2010) noted that "many of the oldest and most prestigious colleges and universities in America were founded by religious orders" (para. 2.). While many are small liberal arts colleges, others are major research, medical, and professional institutions annually ranked among the top colleges and universities in the United States ("Colleges," n.d.). The range of religious affiliation varies from the devout to a tepid association with the founding denomination; even those that tend more toward the secular still maintain that relationship at least in their mission statement, vision, and bylaws (Andringa, 2009). A total of 66 mainstream denominations are represented by at least one college or university and a total of 1,500,000 students are enrolled in religiously–affiliated colleges and universities across America. ("Colleges," n.d.; Turchioe, 2010; VanZanten, 2011).

Despite the secular movement in America, religion has not disappeared from campuses; in fact, there is renewed interest. While many religiously affiliated institutions have de-emphasized elements of religious education, cancelling mandatory chapel and attendance at religious services (Kenney, 1998), others have adhered to their original missions. Mahoney, Schmalzbauer, and Younis (2001) noted that enrollment at religiously-affiliated colleges and universities rose roughly 8–10% in the period from 1983 to 1998 and exceeded the rate of secular colleges and universities; those institutions

are now reconnecting with their founding denominations and rewriting mission statements and curriculum (pp. 2-3). Many have administrators whose primary task is to orient the students to the religious mission. Student involvement can range from daily chapel to community service projects and, being generally student-centered in their approach, these colleges and universities offer co- or multi-religious services in addition to that of the founding faith ("Colleges," n.d.; VanZanten, 2011).

There are two camps within the religiously affiliated institutions: a separatist camp (those who want to separate religion from academe) and an integrationist camp (those who want to intertwine religion and academics). There is also a divide between research universities and liberal arts schools, between faculty who share the faith of the founding denomination and those who are indifferent. While the research universities tend to be separatists, the liberal arts schools tend to be integrationists (Lyon, Beaty, Parker, & Mencken, 2005). Nonetheless, religion does not appear to impact enrollment provided the institution either recruits students who share the institutions perspective on faith and education or de-emphasizes the connection between faith and education.

The Changing Demographics of Higher Education

One of the greatest impacts on collegiate culture is the changing demographics of the United States with colleges in the Northeast and Midwestern parts of the United States, the areas of the "rust belt" ("Rust Belt," n.d.) receiving a particularly hard hit. Two major demographic changes are impacting public and private, non-profit, higher education. First, the number of available teenagers in the United States has dropped. With 2,400,000 fewer high school graduates to recruit than six years ago, the competition for students has increased sharply, leading to arrangements between colleges (3 - 2 programs

and articulation agreements), new programs, and changes in curriculum. This is compounded by the decline in students over 24-years old who traditionally went to community colleges or for-profit colleges – the for-profit colleges have seen enrollments decline by 40% (Thompson, 2017) – creating more competition for a decreasing student base. This trend of decreasing high school graduates and college-age adults will continue for the foreseeable future, with U.S. birth rates hovering at or below replacement rates (Farber, 2016; Juday, 2014; Marcus, 2017; Thompson, 2017). Second, there are more open college seats than students. Colleges expanded and increased tuition 400% over the past 30 years while median family income remained stagnant. With these two reasons combined, colleges and universities are caught between the negative pressures of increasing tuition and decreasing student enrollment. The resulting rate of institutional closures from these forces has accelerated since 2013 (Thompson, 2017).

Colleges are turning more toward first-generation, low-income, and racial or ethnic minorities to fill residence halls and classrooms; colleges are also adding sports to enroll males whose enrollment has been dropping in many key states (Marcus, 2017; Moltz, 2009). Enrollment declines are largely impacted by white students whose numbers are expected to decline 14% over the next decade while the number of Hispanic students will increase 12% during that same period along with the number of African American and low-income students (Hildreth, 2017). Colleges and universities will have to communicate to these groups the value of an education, the ability to connect to postgraduate jobs, and, most importantly, the academic and social support networks that are available; they will also need to address the feeling that those campuses are not connecting with these groups culturally or socially (Hildreth, 2017). As Juday (2014)

noted, "For some colleges, 'encouraging diversity' may go from being a matter of ethics to a matter of survival" (para. 9).

Those changing demographics have a dramatic impact on small, private liberal arts colleges. Religion does not appear to have an impact equivalent to demographics. The impact of increased athletics, however, and the influx of first-generation, low-income, student athletes in response to those changing demographics brings a new set of cultural dynamics to the college campus.

The NCAA and Division III

The majority of sociological and economic research on collegiate athletics focuses on the NCAA's DI institutions. These are the ones seen weekly on television from the Labor Day kickoffs through the end of March Madness (Baucom & Lantz, 2001). DI student athletes receive "full rides," comprehensive scholarships that include room, board, tuition, and fees.

NCAA DIII colleges and universities, and the experiences of their student athletes, are quite different. This division ranges from the smallest of the small colleges to those whose enrollment surpasses many DI universities; the common denominator is their lack of athletic scholarships. According to Section 15.4 of the NCAA D-III Manual (NCAA, 2016b), financial aid packages offered to student athletes "shall be consistent with the established policy of the institution's financial aid office, regular institutional agency, office or committee for all students" (p. 112). The NCAA Manual, sections 17.1.1.3 and 17.10, further defines the football "season" as 18 weeks with 10 games (not including playoffs) which must be concluded with the championship game of that sport. Daily athletic contact (practice) hours are limited in length, and off-season conditioning

practices are voluntary. These student athletes are not participating at the same level as their DI counterparts: Their length of season and offseason activities are limited; their financial aid packages reflect the general student body, and they receive financial aid on the basis of need and merit, not athletic ability. Student athletes in DIII are immersed in the student population: They share residence halls, cafeterias, and classrooms with the non-athletes, and they participate in activities outside their sports even though they identify themselves as athletes (Griffith & Johnson, 2002).

NCAA DIII and DII, the "small college" ranks, emerged in the 1970s. To improve compliance and efficiency, the NCAA first split into two divisions in 1956: the university division and the college division (Gurney, Lopiano, & Zimbalist, 2017). In 1973, the NCAA again realigned and split into three divisions for both competition and legislation, with DI and DII offering financial aid in the form of athletic scholarships and D-III and select DI conferences (the Ivy League) limiting financial aid to grants based solely upon need and merit (Beaver, 2014; Gurney et al., 2017; NCAA, n.d.-a, 2010, 2015a). As of 2017, there were over 1,200 total institutions and conferences representing the three levels of NCAA competition; NCAA DIII was the largest with 450 institutions and conferences, 40% of the total NCAA membership. Of those, 80% were private and 20% were public; they ranged in size from 400 to 38,000 undergraduates with a median enrollment of 2,700 and an average enrollment of 4,000 undergraduates (NCAA, 2017b).

Athletics at the DIII level, where tuition for a private college or university is almost three times that of the public DI institutions, brings in large numbers of student athletes to fill the residence halls and classrooms (O'Shaughnessy, 2011). These institutions sponsor teams and compete in an average of 18 sports each; those with

football programs have a median of 537 student athletes on their campuses and student-athletes account on average for 26% of the student population. Of the 6% of high school football players who move on to play collegiate football, 4% play at DIII colleges and universities (Beaver, 2014; NCAA, 2017b).

DIII student athletes often matriculate with lower high school grade point averages and standardized test scores than non-athletic students and, as athletes, are given preferential treatment in acceptance (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Shulman & Bowen, 2001). However, there is a belief that student athletes subsequently do better in classes so that they can maintain eligibility, noting that athletics help them identify more closely with the institution (Snyder, 1985). Eventually, the student athlete graduation rates exceed the non-athletes, generally 5% higher on average, and the national, four-year, Academic Success Rate in D-III, based on a 2015-16 voluntary survey (200 participating institutions), is 87%. When the less-inclusive federal guidelines are followed, the four-class average for student athletes is 68%, 6% higher than the average for the overall student body (Durham, 2014; NCAA, 2017a, 2017b). Despite entering with lower grade point averages, the student athletes gradually improved and graduated with grade point averages equivalent to or higher than non-athletes, indicating that athletics did not adversely impact their academic performance (Aries, McCarthy, Salovey, & Banaji, 2004; Richards & Aries, 1999).

Although they were unable to enjoy as many extracurricular activities while in college, the student athletes in DIII reported enjoying the same level of socialization, growth, and satisfaction as the non-athletes. Committed to their sport, what they acquired from intercollegiate athletics was more than acceptable to them. They ultimately enjoyed

their college experience as much as the non-athletes (Potuto & O'Hanlon, 2007; Richards & Aries, 1999).

At-Risk Students: First Generation, Low Income, and Minority Student Athletes

As the population of available college students shifts, colleges are reorienting their efforts on two fronts. First, they are adding more athletic teams. This, in turn, draws more student athletes to campus and fills classes and residence halls. Second, they are seeking out more first-generation, low-income, and minority students to replace the dwindling numbers of white students who have traditionally filled those classes and residence halls. The increase in student athletes who are also first-generation, low-income, minority students, with no knowledge of college or its demands, changes the fabric of the college (Hildreth, 2017; Juday, 2014; Marcus, 2017).

First Generation Students

Students who come from families with at least one college-educated parent are more likely to go to college and be better prepared academically (Choy, 2001; Smith, 2015; Thayer, 2000). These students benefit from their parents' collegiate experience, involvement in their education, and level of expectations (Hirudayaraj, 2011; Knighton & Mirza, 2002; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2016).

Part of the issue is defining who is "first generation" and whether that pertains to students with neither parent having a college degree or one parent who has a college degree; the numbers can change by 55% (from 22% to 77%) depending upon the definition (Smith, 2015). The NCAA (NCAA, 2016a) defined first generation as neither parent having attended college; Balemian and Feng (2013) agreed, defining them as the

"first person in the immediate family to attend college" where the "highest degree attained by either parent was a high school diploma or equivalent or less" (Slide 3). Based upon that definition, 25% of white and Asian-American students, 41% of African American students, and 61% of Latino students are first generation (Balemian & Feng, 2013).

First-generation students are at a severe disadvantage: there may be little to no conversation about college in the home; they may have no idea what is required with respect to financial aid, the application process, or the enrollment process; and they may not know how to prepare for college, how to study, or what to expect with the college experience. Generally, their families have little time and fewer resources to assist them (Choy, 2001; Pathways to College Network, 2004; Schmidt, 2003; Thayer, 2000; Vargas, 2004). "First-generation students tend to come from working class families from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds," stated the Counseling Center, set-up to support students who require special attention (Tabor, 2011, para. 8). First generation students tend to be poorer (defined as the lowest income quartile), older, female, and of minority status (Choy, 2001; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998).

Statistics on college graduation rates show that 90% of first-generation college students fail to graduate within six years (Education Advisory Board, 2016; Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2016; Riggs, 2014). The Education Advisory Board (2016) noted that with first-generation students:

> Part of the problem is that these students are likely unfamiliar with the "hidden curriculum" that determines students' success in their first year of college, which includes navigating higher education bureaucracy and practicing good study

skills. These students tend to come from lower-income backgrounds and must often work more than 20 hours per week to finance their education, leaving them too preoccupied to crack the hidden curriculum code. (para. 2)

The statistics for low-income students are equally dismal and compound the problems of first-generation students. Low-income students eligible for federal financial aid – Pell Grants – generally graduate at lower numbers than those who are not on Pell Grants. All things being equal, the six-year reported graduation rate for Pell eligible students is 51% compared to 65% for all other students (Butrymowicz, 2015).

First-generation and low-income college students both enroll and graduate from college in lower numbers and are the highest "at risk" for not graduating (Smith, 2015; Tabor, 2011). These students tend to apply to less prestigious colleges that are closer to their homes (Engle, 2007, p. 3). Academically, their expectations to pursue and obtain a bachelor's degree are lower, and they are generally satisfied with earning a certificate or an associate's degree from a two-year college (Choy, 2001; Smith, 2015; Thayer, 2000).

The NCAA monitors and reports how crucial collegiate athletics are to first generation and low-income student athletes. In total, 16% of all student athletes acknowledge that they are first-generation students; in DIII, 15–18% of the student athletes are first generation students, with football having the highest number of first-generation participants at 25%. Depending upon the study, 47–53% of first-generation student athletes stated that if it had not been for sports, they would not have attended college; more importantly, 64% of first-generation student athletes require either need-based aid or government assistance to attend college (NCAA, 2016a; Prep Star, 2014).

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Minority Students

Because African American student athletes' cognitive abilities are often unrecognized by standardized testing, this produces the feeling among faculty and non-athletes that they are unqualified to be in college (Comeaux, 2010; Edwards, 2000; Harrison, 2000; Sailes, 1993; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). Others are stereotyped into certain sports and roles on athletic teams (Cooper, Gawrysiak, & Hawkins, 2013). On campuses that are predominantly white, the majority of African American students are athletes in the football and basketball programs where they are not receiving an equivalent education (Harrison, 2008).

Athletes as a whole, but minority athletes in particular, do not worry about paying for school but are more concerned with transitioning to college and to a new team. They tend to stand apart as a separate, non-traditional group of students (Eiche, Sedlacek, & Adams-Gaston; 1997; Sedlacek, 1996; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). They do not integrate into the campus or socialize, and they tend to look more favorably upon team relationships than non-team relationships (Williams, Colles, & Allen, 2010).

There are exceptions to the graduation rates and numbers reported by the NCAA, and those exceptions are with two groups of at-risk students. Because reporting graduation rates is voluntary for NCAA DIII, the rates being reported represent an incomplete picture of DIII. Therefore, despite the higher numbers being reported for NCAA DIII student athletes as a whole, the graduation rates for NCAA DIII football players are below the graduation rates of student athletes in other sports. Based upon the four-class average federal graduation rates reported in 2017, only 51% of DIII student athletes playing football graduated (Burnsed, 2018). In addition, while the NCAA

(2018a) reported that 21% of all DIII student athletes are ethnic minorities, only 46% of African American student athletes graduated compared to the reported overall student athlete graduation rate of 68%. The low graduation rates for both DIII football players and African American student athletes have been lagging behind the overall graduation rate of student athletes for eight consecutive years (Burnsed, 2018; Van Rheenan, 2012) and don't reflect the high numbers being reported by the NCAA.

The Collegiate Culture

Clark and Trow (1966) found four distinct and parallel subcultures in a university, each with a unique typology. With minor revisions and the inclusion of newer terms, these concepts still remain relevant 50 years later (Roufs, 2016; Sperber, 2000).

The first is the *collegiate culture*, the hedonists, students who participate in "football, fraternities and sororities, dates, drinking, and campus fun" (Sperber, 2000, p. 3). They are indifferent to serious scholarly pursuits and view a diploma as "a 'large ticket' consumer item, a purchase akin to an expensive automobile, but something that should not obstruct college fun and beer-and-circus" (Sperber, 2000, p. 11). The second is the *academic culture*, the intellectuals who engage in serious academic pursuits and who view a diploma as a pass to even more advanced degrees. This group is matched in seriousness by the third culture, the *vocational culture*, which are individuals who attend college on a part-time basis, working jobs and supporting families while attending classes at night. To them, college is a job, a hurdle to overcome to attain a diploma, a necessary evil. Members in the academic and vocational cultures who become disenchanted join the fourth culture, the *rebel culture*. These nonconformists either perform brilliantly or fail

miserably based upon their interpretation of the importance of a course. Their lack of interest in obtaining a diploma has not changed since the 1960s (Roufs, 2016).

Student athletes are largely assumed to populate the collegiate culture; however, this depends upon the college. Despite the definition, some may belong to the academic or vocational culture and simply rely upon their chosen sport to help them obtain their education (Clark & Trow, 1966; Roufs, 2016; Sperber, 2000).

The Athletic Subculture

Athletics and student athletes are often considered a separate and distinct subgroup, or subculture, within the student body, isolated and apart (Bowen & Levin, 2003; Clark & Trow, 1966; Eiche et al., 1997; Eitzen, 2005; Schein, 2010; Sedlacek, 1996; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992; Shulman & Bowen, 2001). As a subculture, they are set apart from the dominant culture by special, unique characteristics; individuals who participate in that subculture are obligated to share that characteristic, something that differentiates them from other groups in the organization (Falk, 2005; Wheaton, 2007). As athletes, they often adhere to different eating schedules, live according to different time schedules, look different physically, and reflect different racial or socioeconomic compositions from the general student body (Adler & Adler, 1988). They interact regularly (practices and meetings) and share intense, emotional experiences (competition). These special and unique activities isolate them; while they are part of the university's culture, their activities tend to set them apart as a separate and distinct subculture (Beyer & Hannah, 2000; Martin & Siehl, 1983).

Student Athlete Prejudice

The prejudice that many student athletes feel from faculty and non-athletes accompanied by derogatory references about their academic abilities drives them to form subcultures that have separate characteristics and values unconnected to the other students on campus (Parham, 1993; Prentice, 1997; Richards & Aries, 1999; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). Student athletes tend to flock to and congregate in a few majors with other student athletes and disengage from other, non-athletic extracurricular activities (Malekoff, 2004). While non-athletic students must adapt to college, student athletes must adapt to college and a team; balance practices, games, and studies; become accustomed to isolation from mainstream activities; and maintain relationships with coaches, teammates, and the public (Parham, 1993). As a result, student athletes tend to drink more, develop eating disorders, and have a stronger sexual identity (Aries et al., 2004; Valentine & Taub, 1999).

Leadership Influence

With the increase in minorities, various socioeconomic groups, and student athletes on campus, the role of maintaining the institution falls to those adults in leadership positions who have traditionally influenced collegiate students. Those roles, however, are also changing as faculty, athletic coaches, and parents who exert the most influence on the students and student athletes adjust to the new demographics.

The Faculty

Results on faculty perceptions are mixed with perceptions being evaluated and presented as representing the group and not an individual. As a group, faculties often feel uninformed and uninvolved, and disconnected from athletics on campus (Lawrence, Ott,

& Hendricks, 2009). The majority of research on faculty student athlete relationships reveals that negative stereotypes of the "dumb jock" persist: Student athletes often arrive on campus with lower grade point averages and are often seen as less qualified, taken less seriously as scholars, and consequently the faculty are less supportive of them and their scholarships (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Eitzen, 2005; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1990; Engstrom et al., 1995; Saffici & Pellegrino, 2012; Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, & Jensen, 2007; Snyder, 1985; Wininger & White, 2015).

The relationship between athletic success and faculty approval of athletics is both sparse and mixed. Faculties at larger, public institutions are less satisfied with the athletic scenario than faculties at smaller, private institutions where they exercise more influence over the athletic programs (Becker, Sparks, Choi, & Sell, 1986; Cockley & Roswal, 1994; Noble, 2004). While some studies indicate an inverse, or negative, relationship between athletic success and faculty attitudes toward student athletes, others argue a more positive correlation: athletic success drew positive reactions from faculty toward student athletes (Noble, 2004; M. Ott, 2011). Furthermore, student athletes with higher grade point averages attest to better relationships with faculty than those with lower grade point averages (Richards & Aries, 1999).

The Head Coach

Within the athletic subculture, the individuals tend to organize around the head coach, to whom the student athletes develop a sense of loyalty. This relationship traces back to high school, where most student athletes report that their coaches helped them select colleges (NCAA, 2016a). Some align themselves closely with the head coach and become part of the subcultural insiders: their relationship is familial with a sense of deep

loyalty to the organization through the head coach (Adler & Adler, 1988; Andrews, 2014). This loyalty is identified by six factors: domination from a strong leader, identification with a role model, commitment to an ideal, integration among themselves and against the outside world, the ability to align with the group's goals, and the ability to defer gratification. All six of these factors mirror the cultural theorists' motives behind cultural formation (Adler & Adler, 1988; Druckman et al., 1997; Geertz, 1973; Schein, 1984; Welsch & Vivanco, 2015).

The everyday lives of the student athletes tend to revolve around and tie back into the head coach (Adler & Adler, 1988, 1991). Unlike non-athletes, the student athletes rely upon the head coach for their economic support; in turn, the head coach tends to force "intense loyalty" (Adler & Adler, 1988) upon the student athletes, forcing them to align their personal goals with the goals of the team which are often the goals of the head coach. Through domination and forced identification, commitment, and integration, the student athletes are isolated with their teammates from the balance of the institution (Adler & Adler, 1988). The collectivist nature of a team is often cited as the rationale for the coach's behavior (Beyer & Hannah, 2000). This often leads to charges that the coaches and intercollegiate athletics are exploiting the student athletes, forcing them to play their sport at the expense of their education, regardless of injury, and forcing them to surrender any and all personal power (Atwell, 1985; Beyer & Hannah, 2000; Eitzen, 1992, 2005; Noll, 1991).

The Parents

The role of parents is paradoxical. While it is healthy for parents to remain engaged in the lives of their student athletes, overzealous parents can also inhibit their

maturation. Schwanz et al. (2014) conducted a survey of college-aged students regarding the "self-determination" theory and the three basic needs of young adults: the needs to feel autonomous, competent, and connected to other people. Their findings indicated that those needs are not being fulfilled in young adults who have overly or involved parents; in fact, that relationship is equally stressful on the parents (Rochman, 2013).

Studies by Givertz and Segrin (2012) and Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan (2014) surveyed undergraduates regarding parental over involvement; they found an inverse correlation between the amount of parental involvement in a student's life and the level of self-efficacy. They discovered that overindulgent and over-involved parents contributed significantly to college-aged adults' depression, narcissism, anxiety, and an inability to solve problems (Gray, 2015). Parietti (2015) found similar results and noted that parental involvement impacted academic self-efficacy and satisfaction.

On the contrary, Schiffrin, et al. (2013) identified a high positive correlation between parental involvement and students grade point averages. While parental involvement negatively predicts student-athlete depression and independence, student athlete engagement with the college offsets these factors and is a positive predictor of attainment of adult criteria (Dorsch, Lowe, & Dotterer, 2014, p. 21). Any correlation, however, is tempered by the warmth of the relationship between the young adult and his parents (Nelson, Padilla-Walker, & Nielson, 2015).

Nonetheless, athletic administrators and coaches acknowledged that parental interaction – either over-involved, under-involved, or at the appropriate level – was very real. Student athletes, however, believed that their parents were supportive. The NCAA noted that 26% of first-generation student athletes reported that their parents "expected"

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them to be either Olympic or professional athletes in their given sport and that their parents played the biggest role in helping them select colleges (NCAA, 2016a).

Summary

Institutions of higher education are replete with items to fill each of the layers of culture: physical archives and documents, buildings and grounds, and even the town in which the institution is located. Archival records and documents on the website, the mission/vision statements, the strategic plan, the significance of the majors and minors, the degree granting programs, and even the language patterns, dress, mascots, team colors, championships, All-Americans, and Halls of Fame (Blumer,1969; Patton. 2002; Schein, 2010; Yin, 2003) all describe culture in higher education with athletics standing front and center as an external representative of the college or university.

The model being used ultimately determines where these items are placed to evaluate their relationship to each other. My research relies on Schein's (2010) three layered model but notes the arguments of various theorists as a means to expand my understanding of the concepts of culture.

Multiple items impact a college including whether or not it is religiously affiliated, public, or private; its NCAA division; and the demographics of its region. To survive, many colleges and universities are seeking alternatives, including adding more athletic teams and recruiting a more diverse population of student athletes to include first-generation, low-income, and minority students.

In any level of the NCAA, the student athlete is impacted by his relationship with the head coach, the faculty, and the other non-athletic students, and there is often a prejudice against student athletes. In DI institutions, those effects are much more

pronounced due to the effects of having athletic scholarships, the time away from the classroom, and the student athletes congregating in a few majors with limited contact with non-athletes. For DIII student athletes, the impact is less pronounced. However, because they spend time together, DIII student athletes nonetheless develop a subculture that may or may not interfere with them aligning with the college or the college aligning itself correctly with the athletic culture (Aries et al., 2004; Parham, 1993; Shulman & Bowen, 2001).

As organizations, colleges have both a dominant culture and multiple subcultures. In a religiously affiliated college, we can expect to find some connection to the founding denomination in the mission and identity or the student requirements to take classes and attend chapel. In a college with more athletic teams, we can expect a higher numbers of student athletes, many who also fit the description of low-income, first-generation, or minority students. While this addresses the changing demographic landscape, it negatively impacts graduation and retention rates proportionate to the college's ability to recruit, retain, educate, and absorb those students.

The changes that the colleges must make impacts the culture; this, in turn, impacts the roles of faculty, coaches, and staff. Add in the changing dynamic of the parents, particularly parents who have no experience themselves with college, and it creates an interesting scenario. As each of these factors impacts the landscape of higher education, the leadership and the philosophy that is required to navigate this changing landscape must also change.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of my research was to evaluate the organizational relationship between a dominant culture and a microculture, specifically how a microculture might reflect, refract, diffuse, or parallel the dominant culture; as a counterfactual, the dominant culture might respond in like manner to the microculture. To answer my question, I selected one institution, a small college in the Northeast United States, to investigate how the relationship between the dominant academic culture of the college and the subculture of athletics, represented by the largest microculture in athletics and on campus, the intercollegiate football team, create a shared identity to help student athletes reach their full potential. In doing so, the college addresses its core objective: to survive the changing and challenging landscape of higher education.

Research Design

In this section I detail my research design; I also provide a rationale for my choice of the embedded case study strategy. Finally, I provide sufficient details to assure those who may follow behind of how I built both quality and trustworthiness into my research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2005).

Subject

A small college is an excellent subject for a case study: It is geographically and philosophically defined and bounded; it has a dominant culture defined by the Board of Trustees, the administration, and the faculty; it embraces multiple subcultures (e.g., athletics and Greek life), and within each of them multiple microcultures (e.g., teams, fraternities, and sororities). Because National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)

Division Three (DIII) institutions are prohibited from offering athletic scholarships, few student athletes at these colleges and universities are seeking professional playing careers (apart from a few outliers). Consequently, it draws scant attention from either the sports media or professional ranks. A student athlete subculture, if one exists, is wholly the creation of the student athletes themselves and is not prompted by external influences.

Choice of a Research Strategy

Epistemologically, culture can be studied from several approaches: the cognitive, which suggests that the core assumptions exist only within the individual; the variable, which suggests that culture is superficial and can be determined from the visible actions of a group without going any deeper; and, finally, the holistic, which suggests that to know a culture, a researcher must delve into both the cognitive and the variable (Sackmann, 1991, 1992). In fact, cultural studies are often referred to as being their own epistemological paradigm, particularly in the realm of athletics (Krane & Baird, 2005). Cultural studies can be conducted either quantitatively or qualitatively: Quantitative studies favor instruments to gather and statistically analyze data from multiple participants in search of specific attributes (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Rousseau, 1990; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1993), while qualitative studies seek to understand the views of individual participants (Denison, 1990; Hofstede, 1991). Finally, there are two approaches to data collection. The positivist approach measures data in an effort to determine patterns across venues and people that lead to an outcome. The interpretivist approach strives "to uncover the conscious and unconscious explanations people have for what they do or believe, or to capture and reproduce a particular time, culture, or place so that actions people take become intelligible" (Lin, 1998, p. 162).

Regardless of the methodologies and approaches described above and taken, most cultural theorists agree that at its core every organizational culture is both unconscious and axiomatic, emerging only after long-term observations and intense interviews (Creswell, 2014; Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Schein, 2010). Those lengthy observations and intense interviews exemplify naturalistic inquiry, a part of the interpretivist approach, whereby a researcher gathers information on the participants' understanding and perceptions of events, in real-world settings, absent manipulation or constraint (Patton, 2002). This supports the argument that researchers can only understand what is going on if they understand what the participants believe about what is going on, diagnosing what is important to the participants as opposed to what is important to the researcher (Blumer, 1969).

Practitioners therefore generally argue in support of qualitative methods to facilitate naturalistic inquiry, yielding the "thick description" necessary to place everything in proper context so that a non-participant can assess the material in relation to its surroundings (Geertz, 1973; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). This is neither a cavalier nor an undisciplined approach; rather, it requires extensive time and intense scrutiny of what is said, seen, and done if the essence of the organization's culture is to be discerned (Geertz, 1973). Not unexpectedly, this approach also limits the number of possible organizations that can be researched. In exchange, this method recognizes the unique qualities associated with the organization that is selected and avoids basing data collection on the positivist approach, the researcher's position, pre-determined cultural factors, or the results of statistical analysis (Druckman et al., 1997; Louis, 1983: Martin, 1992; Schein, 1984; Smircich, 1983).

However, proponents of quantitative methods dissent, arguing that quantitative methods remove researcher bias from observations and add strength, validity, and a more robust analysis of pre-identified cultural attributes (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Rousseau, 1990; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1993). Consequently, this group of practitioners advocates the use of instruments to capture information from a large sample size and to statistically analyze and derive a mathematically validated set of findings.

Analysis of the discourse between these two contrasting methodologies resulted in my acceptance of mixed methods (Bellott, 2011; Martin & Siehl, 1983) and the application of a holistic approach to study culture in the form of an eclectic "case study" (Lofland et al., 2006; Loy & Kenyon, 1969; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Yin, 2003). Because case studies are not synonymous with either methodology (Yin, 2003) and are not defined by any theoretical tradition (Patton, 2002), I was able to formulate my strategy around qualitative methods while leaving open the possibility of segueing into quantitative techniques when and if needed to answer my research question. This allowed me to focus on the subject as opposed to the protocol and the constraints imposed by a particular methodology (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) (1990) defined a case study as "a method for learning about a complex instance, based on a comprehensive understanding of that instance, obtained by extensive description and analysis of the instance, taken as a whole and in its context" (p. 15). As a comprehensive research strategy, a case study is used to diagnose complex social phenomena based upon the type of research question being asked (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2011). With an extreme "specificity of focus" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29), it is considered appropriate for

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answering a "how" question such as mine (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2003). Furthermore, because my research focuses on a contemporary issue where my control over the participants is nonexistent and the boundary between context and phenomena is blurred, a case study is also considered the logical choice to answer my research question (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003).

The Case Study Approach

This subsection defines each step according to Yin's (2003) model with deference to and support for my position from Creswell (2014), Merriam (1998), Patton (2002), Stake (1995), and Thomas (2011), dividing the process into individual, definable, components including replication logic and methods for validation and reliability. Each component is then described in detail along with my rationale for selecting a particular step or action.

Describing the Case Study

A case study consists of a subject, which defines both the context and the type, and an object, the analytical framework or theory through which the subject is viewed and which it, in turn, illuminates. The subject of my case is the transmission of culture in an organization; my object is the relationship between a dominant culture and a microculture and how the two reflect, refract, diffuse, or ignore each other in an organizational setting. Both subject and object are based on the organizational theories of Schein (2010), Cooke and Rousseau (1990), J. S. Ott (1989), Martin (1992), and Geertz (1973). Based upon my personal interest and experience with the participant and my background in collegiate administration and intercollegiate athletics, my case study is considered a local knowledge case (Thomas, 2011).

Every case is further defined by its constraints, and in my case, these are time and boundaries. Ragin (1992) argued that the "case-oriented approach places cases, not variables, center stage. But what is a case? Comparative social science has a ready-made, conventionalized answer to this question: Boundaries around places and time periods define cases" (p. 11). Similarly, Lofland et al. (2006) referred to a case study as "a holistic investigation of some space- and time-rooted phenomenon" (p. 21). Finally, Creswell (2014) argued an additional parameter, noting that "cases are bounded by time and activity" (p. 14).

Because my research focuses on the culture of intercollegiate athletics, the associated "activity" occurs during a specific "time" or "season" within a unique institution that sponsors the intercollegiate team. Consequently, the scope must also be contained within the participating institution's predetermined "boundaries" (Stake, 2005, 2006; Thomas, 2011) and a "place" which includes location (geographic), physical plant (buildings and grounds), philosophy (curriculum, mission, vision, and identity), and people (student athletes, administration, and coaches).

A case is further defined by its purpose, approach, and process (Thomas, 2011). The purpose of my research is to understand how culture aligns within an organization; this question is best answered through an explanatory case study (Yin, 2003), "drilling down" to gain a depth of understanding (Thomas, 2011). My approach is to draw upon concepts within the theories of organizational culture to explain the alignment of culture. However, because culture is constructed on symbols, with an athletic culture heavily influenced by such symbols (mascots, championships, individual awards), my analysis will also be influenced by symbolic interaction. My process is a single-case analysis of

one organization studied as a "snapshot" (cross-sectional study) of one season in the history of the college and the athletic careers of the student athletes (Thomas, 2011). Finally, this is an "embedded" case study, simultaneously analyzing multiple units within the organization using qualitative and quantitative methods (Yin, 2003).

My case study is rooted in organizational ethnography using a non-participatory ethnographic approach (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010) for studying culture from an outside-in vantage point. This approach succeeds when the researcher establishes rapport with gatekeepers and the observed participants; this, in turn, provides the researcher with access to conduct field observations and interviews (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). Through detailed field notes, interview notes, observation notes, and analysis of documents and artifacts, the researcher examines and cross-examines an organization from multiple facets, developing the "thick description" necessary to describe the organization's culture (Geertz, 1973; Patton, 2002; Van Maanen, 1979).

Organizational ethnography must conform to three general criteria. First, it must adhere to traditional "ethnographic methods," e.g., talking to participants, conducting observations, and researching relevant documents and artifacts. Second, it must be written in a narrative form with explanations of places and scenarios. Third, it must be trustworthy, expressing "the ethnographic sensibility that would convince the reader of the trustworthiness of the author as well as of the findings s/he presented" (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 254).

My goal was to understand the culture of both the college and the intercollegiate football team from the vantage point of the members (Krane & Baird, 2005; Patton, 2002). My approach was not new; in fact, its origins lie in the Human Relations

Management Theories where it was first practiced in the 1920s by Mayo in the Hawthorne Studies (Yanow, Ybema, & van Hulst, 2012). Ethnographic case study has also been a recognized approach used by sport sociologists and sports managers in applied sports psychology, sports management, and sports studies to diagnose and decipher athletic cultures and phenomena (Krane & Baird, 2005; Schroeder, 2010). Practitioners found that this approach eliminated the jargon generally associated with theory and methods, focused on the essence of culture, and avoided unnecessary details by bridging anthropology and sociology (Geertz, 1973). Through this approach, I was able to understand how student athletes and administrators at the participating institution made meaning of their cultures.

Throughout my research, I retained the option to use various quantitative measures when necessary on data that became available through the course of the ethnographic study. It was unnecessary for me to exercise that option, however, beyond creating simple comparisons of populations: NCC compared to NCAA DIII and the overall population of students at NCC to the football team at NCC. The use of descriptive analyses (Hellevik, 1988) for comparing the two populations – student athletes to the general student population – was unnecessary since the student athletes comprise the majority of the student population at NCC.

Designing the Case Study

Schein (2010) suggested six steps to understand or "decipher an organization from the outside: (1) visit and observe; (2) identify artifacts and processes that puzzle you; (3) ask insiders why are things done that way; (4) identify espoused values that appeal to you, and ask how they are implemented in the organization; (5) look for

inconsistencies and ask about them; and, (6) figure out from all you have heard what deeper assumptions actually determine the behavior you observe" (p.178). In a comparable approach, Schroeder (2010) provided a process to diagnose a sports culture with questions centered on four areas: institutional culture, which establishes the cultural parameters; the external environment, which infiltrates the department; the internal environment, which sets the course for athletics; and finally, the leadership and power at play. By tactically weaving these into my interviews and observations, I was able to unravel both the culture and the subculture, the espoused values, and the core assumptions. I was also able to triangulate my findings, provide validity, establish reliability, and assure quality as part of "a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about those questions" (Yin, 2003, p. 20).

The Model

Relying on the theoretical argument that culture is multi-layered, I utilized Schein's (2010) description of three layers to construct a model as a template for my data collection and analysis, and I simplified it to facilitate my presentation. In my interpretation of Schein's (2010) description, as shown in Figure 4, the core assumption is the footer, the necessary yet unseen subterranean layer that supports the entire culture. The espoused values are the visible foundation, the base that supports the structure, and the artifacts are the structure itself, the visible images which are associated with this culture. These three sections must align; if not, the culture collapses. However, if the footer, the foundation, and the structure – the core assumptions, the espoused values, and the artifacts – align and interlock, the culture – like a well-built building – stands firm.
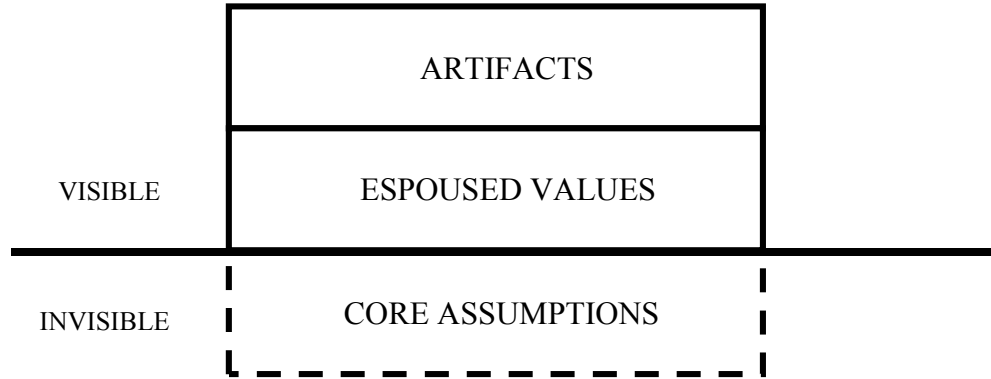
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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│          ARTIFACTS          │
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VISIBLE │      ESPOUSED VALUES        │
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INVISIBLE │      CORE ASSUMPTIONS       │
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Figure 3. Three-layered model of culture. Adapted from *Organizational Culture*

and Leadership (4th ed.) (pp. 23-33), by E. H. Schein, 2010, San Francisco, CA:

Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2010 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The model assumed that the college culture was the dominant culture – it was

their artifacts, espoused values, and core assumptions that were located; the microculture

shared both the artifacts and the espoused values. Because the students simultaneously

belonged to multiple subcultures and microcultures (Clark & Trow, 1966), it proved

difficult to isolate a core assumption attributed solely to them. Eventually, one surfaced

after repeated discussions and observations. Therefore, the dominant culture formed the

model against which the microculture was evaluated to determine whether the dominant

culture and its ideology impacted the microculture or if the microculture created its own

ideology that impacted the dominant culture (Abercrombie & Turner, 1978).

The Research Questions

I wanted to understand how two cultures in the same organization – a dominant

culture and a microculture – formed a common culture and how that impacted their

shared population. I also believed that the relationship between those two was neither

linear nor directional; rather, it was matrixed with ongoing interaction. I then subdivided

my central question into four primary propositions (Patton, 2002). I define each

proposition below with easily understood examples that do not necessarily reflect NCC but are meant to simply explain the propositions.

1. The dominant culture is reflected, refracted, or diffused by the microculture. A microculture might reflect the dominant culture so that there is essentially no difference between the two; an example might be a military academy. The microculture might diffuse or enhance the dominant culture by animating a part of it that would otherwise lie dormant; an example might be the athletic culture promoting the number of scholar athletes and academic all-Americans. The microculture might also refract, or bend, the dominant culture to suit its own, unique purposes; an example might be student athletes adhering to many of the college's rules but ignoring the college's prohibition on alcohol.

2. The subculture is reflected, refracted, or diffused by the dominant culture. The dominant culture may reflect the microculture's symbols: the mascot and team colors become a marketing tool, carrying the name of the college to distant locales where the athletic teams compete and are associated with the college. Absent the athletic teams, there is no need for the dominant culture of the college to have a mascot, and colors are a non-issue. To retain student athletes and enrollment, the college might bend, or refract, its prohibition on alcohol at student athlete parties and ignore it while promoting exemplary student athletes, diffusing the athletic culture for the colleges benefit.

3. Some combination of the first and second propositions occurs. The microculture might reflect the academic values of the dominant culture, recruiting high potential student athletes who will graduate and develop careers that reflect on both the college and the team. The college may dovetail on the success of the athletic teams,

using them to promote the college as an outstanding academic institution with student athletes who excel on the field, building on alumni who demonstrate success in both. In this instance, the two cultures exist as one, reflecting the norms, values, and beliefs of each other with an underlying set of assumptions that guides that relationship with both simultaneously ignoring certain rules rendering those rules mere organizational chant.

4. The two cultures coexist in parallel and ignore each other. Members of the dominant culture and the microculture recognize each other's existence – they simply choose to ignore each other. An example would be a college with an excellent academic reputation and exemplary graduates that harbors an athletic subculture with an excellent athletic reputation but where the student athlete success rates are low, and the athletes migrate into the professional ranks absent degrees. They neither change nor oppose each other – they simply ignore the goals and values of each other.

There is a fifth proposition which concerns the actual subjects of the study and assesses their feelings on the juncture of intercollegiate athletics and the institution:

5. Intercollegiate football augments or detracts from the student athletes overall collegiate experience. It is important to recognize the student athletes who simultaneously participate in both the football culture and the college culture. It is therefore important to assess the impact of these two cultures on the student athlete's career development, overall collegiate experience, and ability to be successful in both their academic and athletic pursuits.

Unit of Analysis

In a case study, the case itself is often the unit of analysis; however, in an embedded case study, the units of analysis within the case are studied individually and

combined to understand the case holistically (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). In my case, the

units include the organization of the participating college, its artifacts, its administration

(the Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Life, the Athletic Director, and the

Head Coach), and the representatives of both the microculture and the dominant culture

(the intercollegiate student athletes, the faculty, and, to some degree, the parents). I

gathered data on each of these units individually and combined them to create a season-

long snapshot of Northeast Christian College.

Criteria for Selecting the Participant

American colleges and universities can be placed into a two-by-two matrix: they

are public or private and religiously affiliated or secular, a combination that yields four

categories. With no public, religiously-affiliated institutions in the United States, all fit

into one of the three remaining categories. I selected a participant in the category of

private, religiously-affiliated, colleges, a small, liberal arts college located in a rural town

in a Northeastern state. My fieldwork was limited by my job requirements, and my time

to complete this research was limited by my program; consequently, my overall research

was limited geographically and categorically to one college in one category. I selected

NCC and its culture because it fit the category, it is accessible, and its culture is unique; I

selected this microculture because it contains the largest number of students, and it is the

microculture with which I am most familiar.

Isolated by geography and distance, NCC is fully self-contained in one location

with no branch campuses. Being private, it reflects 80% of the NCAA DIII institutions; it

is also religiously affiliated, similar to many DIII institutions. The College averages

1,000 undergraduates in any given year and its reputation is regional with two-thirds of

its students coming from the host state. It does have a few students from US territories, and its African American population is reflective of national demographics. It grants bachelor's and associate's degrees in social sciences, pre-professional studies, natural sciences, business, and the arts; it does not offer graduate programs. The College has approximately 100 full- and part-time faculty with a student: faculty ratio of 10:1; most classes have less than 20 students.

The football team is one of over 20 teams on campus administered by the College according to NCAA DIII guidelines and the College's recruiting philosophy. Many of the student athletes are from the immediate region, and many were recruited to play football at other non-scholarship DIII institutions with a few being recruited by DII. Several were limited in their options due to their physical size; selecting this institution was a choice for most, but the only option for others. Finally, the student athletes must have the ability to obtain financial aid solely on their academic credentials and economic needs; athletic scholarships are not offered at the DIII level, so playing football is an option independent of scholarship obligations (NCAA, 2018b). Financial aid is not contingent upon the student athlete's continued participation in the sport; if the student athlete quits, he or she retains the financial aid received based upon academic merit and economic need.

Based upon Table 3, NCC is smaller than most DIII colleges and is near the bottom of the range in terms of enrollment. Interestingly, with over 20 athletic teams, the College is near the top of the range in terms of numbers of teams and percent of student athletes on campus. These three statistics, when combined with the percentage of at-risk students, paints an interesting scenario.

Table 3

Comparing NCAA DIII to NCC and the NCC Football Team (2015-2016)

Comparable Factors	NCAA Division III	Northeast Christian College	NCC Football Team
Average Undergraduate Enrollment	4,084	+/-1,000	
Median Undergraduate Enrollment	2,758	+/-1,000	
Average Number of NCAA Sports Sponsored	18	>20	
Percent of Students in Intercollegiate Athletics	26%	>50%	100%
Percent of Students Receiving Financial Aid	75%	>90%	
Percent of First Generation Students	15—25%	40–50%	>50%
Percent of Caucasian Students		80%	60–65%
Percent of Minority Students		20%	35–40%

Note. All data for this chart provided by the NCAA (n.d.-b, 2016a) and NCC.

Both the College and the football team are heavily-laden with at-risk students.

The student athletes comprise over 50% of the student population. Of the general student

population, 40–50% are first-generation college students and 40–50% are low-income,

and the average student at NCC has an ACT or SAT score equivalent to the national

average for students accepted into college across the United States. The student athletes

on the football team are composites of several of these at-risk categories: Over 50% are

first generation and 35–40% are minorities (predominantly African American), and their

average ACT/SAT score is lower than that of the average student population. Of course, 100% of the football team are student athletes.

The College is located in a small town that has steadily lost both jobs and population for almost 50 years. The town is remote, located within one to two hours of several metro areas, and it is considered "financially distressed," a condition whereby the state declares a municipality to be suffering an economic crisis and it becomes subject to state oversight[3].

Finally, the college is religiously affiliated. This Christian denomination sponsors less than 50 colleges and universities across the United States, and all are NCAA DII or DIII. Northeast Christian College was founded a century and a half ago and has been coeducational since its inception. Never guilty of promoting dogmatic religious requirements, the College nonetheless builds its theology into its vision and mission, encouraging the holistic development of students through academics, athletics, and faith. Like all small liberal arts colleges, it is challenged to both find and retain students despite the fact that it has historically been coeducational and does not use religion or religious requirements to select or to segregate incoming students.

Geography and affiliation, size and participants, time, and space define the boundaries of my case (Lofland et al., 2006; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2003). The subject has a unique mix of athletics and at-risk students pushing the traditional boundaries of the NCAA and small colleges in general.

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[3] A citation and reference are available but neither will be shown; this is done to protect the location and the identity of the participating institution.

Data Collection Methods

Using a case study with a non-participatory ethnographic approach, I was unrestricted in my data collection methods; nonetheless, I wanted to legitimize why I pursued certain courses of action to ensure that I did not act arbitrarily or capriciously, meandering about without a plan or strategy (Krane & Baird, 2005). Through multiple data collection methods, I obtained a thick, rich, detailed description (Geertz, 1973; Lofland et al., 2006; Patton, 2002).

I used five of the six sources of evidence recommended for case study strategies (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003): archival records, documents, physical archives, interviews, and direct observation. Using multiple evidentiary sources, I achieved triangulation, developed a comprehensive database, and completed a chain of evidence (an audit trail) (Yin, 2003).

Sampling Strategy

Some researchers argue that sampling strategies in case studies are unimportant (Yin, 2003); however, I wanted to provide a rationale for who I included in my data collection and why they were included in the strategy. To assess the dominant culture, I used maximum variation sampling of documents, archival records, and physical artifacts. This method gave me access to a wide range of information to establish patterns, both positive and negative (Merriam, 1998). For example, I focused on the college's philosophy as it appears on the website and in documents such as printed brochures and the college newspaper. The website also included recruiting information and the college's archives. Finally, I was able to locate the intercollegiate football history provided in the annual football guide also located on the website. In addition, I conducted extensive

walkabouts of the College's physical artifacts including the academic buildings, the athletic venues, and the town. Direct observation of games and practices, coupled with informal, ad hoc conversations with parents, retirees, and former administrators, contributed to the establishment of the artifacts and espoused values.

I used criterion sampling to select and interview administrators associated with the student athletes (coaches, athletic administrators, and college administrators), limiting my interviews to those who fit this criterion (Patton, 2002). This facilitated my understanding of the artifacts from which I was also able to formulate a picture of the college's espoused values. By inference, I was also able to segue into the core assumptions.

I also had to assess the football culture, how that microculture is maintained, and whether it reflects, refracts, diffuses or parallels the dominant culture. To obtain that information, I observed the student athletes, and I interviewed them according to stratified sampling techniques. I subdivided the student athletes along specific strata to identify both variation and commonalities (Patton, 2002). I differentiated the underclass (freshmen and sophomores) from the upper class (juniors and seniors), stratifying the population to search for patterns and define what might be transferred from one down to the other, the established to the uninitiated. This painted a picture of a Northeast Christian College football student athlete and supported Schein's (1984) argument that "For culture to serve its function, it must be perceived as correct and valid, and if it is perceived that way, it automatically follows that it must be taught to newcomers" (p. 10).

Observation

Krane and Baird (2005) referred to observation as the "backbone of ethnographic research" (p. 94). There are two accepted approaches to conduct ethnographic observation: participant-observation and non-participant observation. Participant observation inserts the observer directly into the culture under study; the book *Paper Lion* (Plimpton, 1966) is an excellent example of this approach. Non-participant observation has the observer collect data on activities and interactions of the group being observed often from a distance. The works of Ruth Benedict, such as the *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946), are representative of this approach ("Ruth Benedict," n.d.). Such observation can be either covert, with the observed unaware that they are being observed, or overt with the full knowledge of the observed. With the permission of the College, I utilized the overt non-participatory approach; my background and personal connections allowed me to gain access to this superb site for research (Lofland et al., 2006; Mills et al., 2010), and I hold a letter from the college expressing its desire to be included as a participant and welcoming my interest, provided I ensure their anonymity.

Taylor and Bodgan (1998, as cited in Krane & Baird, 2005) noted that this approach requires simultaneously attending to multiple actions: eavesdropping, visually observing social interactions and patterns, and simultaneously communicating with multiple participants. I attended practices, walked with tired and sweaty student athletes, and dropped subtle inquiries when I ate with the parents at the tailgates. I attended games in driving rainstorms, icy overcast afternoons, and stifling heat. I watched the players and the coaches to note patterns of behavior, groupings of players, player-coach interaction,

player behavior, and methods of communication. I saw student athletes in classrooms and in hallways between classes.

My observations extended over a 14-week period during the 2016 fall semester and 2016 football season which began the third week in August (when summer camp began) and lasted until the final game in mid-November. I observed practices at least once per week, sometimes twice, and spent the entire afternoon on campus before each practice walking about, reviewing physical artifacts, or combing through the buildings in search of documents and other artifacts. I spoke to players before practice when I saw them in the halls or on campus and again after practice. I attended one scrimmage in late August and, except for one game located some distance from my home, I attended nine of the 10 scheduled games, arriving early to walk around tailgate parties and talk to parents.

Artifacts

I spent hours walking around both the campus and the town while waiting for practices to begin. The town is not large: I walked all of the streets several times, noting the stores that closed and those that were repurposed in the central business area. I walked along the railroad tracks to find large plant sites that were apparently once thriving but are now fenced-in brownfield sites waiting for someone to repurpose them.

I walked the beautiful, manicured, tree-lined campus from one end to the other, investigated the residence halls where 90% of the students reside, the baseball/softball complex, the track and field complex, and, of course, the multi-purpose stadium. I checked the academic buildings, walking inside all of them to assess how they appear to a first-time potential student. From the academic buildings to the student center, the oldest building on campus to the newest, I reviewed how this well-maintained campus appears

to students. I investigated the Hall of Fame and the Fitness Center, the locker rooms, and the various gyms to get a feel for what it is like to be at NCC.

Document Review

A critical part of my research concerned document, or artifact, reviews. I searched the college's website where I was led to their new strategic plan in published form; FAQs on both athletics and the college; recruiting and admissions criteria; and team rosters, schedules, and coaching staffs for every one of the over 20 teams on campus. I accessed archives, information on campus organizations, and campus religious activities.

Interestingly, I located, on the web, football guides for the most recent five-year period. Within those guides, I found team records back to the nineteenth century, timelines of activities, schedules, and information on individuals. This filled-in my unanswered questions. For example, it provided me information on the mascot, the age of the program, and coaching and team records. I also found government and historical information on the town and region to augment my walks about the town. All information was corroborated by multiple historical and independent collegiate research sites.

Finally, in walking about campus, I found printed materials. The most important was the college newspaper. After reading it, I was able to ascertain the students' opinions regarding campus renovations (they appreciate them but are still upset with "antiquated dorms"), interviews with faculty and administrators, and brief stories on events around campus including a "pre-season" review of the team. I also found a rack with multiple pamphlets including an ethics brochure delineating the college's views on ethics and how to respond to unethical situations.

Interviews

Interviewing is one of the cornerstones of anthropological, phenomenological, and ethnographic qualitative research. It allows the researcher to see things as the interviewee sees them, to understand his life experience (Seidman, 2006). In preparation for my interviews I prepared two semi-structured interview guides built around sensitizing concepts, theories of culture, and theories specific to athletics using open-ended questions to elicit responses and spur conversations (Patton, 2002; Schein, 2010; Schroeder, 2010). One version was used for the focus group interviews of the student athletes; the other was used for one-on-one interviews of administrators and coaches. Both were IRB approved and appear in Appendix A. Questions were attuned to collect information on the culture of the College and the team, the symbolism, and the history, per the guidelines established by Schein (2010) and Schroeder (2010); examples of these questions include: What is the history of Northeast Christian College and its football team? What is the mission of Northeast Christian College? What are the values of Northeast Christian College? Who are the informal leaders? What are the symbols of the College? What does the Athletic Department / Football team contribute to the College as a whole? These questions spurred a great deal of discussion with student athletes who often disagreed with each other on one topic and adamantly supported each other on another.

I scheduled four formal one-on-one interviews with administrators and coaches (which I completed during the last week of November and the first week of December, 2016) who I will refer to by their pseudonyms: Dr. Lisa Walker, the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA) and a seasoned professional administrator; Mark Metzler, the

Vice President of Student Life (VPSL) who is both an alumnus and a former football player; Andie Shepherd, the female Athletic Director (AD) and a conscientious administrator who clearly has a solid future in athletic administration; and Dave Baum, the Head Football Coach (Head Coach), an intelligent, articulate young man who is just over ten years removed from the field as a player but who has a solid understanding of both football and the athletes on his team.

Each of these individuals reviewed and signed IRB-approved consent forms. All the interviews, which lasted 45–60 minutes each, were recorded and transcribed. I reviewed the transcripts and then forwarded them to the interviewees for comment. All completed member checks on the transcripts of their interviews and responded with affirmative emails; only one, Dr. Walker, asked for specific changes on grammar and English (she was at one time an English professor). The others were satisfied, validating their comments and conforming to my assurance of quality.

On an ad hoc basis, I spoke with the former Head Football Coach and Athletic Director, Joe Lindenhall, in late summer 2017 and a retired advisor to the athletes, Veronica White, in the stands during an away game in September 2016. Fred Connor, a former Facilities Director at NCC for 20 years, also provided insight on the staff relationships with the students during an ad hoc discussion in the fall of 2017. Finally, I relied upon an associate professor, Andy Giansante, who prior to working at NCC worked in manufacturing; our careers crossed paths several times, and I have a professional friendship with Andy. I responded back immediately to both Mr. Lindenhall, Ms. White, and Mr. Conner regarding my interpretation of their comments and all agreed; Professor Giansante also reviewed and agreed with my comments.

I also met with two focus groups (which Coach Baum helped me schedule near the beginning of the spring semester in February 2017). Focus group interviews were critical to my research. By placing a group of similarly-situated student athletes into one room, I allowed them to express their views and then to hear the views of their peers. This provided them with time to reflect on their responses, to agree or disagree with each other, and to clarify the groups position on each question (Lofland et al., 2006). The first focus group was comprised of seven young freshmen and sophomores, four white (Toby, Mike, Joey, and Dan) and three African American (Yosiah, Dion, and Marcus), all from either metro cities two to six hours away or small towns in between. The second focus group was upperclassmen, five juniors and seniors, including an academic all-district player and captain (Layton), an inspirational defensive leader and future captain (Jack), one African American (Damiane), and the balance from small towns and metro areas in the region adjacent to NCC (Matt and Rafe). I reviewed the consent forms with the focus groups prior to each session, informed them that the session would be audio recorded, and ensured that each of them would be provided a pseudonym; all the attendees gladly agreed and acknowledged by signing individual consent forms.

During the focus group interviews, I included Jan and Tom, two other PhD candidates as "seconds" to sit in, observe, and comment. We reviewed our individual notes after the interviews; Jan, the observer for the focus group of upperclassmen, prepared written notes, and I refer to them in various places within my paper.

To corroborate my research on the student athletes, I also spoke with parents, family, and friends. My ad hoc conversations with those groups occurred as I walked through the public tailgate sections of the parking lots and sat in the paid general

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admission seats during the games. I spoke with coaches and student athletes before and

after the open practices, and in the hallways before and after classes. Their comments,

made in the moment and unedited, corroborated my observations and revealed

characteristics of the student athletes that I later verified (such as their backgrounds).

Although I felt compelled to identify myself to the parents and the spectators, and the

coaches informed the student athletes of my purpose for being there, I nonetheless wrote

my field observations in the privacy of my car immediately afterward before I left for

home. This was deliberate. I wanted open and honest reactions, and I did not want to

have a chilling effect on these people, causing them to feel that every word that they

uttered was being scrutinized.

Data Analysis Methods

I developed and maintained my data in two files. The first contained fieldwork

files which included my collection of archival records, documents, and reviews of

physical archives. The second contained folk files, my transcripts, and notes of both

individual interviews and focus group interviews as well as my direct observation notes

and files (Lofland et al., 2006; Saldana, 2009). I subsequently analyzed my case study

data in two ways: individually to ascertain what each unit of analysis was telling me

through words, actions, or observations and holistically, where I combined the units to

picture the entire case at once, drawing conclusions to search for patterns. To complete

the analysis of my data in an efficient manner, I utilized coding.

Saldana (2009) noted that coding is not mere labeling, it is linking: thoughts to

codes, codes to themes; themes to propositions. There are two perspectives on coding:

Seidman (2006) argued that only the critical items in a corpus of work should be coded

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and linked. Conversely, Lofland et al. (2006) argued that the entire body of data should be coded. The question for me was ultimately settled by Saldana (2009): It was better to focus my coding on quality data rather than worry about the quantity of data. Coding is also cyclical, as the researcher attempts to find patterns that reveal the basis for an action. I eventually synthesized my information through replication. I began with descriptive coding – summarizing concepts and thoughts from multiple sources of evidence – and then pattern coding – searching for repetition among the sources of evidence. I examined social interactions and where they occurred: between multiple actors engaging in one or more activities at a specific time and in a particular place (Lofland et al., 2006; Seidman, 2006).

As with any form of qualitative analysis, my codes changed and shifted with each iteration as I studied and analyzed my data. To facilitate this, I formatted my data using files and folders, a traditional hands-on but efficient method, and then settled on specific codes. The material was grouped into themes to facilitate analysis, searching for specific patterns according to my theoretical model. For example, I easily segregated information into artifacts while searching for patterns; adhering to Schein's (2010) six steps for deciphering a culture, I searched for emerging patterns that would constitute NCC's core assumptions and the secondary categories representing espoused values. The codes are included in Appendix B.

I then developed my information using a two-stage protocol. The first was a *case description*, a detailed account of my findings (Yin, 2003), which is incorporated throughout my final write-up in Chapters Four and Five. Merriam (1998) suggested several frameworks to organize, analyze, and present data within the case description: the

role of the participants, exchanges among participants, historical or thematic information, observing rituals and symbolism, and critical incidents, all of which I included at one point or another. I also included descriptions of the physical artifacts; the documents; demographics of the college, the students, and student athletes; observations of the parents; and the rituals and symbols of both the dominant culture and the microculture.

The second was a straightforward comparison of my propositions to my data in a form of pattern-matching. I reviewed my case description and my research to determine patterns across the campus and deciphered one core assumption for the College culture and several items which, due to their nature, I labeled as core concessions; I also deciphered one core assumption for the football culture. I settled on one primary espoused value and four secondary values that support the primary. These required analyses and the exchange of thoughts between those I observed and me. Most important were my exchanges with my committee chair to whom I am most indebted, since he is an individual skilled in sports-related ethnographic analysis. These appear in Chapter Six.

Assurance of Quality

Integrity and trustworthiness are critical to qualitative research; otherwise, the credibility of the researcher, as well as the analysis and findings, might be denigrated or disregarded. Lincoln and Guba (1985) initiated the concept of *trustworthiness* in qualitative research as an equivalent term for validity, which is more applicable to quantitative research. They defined trustworthiness as having credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. According to Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers (2002), Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined the criteria to attain trustworthiness as more closely related to "specific strategies… such as negative cases, peer debriefing, prolonged

engagement and persistent observation, audit trails and member checks" (p. 15). While recommending the inclusion of this criteria, Morse et al. (2002) argued that validity and reliability should remain a viable part of qualitative research and that the concept of verification should be built into the process. Relying upon organizational ethnographic concepts, I also paid attention to the pitfalls associated with ethnography (Van Maanen, 1979). Bearing in mind that researchers following behind me must be able to replicate my design, data collection methods, data analysis, and findings, I included the measures advocated by these theorists into my data collection strategy.

Audit Trail

Whether it is referred to as an "audit trail" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002) or a "chain of evidence" (GAO, 1990; Yin, 2003), the requirements are the same: to maintain a journal including my data collection activities, reflections, and analysis from the beginning of my research until final approval of my research. A sample from my audit trail is below; it clearly shows how I searched for patterns after a focus group interview and my discussion with one of my observers:

Excellent interview! Jan picked up on a few items that I didn't see – and she picked up on several others that repeated in this group as well. The themes she heard – and placed in her notes – included *Connections, Team*, and *Accountability / Responsibility*. The Accountability / Responsibility theme was also picked up by Tom, my other cohort second / observer, and Andy, the professor, last week with the underclassmen. I agree with them but there is still an overarching theme that I am missing. Jan provided me with excellent notes on her observations which I saved. I also provided notes to summarize my impressions as well. I will get the

tape transcribed to have a copy of the actual interview on file. Jan, similar to Tom and Andy, was here to reflect on what they heard, my interpretations of what I heard, and provide an opinion as part of my assurance of quality since I cannot do a member check on the group. (Audit Trail, Week of February 28 – March 4, 2017)

A file of dated communications, transcriptions, field notes, and observations is available so that my data corroborates my findings. Where one leaves off the other resumes: For example, my field notes include my observations and reflections and, where they end, the interviews commence.

Triangulation

The concept of triangulation is based upon land navigation and using three points to locate one's position. In qualitative methods, it involves comparing multiple, independent sources or methods that converge and corroborate each other, creating a convincing argument and a finding (Baškarada, 2014; GAO, 1990; Yin, 2003). Of the four methods recommended, I incorporated three into my data collection and analysis (Patton, 2002).

The first method, triangulating analysts, required individuals to independently observe, analyze, and question my methods and findings. This served three purposes. First, it provided active "seconds" to assist with my focus group interviews and serve as part of the data collection process. Second, it facilitated my data analysis by augmenting and reviewing my observations and interpretations. Third, it supported both triangulation and validity. Two PhD candidates, Jan and Tom, served as moderators during my focus group interviews and analyzed my conclusions to determine whether they agreed.

Additionally, Andy Giansante reviewed my description of the college, and a PhD in Sociology, a Jesuit and friend, Fr. William, reviewed my results and we discussed them several times over the telephone.

Second, I built methods triangulation into my data collection process. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and coaches and administrators participated in member checks (Patton, 2002). I particularly enjoyed my interview with Mark, the VPSL, and his email comments after reading the transcripts produced a laugh on both of our parts as we realized how we came across on tape to my transcriptionist: "Do you see a need for me to go in and make grammatical changes? Boy does my communication look bad on paper. I am not sure if it matters, but if it does, I will edit without changing the content" (VPSL Member Check, February 14, 2017). I reassured Mark that mine was as bad and that the content mattered more than the grammar; he agreed and was satisfied.

Finally, I relied upon triangulation of sources (Patton, 2002) or data triangulation (Yin, 2003). I relied upon the observers described above to determine if I accurately represented the student athletes in the focus group interviews. We reviewed our notes, and we discussed what was said immediately after the interviews concluded and our notes were fresh. Jan's observations, recorded in her notes, were particularly lucid and helpful:

> They [the student athletes] realize it takes hard work and dedication as an
> individual and as a team. They are not passive in this process – they said several
> times that *their* reaction to what happens during college is the important thing.
> They used the words 'contribute', 'accountable', and 'responsible' as well as

'loyalty' and 'persistence' when they talk of what they do on and off the football

team. They mentioned hard work and dedication as critical… (Jan's Interview

Summary, February 24, 2017)

Validity and Reliability

Quantitative studies build reliability and validity into the process to show that

conclusions make sense (Merriam, 1998), but there are similar methods for case studies

(Yin, 2003). To ensure construct validity, I included multiple data collection methods

such as multiple sources of evidence, an audit trail, multiple analysts, and member

checks. I established internal validity, a crucial component of an explanatory case study

such as mine, by comparing my propositions to my findings, using triangulation to

demonstrate how my findings matched reality (Merriam, 1998). I established external

validity by detailing replication logic to complete additional case studies allowing other

researchers to test my strategy on other cases of their choosing (Merriam, 1998); this

logic in diagram form can be found in Appendix C. Finally, reliability *v*erifies that my

case study can be replicated by following the data collection system described in my

design protocol and my replication logic (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003).

Per Morse et al. (2002), I improved my validity and my reliability, and therefore

the rigor of my research, by incorporating the concept of verification into my data

collection process. I ultimately utilized four of their five verification strategies. First, I

included methodological coherence, ensuring that the ethnographic methods which I

selected were relevant to my question. Second, I included appropriate samples,

interviewing participants who had knowledge of my propositions and reviewing artifacts

that contributed to data replication. Third, I collected and analyzed my data concurrently,

revising my research to seek out and obtain answers to questions that arose during the course of my investigation. Finally, I maintained a theoretical focus by thinking theoretically and reading, rethinking, and revising my research protocol as necessary to develop my answer.

Defense of the Case Study Strategy

There will be arguments against my choice of the case study strategy. In response to the most common dissenting opinions, I defer to prior experts in the application of this strategy. First, I acknowledge that case studies focus on particularization, not generalization, and that there is disagreement even among theorists (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2011). Generalization with any methodology, however, can only be obtained after multiple and repeated attempts and trials, each of which focuses on particularization while making a contribution to the overall findings commonly referred to as generalization. Therefore, multiple case studies that replicate mine will contribute to a general theory of collegiate culture as I hope mine contributes to the theories of those who preceded me.

Second, there are criticisms that case study outcomes can be manipulated; however, that criticism applies to case study teaching, not case study research (Yin, 2003); manipulation is no more common in a case study than in the design of a quantitative questionnaire. Schein (1990) also argued the problem with quantitative questionnaires and their application to cultural research: "Furthermore, it is not clear whether something as abstract as culture can be measured with survey instruments at all," noting that "the problem with this approach is that it assumes knowledge of the relevant

dimensions to be studied" (p. 110). That point became clear as I delved into my research: I lacked a clear understanding of those dimensions until after I completed my interviews.

Finally, case studies allegedly require an extensive amount of time; however, a focused case study has strict parameters to constrain the scope and the time element, thereby reducing the amount of time that can be spent on an individual study. The total time required for data collection, from the first observation during the first week of summer practice for the football team to the final member check was 28 weeks. This was predetermined by the athletic team included in my study and the length of their season as dictated by the NCAA, roughly the length of the fall semester in 2016, the impending graduation of several seniors, and the time constraints imposed by my program.

In closing, an ethnographic case study is considered the preferred method to analyze a culture. Geertz (1973) argued that when studying a culture, it is important to prepare an ethnographic representation of the here and now, a "thick description" (p. 6), to develop a model that seeks to understand the culture under study. While the resulting analysis may not be predictive of any other cultures, it nonetheless provides a snapshot of this culture and may shed light on similar cultures in other areas and other points in time. Thomas (2011) conclude that a case study is "seeing something in its completeness, looking at it from many angles. This is good science. In fact, it is the *essence* of good science" (p. 23).

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSES: CORE ASSUMPTIONS

Schein's (2010) three-layered description of organizational culture helped to create a template to both organize and present my findings in this chapter and the next. Reversing the usual sequence, I am presenting the foundational layer, the core assumptions, first in this chapter. I believe it is crucial to do so because they are the underlying, motivating influences on which the entire culture rests. The reader can subsequently then understand the utility of the second layer, the espoused values, and its relation to the top layer, the artifacts, in the following chapter.

This chapter includes my rationale to support institutional survival as the College's primary core assumption. I also include several assumptions that support my selection of institutional survival as the core assumption. The student athletes' attachment to football is also identified as their core assumption, the motivating force which makes the College's core assumption possible. Finally, the parents verified the student athlete's core assumption. To determine congruence and resolve my propositions, however, it is crucial to first clarify the various cultures on campus.

Defining the Cultures

The intercollegiate football team at Northeast Christian College (NCC), previously termed as the football culture in my research, fits the definition of a microculture. Due to the similarities in their ages, their time together in practices and study halls, and their shared exposure to highly intense competition, the criteria for subculture development among members is satisfied. While the student athletes share norms, values, and beliefs with other students and staff who are members of both the

athletic culture and the college culture, the student athletes on the football team are bonded into a separate microculture by the totality of their unique shared experiences as football players (Bellott, 2011; Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Martin, 1992; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Schein, 2010; Schroeder, 2010; Southall et al., 2005; Trice & Beyer, 1993).

The subculture of intercollegiate athletics, referred to in my research as the athletic culture, has over 20 teams, each a microculture, and encompasses over 50% of the student body. In addition, 40–50% of the student population are identified as low income and 40–50% are first-generation college students; together these two subgroups comprise a socioeconomic subculture. Combined, the athletic culture and the socioeconomic subculture make-up the largest groups on campus by percentage of population. It could be argued that they are the culture. Despite their numbers, however, they lack the power to define the dominant ideology, since dominance is predicated on power and control ("Dominant Culture," 1998; Neulip, 2017). Being part of the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) Division III (DIII), the power of the athletic culture is also mitigated. As Dr. Walker, the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA), pointed out: "they are student hyphen athletes, not athlete hyphen students" (VPAA Interview, November 30, 2016). These two subcultures, however, exert a latent influence on the dominant culture and ideology (Abercrombie & Turner, 1978).

The Board of Trustees, senior administration, and the faculty in shared governance comprise the college culture, the dominant culture. They establish and maintain the artifacts and the espoused values of NCC, each representing a strategic decision that reflects the dominant ideology (Abercrombie & Turner, 1978; "Dominant Culture," 1998; Neuliep, 2017). The athletic and socioeconomic subcultures, however,

influence the college culture (Bellott, 2011; Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Martin, 1992; Martin & Siehl, 1983; J. S. Ott, 1989; Southall et al., 2005). That influence becomes evident in the core assumption and espoused values where the college provides the athletic and socioeconomic subcultures with intense academic-support and financial incentives to attend and remain at NCC.

The Hidden Layer: The Core Assumptions

Richardson (2016) noted that a *core assumption* "is the first and most basic of all of our assumptions, and it is the one from which our other assumptions and later our beliefs and knowledge stem" (para. 2). Core assumptions were once espoused values that metamorphosed into unconscious thoughts; they now influence or mitigate organizational decisions (Schein, 2010). Theorists argue that since they are unconscious, their existence can only be discerned through extensive interviews and long-term observations (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Rollins & Roberts, 1998; Schein, 2010; Schroeder & Scribner, 2006). Other theorists, however, contend that an organization's history, stories, language, rituals, and behaviors provide us with visible reflections of the abstract core assumptions associated with the culture of the organization (Wilkins, 1983).

Northeast Christian College's Core Assumption

Sitting together during our interview in her quiet oak-trimmed office, Dr. Walker, the VPAA, noted that the College has accepted that "a large percentage of our students are athletes." When asked if the College could ever eliminate football or any other sport, she instantly responded with a firm "no," following up with "that's a practical reality, not some deep existential thought" (VPAA interview, November 30, 2016). Later that same day, in his office in the bustling student center, Mark Metzler, the VPSL, told me, "we

know, and recognize, and appreciate, that athletics draws in many of our students. More than half of our students are involved in athletics and we see it as a valuable learning tool, as part of the overall institution" (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016). When asked if he thought the College could survive if any athletics, including football, were to disappear, Mark, too, immediately replied, "I don't think so." I immediately followed up and asked if the faculty would agree, and he replied unhesitatingly, "I believe so" (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016). These two responses by senior administrators acknowledge the role that student athletes play on this campus.

To remain relevant, NCC recruits racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse student athletes to build student enrollment. It fields over 20 athletic teams and maintains a population of over 50% student athletes, both in excess of DIII averages. The student population is also comprised of 40–50% first-generation and 40–50% low-income students, both of which demand a dedicated support network and financial aid from the college. With well over 50% first-generation students, 40% minority students, and 100% student athletes, the football culture is an example of this strategy. To educate and retain this population, the college has been modernizing and constructing facilities and investing in support departments for 20 years. Yet, despite this backing, only 30–40% of the students graduate within 4–6 years.

My analysis of these statistics and the comments by the VPAA and the VPSL led me to consider that the core assumption of the college is the *survival* of the institution. Schein (1990) argued on behalf of the connection between internal culture and survival when he stated, "culture is what a group learns over a period of time as that group solves its problems of survival in an external environment and its problems of internal

integration" (p. 111). Unlike the espoused values, the core assumptions are not public; they lie subconsciously within the organizational culture (M. Ott, 2011; Rasmussen, 2013; Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 1984).

The word survival as it is used in the context of my research refers to a mindset, a search for a methodology to weather an increasingly difficult situation. The Oxford Dictionary defined survival as "the state or fact of continuing to live or exist, typically in spite of an accident, ordeal, or difficult circumstances" ("Survival," 2018, para. 1). As Schein (2010) suggested, survival is what NCC has mastered in this challenging external environment.

My use of the word and my reference to it as a core assumption for NCC is not meant to imply that NCC is impoverished or destitute. Unlike the town in which it is located, NCC is not financially distressed. As my research will demonstrate, the strategic plan that just concluded increased the endowment substantially. New buildings and facilities have been constructed or renovated and new programs have been initiated. The campus is groomed to impeccable standards, and the College's money is being recirculated back into the student body in various ways. Consequently, survival in my research and in relation to NCC is meant to imply a strategy that underlies all the efforts in which NCC engages to remain viable and competitive in this increasingly difficult market and region.

Cultural theorists might argue that "survival" is the prime imperative, a critical part of all strategic philosophies, and a basic core assumption of every organization (Davidson & Smith, 1971). It is the foundation upon which Maslow's hierarchy is built – absent physical survival, all else is meaningless (Maslow, 1943). Organizations that are

in "survival mode" therefore become adept at focusing upon the internal, strategic, or external threats to their survival (Kaplan & Mikes, 2012; Reinink, 2010). Once those threats are mitigated, however, the organization is free to pursue other objectives, cautiously aware that at any time it could again be faced with the need to revert to survival mode. Obviously, then, while survival is imbedded in every organization's strategic planning, its rank in the hierarchy of that planning is determined by the threat level facing the organization.

Universities with large endowments and envious reputations are not subjected to the pressures of increasing costs and decreasing student availability. Their threat level is much lower, and survival is an afterthought to those universities. However, absent both the financial wherewithal to cover costs and a national reputation to attract students, the threat level is much higher for small colleges such as NCC. Survival is in the forefront of NCC's core assumptions and therefore holds a higher position in their strategic thinking.

The Strategy of Recruiting Diverse Student Athletes

I asked Dr. Walker, the VPAA, if she could provide me any examples of NCC students who have "reached their full potential" as prompted by the website, the documents, and everyone within this college. "Absolutely!" she smiled:

> One individual has pursued a successful medical career and at the same time achieved business success. This individual credits such success to the broad liberal arts education offered at this institution, which combines liberal learning with career education. Closer to home, we have a student graduating this spring who spent part of last summer at Oxford University in England. Admission is competitive and he's done beautifully there and is now internationally traveled;

just a wonderful example of student success. (VPAA interview, November 30, 2016)

By this example, and several others Dr. Walker provided, students and graduates are bringing accolades to NCC. This, however, does not represent the majority of students. The College's on-time graduation rate (defined as two years for an associate degree and four years for a bachelor's degree) is 30–40%. NCC's six-year graduation rate, the number mandated by the federal government, is just over 40%. Both of these numbers fall below the national average (College Tuition Compare, 2018[4]; Engelmyer, 2017; DOE, 2017). The demographics, however, make these numbers plausible and possibly understandable, considering the circumstances.

Demographics of the College

With approximately 1,000 undergraduate students, NCC is small even among DIII colleges. The student population is less than 50% female and greater than 50% male, and over 60% of students are from the state in which the college is located. The minority student population is small: 13% are African American, 5% are Asian, and 2% are Hispanic, roughly equating to the host state's average minority population.

Several at-risk populations, however, emerged as NCC's strategic niche. First is the number of student athletes: Over 50% of the student population participates in NCAA-level athletics, exceeding the NCAA's reported DIII average of 26% of the student population. NCC is near the top of the range for all DIII colleges and universities in student athletes as a percent of student population. This contrasts with the College's low total enrollment, near the bottom of the range reported for all DIII colleges and

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[4] This citation and its accompanying reference refer to a general website; this is deliberate to avoid revealing either the name of the participant or its location.

universities (NCAA, 2017b). Furthermore, according to the NCAA, DIII student athletes tend to graduate in excess of non-athletes. Depending upon the survey, the NCAA reports that approximately 68% graduate in four years and approximately 87% graduate in six years (NCAA, 2015b). At the time they graduate, the NCAA reports that the grade point averages (GPA) of the student athletes equate to the GPA of the non-athletes (Durham, 2014; NCAA, 2017b). At NCC, the GPAs of the football student athletes are also equivalent to the non-athletes by their senior year. However, one would also expect that a College with a high percentage of student athletes would have graduation rates in excess of NCC's reported graduation rates of 30–40%, which are well below the reported NCAA averages.

This identifies the first at-risk group on NCC's campus. According to the NCAA's own recordkeeping, while student athletes in general are graduating at higher rates than non-students (NCAA, 2017a), this is not true of all student athletes. The NCAA touts a student athlete four-year graduation rate of 68%, but that is based on only 40% of the member institutions annually, and voluntarily, reporting four-year graduation rates (Burnsed, 2018; NCAA, 2017a). The reality is that over a period of eight consecutive years, student athletes on DIII football teams have graduated at a rate of only 51% (Burnsed, 2018). With a team roster averaging 100 student athletes, NCC's football team comprises 10% of the student population, a group considered by NCAA records to be at-risk of graduating only one of every two student athletes.

Several other at-risk groups offset the NCAA's reported student athlete graduation rates. These form a population that tends to graduate below the average of the student population if they are fortunate to graduate at all. This includes the second at-risk

group, the first-generation college students. Mark Metzler, the Vice President of Student Life (VPSL), estimated the percentage of first-generation students on campus at "between 40–50%" (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016). First-generation students are generally unprepared, often attend college closer to home, and more often settle for certificates or associate's degrees (Choy, 2001; Engle, 2007; Smith, 2015; Tabor, 2011; Thayer, 2000). Determining how many first-generation students graduate is difficult since it is a number that is often unreported. Sifting through the various studies, however, the first-generation college graduation numbers are not promising: Less than half (47%) of first-generation students ultimately earn a degree, and the numbers earning that degree in six years or less is roughly 24% (Chen, 2005; Engle, 2007). The graduation rates for first-generation students who are also low-income is more dismal: almost 90% fail to graduate in six years (Education Advisory Board, 2016; Riggs, 2014).

This leads into the third at-risk group, the low-income students: Again, Mark Metzler, the VPSL, stated "[40–50%] of our student population are also Pell eligible" (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016). Pell is a federal grant provided to undergraduate students from families whose income is less than $30,000 – $40,000 a year or who have a high debt load. Surveys report that 50% of Pell-eligible students fail to graduate in six years (Butrymowicz, 2015; Fulciniti, 2015).

The fourth at-risk group is buried in the athletic culture: the minority student athletes. Again, with only 40% of the membership annually, and voluntarily, reporting four-year graduation rates for all student athletes over a period of eight consecutive years, African American student athletes have graduated at a rate of only 46%, reinforcing the

notion that these students are more "athleticated" than educated (Burnsed, 2018;

Harrison, 2008).

Finally, a potential fifth at-risk group lies buried within the student population: the students whose academic abilities are below average. These students may be either underperforming or underprepared. Over 60% (some collegiate sites show over 70%) of all applicants are accepted at NCC. Institutions that accept less than 25% of applicants are considered selective; those who accept 25–50% of applicants are considered less selective. NCC, accepting over 50% of applicants, is considered moderately selective (DOE, 2017[5]). The majority of incoming freshmen (statistics are based on August - December numbers) have, on average, high school grade point averages (GPA's) of 3.00+. Their cumulative SAT scores are 830-1030 with an average of 900+ on the old SAT and 910-1110 with an average of 1000+ on the new SAT. Their composite ACT scores are 17-21 with an average of <20. These scores reflect the national average, respectively (College Data, 2018; College Factual, n.d.; College Simply, 2018). Assuming a normal distribution in the student population, we can expect that possibly 13–16% of the students at NCC are above average but at least 13–16% are below average, a hidden statistic.

Demographics of the Football Team.

The microculture of the football team, the football culture, had 120+ student athletes in August. By the end of the season that number was just under 100, a respectable number that shows 80% retention over the season. This reflects both the NCAA data and what Mark Metzler, the VPSL, told me earlier, "it's clear that athletes

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[5] This citation and its accompanying reference refer to a general website; this is deliberate to avoid revealing either the name of the participant or its location.

stay here and graduate at the same, if not higher rates, than the other students" (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016). Depending upon that rate, it may either offset or confirm the NCAA data on the graduation rates of DIII student athletes who play football. The average GPA for an incoming freshman football player is 2.50+, but this increases to over 3.00 by their senior year, just a few tenths below the average of the senior student population, verifying that DIII college students eventually do as well as their non-athletic peers at NCC (NCAA, 2017b).

Other potential at-risk populations are over-represented in the football culture. The African American student athletes comprise almost 40% of the team; combined with Asians and Hispanics, they comprise 35–40% of the student athletes on the team. The football team is also well over 50% first-generation college students.

Demographic Comparison

Northeast Christian College accepts at least three of every five applicants. A snapshot of the accepted, general student population reveals that three of every five students is also a student athlete. Half of the students are low income and eligible for federal financial aid, one of every five students is a minority, and half are first-generation college students.

The football team, however, has double the percentage of minorities with two of every five football players being African American or Hispanic. Almost two of every three football players are first-generation students and, of course, all are student athletes and football players. Both the college and the football team are deep in at-risk students. The football team, representing athletics, also represents over 10% of the student population and includes a sizable percentage of the at-risk population.

Enrollment Driven Athletics

The College relies upon the head coaches of its over 20 athletic teams to help recruit student athletes and to help construct the classes that support the College. Mark confirmed this when he stated that:

In our previous strategic plan there were three main goals for the athletic department: one had to do with enrollment and retention, one had to do with academic performance, and the last one had to do with their performance on the field… Their focus of course is to bring in new athletes, but they focus on developing them into scholars and into citizens and then, hopefully, while they're here, they're developing as individuals, as athletes, to be competitive and succeed in that role. (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016)

Dave Baum, the Head Football Coach, realizes that his role as a representative of the college culture is to help the College survive by building the football culture. During our interview, Dave clarified for me the role of coaches in DIII, and he acknowledged Mark's comments on the main goals for the athletic department administrators at NCC, including coaches:

The president's belief is that our job as coaches is to go out and yes, find good student athletes, but while they're on campus develop them athletically, academically, and socially. We need to make sure we're recruiting quality people and then we need to make sure we're doing the best we can as coaches to develop their skill and we try to ensure the best we can that they're having a positive college experience. (HC interview, December 7, 2016)

Using student athletes to help construct classes has inherent risks. Dr. Walker highlighted the dichotomy:

> You want to recruit, but then you want to take care of your recruitment so that students are retained… I do know that if your bench is too large you're going to have people sitting there and never getting to play... so there is a limit to what percentage of the student body can be athletes and still give everybody a decent chance to play. (VPAA interview, November 30, 2016)

It is important to recruit the niche of low-income, first-generation student athletes to construct classes, but that balance is often precarious: too many and the students leave, too few and the College suffers. Andy Giansante, a professor, verified that when he told me that the former Vice President for Enrollment pursued students for whom the College held no appeal; those classes fell below average and those low enrollment numbers now impact the College for four years. Failure to focus on or balance a college's niche can be detrimental if not disastrous.

Support for the Core Assumption

If the survival strategy were to simply recruit droves of student athletes every year to obtain an annual influx of tuition money, then retention, performance, and graduation would be inconsequential and not part of the coaches' goals. Recruiting only satisfies one of the goals laid out for the head coaches. The others – retention, academic performance, and athletic performance – require an intense effort from everyone to provide those student athletes with the positive experience that the College President seeks and an opportunity for those student athletes to reach their full potential. Support mechanisms are crucial for this strategy to work; however, these are also unspoken and unwritten. One

could argue that each of these is possibly a core assumption. However, none stands out singularly and the purpose of each is to support the core assumption.

Support for At-Risk Students

Accepting that the core assumption is survival of the institution, the College must provide methods to help its diverse at-risk population. Those methods must also be diverse and capable of helping Paul, a linebacker with a slight learning disability, while simultaneously challenging Layton, an academically intense defensive back. It is difficult for a student from a high-risk population, a student athlete, particularly one who is first generation or low income with no direct family connections to college and little understanding of collegiate expectations, to reach his full potential (Butrymowicz, 2015; Choy, 2001; Pathways to College Network, 2004; Schmidt, 2003; Smith, 2015; Tabor, 2011; Thayer, 2000; Vargas, 2004).

Retaining students is often more difficult then recruiting, particularly with a large at-risk population. NCC's first year retention rate is 60–70%, respectable and just above the national average. Retention is reflected on the football roster which is heavy with underclassmen; Layton pointed out that only seven seniors remained on the team. Mark, the VPSL, admitted, "we do have issues with student persistence from first to second year and second to third year" although he added, "we're actually doing pretty well with our first-generation college students as compared to national averages" which are just below NCC's average (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016).

There is strong support at NCC to help its student athletes reach their full potential; each support mechanism, however, places heavy obligations on faculty and staff. Similar to the core assumption, these are also unwritten but nonetheless as strong an

influence. I refer to these as "core concessions," the unwritten acknowledgement by everyone on campus of what must be done if the core assumption is to be realized. These core concessions often take-on a more familial, paternalistic appearance.

Faculty Involvement

Low-income, first-generation students often do not understand how to navigate a challenging four-year academic program or manage the "hidden curriculum" that exists within higher education (Education Advisory Board, 2016; Riggs, 2014). On a campus with a student body that is over 50% student athletes, therefore, one might expect to find Physical Education or Athletic Coaching programs attended by a majority of the student athletes, programs with which they might easily identify and feel more comfortable, but that is not the case. The Physical Education Department is small, and it is not the prevailing major; Athletic Coaching is only a minor. The most popular majors on campus for students as a whole are business administration, biology, and psychology. The top major for football players reflects one of the top majors on campus – business administration – and the other top two majors for football players are communications and criminal justice, two pre-professional programs. Intense faculty involvement in recruiting, advising, and supporting these student athletes is what helps them navigate the more difficult majors at NCC.

Andie Shepherd, the Athletic Director (AD), commented on the Business Department and its relationship with the student athletes: "If I have to recruit a business kid all they have got to do is meet any one of those professors and it's a done deal – they're coming to [NCC] – they're a good group" (AD interview, November 30, 2016). As an example, Andy Giansante is a professor in business; his classes routinely include

guest speakers from local businesses and class projects where students engage with local

business people - and his classes have high percentages of student athletes. Layton, an

Academic All-District student athlete, recognized the support offered by this Department

and the paternalistic nature of the professors, saying:

> I'm in the business department; the business department is amazing. Their first
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> mission is to get you a job, internship, whatever they can to get you success. The
>
> professors really try to prepare you for the workplace, at least the ones that I've
>
> had. Anytime they're teaching, mostly you hear really good examples of how you
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> use everything in the workplace depending on your major. I feel like everyone in
>
> the college really wants you to be as well prepared as you can when you go out
>
> into the workplace. (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017)

An accounting major, Layton knows NCC's job placement: "I know for accounting majors,

I think there are about 25 in my class, I think 20, 22, something like that, all have jobs

already…. the last five years our placement for accounting majors is like 95%" (Focus

Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017).

There are also support networks established in other departments throughout

campus. Andie, the AD, described two interesting examples that were almost father-like:

> Our students have really good interactions with some of our biology professors.
>
> One is a personal friend of mine, actually; he definitely goes out of his way and
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> makes sure the student athletes and students in general are taken care of. (AD
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> interview, November 30, 2016)

Later, she had similar kudos for the Theater Department:

The Director of Theater, he works with the student athletes if they need a class for credit or they can't take his class because it's a certain time. He's like, "okay, do you want to help build sets?" He has a lot of student athletes that will take theatre credits, it's part of the core, and they help build sets for his plays – but what a great experience! They go to the play then and they see Dr. [Thomas] on campus and they really like him. You know, you have an athlete who…has to take a three-credit theatre class to stay eligible but he gets a great experience – he meets people he wouldn't meet in athletics. He builds a set, something to feel proud of, and then actually goes to the play and watches it. (AD interview, November 30, 2016)

The faculty are also supporting the student athletes outside of class, pushing them to change their socioeconomic status. Again, the student athletes acknowledge and appreciate this paternalistic-level of intervention. One player, Toby, commented:

Like if you email them or whatever, they'll help you with any questions you have. Or like anything, you need anything, they'll help you with it. They encourage you to go to office hours and everything too. I met with one teacher on a Sunday. (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017)

Jack, a junior linebacker, also commented on the paternalistic support of the faculty and in particular one professor as an example of what he meant:

I mean you can go wherever you want and like they will talk to you just like a loving campus. Everyone is here to help you… one professor, she's keeping me after class, trying to get me to come back for an extra semester to get my business

certificate, that way I could do stuff with both [he's a criminology major]. She's

going out of her way for me. (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February

24, 2017)

Rafe, a senior offensive lineman majoring in criminology, will become a state

police officer after graduation in the spring. A big, introspective young man, he added,

"the relationships they build with you as a student and the way they look after you... they

don't want to see you fail... they aim for you to be successful not only now but later on in

life" (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017).

An example of faculty being openly engaged and helping these students through

college emerged while I was sitting in the stands at an away game. While there I met

Veronica White, a retired admissions advisor. She discussed several student athletes she

helped and pointed out one in particular, describing her involvement with him:

They allow me to stay involved – see that player there [she points to a lineman], I

helped him. When I got him he could care less about classes and studies and it

showed. After a while he understood that education was his primary reason for

being here, not football, and now he has great grades and he's a spokesman to

underclassmen, telling them to study and apply themselves. [Smiling] He's one of

my favorite success stories. (V. White, Observation notes, September 24, 2016)

This contradicts the research (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom et al., 1995;

Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1990; Simons et al., 2007; Snyder, 1985) which indicates that

faculty have less respect for student athletes. This is possibly the difference between

NCC as a DIII institution and any DI institution: There are no athletic scholarships at

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NCC. Student athletes are treated the same as non-athletes, and there appears to be neither preferential nor disadvantageous treatment due to their participation in athletics.

Academics and athletics, however, have always coexisted in higher education at worst in institutional entropy and at best in dynamic equilibrium. That is to be expected on any campus, particularly one that has as many student athletes, as NCC. Dr. Walker acknowledged:

> There's always tension there, especially in a division three school. They [athletics] expect us [academics] to provide a good education for the athletes that they work with. They expect us to understand what their constraints and requirements are and find ways to accommodate them. They expect us to respect what they're doing and sometimes I think they feel that we don't accord them full respect. (VPAA interview, November 30, 2016)

When asked about a possible athletic counter-culture with so many student athletes on campus, Dr. Walker adamantly agreed that a counter-culture would not be tolerated on a small college campus. "We don't have that counter culture. Are there aspects of frustration? Oh yeah." She then summarized faculty frustrations:

> Coaches, I think, certainly tell their students "your studies come first," but when a student has to leave at noon to travel some distance to a game, that student is going to miss two classes and rhetoric doesn't matter. You can say student athlete all you want but there are actions that the grown-ups should take to make sure that the students are not pulled apart in all these directions and put into virtually impossible situations. (VPAA interview, November 30, 2016)

This exchange and the ensuing transition highlight the dichotomous reality of higher education not only at NCC but in campuses across the country. My conversation shifted from the Vice President of Academic Affairs, a seasoned educator with several decades of academic experience, to the Vice President of Student Life, a young administrator who is concerned with the holistic development of students on campus. The perspectives on students and student athletes were reflected in the distance between the quiet administrative offices on the top of the hill and the vibrant student center 75 yards down the hill. Sitting with Mark Metzler, the VPSL, in his office in the bustling student center, he described the support of the college culture for the athletic culture:

> There are times when I think that faculty wish there's more of an emphasis on and support for academics versus athletics; I think that probably happens at a lot of institutions, especially at an institution where we have [over 50%] athletes. But as a whole this campus, in my opinion, is very supportive of athletics. Does everyone feel that way? Probably not; there are a number of faculty that probably don't go to the athletic events... but I would say as a leadership team that's an emphasis for us and we try to encourage that as much as possible. (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016)

Moving later that day from the student center to the gymnasium, I walked 150 yards past the administration building and down the other side of the hill to another perspective, the athletic perspective. In distance, all three are within sight of each other and they form a geographic triangle on campus. In their perspectives and views, they also see the College from different sides of the same triangle, a triangle that by necessity must include academics, student life, and athletics for a college to be "whole." Sitting in her

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office in the gymnasium with the sound of the weight room in the background, Andie, the AD, discussed faculty and staff support for athletics:

> We obviously want support… come to our games, be positive with our student athletes, just be supportive, make yourself available. If your office hours are only during a time that the students' got to practice, slide them and give them an office hour. If so-and-so got a concussion, it's not his fault. If a kid is missing a class, call the coach. Communicate with us about some things our students aren't doing and also communicate with us about the things they are doing well. We'll reward them if they're doing well; it's not always about punishing them. I think sometimes it's a little bit overlooked by our faculty what our coaches do. [Smiling and laughing slightly] It's my job to kind of educate them. (AD interview, November 30, 2016)

All three of these administrators share a love of the College but demonstrate the relationship between the academic world and the athletic world. One cannot survive without the other. Fortunately, at NCC, that relationship is not estranged; the closeness of the buildings, and the shared involvement in making NCC successful, keeps the departments focused – and in the background there is always the core assumption.

Dave, as the head coach, shares a similar perspective with Mark, the VPSL: They are in the middle, working with students but a part of the administration. They recognize that their roles are to support the College, but in doing that, they must support the students. When discussing faculty, his direct contact with the academic world, Dave agreed that while the majority of faculty are very helpful and forgiving, their reactions are similar to riding a wave:

I think there's elements within human nature where some administrators and faculty…don't really care for student athletes and don't really understand student athletes and why it's important. There are some that are very tied and attend sporting events, very supportive of student athletes. I think our student athletes are well received on campus…I think they [faculty] understand the commitment and sacrifice it takes to be a student athlete but it is a "wave" as far as reaction to behaviors. I think we constantly ride a wave as to what the perception of student athletes is on campus. If student athletes are doing the right things and having success on the field I think perception improves. No matter how you want to separate it, at the end of the day, being a football player is still an all-encompassing umbrella. Even if you're a 4.0 student, and you do all the right things, "well, he's a great student..." and then there's always, "...even for a football player!" But, again, the more quote-unquote, "knucklehead-type guys," problem guys, guys causing problems in the dorms and in the classroom and not going to class, I think it's a wave of positive and negative reactions. (HC interview, December 7, 2016)

Dave recognizes that perceptions of student athletes are often skewed toward the negative by the unacceptable actions of a few individuals. Unfortunately, this often impacts the positively performing student athletes as the entire team is stereotyped. At NCC, however, the majority of faculty appear to understand what the student athletes contribute toward the viability of NCC as an institution.

Staff Involvement

The support does not end with faculty; rather, it extends to all staff employees on campus. Responding to the question on why he is at NCC, Dave said, "I think it was the leading force behind me even taking the job," adding:

NCC is truly an "it takes a village" type of mentality…where everyone from the librarians to the mailroom workers to the cafeteria, everyone has an interest in the student's development. They want to develop successful people… successful husbands, fathers, employees, bosses… NCC is the first place where I've been where librarians are reading student papers, correcting grammar, and helping them with research projects. So that was where I kind of got a different feel as far as them truly making an investment in the students' development. (HC interview, December 7, 2016)

I was intrigued by the comment "it takes a village," and I asked Dave if he could give me an example, a particular informal leader, and he identified an interesting person:

The most influential on our students and our student athletes is probably the campus police chief…. he's city brought up, he can relate to the lower socioeconomic students, he has that ability to kind of understand where they've been. He has life experiences I think that lend well to things a lot of our guys go through. He just has a good street sense to him. He's really dialed in. (HC interview, December 7, 2016)

Exploring his response further, I asked him "what is 'dialed in?'"

He does a good job as far as putting his story out there early. He comes in and talks a lot to the teams about life experience... he comes to a lot of games, he's at

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practice a lot, the way he dresses and carries himself relates well to our minority students. (HC interview, December 7, 2016)

As one might suspect, the Chief of Campus Police is a minority, an African American. Born within the boundaries of a metro area two hours away, he developed relationships with all the student athletes on campus, particularly the minority student athletes on the football team. This became apparent when I asked the student athletes in the focus group interviews about informal leaders and they also replied, "Chief!" Yosiah said, "I can talk to Chief about literally anything. No matter what it is. Football, school, life, anything." Dion added, "...and if you get in like trouble or anything, he'll like help you out with it. He'll like talk to you and get you on the right page." (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017)

The "it takes a village" mentality encompasses many of the staff and at all levels. The former facilities director at NCC, Fred Connor, discussed with me his role at NCC. He employed a number of student athletes over the summer and during breaks as painters and as grounds maintenance. His opinion was that he was teaching these students something practical in addition to what they were learning in the classroom: hands-on training outside the classroom, things they could use throughout their life. The student athletes appreciated his help – they remained in contact with him after graduation to update him on their careers (F. Connor, Personal Phone interview, March 2017).

Coaching Involvement

The most important support for student athletes comes from the head coach; he is the conduit between the college and the student athletes and his example sets the attitude for the entire team (Adler & Adler, 1988,1991; Andrews, 2014; Schroeder & Scribner,

2006). Layton, NCC's all-academic senior defensive back, provided me with an excellent example. I was in a classroom with Andy Giansante when I came across Layton. It was the week after NCC's first loss of the season, so I asked him about the game that previous Saturday and why it was so much closer this year (NCC lost in overtime) and what was the difference? "Last year we didn't win. That team we played Saturday beat us last year by over 40 points…. but this year was different – they didn't embarrass us." According to Layton, the difference was the head coach, "yeah, he's organized! No fooling around! He played at [an extremely competitive DIII college] you know" (Observation notes, September 13, 2016). Curious, I asked if he could tell me about the new team discipline. Layton recalled an incident that occurred in Summer Camp: "We got a little 'chippy' [or rough] with each other this summer – offense, defense – he [Head Coach] blew the whistle and stopped everything. He told us, 'we don't do that here anymore!' and it stopped" (Observation notes, September 13, 2016). Layton's comments clearly suggest that the Head Coach has now brought team discipline from his alma mater to NCC.

In his role as the VPSL and a former student athlete himself, Mark's observations support the notion that the head coach exerts the most influence on the student athletes:

One of the most noticeable things for me in my role is the coaches. The coaches have a tremendous amount of influence on them [student athletes] as players but also as students. Our coaches are an integral part because we know that these athletes are going to listen to their coaches. The opportunity to compete is a big influence on those students. (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016)

Andie, the AD, concurred and provided an example: One female professor told a senior male professor that she had trouble getting students to come to advising meetings.

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So he asked her, "well, are they student athletes?" to which she replied "I think so." He immediately responded, 'Well, call the coach! If I can't get hold of a kid, I call the coach. It's fixed" (AD interview, November 30, 2016).

Similar to a classroom, every football practice was scripted with a "lesson plan" that divided the time on the field into periods. Background music (predominantly rap or electro-dance) filled the stadium at almost every practice I attended. The athletes were scheduled the entire time they were on the field, just under two hours, but the music made the practice go by quickly. The stadium game clock measured the intervals of activity, with each of the assistant coaches holding his script to indicate what he was to accomplish during each period. I heard coaches at various times grow intense to get a point across, and the occasional "Move! Move! Move your asses!" resonated through the cool autumn air, loud enough to vibrate the autumn leaves hanging on the trees surrounding the field. But most conversations, again, were delivered in a paternalistic teaching mode. This same approach carried over into scrimmages and games, supporting the College's philosophy of athletics as an extension of the classroom.

Dave always met with his team at the end of practice to give feedback. I heard him tell the team at the conclusion of a practice after a game, "We improved last Saturday on our mental game but we still need to improve our physical game. We will continue to work on both to become the team that we want to be" (Observation notes, week of September 3, 2016). That same week, one evening after practice, Dave told the team:

> It's 5:45. Get to the locker room, hang up your pads and uniforms, and get
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> moving. It shouldn't take you an hour to shower and eat, get your books and

materials, and get to study hall. It starts at 7:00. Now move. (Observation notes, week of September 3, 2016)

Dragging himself off the field one night after practice tired and sweaty, Paul, a linebacker, told his grandfather, Wayne, that he could not go to dinner with him because he had study hall and "coach is serious" (Observation notes, week of September 3, 2016).

I met with officiating crews after several home games and asked for their observations. Jay, an experienced Referee, told me after one game, "they're much more disciplined now... the head coach doesn't complain about calls or spots – he asks a question, you give him an answer, he says thanks, and walks away." At another game I asked if the coach's attitude reflected on the players and, if so, how, and Gary, an Umpire, commented, "they don't get stupid penalties – they just play the game." Kevin, a Line Judge with several years of experience, added after another game while we were out getting a quick meal, "this team is now playing and acting like a college team again" (Observation notes, September 10, 2016, October 22, 2016, and November 12, 2016).

I questioned Dave about his approach to coaching student athletes at the DIII level, knowing that he had previously been an assistant coach at a small DI institution with scholarship athletes but that he was a DIII student athlete himself. "Winning is not the top priority; it's the development of the students," he told me. I then probed a little deeper and asked Dave about his method for developing student athletes:

I don't want to say coach "influence," but player-coach relationship. We create an environment where I think we have more personal relationships with the students that we work with than any faculty member is going to have with a student that they have in class... (HC interview, December 7, 2016)

During her interview a week prior, Andie, the AD, noted those relationships and how crucial they are, stating that, "A big part of our job, and part of what we get evaluated on, is developing our student athletes both athletically and academically" (AD interview, November 30, 2016). Mark, the VPSL, in his interview, concurred, "winning is third" (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016). This indicates agreement between three administrators with the previously-expressed views attributed to the President of NCC: develop the student athletes academically, athletically, and socially. Winning is not to be sought-after to the exclusion of the other goals on campus.

During a focus group interview, Yosiah, an underclassman and African American inner city running back, unknowingly vindicated Dave's philosophy from the perspective of a student athlete while reinforcing the paternalistic nature of the coaching staff:

They're like family to me...they're not like, I come to football and have questions, it can be about anything. Something personal, something outside of football, about football, they're always there for us as well. Just as much as professors are there, coaches are there too. (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017)

Dave Baum summarized his role as the Head Coach in an enrollment-driven athletics program. Retaining key student athletes such as Yosiah both in the College and on the team is critical:

Relationships keep, relationships directly influence, your retention. It could be player-coach relationships, it could be athlete-athlete relationships, it could be a lot of different dynamics, but I think what draws you in and keeps you at a place is building relationships. (HC interview, December 7, 2016)

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In summation, this supports the argument that it is the coach who has the most influence on the student athlete (Adler & Adler, 1988, 1991; Andrews, 2014; Atwell, 1985; Beyer & Hannah, 2000; Eitzen, 1992; Heller, Gilson, & Paule-Koba, 2016; Noll, 1991; Schroeder & Scribner, 2006). The faculty, however, do not oppose the student athletes, consider them dumb jocks, or ignore their learning issues (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Duderstadt, 2000; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1990; Engstrom et al., 1995; Leach & Connors, 1984; Parsons, 2013; Simons et al., 2007; Snyder, 1985). On the contrary, they and the staff are actively engaged, helping the coach retain these student athletes by conceding time and energy to support them on an unofficial basis.

The Student Athletes' Core Assumption

While football is not part of the College's core assumption, it is nonetheless a factor that the College relies upon to build its classes and satisfy its core assumption. The core assumption of the microculture of student athletes, the football players, becomes apparent after days of observation and focus group interviews: it is the desire to identify themselves as intercollegiate football players. Within my two focus groups, all the student athletes agreed that they were drawn to NCC by their love of football. When prompted, Jack emphatically replied, "I guess any opportunity that you get to play the sport you love for four extra years, I mean, you're going to hop right on that" (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017). Yosiah agreed, "I got the opportunity to continue my education and play football - the other schools said I'd be second string" (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017). Matt said, "I knew I could play freshman to senior year" (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017).

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For most, that opportunity to play football – not the mascot, the facilities, the academic offerings, or the curriculum – drove them to select Northeast Christian College over other options. While there is respect for these artifacts, their burning desire to continue their football careers – and the belief that they could for four more years – is their first reason for being in college. Not one mentioned the facilities at NCC in comparison to other colleges; not one mentioned the lure of being a "Bull" at NCC; not one mentioned that he came here for a particular academic program (notwithstanding comments made by those who eventually selected high caliber programs once they arrived such as Layton, who came for the major, but also because he could play football). It was football that brought them to the front porch of NCC and, once they entered through the front door, it was up to the College to introduce them to other opportunities.

Football also serves as their elixir, their analgesic, making them want to stay and fight through classes which they might be unprepared for socially or academically. They know to play they must stay and to stay they must study. Dion said:

> Football helps me realize, I mean, look at the statistics, not a lot of people go to the NFL, so that was never a plan, but I feel that football has always been a stress reliever. It helps me, it pushed me in the classroom. (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017)

As Mark Metzler, the VPSL, noted, the desire to play and to compete is what motivates them. This eventually matures into a grudging reality – that football will not be there after NCC – which transitions into the need for an education. Mike, an underclassman, described his commitment to attend NCC and to play small college football, "We have to commit to school and football more because none of us are relying

on football to get us through the rest of our lives. We have to go out in the real world and get a job" (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017). The others quickly nodded their agreement with Yosiah's assessment:

Most DI football players, they plan on, not most maybe, but a lot, plan on having football pay the bills. Maybe; but they really aren't learning all the things that we talk about. One day you're going to grow up, you know, have a big life, have a wife, maybe [they all laugh], maybe not! But you know, you have kids and the way your dad put in time, you want to be there the same way for your family. If you're putting in 100, 110%, every play, it transfers off the field when you go home. We have more motivation to succeed. (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017)

Jan, my observer, commented after the focus group interview with the upperclassmen, "These guys are extremely pragmatic. They know they are not headed for professional football and that they have to concentrate on their academics as well – they feel grateful for the opportunity to play football for four more years" (Observer interview notes, March 24, 2017).

Football lures them in, football gives them a reason to stay, and it is the football culture that helps the College build classes, retain students, and pay bills. At the same time, the College helps the student athletes grow and mature until as upperclassmen they realize how fortunate they were to not only play the sport that they love for four more years, but to also come away with a degree that they otherwise might not have had. The same can probably be said about the student athletes on the other 20+ teams on campus.

Support for the Core Assumption

Multiple observations and interview comments support the desire of the student

athletes to identify themselves first as intercollegiate football players and then as student

athletes. They maintain a close relationship with their former teammates who introduced

them to NCC. They develop a close camaraderie with their current teammates and, in

turn, welcome their new and future teammates into NCC. This evolves into a recursive

football culture. Ultimately, the student athletes accept the need to complete a college

education and they recognize football as the vehicle that helps them attain that degree.

Microculture Development

We know that subculture development depends upon a groups' perception of

themselves (Martin & Siehl, 1983). Individuals with greater affiliation share

communication and have intense, continuous contact with others who share similar

beliefs (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Trice & Beyer, 1993). For a team, there must be

horizontal interaction where individuals align with the norms of their particular group

(Cooke & Rousseau, 1988). These individuals share experiences and demographics such

as age, ethnicity, and social class (Martin & Siehl, 1983). They create boundaries, define

acceptable actions, and adhere to a dyadic process separating insiders from outsiders

(Adler & Adler, 1988; Andrews, 2014; Barnhill & Turner, 2014; Dansereau et al., 1975;

Falk, 2005; Graen, 1976; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Eventually, they share the same

motivation: to play intercollegiate football.

When I asked the freshmen and sophomores in the underclass focus group

(February 17, 2017) who motivated them or led by example on the team, Yosiah

immediately replied, "the upperclassmen." And when I asked all? "Not all

upperclassmen," added Dion, "just some of them." Mike added, "I think there's a lot of opportunity for younger leadership. There's different leaders, different times, different situations." So, who do they follow? Yosiah said, "the silent ones," and Mike stated, "more lead by example." They all mentioned one senior and Toby, an underclassman, explained:

> He's a great example of someone - he came in as a freshman, wasn't the strongest, wasn't the fastest, wasn't the most athletic, but he worked hard. He worked hard in the classroom, worked hard in the weight room, on the field, and by the time he was a junior and a senior he started as a wide receiver. Played every game. (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017)

I observed the team leadership on the field during practices. I watched Jack loudly tell his teammates during a kick-off drill, "You're doing it wrong! Stop dogging it! Come on!" (Observation notes, October 5, 2016). Offensive linemen appeared to be a particularly tight group, helping each other and showing each other what to do, and they appeared to have a strong affinity for their position coach, an educated bear of a man who once played at another academically-oriented DIII college (Observation notes, Week of November 7 – 10, 2016). The players would also harass each other good naturedly with loud whoops and hollers when one got beat by another such as a defensive back getting beat by a receiver (Observation notes, week of October 30 – November 4, 2016).

Team leadership helps recruit and retain future microculture members; as Schein (2010) noted, having something to pass down to the next generation defines a culture, legitimizes it, and solidifies it. It also demonstrates that this is a true microculture with its own norms and values which they recursively pass to their replacements. This connection

to the microculture continues beyond graduation. Dave, the head coach, commented "I think it helps to bring alumni back to build relationships with the players. Guys come back and talk to our guys about education and business and accounting and all these different paths that we've had guys take" (HC interview, December 7, 2017). The influence of student athletes, current and past, on each other was obvious. Jack discussed what brought him to NCC and how that differed from his treatment at another, DII, religiously-affiliated institution:

> I had two of my best friends that still talk to me every day who were seniors when I was a freshman and they kind of brought me under their wing a little bit and that's what made me enjoy [NCC] the most. I didn't like the vibe of the other team that wanted me so I came here. At the other school the sophomores were talking to me but the seniors didn't care about me so I thought I'll come to [NCC] – I thought it was better. From the moment I got here I was just comfortable with the team. I mean, I stayed overnight at a competitor and it just wasn't a really comfortable atmosphere. I'm not a boring guy to be honest with you [laughing hard with his teammates]. I wanted to come here, I wanted to have fun for my four years of college, so I thought [NCC] was a little more for me. (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017)

Jack will be a team captain next year, a leader, and he will no doubt pass down to incoming players what was done for him. Matt concurred with Jack's views:

> I feel like in this school we have a good bond. I mean seniors can hang out with freshmen and it's like just another group of friends. At other schools, seniors and freshmen, they're kind of like, "He's a freshman, I'm not going to hang out with

him," but here I don't care who you are come hang out with us. (Focus Group

interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017)

The assimilation process is apparent on the field. At the beginning of the season, I

observed players segregated into pockets by race and experience level. It was subtle but

noticeable. As the season wore on, however, the pockets dissipated and merged. Head

Coach Dave Baum agreed:

People tend to pocket with physical characteristics that they share with each

other… the natural thing when you're young and you don't really know anyone is

that white guys tend to stick with white guys and black guys tend to stick with

black guys. It's just a comfort thing. (HC Interview, December 7, 2016)

Dave observed that this weakens over time. "If you're coaching linebackers and

you have minority guys, they tend to first start together and then they branch out and it

becomes one group; then it branches out into the team" (HC Interview, December 7,

2016).

Dr. Walker observed that the student athletes "do identify with one another,"

however, "I don't really know which student is an athlete and which is not an athlete!"

She agreed with Dave: "we're comfortable with those who are like us, we share our

values and sometimes, just the way we spend our days…and that's good. If it's to the

exclusion of other groups from whom we might learn, that's bad" (VPAA interview,

November 30, 2016). To avoid an exclusionary subculture, there are no athletic dorms,

athletic training tables, or athlete-only weight rooms. As a microculture, however, that

invisible bond of football helps the student athletes identify with each other, retaining

them for NCC.

Parental Involvement

Parental support is not integrated into either the college or the football culture nor does it directly impact my findings. It does, however, serve two purposes: first, to address the literature and, second, to verify the decisions and the backgrounds of the student athletes.

Andie Shepherd, the AD, discussed her personal experience as a first-generation student athlete, stating, "I wanted to go somewhere my parents could watch me play ball still." She added:

> They [parents] want to be able to continue to watch their student athlete play
> sports, or be able to attend their honors day convocation, still be part of it. Their
> parents are probably telling them they need to go to school, that they need that
> opportunity. My parents always told me "You don't want to end up like us." My
> folks turned out well but my dad always said, "you don't want to work in a prison,
> do ya?!" (AD Interview, November 30, 2016)

Andie's experience reflects the general experience of low-income or first-generation students. Most attend college closer to home (Engle, 2007). At NCC, most student athletes stated that they were from towns and cities within four hours of the college while some only went a distance to escape a harsh environment. At pregame tailgate parties, I asked parents and families why their sons and grandsons selected NCC rather than other colleges and over the weeks I heard the following comments:

- "He had no DI potential – so we decided he'd get an education out of this."

- "They showed interest in HIM and then he came here and he liked THEM!"

- "They offered him some good financial aid."

- "It was his choice and we liked it – he wanted to play college ball."

- "It was close to home."

- "He just loved the school."

- "His girlfriend goes to school nearby."

- "His high school coach played here and suggested it to him."

Wayne, a grizzled, tough man who I befriended while attending practices, echoed Andie's father, advising his grandson, Paul, "don't be like me – get an education, finish here!" (Observation notes, September 28, 2016). Seeming to contradict findings in other studies, the parents suggested that their sons lacked DI potential, that it was about education, and that NCC was their son's decision: The parents' sentiments were that no one pushed these student athletes in opposition to their abilities (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014; Givertz & Segrin, 2012; NCAA, 2016a; Rochman, 2013; Schwanz et al., 2014).

Large numbers of parents, African American and white, demonstrated their support by attending every game, home or away. I conversed with several fathers. Rod, easily 6 feet 4 inches tall and close to 300 pounds, played a year of DII college football but dropped out. When I asked him why, he laughed, pointed to the field, and said, "him – me and his mom got together" (Observation notes, October 1, 2016). John, a middle-aged father who appears to have been an athlete once himself, nervously rocked in his seat and talked to himself, projecting to his son on the field. Jones, a short, thin African American man, waved a game program and paced along the top of the stands every game whereas Rocco, a white father who was at one time muscular, balanced him out by pacing along the bottom of the stands. Rich, a short but stocky police officer from a city

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three hours away, would yell "Bullshit!" on every call or play with which he did not agree (Observation notes, October 1, 2016). Wayne, my retired truck-driving friend, came to all the games and to practice at least once per week, encouraging his grandson, Paul. On senior day, an extended African American family of 20 people supported their student athlete by wearing the same NCC t-shirt with his name on the back.

These parents confirmed in several ways that their sons were indeed first generation, sons of blue-collar families (Tabor, 2011). Dialect was the first indicator: Speech is an indication of socioeconomic status and role modeling in blue-collar groups ("Dialect and Accent," n.d.; Forrest & Dodsworth, 2016; Nordquist, 2017; Philipsen, 1975). When I asked Jim, a firefighter who never went to college, why he was here, he replied with an Appalachian twang, "I'm just here to support my little girl," a student at NCC; he added, "this is sure a lot a fun!" (Observation notes, September 17, 2016). At one game, a well-dressed, attractive mom of one of NCC's players yelled in her heavy blue-collar regional dialect, "That ain't college ball!" and "My son can play better n' at!" (Observation notes, October 1, 2016). One rough-looking white father in the back of the stands called out in his stentorian voice, "Come on boys, ring a few bells out there!" (Observation notes, September 17, 2016).

Dress is also a measure of socioeconomic status, representative of education, income, or occupation (Davis & Lennon, 1988; McDermott & Pettijohn, 2011). Mike, Rod, and Rocco wore the same NCC football jersey and shorts to every game. Jones wore an oversized letterman jacket and hat regardless of temperature. The rough-looking father with the stentorian voice wore a black t-shirt and his newsboy hat on backwards to every game. The mothers wore NCC sweatshirts to every game, August through November.

The blue-collar attitude was exhibited strongly on a cold Saturday in November before NCC's final game against their rival, a well-heeled college with immaculate facilities and a strict conservative religious mindset. While tailgating, the parents discussed the no alcohol policy at this college (an away game) and Wayne observed, "Look, no one has beer – that's their rule here, they're a little stiff, but we'll do as they ask, it's their school." One father from NCC in a parka and sunglasses said, "I was afraid to sneak a beer – they might send me to purgatory for a while!" Bill, another father, replied, "Hell, I was afraid to walk on the f***ing grass!" Two others, both with beards, hats, camo jackets, and sunglasses said, "People looked at us like we were part of the grounds crew" (Observation notes, November 12, 2016).

These families were involved and proud of their sons being in college. Joey, an underclassman, noted, "my mom always wears her NCC hoodie and it has the [Bull] on it. I can't even tell you the amount of times that she has been stopped and told how wonderful the school is" (Focus Group interview, February 17, 2017). Dave, the Head Coach, noted the college adjusts its operations based on the close family bonds:

> Professors, faculty, and staff, as long as students are communicating it's a pretty, I don't want to say forgiving, but it's an understanding education, more lenient than I've ever seen. They understand that grandmothers get sick and there's family ties. I think it goes back to the idea of us being a majority blue-collar, first-generation college. (HC interview, December 7, 2016)

Summary

Northeast Christian College has survival as its core assumption. Maslow (1943) argued that survival is one of our basic needs. Survival, both individually and

organizationally, is not unexpected in a region known as the rust belt ("Rust Belt," n.d.), with decreasing numbers of college students, financially distressed towns, and parents with lower income jobs. Those parents, however, also have children who require a college education and want to play collegiate sports. NCC is using enrollment-driven athletics to recruit racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse student athletes from these communities. Consequently, coaches help construct classes made-up of students who want to play intercollegiate sports. This is not a change in organizational philosophy as much as it appears to have developed into a guiding philosophy.

Within this niche are multiple at-risk groups. Over 60% of the applicants are accepted and their scores and grade point averages are average according to national standards; statistically, many are then below average. The student athlete population is over 50% of the student population; 40–50% percent are first generation, the children of blue-collar families for the most part; and 40–50% are low income. Each of these groups is overrepresented on the football team, which also has 40% minority students. These numbers are reflected in the college's low graduation rates: 30–40% graduate within four years and just over 40% graduate within six years.

In support of the core assumption, several core concessions are granted by every group on campus. Faculty help recruit and retain the student athletes and their efforts echo the subtle, "velvet paternalism" of the College. Of course, in higher education, where faculty stress academics, this can often lead to friction. The staff on campus also support these students: some by including them, some by listening, others by assisting the students as an unofficial part of their job.

Most importantly, there is the coach, the linchpin to cultural congruence on campus. He develops a relationship with the student athletes, recruits them, and helps retain them. He is also expected to develop and socialize them. This is not DI where the coach delegates each of these roles to others – in DIII he is intimately involved.

The College's core assumption ties into the core assumption of the student athletes and football appears to be that core assumption – the love of the game and the belief that they can extend their playing careers for four more years. Once on campus, they join their microculture and transition to reality: the need for an education.

The logic behind NCC's core assumption is not unique. A former athletic director and coach that I knew, while consulting at another troubled institution, stated in response to unfavorable comments from faculty and staff regarding football: "Great. Now, ask them if they enjoy being paid." NCC is an example of that logic. With 100 football student athletes, over 10% of the student population, in a school that does not provide athletic scholarships, football adds to the College's income – and that is just one of over 20 sports. It is a strategy that pays dividends.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSES: ARTIFACTS AND ESPOUSED VALUES

This section continues my analysis from the previous section, segueing from the covert to the overt and placing the balance of my findings into the first two visible layers of Schein's (2010) model: the outer layer –the artifacts – and the middle layer – the espoused values. These two layers are critical to determine if cultural congruence with the core assumptions in the previous section exists: the College's core assumption of survival and the student athletes' core assumption of identifying themselves as intercollegiate football players. In identifying these, I want to present the impact on the student athletes. I will begin by describing the artifacts: the town, the College, and the documents.

The Visible Layer: The Artifacts

Yin (2003) and Patton (2002) identified three sources of evidence, described in Chapter Three, that define the artifacts: physical archives, archival records, and documents. Physical archives include facilities and grounds as well as the actual town. Archival records and documents include the website, mission/vision statements, and the strategic plan. However, organizational theorists also add language patterns, dress, and symbols into this layer reflecting the definitions attributed to symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1969; Schein, 2010). As the outward, visible signs of culture, the artifacts provide an immediate and public impression of the assumed culture that lies within.

The Town

A town is molded by both its location and the natural features upon which it is founded. The street names and buildings, which often have historical significance,

combine with the geographic features to convert roads and buildings, hills and streams, into a town and a town into an artifact (Schlereth, 2005). The town in which Northeast Christian College (NCC) is located lies in a sparsely inhabited part of this region 1–2 hours from the nearest metropolitan areas. To reach it, you must take a nondescript exit off an interstate and turn onto a two-lane state highway that meanders several miles through fields and past farms, until it descends a hill into a broad valley. There it passes fast-food restaurants and discount strip malls, and eventually becomes the town's main street. Houses converted into professional offices line both sides of the road, while Victorian homes hug the tree-lined brick side streets. Main street enters the business district where it passes between rows of shops and antiqued iron street lamps. Several railroad tracks cross over the main street before the main street crosses over a young river, climbs up another hill, winds through a neighborhood of older and smaller frame homes, and transitions back into a state highway as it exits the other side of town.

With just under 6,000 people, the town's population has steadily declined since the middle of the 20th century when it numbered 10,000. The demographics of the town are common for this region: 96% white, 98% English speaking, and 91% high school educated. Residents have a median per capita income $12,000 below the national median per capita income, and 20% of the population lives below the poverty level (DataUSA, n.d.; "Demographics," 2017)[6].

Rural and quaint, the town is entrenched in the rust belt ("Rust Belt," n.d.). The old storefronts in the central business district lining the main street have been repurposed

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[6] This citation and all subsequent citations and accompanying references in this chapter refer to a general website wherein the information can be found; this is deliberate to avoid revealing the name of either the participant or the town in which it is located.

and are now either restaurants, pizza parlors, bars, small shops (laundromats, repair shops, boutiques, and salons) or vacant – at least three in a small two block area. A brownfield industrial site, a now-empty field that was once home to a well-recognized steel fabrication company, sits less than a half mile from main street. The last large employer in town, a construction equipment manufacturing company, filed for bankruptcy; it was purchased and subsequently relocated all but a few remaining operations to other areas. These industrial ruins and remnants bear witness to the region's 50% job loss (DataUSA, n.d.; "Demographics," 2017).

The town and College are physical archives of each other and have coexisted since the mid-19th century. The College provides residents with opportunities for education, entertainment, and work, while students and staff rely upon the town for housing, shopping, dining, and professional services, echoing the traditional relationship between a college and its host community (Lambe, 2008; Semuels, 2017). The majority of crimes in town are for alcohol and assault, and the town is rated safer than average; the College, paradoxically, is considered less safe than average. Closer inspection of the statistics mandated by the Clery Act and VAWA, however, reveal that campus crimes are also alcohol- (70%) and drug-related (30%). One rape and one burglary have been reported in three years, and two to three incidents of domestic violence occur annually (College Factual, n.d.). Together, the town and the College are considered one of the safest collegiate environments in the country (Niche, n.d.).

Andie Shepherd, the Athletic Director (AD), recognizes the role that the College plays with the town and the community. "Athletics is directly tied to a little of your identity as an institution" (AD interview, November 30, 2016) she observed, reflecting

the notion that athletics is the "front porch" of a college. She then noted the ambassadorship of the student athletes within the town:

> We're a big portion of the student population here... We want to make sure that the student athletes are out there, and they're positive, they're being role models. I think we could actually grow that relationship with the community [the town] a little bit more, doing more community days, things like that. (AD interview, November 30, 2016)

Mark Metzler, the Vice President of Student Life (VPSL), added that "as far as the relationship between the community and athletes, I feel we get good support from the community especially with football in particular, a lot of them like to go to those games" (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016).

The College

A tree-lined driveway two blocks from main street summits a hill and ends in a cul-de-sac in the academic heart of campus. Three large buildings stand side-by-side as one academic citadel on the steep side of the hill. The oldest and the newest academic buildings cordon off the back center of the academic area, while the new student center balances out the academic area on the opposite side of the hill. All six of these buildings are constructed of red brick. The lone exception is the natural-colored brick administration building standing front and center. Tree-lined walks radiate out from the academic area through the lawns to the corners of the campus.

Older, traditional, red-brick dormitories and newer apartments and condominiums sit at opposite ends of the 100+ acre campus; combined, these house over 90% of the student population. Athletic facilities are spread across campus: The relatively new

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baseball/softball complex and the brand-new track and field complex are on the periphery of campus, while the older gymnasium and the newer stadium sit side-by-side on a hillside immediately below the academic buildings.

Less than 20 years old, the stadium is home to football, soccer, and lacrosse. A multi-purpose brick building houses the ticket booth, restrooms, and concessions. A black iron gate serves as the entrance on one side, while a chain link fence picks up on the other side and continues around the perimeter of the stadium. Aluminum bleachers, built into the hill on one side only, can seat between 1,000–2,000; new lighting permits the college to host night games and provide night practices. Team locker rooms are located in the adjacent gymnasium which also houses the basketball, volleyball, and wrestling teams. The College's fitness center is also in a renovated section of the old gym, and the athletes share it with the general student population.

Despite the investments in the physical plant, the older dormitories and unfinished projects are pointed out by students on social media and in the college's newspaper. One student on social media wrote, "the track was supposed to be done in 2016 the dorms are just terrible they are out of date." Students in the College newspaper compare NCC's residence halls to those of other colleges and note the alleged inequities. The implication is clear: Unless you are willing to remain patient for construction or already reside in a new residence hall, you will most likely be disappointed.

To an outsider, the artifacts associated with the physical plant present a prudent College working diligently to improve its facilities and remain competitive with other small colleges in the region. What the social media sites fail to acknowledge are the eight new facilities constructed in the last 20 years and the number of facilities renovated

during that same time frame. The campus does not have colonial or gothic architecture, and it lacks the ubiquitous climbing walls, multi-tiered fitness centers, and added amenities of a larger university. Unassuming red brick remains the predominant architectural material, yet its pragmatism does not equal poverty. NCC is comfortable in its own skin. Utilitarian in appearance, it presents a small college in a rural community, and it appeals to a certain type of student.

Religious Affiliation

One tree-lined walk leads across the lawn and down the hill to the new, red brick chapel which represents the denomination that founded this as an eclectic, ecumenical, Christian co-educational college a century and a half ago. Located in the center of campus, the website notes that the chapel stands "as a witness to the centrality of our spiritual life that we share together" (Observation notes, September 2016). Religion, however, does not dominate this campus. While the College remains closely affiliated with the founding denomination, that relationship is not draconian. Unlike a strict, dogmatic, conservative Christian college, chapel attendance is not mandatory, and there is only one religious course in the academic core. On this campus, religion informs the educational process through the mission, vision, and identity and remains a viable part of the holistic education where students are simply asked to discern the meaning and the purpose of their lives. This philosophy has not changed since the College's founding.

Financial Symbols

As a private college, NCC received no direct money from either state or federal governments, and the College endowment was less than $20,000,000. A campaign associated with the last strategic plan, however, increased the endowment to over

$50,000,000. The additional income contributed to construction, renovation, innovative programs, and the College's generous financial aid packages, which over 90% of the students received. Only 16% of the colleges and universities in the country have endowments greater than $50,000,000, and NCC was one of them (American Council on Education, 2014, p. 3).

Documents

NCC's statements of mission, vision, and identity are prominently displayed on its website in the "About" section along with its history, accreditation, and affiliation. The stated mission is to help individuals "reach their full potential" through ethical leadership, global awareness, and academic excellence as they develop lives of meaning and purpose. The "Academic" section lists the 20+ departments, over 50 majors and minors, the honors program, and opportunities for internships and study abroad. "Admissions" directs potential students to the online application process, the financial aid site, and tours of campus. "Campus Life" describes over 50 clubs, Greek life, spiritual life, and organizations on campus (Observation notes, August 15 – September 23, 2016).

Finally, the "Athletic" page lists the rosters, coaches, and schedules for the over 20 men's and women's athletic teams; all but three are in one conference (the conference does not offer those sports). The athletic department's mission is to have its student athletes "succeed in athletics as well as... other areas of the college community" and to help them "reach their full potential" both on the field and in the classroom. The college proclaims its affiliation with the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) Division Three (DIII) core principles: *discover*, *develop*, and *dedicate*. These principles

are reflected in the coach's evaluations: recruit, retain, and improve (Observation notes, August 15 – September 23, 2016).

Strategic Plan

NCC's new five–year strategic plan, which is both printed and referenced electronically on the website, has just three goals: developing resources, increasing enrollment, and creating an inclusive learning environment that combines academics, experiential learning, co-curricular programs, and athletic programs. These are designed to help the students "live lives of meaning and purpose" as they strive to "reach their full potential." These are then reinforced with a "Statement of Commitment" to "deliver a personalized, motivating, challenging and relevant education for every student." Aligning the College's mission, vision, and identity with the strategic plan, stakeholders are engaged in four supporting "pillars": academic excellence and relevance, a culture of caring and confidence, enhanced facilities and infrastructure, and superior delivery of programs. Four banners hanging vertically from the library represent the four "pillars" (Observation notes, August 15 – September 23, 2016).

The pillar entitled "Commitment to a Culture of Caring and Confidence" has five "initiatives": shared responsibility; lifelong learning; diversity and global engagement; Judeo-Christian values and ethics; and excellence in athletics, academics, and community service. These themes are consistently reinforced across the College (Observation notes, August 15 – September 23, 2016).

Athletic Symbols

The entrance to the Athletic Hall of Fame in the gymnasium is located off of the main driveway and immediately below but adjacent to the academic heart of campus.

This Hall honors the individuals and teams that have represented the College for a century, winning 50 conference titles in various sports. Recruits walking down the hill from the academic center to the various athletic venues pass the Hall where they can see how NCC recognizes the contributions of its student athletes. The Hall holds a symbolic place on campus: Adjacent to the academic center and prominently accessed off the main driveway, it reveals the centrality of the role student athletes play in this College.

The athletic team colors and a unique depiction of their mascot can be found in the stadium, the gymnasium, the student center, and on the banners that hang from lampposts the length of the driveway announcing NCC's majors, age, job placement rate, and financial support of students. The mascot depicts an aggressive bull[7]; a bronze statue of the mascot stands in an area where several walkways intersect near the academic center of campus (Observation notes, August 15 – September 23, 2016).

There are varying opinions on the mascot and symbols. Dr. Walker, the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA), represented the academic view and noted that:

> There has always been discussion about the [bull] and whether that's the mascot we really want...because for one thing it's [Bulls] - so that's just male. How does that feel for our female athletes? It's a brave new world now – and the women want to be represented, differently and symbolically. (VPAA interview, November 30, 2016)

However, Andie, the Athletic Director (AD), disagreed. As we sat in her office and talked, we could hear the muffled sound of weights clanging behind us from the adjacent weight room, weights being lifted by both male and female student athletes.

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[7] The name of the mascot has been changed to hide the identity of the participating college.

Representing the athletic perspective, Andie noted that, "It's something to rally around, it's a pride thing. You want to have those traditions, that's our branding." When asked how the female student athletes feel about it she replied, "That's what they are! They wouldn't like to be called the Lady [Bulls] – they're [Bulls]!" (AD interview, November 30, 2016).

Mark, the VPSL, himself an alum and a former football player, noted that the mascot was not always a Bull – years ago it was a Wolf but was changed sometime "in the 60s or 70s." When asked if the mascot is important, he readily admitted, "we've talked about it because it's not really well known," but added:

> I don't want to give the impression that it's not important to a lot of people but it's also something that's been debated... but we had the feeling that many alumni would be upset if we changed it; students would be upset. (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016)

I asked Andie how the mascot came about, and she relayed a story about a former coach who was "tough;" his players reflected his attitude and the campus referred to them as his bulls and the name stuck (AD interview, November 30, 2016).

Dave Baum, the Head Coach of Football (HC), reflected, "Our guys are cognizant of it, they don't walk on the picture [painted on the ground at the stadium entrance], but I don't think they're overly tied to it" (HC interview, December 7, 2016). While the logo of the mascot is both distinct and interesting, it remains relatively unknown. Dave pointed at the logo on his shirt and said, "I got to go to this recruiting fair this evening and it'll probably be 50–50 on who might have an idea of who this represents and who we are" (HC interview, December 7, 2017).

Student Athlete Perspectives on the Artifacts

The student athletes are aware that the town and NCC are almost 90 miles from any large metro areas; small, quaint, clean, neat, and safe, the state has nonetheless deemed the town economically distressed. Unlike the students on social media and in the college newspaper, however, not one student athlete in either focus group complained about the town, the location, the physical plant, or the dorms. In fact, the student athletes demonstrated a respect for the position that the College and the team hold in this little town. Reflecting the Athletic Director's thoughts about how the student athletes represent the College, Rafe, a tough, senior offensive lineman strongly interjected:

> We're the biggest team and we're probably the head people in the school. When you think of an NCC sports team, you're thinking of football first. They [administration] expect us to be mature and responsible and set a good example for everything because if we go out and meet people in public they're going to say, "oh, you're a NCC football player" and they don't want to have a bad reputation. (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017).

Jack, a junior, in typical linebacker fashion, defended his teammate's assessment and quickly added, "especially in such a small town!" (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017).

I asked what attracted them to NCC being that it is located in such a small, rural, isolated area. Interestingly it was Yosiah, an inner-city African American freshman athlete from a large metro area, who spoke first. Yosiah came to escape his culture, stating, "The culture where I live at home is not good, it's better here. I'm probably the only person in my neighborhood to go to college and play football" (Focus Group

interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017). Marcus, another African American underclassman, said, "My brother goes here and he enrolled the year before me... my family didn't have to split between the schools and pick where to go to see us play" (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017). Toby said his mom "knows a few of her friends have kids that went to school here" (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017) and that helped him decide. Mike, a sophomore defensive back, reflected: "I came from a small high school and a small hometown so I didn't really want to get caught up in a bigger school, bigger city" (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017). Matt, an upperclassman, offered, "I picked it for the distance. I mean it's not too far, but it's also not close" (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017). Others agreed with the generalized comments: "Small town feel" and "if I went to a big school I'd probably get lost." All wanted "the smaller class sizes" that came with a small college.

While the student athletes respect the mascot, they are equivocal on the athletic symbolism. Jack, next year's defensive captain, agreed with Dave's comments, "We don't step on it [the mascot painted at the entrance to the stadium]. If we're going out 2 x 2, you'll see us split" (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017). Several players knew of the former mascot and that it changed, but similar to the administration, few could recall why or when. I researched the story of the coach and his players and found it to be partially true; however, the name was given to them by the head coach of a competitor who claimed that the team "played like [bulls]!" That name change did not occur in the 1970s. In fact, the College's media guides noted that the event and the game that changed it occurred in the 1920s. Nonetheless, the allegiance to

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the unique name and the interesting mascot is neutral. Matt said, "I'd like to be called the [Wolves]" (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017). The student athletes argued both in favor of and against the mascot. Jack, clearly the leader of this group, closed the argument with the upperclassmen by adding, "as long as we don't get, like, a little [calf]" (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017).

Despite the religious affiliation, the symbolism, the history, and the tradition covering the campus, the football players demonstrated no knowledge of it. "They were pretty good ball players back in the 70s," said Jack (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017), but despite winning the conference title once, their record was just three games over .500 during that decade. Matt offered, "we don't have a very good history the past 10 years" (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017), which is true but the college made the playoffs immediately prior to that period and had several excellent seasons back-to-back immediately following those playoff appearances. Freshman Yosiah said, "didn't they play through a fire or something here" (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017) but that event occurred during an away game on the campus of another team. They could not agree when NCC was founded (over 150 years ago) or when football was started (over 120 years ago), but they all laughed when they discussed an assistant coach who played on the last team that won the conference title over 10 years ago. "He's still got that film on his computer!" laughed Matt, and his comment evoked laughter from around the table (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017). Jack added, "We were real heavy into tradition...but the whole mindset from last spring to this fall is 'new era'" (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017). A change in coaches

brought about a change in tradition: In changing the tradition of losing to winning, the history has been all but forgotten.

What the Artifacts Tell Us

The artifacts paint an interesting picture. A rural town and a small college combine to provide a backdrop against which we can compare the College culture and the football culture. This town is deemed by the state to be financially distressed. Despite the economic situation, the town remains inviting, safe, and well-maintained; this encourages parents to entrust their sons and daughters to the College. As its "front porch," the College applies window-dressing to the town as needed through its website. The College must also provide work, entertainment, and activities that the students need and desire, items that would be available in a metro area but not in a small, distressed town.

While this is not a poor, struggling college, it is not a rapidly growing college. The artifacts bespeak of a frugal college that continues to focus on its mission: to develop students and help them reach their full potential. The two cultures – the college culture and the football culture – share the artifacts. However, the football players are ambivalent. With the emergence of a "new era," not one of the football players knows how or when the mascot was named, the last time a conference was won, or the overall record of the team. The town is not an issue to these student athletes, and the financial symbols are unimportant to them.

Unpretentious, the College itself lacks the added amenities of a larger university, amenities that might appeal to certain students, but the students NCC attracts have no preconceived notions about what to expect. With over 50% of the football team being first-generation student athletes whose parents never went to college, they never

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developed artificial expectations built upon their parents' experiences. Interestingly, it also appears that these student athletes really do not care about those items. These student athletes simply want an opportunity to play intercollegiate athletics and obtain an education, in that order. Dorm suites, climbing walls, ivy-draped gothic buildings, and old traditions mean little to them. Football is the amenity that they seek.

The Foundation Layer: The Espoused Values

I heard multiple words and phrases during the interviews I conducted to locate and then triangulate the espoused values. Dave Baum, the Head Coach, described NCC's values as "academic honor" and "communications." Dr. Walker, the VPAA, noted "persistence," teaching student athletes to persist "off the field as well as on the field." Both vice presidents, Dr. Walker and Mark, the VPSL, referred to "freedom of inquiry" and "academic inquiry," indicative of discussion among senior administration. I heard "service to society," "academic excellence," and other words also found on the website (Personal interviews with VPAA, VPSL, and HC, November 30 and December 7, 2016).

While I heard a variety of paternalistic and student-development oriented expressions, one phrase appeared in the college's mission statement, the athletic mission statement, the strategic plan, the wall of the football team's locker room, and in everyone's conversation: "reach your full potential" or "RYFP." Andie, the AD, said, "Our value is that we want our students to be the best they can be, to reach their full potential," adding, "RYFP is a big thing here... it's actually in the athletic department's mission statement" (AD interview, November 30, 2016).

Mark, the VPSL, stated that "we really strive to help our students reach their full potential" (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016). Dr. Walker, the VPAA, said "we talk a

lot about helping students to reach their full potential," recollecting that, "I think that phrase came originally from athletics...the former athletic director, that was his mantra" (VPAA interview, November 30, 2016). With athletes comprising over 50% of the student population, it is not surprising that the espoused value emanates from athletics.

<div align="center">

Reach Your Full Potential

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The former head football coach and athletic director, Joe Lindenhall, made his mantra the defining philosophy of the college. Joe produced conference-winning and DIII playoff-caliber teams at NCC, and he attributed that saying to another college:

> I was a defensive coordinator and it was a part of their football mission statement, somewhat overlooked, and I seized on it as the defining statement for my defense. When I later accepted the job as head coach at [Northeast Christian College] I made it my focus. (Emails and Phone interview, Former AD, August 2017)

Later, when he moved from coach to athletic director, Joe pushed it to all the coaches and teams; he subsequently introduced it in the strategic planning process, and it became a part of NCC's values. Joe viewed RYFP as a defining philosophy, adding:

> It's a way to seek daily improvement, not measured in ends, but striving to be better tomorrow than today. It's an easy measure and gives you instant feedback, self-evaluation as a student athlete in terms of playing time and grades. It's a way to continuously measure yourself as a person. (Emails and Phone interview, Former AD, August 2017)

As a son of blue-collar parents, a first-generation college graduate, and one of NCC's administrators and successful alumni, Joe exemplifies the niche at NCC and is a role model for the student athletes who share his background. I told Joe that I saw NCC

as a blue-collar college, and he immediately replied, "absolutely!" I then asked him if he

used RYFP with the predominantly blue-collar parents whose sons he was recruiting and

what they thought of it. Joe replied, "They loved it. We talked football but we didn't talk

about their sons starting or playing; rather, we talked about challenging their sons to be

the best *person – student – athlete* that they could be – and in that order" (Emails and

Phone Interview, Former AD, August 2017). I followed up and asked Joe how he helped

these young student athletes reach their full potential and he replied, "We held them

accountable" (Emails and Phone Interview, Former AD, August 2017).

Student Athlete Perspectives on the Espoused Values

Although Joe has not been connected to the football team for several years, his

legacy in NCC athletics remains: A student athlete on NCC's football team still reaches

his full potential through "accountability." Dave, the current head coach, told me, "I harp

on accountability – that's kind of a program byproduct for us" (HC interview, December

7, 2016). I told Dave that I heard that term from more than a few players in the focus

group interviews and in ad hoc discussions, which means that he had apparently got

through to them. Dave smiled and nodded, "yeah, a few I think" (HC interview,

December 7, 2016).

I asked the student athletes in the focus groups for words that defined the values

they were being taught at NCC both on and off the field. Unlike the administrators,

however, there was no equivocation. Two words rapidly and repeatedly emerged from

every student athlete: "accountability" and its equivalent, "responsibility." The response

was so swift and overwhelming from every student athlete that Jan, one of my observers,

noted its significance in her notes. To the student athletes, accountability was being taught as a means to achieve their full potential.

When asked what the coaches expected of them, the underclassmen responded with uniformity. Dion began, "Responsibility I guess, hold yourself accountable. It's something our coaches instill in us and what my academic advisor also instills in me as well" (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017), which indicates that the head coach and the academic advisor are using the same language. "That's one of the bigger things with our new coach," Mike observed, "you don't just skip stuff. Be accountable" (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017). The student athletes' comments reflect the coaches' role in supporting the espoused values. Marcus verified that, adding, "I believe that the coaches do a great job of teaching things such as accountability" (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017). The same words later emerged from the upperclassmen. "Responsibility I guess. Hold yourself accountable," said Damiane. Layton added, "Accountability; if you're not on time for practice and we all get punished for it, instead of thinking badly of the punishment, change it" (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017)

Earlier in the season, Layton and I caught up with each other in the hall. I casually asked what he thought of the team this year, and he replied:

I'm only one of seven in the senior class that are still on the team and that includes fifth year seniors as well. Most quit, they weren't happy with the old coach and losing, but now we're all together. None of the freshmen or sophomores have quit, they're all still here. (Observation notes, September 13, 2016)

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I asked him what was different, and he instantly replied "Coach!" I asked how so, and he said, "well, more discipline. Coach holds us accountable" (Observation notes, September 13, 2016). Jack later offered an example of team accountability:

I'd say it's a group of guys, not really one individual. I mean you have kids hanging their heads and you know, M-F'ing the coaches and stuff like that – because they think they're [the coaches] always the problem - when, all reality – it's us! We tell them it's all on us, we gotta go play, we're the ones making the plays. (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017).

The student athletes acknowledged the impact of the head coach upon their ability to be held accountable as they fought to reach their full potential. Dion laughed, "If you miss something, there are consequences for it." I asked consequences for what, and they replied not being accountable for your actions or being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Mike added, "motivation not to be in that place again!" (Focus Group interview, Underclassmen, February 17, 2017). Jack smirked when asked the same question in his focus group, noting that the coaches reinforce the College's values "in a more physical way…." (Focus Group interview, Upperclassmen, February 24, 2017). Running appears to have the same motivational influence now as it did decades ago.

As Mark, the VPSL, stated, football was what these student athletes knew; it brought them to NCC. Once here, the college had to intervene, and that intervention began with the head coach teaching accountability and responsibility. It is interesting that the values that ultimately helped to shape them academically were learned on the athletic field. Accountability and responsibility were taught by the coaches, and those values transferred to the classroom. This verified that the coach is the conduit: he brings the

athletes in, teaches them the basics, and then allows the faculty, administration, and staff to motivate them to become something more, something different than what they were when they first arrived. Through forced accountability and responsibility, these young men were changed from high school football players into intercollegiate student athletes.

College Support for the Espoused Values

As noted in Chapters One, Two, and Four, first-generation college students who are both low income and student athletes often struggle with college. Recognizing this as the niche that supports their core assumption, NCC provides several paternalistic mechanisms to help its students and student athletes reach their full potential. It could be debated that each of these, like the core assumptions in Chapter Four, could stand as an espoused value. When viewed collectively, however, they are ultimately used for one purpose: to help the students reach their full potential. Absent this support, most students could not – or would not – ever reach their full potential.

Financial Support

One of the major drawbacks to first-generation, low-income students attending college is money for tuition, room, and board. While the College exploits this niche to recruit potential student athletes, this exploitation does not negatively impact the parents or students. In addition to federal Pell grants, eligible students at NCC also receive generous loans, grants, and work study jobs. The College's founding denomination also provides support to those students who maintain high grades and demonstrate leadership potential. Consequently, over 90% of the students receive some combination of federal, state, or college-sponsored financial support.

The College is proud of the financial support it provides to its students. Andie, the AD, reported, "We are thoughtful of the fact that we know we have a lot of first-generation students, Pell level students. We cater to that. We do a little bit of hand holding here" (AD interview, November 30, 2016). The football student athletes, in turn, acknowledge and appreciate what the College is doing for them. All of the underclassman in the focus group recognized this: "I had a really good financial aid plan," "they helped with a lot of loans and stuff," and finally, "tuition ended up being good." Absent financial aid, most lower-income, first-generation students would not go to college. The football culture and the college culture share in this value, the former as a recipient and the latter as a provider.

Direct Support

First-generation, low-income students often arrive on college campuses underprepared. They may have little understanding of the expectations; their study habits, time management skills, and college-level writing abilities are often underdeveloped as well. To alleviate these issues and develop their students, NCC provides a College Resource Center staffed with four full-time employees who sponsor writing labs and study groups, provide supplemental instruction and tutoring, and schedule programs on academic skills such as time management and note taking. NCC also staffs a Career Development Center with two full-time professionals who help students locate internships, conduct job searches, prepare resumes, and prepare for interviews. These are skills that they possibly did not receive at home: The parents of first-generation and low-income students have little knowledge of college expectations, college curriculum, or

resume preparation. This also holds true for low-income high schools. The College must therefore assume the responsibility to provide those skills.

Comments made by Mark, the VPSL, indicated the awareness of NCC's administrators when dealing with their student population and the need to engage in student development:

> We actually created a new position in Student Life this year - it's a professional academic advisor. Part of this was to better serve our first-year populations. We find that students come to college not really knowing what to expect, not knowing how to navigate college. This staff member works with them, very hands on, very developmental, and helps them navigate through college and hopefully succeed in their first year then they'll transition to a faculty advisor. (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016)

Providing Opportunities

The College is also aware that the students, particularly the student athletes it recruits, often have little if any background in many of the non-athletic collegiate activities and opportunities that are available to them. Mark, the VPSL, explained the College's goal of engaging the student athletes in multiple activities as a form of development and retention:

> One thing that I can appreciate most about this institution, and you'll hear this in our mission, is when I say it is helping students reach their full potential. One area in which I see students excel every day is stepping out of their comfort zone, taking advantage of the opportunities that we have, and really developing into different students by the time they graduate… Students come in as football

players and I'm an example of that. I came in as an athlete, that's what I knew in high school, that was my life. I came in and got involved in a number of other things - and I was encouraged to do that and it helped me to tap into other talents and interests that I had no idea existed when I got here. I would say that's one of our gifts as an institution: that value-added through the opportunities that exist on campus for our students and the encouragement of our faculty and staff for our students to take advantage of this. (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016)

The College strives to integrate its student athletes into the college culture. Mark offered, "given the number of athletes we have on campus, I mean we have [over 50%] of our students being athletes, there's going to be some natural integration that's going to occur with them being involved in other organizations" (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016). The website is alive with opportunities to study abroad, to obtain internships, to join over 50 organizations, and to be part of honors and specialized programs.

Numerous non-academic organizations flourish at NCC. One particularly evident group that crosses over from the academic to the social is Greek life. Large contingents of students came to the games attired in their sorority and fraternity sweatshirts, and many players came to the focus group interviews with fraternity shirts. "Greek life is very strong" Mark told me, "they make up [about 30%] of the student population" (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016). Andie, the AD, confirmed Mark's statements:

A lot of them [student athletes] are Greeks and they're in these different academic groups, especially the high achieving ones, and they're in all these sororities, fraternities... and when I say high achieving students, I'm not saying all are 4.0's; I'm talking about 3.0's and above. They know that in order to be more prepared

they got to do this, and they've got to do that, and they've got to gain this experience... so they tend to do a lot as far as Greek this, alpha sigma something..." (AD interview, November 30, 2016).

We both laughed at the amount of activities in which the student athletes are engaged, "almost too much sometimes," added Andie (AD interview, November 30, 2016).

The level of student involvement is evidenced by the number of students engaged at the football games. There are approximately 100–120 student athletes in football uniforms on the field. Cheerleading has 14 participants; the dance team adds another five students. The band has 70+ students, and the choir, which sings the national anthem, has 20 students. Combined with the students working the admissions and spirit wear booths and student athletes from other athletic teams on campus hawking programs and 50-50 chances, at least one-quarter of the student body is somehow actively engaged in the game. This does not include the students sitting in the stands watching the game. Mark told me that the band, cheerleading, and dance squads are usually larger but, echoing Andy Giansante, a few subpar classes dented the participation (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016).

Mark followed up on this and the level of student development at NCC, "Students come for the purpose of a sport and then we have to take advantage of the opportunity to try to get them in the academic student life aspect of college." He provided an example:

Many of our teams do service projects. One example occurred last spring – we hosted an event with a local church for physically disabled individuals. It's called 'A Night to Shine' where you hold a prom for these students, these young adults that never had the opportunity to go to prom in high school, and we called upon

our football team to come help with that and they showed up en–masse. I think

our students are probably more engaged in a more diverse selection of clubs and

organizations than other institutions and we're very intentional about that. Our

coaches want their athletes to be involved in other things. (VPSL interview,

November 30, 2016)

This reflects the statistics that demonstrate that DIII student athletes tend to be more

engaged than other students (Griffith & Johnson, 2002; NCAA, 2017b).

Two additional examples of student athletes engaged in multiple activities outside

of football also represent NCC's diverse student population. Paul is a tall, broad-

shouldered sophomore linebacker from a single-parent blue-collar family in a small rural

town. With a slight learning disability and an engaging personality, Paul is getting help in

academics; however, he is also interested in art and other sports. At NCC, he can do it all:

In addition to football, he attends art classes and gets help with academics. He also

competes in one other sport on campus. When I asked him how he liked NCC, he

responded, "very much, sir; I appreciate what these people are doing for me"

(Observation Notes, Week of September 7, 2016). Then there is Layton, a senior

defensive back, team captain, and first team academic all-district majoring in business; he

is both articulate and academically gifted. He has been on the Dean's List seven out of

seven semesters, is active in a professional club, and also plays another sport. These two

student athletes, teammates, represent opposite ends of the student-athlete population at

NCC, yet both are engaged in multiple activities that dispel the myth of the "dumb jock"

(Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Duderstadt, 2000; Engstrom et al., 1995; Leach & Connors,

1984; Parsons, 2013).

Mark expanded on the positive connections between student athletes and non-athletes at NCC:

Several years ago we started the marching band on campus. One of the coolest things for me to see, not only as a former athlete and alumni of the institution but also in my current role, is how the football team embraced that marching band. I remember after one game the football team made it a point to go over to the marching band and they were high-fiving each other and you know, it was really cool to see, because you don't see that too often. (VPSL interview, November 30, 2016)

Mark's observations are important. In many institutions the athletic and non-athletic students often ignore each other. At NCC, however, there is acceptance among students for each other and they share a common bond: They are all in this together.

What the Espoused Values Tell Us

At Northeast Christian College, the most widely proclaimed espoused value is "reach your full potential." It has been the prevailing theme for almost two decades, tracing back through three coaches. RYFP is used in recruiting to challenge the student athletes and reassure their parents that their sons are going to NCC for more than football. It hints at the emphasis on student development that NCC promotes. It appears in multiple places and documents, and it is used universally among administrators. Among the student athletes, RYFP manifests itself as accountability, with each individual being held accountable for his or her actions and performance.

A high-risk population, the student athletes are predominantly first-generation, low-income, minority students who need help. To reach their full potential, the student

athletes draw heavily on college resources. Absent the financial support, most would not be recruited; absent the support, most would not be retained.

The response by the student athletes faintly echoes Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation. Herzberg's theory (Miner, 2005) argued two separate, almost conflicting, perspectives. One set of factors contributes to satisfaction (motivation) and the other contributes to dissatisfaction (hygiene). Simply stated, people are motivated by the presence of items that contribute to satisfaction, such as achievement or recognition. Conversely, people expect certain factors to be present, such as acceptable conditions and compensation; while the presence of these items do not motivate people, their absence is considered a de-motivator (Miner, 2005; Talukder & Mohammad Saif, 2014).

In my research, the artifacts (academics, strong finances, a stadium on campus, and acceptable residence halls) are hygiene factors: if they were not present on campus or were truly sub-standard, the student athletes would either not attend or would leave to attend a college where those items were available. The motivation to come to NCC is oriented to athletics, which is vitally important to the identity of the student athletes. Being recognized as intercollegiate football players and enjoying the team camaraderie within their microculture is very satisfying to them. The motivation to succeed in academics comes only after the opportunity to become intercollegiate football players is secured. Once the realization sets in that football will not last more than four more years at most, the emphasis transitions from athletics to academics, which are just as rewarding and more important to their post-graduate lifestyle.

It is clear that the College's espoused values originated in athletics. The mantra, reach your full potential, expanded as the then-head coach's responsibilities increased.

The College then expanded upon it and espoused other values including exceptional

financial aid packages, structured support systems, and multiple non-athletic

opportunities. While satisfying the College's core assumption, this has the potential to be

a success story: a college that takes high school athletes who have one purpose, a singular

focus in going to college, and expands their horizons. Those high school athletes become

intercollegiate student athletes, where they are given an opportunity to change the course

of their lives from low-income, blue-collar, first-generation college football players to

first-in-their-family college graduates.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of my research was to understand how two cultures embedded within the same organization – a dominant culture and a microculture – combined to create a shared identity and how that shared identity subsequently impacted their shared population. It was my position that culture passed between the dominant culture and the microculture similar to the way light or sound waves reacted upon contacting a medium: rebounding, refracting, or diffusing. In doing so, the resulting cultural modifications transformed both cultures on an ongoing, evolutionary basis.

I subsequently divided my research question into four propositions. First, that the dominant culture is reflected, refracted, or diffused by the microculture. Second, that the microculture is reflected, refracted, or diffused by the dominant culture. Third, that a combination of the first and second propositions occurs. Fourth, that the two cultures coexist in parallel. I also included a fifth proposition unique to this participating institution but one that can be applied to any participating institution by identifying and substituting a specific subculture or microculture unique to that institution: The microculture of intercollegiate football augments or detracts from the student athletes overall collegiate experience.

To answer my question and my propositions, I employed the eclectic case study approach. This was deemed the appropriate strategy to resolve both a "how" question and to decipher an athletic or organizational culture (Krane & Baird, 2005; Patton, 2002; Schein, 2010; Schroeder, 2010; Yin, 2003). Using a non-participatory, organizational ethnographic methodology (Ybema et al., 2009), I researched the recommended sources

of evidence (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003), connected with gatekeepers and participants (Lofland et al., 2006; Mills et al., 2010), and developed a thick, rich, cross-sectional description of this culture at a specific point in time (Creswell, 2014; Geertz, 1973; Lofland et al., 2006; Patton, 2002).

I selected a small college in the Northeast United States, Northeast Christian College (NCC), to research my propositions. This participating college fulfilled the requirements of a case study: It was bounded by location, size, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association's (NCAA) divisional classification system as a Division Three (DIII) institution. Because my research included an intercollegiate athletic team, my case was also bounded by time (one season of play). Furthermore, the college culture, athletic subculture, football microculture, and student population of this college were unique when compared to similarly situated colleges (Lofland et al., 2006; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2003).

Guided by my literature review in Chapter Two and my methodology in Chapter Three, I described my findings in both Chapter Four and Chapter Five using Schein's (2010) three-layered organizational model as a template. I analyze those findings in this chapter, compare them to my propositions and the literature, and present my conclusions.

Discounting Research Inconsistent With This Case

After careful deliberation, I dismissed aspects of the literature which preliminarily appeared relevant but on analysis did not influence my understanding of the propositions. My decision as to what was or was not relevant hinged upon whether the research on a topic impacted the relationship between the college culture and the athletic culture and whether or not it helped resolve my propositions. The first aspect of the literature which I

dismissed was the impact of NCC's religious affiliation. The 900+ colleges and universities in the United States that are religiously affiliated ("Colleges," n.d.; VanZanten, 2011) could be either dogmatic or pragmatic (Kenney, 1998; "Colleges," n.d.; VanZanten, 2011). They could be small liberal arts colleges or major research universities (Turchioe, 2010). NCC, founded by a mainstream Christian denomination as a small, coeducational, independent, liberal arts college has always advocated spirituality as part of living lives of "meaning and purpose." Being pragmatic about its location and mission, however, it has never touted dogmatic faith to segregate recruits nor has it ever allowed religion to interfere in the student-athlete recruiting process (Andringa, 2009). Religion is therefore a non-issue in my analysis.

The second aspect of the literature which I dismissed concerned the parents of the student athletes. The level of parental involvement could have been seen as "over-parenting," adversely impacting their student athletes' progress to independent adulthood (Rochman, 2013; Schwanz et al., 2014), academic success, and self-satisfaction (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014; Givertz & Segrin, 2012; Gray, 2015; Parietti, 2015). That impact, however, was tempered by the obvious closeness of the relationships between the student athletes and their families (Nelson et al., 2015). Based upon her personal experience, Andie, the current Athletic Director (AD), observed that the parents simply wanted to watch their sons progress through college. Being blue-collar and having never attended college themselves, they watched from the periphery. Examples of parental involvement at NCC abounded, including Jim, the Appalachian fireman, and Wayne, the retired truck-driving grandfather who was the only male role-model in one student athlete's family. These parents did not pressure their sons to attempt athletics at a

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level beyond their capabilities (NCAA, 2016a). In fact, Joe Lindenhall, the former head football coach and athletic director, confirmed that the parents were pleased to hear that their sons would be taught more than football. The parents did not intervene in their sons' decisions to attend NCC (Engle, 2007). Indeed, the families supported their student athletes: This was evident in their comments and the NCC clothing which they proudly wore to every game. Therefore, the presence of grandparents and parents at both practices and games was seen as simply reinforcing the student athletes' decisions to attend NCC.

Three other aspects of the literature were deemed inapplicable. First, Dr. Walker, the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA), argued that a counterculture did not exist and that was confirmed: There appeared to be neither dissident nor dissatisfied student athletes in the football culture (Clark & Trow, 1966; Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Martin, 1992; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Roufs, 2016; Southall et al., 2005). Second, the student athletes were not concentrated in a few, less-intense majors but were enrolled in the prevailing majors on campus, and their relationships with faculty indicated that the hedonistic collegiate culture did not exist (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Clark & Trow, 1966; Duderstadt, 2000; Engstrom et al., 1995; Leach & Connors, 1984; Parsons, 2013; Sperber, 2000). Finally, Student athletes congregating together was seen as a natural activity that reflected their shared experiences: they were involved in the student population in other areas and did not remain aloof as a distinct population (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Parham, 1993; Schein, 2010; Schroeder, 2010; Trice & Beyer, 1993).

Summarizing the Model

I selected Schein's (2010) description of culture to construct a template for my research (Chapter 2, Figure 3). Based upon my findings, I recreated that model in Figure

5 and I "filled in the levels." A summary explanation for both Figure 5 and the levels identified in Chapters Four and Five immediately follows.

Upon analysis, the core assumption of the college culture comes to light: survival of the institution. To support their core assumption, NCC engages in enrollment-driven athletics requiring faculty and staff support for the at-risk students and student athletes who are at the center of the College's core assumption. The student athletes in the football culture also arrive on campus with a core assumption: to identify as intercollegiate football players. Their core assumption is supported recursively by their microculture and indirectly by their parents.

	Artifacts: ● Documents, Websites, Archives ● Academic Facilities ● Athletic Facilities ● Residence Halls ● Town ● Symbols ● Religious Affiliation ● Grounds	
VISIBLE	**Espoused Values:** **Reach Your Full Potential** ● Accountability ● Multiple Opportunities ● Financial Support ● Direct Support	
INVISIBLE	**College Culture's Core Assumption:** **Survival of the Institution** ● Enrollment-Driven Athletics ● Indirect Support for At-Risk	**Football Culture's Core Assumption:** **Identify as Intercollegiate Athletes** ● Microculture Support ● Parental Support

Figure 5. Filling-in the three-layered model of culture with data and information obtained from documents and interviews at NCC. Adapted from *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (4th ed.) (pp. 23-33), by E. H. Schein, 2010, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2010 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The college culture, the athletic culture, and the football culture share the artifacts and the primary espoused value: to help students reach their full potential. To support this, the College espouses accountability. It also provides financial aid, academic support,

and multiple, nonathletic opportunities that introduce the students to a different lifestyle

than the one from which they came. The documents, websites, and strategic plans – all

simple and straight-forward – tie together all three layers of the culture.

Comparing Findings to Propositions

I summarize my conclusions in Table 4 and explain them in detail afterward:

Table 4

Comparing Findings to Propositions

Proposition	Results	Explanation
Proposition One: The dominant culture may be (a) reflected, (b) refracted, or (c) diffused by the microculture.	Confirmed	Propositions 1(a) and 1(b). The dominant cultures core assumption is refracted by the microculture to their advantage; the artifacts are reflected and shared by the microculture.
Proposition Two: The microculture may be (d) reflected, (e) refracted, or (f) diffused by the dominant culture.	Confirmed	Proposition 2(d). The microcultures espoused values and core assumptions have been reflected by the dominant culture to their mutual advantage.
Proposition Three: Some combination of a-f may occur.	Confirmed	1(a), 1(b), and 2(d) occur simultaneously in support of each other.
Proposition Four: The two cultures coexist in parallel neither impacting nor being impacted by the other.	Disconfirmed	The existence of the above disconfirms this proposition.
Proposition Five: The microculture of intercollegiate football (h) augments or (i) detracts from the student athletes overall collegiate experience.	Confirmed in part	5(h). Access to a college education despite lower high school GPA's and test scores, excellent financial aid packages, and academic support systems confirm this. Lower than average graduation rates disconfirm.

It is important to recall at this point that I refer to the dominant culture as the

college culture, the subculture as the athletic culture, and the microculture as the football

culture.

Proposition One: The Dominant Culture May be (A) Reflected, (B) Refracted, or (C) Diffused by the Microculture

Propositions 1(a), the dominant culture is reflected by the microculture, and 1(b), the dominant culture is refracted by the microculture, were confirmed.

The first and the most obvious indication that the microculture "reflects" the dominant culture appears in the recruiting philosophy. The student athletes are placed at the center of the college culture's core assumption: to create a survival strategy in higher education through enrollment-driven athletics. Dr. Walker, the VPAA, acknowledged the necessity for student athletes, explaining, "that's a practical reality, not some deep existential thought" (VPAA interview, November 30, 2016). Athletics in DIII bring in student athletes and adding sports increases male enrollment numbers (Juday, 2014; Marcus, 2017; NCAA, 2018b; O'Shaughnessy, 2011). The statistics at NCC attest to the veracity of these statements: There are over 20 athletic teams at NCC (well above the average DIII college). This is then "reflected" in a student population that is over 50% student athletes (at least 30% higher than the average DIII college) and over 50% male.

Second, the College's espoused value – reach your full potential – is "reflected" by the student athlete population. Teaching the student athletes accountability, providing them with excellent financial aid packages, promoting on-campus learning and career centers to help them succeed, and providing multiple opportunities for them to expand their horizons beyond athletics attracts and retains them. The College's overall student population is 40–50% first-generation, and the football team is well over 50% first-generation. Were it not for athletics, 47–53% of these first-generation student athletes might not be in college (NCAA, 2016a; PrepStar, 2014). Absent this level of support and

financial aid, 90% of the blue-collar, low-income, first-generation college students would potentially fail to come or graduate within six years (Education Advisory Board, 2016; Riggs, 2014), and 56% of the first-generation student athletes would be concerned about how they would finance their education (NCAA, 2016a; PrepStar, 2014).

Finally, the College refurbished old artifacts and constructed new physical artifacts to accommodate the student athlete population. The College brought to campus athletic fields, a track, and an Athletic Hall of Fame. Most importantly, the College constructed a stadium on campus which held symbolic significance (the College previously relied upon the local high school facilities) (Leonard, 1998). Those facilities enabled NCC to participate as an equal in an athletic conference with larger, academically powerful institutions (Barratt & Frederick, 2015; Chalfin et al., 2015; Cheska, 1972; Geertz, 1973; Kraatz, 1998; Lifschitz et al., 2014). Having those physical artifacts on campus allowed NCC to recruit the student athletes at the center of its core assumption. By becoming student athletes at NCC, the athletic and football cultures "reflect" and share those facilities with the college culture.

The football culture developed over time through shared experiences, and it is permeated with symbolism: Being part of a team, winning championships, and gaining personal honors are highly symbolic to these student athletes (Druckman et al., 1997; Schein, 1984). Forming around common ideologies (Druckman et al., 1997; Schroeder, 2010; Trice & Beyer, 1993), these symbols guide the behavior of this group (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Rousseau, 1990), coalescing multiple individuals into a football culture where they share their most important symbol and core assumption: identifying as an intercollegiate football player.

It is that identification with football that propels the student athletes to "refract," or interpret part of the college culture for their benefit. By satisfying their core assumption –identifying as intercollegiate football players – the student athletes in the football culture benefit from the college culture's core assumption and espoused values. Football is the student athletes' primary motivation for being in college; they stated that their investigation of colleges and universities was prompted by the football coaches at those institutions recruiting them. Football came first, and education and other activities evolved secondarily. Absent football, they would possibly not be at NCC or any other college. These student athletes eventually rejected other colleges and accepted NCC's offer to participate in intercollegiate football. In turn, the student athletes expected that facilities and academics would be provided (Leonard, 1998; Weisbrod et al., 2008). The student athletes "refracted" a part of the college cultures core assumption and espoused values (using financial aid to support enrollment-driven athletics) for their benefit.

Symbolic interaction posits that individuals act toward things based on the meaning that those things have for them (Blumer, 1969). The College addressed both its symbolic needs and its core assumption by constructing facilities, remaining in an academically powerful athletic conference, and recruiting 100 student athletes for football (NCAA, 2018b; O'Shaughnessy, 2011). The student athletes satisfied their symbolic needs and their core assumption by coming to the College to play football. Collectively, the college and football cultures share the College's athletic facilities and residence halls and participate in a conference of prestigious colleges and universities, which symbolically reflects positively upon both of them.

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Proposition Two: The Microculture May be (d) Reflected, (e) Refracted, or (f) Diffused by the Dominant Culture

Proposition 2(d), the microculture is reflected by the dominant culture, was confirmed. This is best illustrated by a counterfactual; the former head football coach and athletic director are acknowledged by everyone across campus as the originators of the College's primary espoused value: reach your full potential (per Dr. Walker, it was "his mantra"). He pushed that phrase beyond athletics where it became the mantra of the College (Mark, the Vice President of Student Life (VPSL) told me, "you'll hear this in our [the College's] mission statement"). That phrase also appeared in multiple documents and archival records and was heard in every interview. The college culture "reflects" the espoused value that originated in the athletic and the football cultures.

Second, the symbols of the athletic and football cultures are "reflected" by the college culture. A bronze effigy of the mascot stands proudly in the academic center of campus, and it appears on banners, posters, clothing, the center of the field, and the driveway leading to campus. The athletic colors are used in the artifacts and documents. The artifacts associated with the athletic and football cultures – The Athletic Hall of Fame, the stadium, and the gymnasium – are located immediately adjacent to the academic heart of campus. These tie-together the academic and athletic cultures.

Third, the student athletes, the largest population on campus, and the football team, the largest microculture on campus, are supported by faculty and staff who encourage the development of the student athletes as they strive to reach their full potential. While the head football coach and the VPSL noted that some faculty members still dismiss the football players as less than serious students, they both agreed with the

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AD that the majority of faculty and staff made themselves available to assist the student athletes, "reflecting" the athletic culture on campus. The inevitable friction between academe and athletics, alluded to by the VPAA, was seen as common to all colleges and universities (the VPSL made note of it in his interview, acknowledging that friction is not uncommon on a campus with a large number of student athletes). However, the existence of this friction was not seen as an impediment (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1990; Engstrom et al., 1995; M. Ott, 2011; Richards & Aries, 1999; Simons et al., 2007; Snyder, 1985).

The college culture adopted and now shares the espoused values that originated in the athletic and the football cultures. Those values are now proclaimed as a common ideology for the campus (Abercrombie & Turner, 1978; Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Druckman et al., 1997; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Rousseau, 1990; Schein, 2010; Schroeder, 2010; Trice & Beyer, 1993).

Proposition Three: Some Combination of A-F May Occur

It was confirmed that propositions 1(a), 1(b), and 2(d) occur concurrently. The microculture addressed its core assumption by refracting the core assumption of the dominant culture. The College's need to survive – its core assumption – placed enrollment-driven athletics at the center of its core assumption. The College manifested its core assumption by recruiting student athletes, funding those student athletes, and subsequently involving the entire spectrum of human resources at the College to support and retain those student athletes. In response, the student athletes satisfied their core assumption – to identify as intercollegiate football players – by embracing this portion of the college culture as their own.

The student athletes in the football culture also reflected and shared the physical artifacts which the College constructed. These artifacts were symbolic – they gave NCC a campus equivalent to the other institutions in their conference – and allowed them to recruit the student athletes which they needed. In doing so, the microculture reflected and shared the artifacts constructed by the dominant culture.

The dominant culture concurrently reflected the microculture it was attempting to recruit. To address an existential threat, the college culture reflected the athletic culture's espoused values, formerly an ideology in the football culture. The athletic culture's symbolism are counterfactuals which the college culture adopted from the football and athletic cultures. The athletic and college culture's symbolism were blended. The college, athletic, and football cultures now share both artifacts and espoused values.

To say that these two "prey upon" each other cheapens the relationship and assumes that both know beforehand that they are refracting and reflecting each other in a mercenary philosophy. It is better to say that they engage in "cultural congruence" along a continuum where the two cultures intersect. However, the college culture needs the football culture more than the football culture needs the college culture. The athletic and football cultures are integral to the college culture's core assumption. Therefore, while the college culture needs student athletes to fulfill its core assumption, the student athletes, represented by the football culture, can fulfill their core assumption at any college in the NCAA that supports and subsidizes student athletes and a football team.

Proposition Four: The Two Cultures Coexist in Parallel Neither Impacting nor Being Impacted by the Other

This proposition was disconfirmed. Dr. Walker adamantly declared that a counterculture did not exist. The AD discussed how faculty acknowledged and supported the student athletes, and the Coach described how the staff acknowledged and supported the student athletes. Two former employees, a faculty advisor and a facilities director, told me how much they enjoyed working with the student athletes. Student Life encouraged faculty to be involved, and there were administrators at every home game. The student athletes are built into NCC's strategy.

On the other side, there were no indications of rebellion or disdain from the student athletes toward the College. The student athletes considered the College "a loving community" where they obtained assistance as needed and were appreciative "of what these people are doing…" The student athletes verbalized their appreciation of the faculty and staff who interacted with and assisted them on weekends, at night, or after class. The student athletes voiced their respect for the town and the physical artifacts. They did not want to embarrass the College where they self-identified as leaders ("When you think of an NCC sports team, you're thinking of football first"). They also did not want to embarrass the Campus Police Chief (the figurehead responsible for student discipline on campus but also an informal leader) and the coaching staff (which they considered "family"). Additionally, student athletes were engaged in campus activities unconnected to football (Parham, 1993), were active in the predominant majors on campus, and did not cluster in less strenuous programs (Malekoff, 2004). These positive responses would not exist in a counter or parallel culture (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Roufs, 2016).

A parallel culture may exist in DI where the revenue-generating sports of football and basketball are self-funding and independent of the university's support. At that level, those sports can sustain their scholarship model and continue recursively on their own, good or bad, absent the academe in their daily affairs (Parham, 1993; Prentice, 1997; Richards & Aries, 1999; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). That scenario, however, is not evident on this small DIII campus where the various components must fit together.

Proposition Five: The Microculture of Intercollegiate Football (H) Augments or (I) Detracts from the Student Athletes Overall Collegiate Experience

This proposition was mixed. It is crucial to first recall key demographics to analyze this proposition. First, 16% of all NCAA student athletes are first generation. In DIII, 15–25% of the student athletes are first generation with football having the highest number at 25% (NCAA, 2017b). At NCC, 40–50% of the student population is first generation. On the football team, however, well over 50% of the student athletes are first generation. Both are in excess of the NCAA averages. On average, NCAA DIII colleges and universities support a student athlete population that is 26% of the overall student population (NCAA, 2017b). NCC, again, exceeds the NCAA statistics: over 50% of the student population is student athletes and over 10% of the student population plays intercollegiate football. Sports are crucial to recruit and retain first-generation student athletes: 47–53% state that had it not been for sports they would not have attended college (NCAA, 2016a; PrepStar, 2014). Therefore, the effort being expended at NCC to recruit and retain first-generation football players augments the student athletes' college experience: Were it not for football, most would not be in college.

The student athletes at NCC matriculated with lower high school grade point averages (GPAs) and standardized test scores than non-athletic students. African American student athletes, whose cognitive abilities are generally unrecognized by standardized testing, comprise almost 40% of the football team (Burnsed, 2018; Comeaux, 2010; Edwards, 2000; Harrison, 2000; Kroshus, 2014; Sailes, 1993; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992). Eventually these student athletes caught-up with their class and graduated from NCC with equivalent GPAs (Aries et al., 2004; Griffith & Johnson, 2002; Snyder, 1985). By their senior year, the football team's average GPA was less than a couple tenths behind the average GPA for the College. Being a football player augmented their college experience: It gained them access to higher education despite having lower GPAs and standardized test scores than non-athletes.

The administration acknowledges that it needs athletics – and student athletes – to survive; that is why it supports over 20 NCAA DIII men's and women's athletic teams, more than the average NCAA DIII college (NCAA, 2017b). Football helped the student athletes get noticed and was the student athlete's conduit to obtain a college education. Therefore, football augmented their college experience: The student athletes' affiliation with football helped them get recruited and escorted to NCC's front porch (Beaver, 2014; NCAA, 2016b).

Many of the student athletes, in turn, require financial aid to attend the College and play football. Of the first-generation student athletes, 56% require either need-based aid or government assistance to attend college (NCAA, 2016a; PrepStar, 2014). At NCC, 40–50% of all students, almost half, are on Pell grants, and over 90% of all students on campus receive some form of financial aid. Without financial aid to sustain

them, most would not be at NCC or any other college. All of the underclassmen recalled the suitability of their financial aid packages as being responsible for them being at NCC. Recall that in the eyes of most student athletes, football is primary and academics are secondary. Therefore, to them all colleges are equivalent. Consequently, while athletic scholarships are prohibited in DIII, student athletes are intelligent enough to compare financial aid packages between various colleges. The college or university that they select to satisfy their core assumption – to be an intercollegiate football player – is determined by the financial aid package and the football culture on that campus, with limited influence from academics. In this contest, NCC prevailed. Being a football player, therefore, augmented their college experience: NCC's outstanding financial aid package helped them through the College's front door by subsidizing their education.

Student athletes' relations with faculty were not hampered by their affiliation with athletics. While faculties at larger, public institutions tend to be less satisfied with the athletic scenario, the faculty and staff at NCC, a small, private institution, support the student athletes (Becker et al., 1986; Cockley & Roswal, 1994; Noble, 2004). Paul, the linebacker with a learning disability, was treated the same as Layton, the all-academic defensive captain. Paul said he appreciated what was being done for him, and Layton bragged about the Business Faculty. Rafe, the offensive lineman and future police officer, discussed how they were preparing him for life. The student athletes respected the Librarians who checked their papers, the Learning Center who provided them with skills, and the Campus Police Chief who counseled them. In contrast to the literature, athletic performance and student GPA did not impact faculty assistance (Noble, 2004; M. Ott, 2011; Richards & Aries, 1999), and those who struggled with learning

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disabilities were not ignored but provided special attention (Stokowski et al., 2017). There was no mention of the "dumb jock" stereotype (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1990; Engstrom et al., 1995; Simons et al., 2007; Snyder, 1985). All of this occurred with a team that demonstrated a great deal of heart but remained below .500, contradicting the notion that faculty support was proportionate to the team's winning record. Again, being a football player augmented their collegiate experience: It provided them with excellent faculty and staff support mechanisms.

Finally, student athletes, white or minority, did not stand apart as a separate, non-traditional group of students (Eiche et al., 1997; Sedlacek, 1996; Sedlacek & Adams-Gaston, 1992) nor did they fail to integrate or socialize with the campus community (Williams et al., 2010). Dr. Walker claimed she could not tell the difference between student athletes and students. The student athletes were active in clubs, programs, and other sports. Both the AD and the VPSL described the number of "Greek" activities in which the student athletes were engaged, and this was confirmed by the student athletes. This possibly reflects the College's isolation or the fact that over 50% of the student population are athletes. The VPSL said crossover is to be expected, but that contradicts the research which states that student athletes lack time for anything but their sport. Football again augmented the student athletes' collegiate experience: It introduced them to activities on campus, activities that would have remained unavailable to them had they not been initially recruited into the College to play football.

What holds back full confirmation that football augments the student athletes' collegiate experience are the dismal graduation rates. With a 60–70% freshman retention rate, NCC approximates the national average for private, nonprofit institutions (College

Factual, n.d.; DOE, 2017; Engelmyer, 2017). However, despite all of the support, financial assistance, and faculty involvement, NCC graduated just over 40% of the students who began their programs six years' prior (College Tuition Compare, 2018), at least 15% below the national average (DOE, 2017; Engelmyer, 2017). If that 40%+ were all student athletes, it would still be below the NCAA's "voluntary" DIII statistics of 62% for students and 68% for student athletes (NCAA, 2015b, 2017a, 2018b). It could be argued that being a student athlete takes time away from the students' studies and therefore detracts from the student athletes' collegiate experience.

Unfortunately, the graduation statistics also reflect the demographics at NCC: NCC has a preponderance of at-risk student athletes ("At-Risk," 2013; Kroshus, 2014; NCAA, 2016a). They come from working-class families that are often low income and first generation – recall how Joe Lindenhall referred to this as a "blue collar" college. Despite the College's efforts, first-generation and low-income students often do not know how to prepare for college (Choy, 2001; Pathways to College Network, 2004; Schmidt, 2003; Thayer, 2000; Vargas, 2004). These students often apply to colleges that are closer to their homes, enroll and graduate in lower numbers, require special attention, are the highest "at-risk" for not graduating, and have lower expectations of earning a bachelor's degree (Choy, 2001; Engle, 2007; Smith, 2015; Tabor, 2011; Thayer, 2000). Graduation statistics for first-generation and low-income students are recognized as being low nation-wide: Statistics indicate that 51% of low-income students (Butrymowicz, 2015) fail to graduate within the six-year reporting period mandated by the federal government. Those who are both first generation and low income have only a one in 10 chance of graduating (Education Advisory Board, 2016; Riggs, 2014).

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The numbers of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomically at-risk students which NCC accepts helps explain their low graduation rates. The low graduation rates also indicate that being a student athlete, particularly a football player, is not a guarantor of success (Burnsed, 2018; NCAA, 2018b). Racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic status, combined with the student athlete designation, may combine to expand the rate of failure for any one of these groups. While NCC's philosophy addressed the needs of the dominant culture and the wants of the microculture, it came at the expense of graduation numbers.

Possible Explanations

There may, of course, be rival explanations and different core assumptions at NCC. The College offers over 20 sports, over 50 majors, and 50 clubs and activities to entice and retain students. This leads to a different core assumption, possibly the diametric opposite of my research: NCC wants to attract students and therefore must provide a draw to this small, remote location. Consequently, by virtue of the number of athletic teams, the number of student athletes it draws is then quite large. But why attract students through 20+ athletic teams, particularly when the number of sports being offered is in excess of both the average NCAA DIII institution (18) and the conference in which it participates? Why maintain such a large contingent of first-generation and low-income students and student athletes? Why not initiate activities to draw and reflect a different type of student? For example, what if NCC increased its religious and social outreach to draw students who are more interested in those activities?

When the number of teams and the number of student athletes are combined with the demographics of the institution, the financial aid being offered, and the student academic backgrounds, NCC is clearly appealing to a niche of blue-collar, first-

generation, lower-income student athletes. Many colleges in the conference offer fewer sports, and while some are comparatively close in the number of athletic teams and activities being offered, none matches NCC. The conclusion must be that the intent is to recruit and retain student athletes. This is not a negative factor but more of an obvious one. This is their niche – and it is done to remain relevant, to survive a very different landscape in higher education than the one that existed when NCC was founded.

My research also reveals that NCC's football team has more underclassmen (freshmen and sophomores) than upperclassmen (juniors and seniors). There may be a tendency to assume that the student athletes are dropping off the team or out of school because the academics are too rigorous. It may also be assumed that because football brought these student athletes to NCC that possibly they should not be in college at all.

There are, however, several other possible explanations for the attrition rate on the football team and the subculture of athletics in general. First, collegiate-level student athletes tend to experience burnout (Holden, Keshock, Forester, Pugh, & Heitman, 2016; Kroshus, 2014; Schumate, 2016). Many have played their sport since they were in grade school, and after 10 to 12 years they may have simply lost interest. Second, personal interests often expand beyond sports when students reach college (Gowdy, 2014; Keefe, 2015; McDonnell, 2012). With multiple activities available on campus, and a new desire to complete a college education, they may no longer feel the need to focus on athletic competition, particularly if they are not receiving scholarships. Finally, the thought of being involved with a program that has accumulated several losing seasons can be deflating to an individual who identifies himself as an intercollegiate athlete (Heller et al., 2016; Schumate, 2016).

The coach–student athlete relationship also impacts attrition. Student athletes may lose interest in both the college and the team if they discover that they cannot relate to the coach who recruited them or they disagree with his views on their commitment to athletics or academics (Heller et al., 2016; Keefe, 2015). Coaches may also move to higher-level programs or seek out a fresh start, leaving behind the student athletes that they recruited. The incoming coach may then propose a unique style of play, negating the abilities of the student athletes currently on the team (Heller et al., 2016).

NCC has had at least two head football coaches in 10 years; they have also endured ten consecutive losing seasons. Recall that Layton noted that the number of seniors on the team was smaller because several quit due to either their relationship with a former coach or being part of a losing team. However, it is important to note that this team was competitive. During the season that I observed them, the team came close to winning six of the 10 games they played as opposed to losing six of the 10. Again, a decade earlier this was a playoff caliber team – but with the student athletes' lack of knowledge of either the history of the college or its athletic teams, that record is lost in the shadows and the light of a "new era." Obviously, a losing record has not adversely impacted recruiting, but it is important to remember that the student athletes are coming for two reasons: first, to identify as intercollegiate athletes and, second, the financial aid package. Once here, the desire to identify as a *successful* intercollegiate athlete (where success is defined as being part of a winning team or earning individual honors) may supplant the original core assumption and contribute to the attrition.

Recommendations

As I stated in my statement of positionality, I was intrigued by Northeast Christian College, and my affinity for it and everyone associated with it grew as time progressed. As a former first-generation, blue-collar student athlete, I applaud how NCC is working to empower racial, ethnic, and socioeconomically-disadvantaged students and student athletes. I would have enjoyed presenting this as a major success story where 68% of the student athletes graduated in six years and reflected the NCAA's numbers – but that is not the reality. NCC has accepted its survival strategy. It must maintain the number of teams and absorb the challenges that accompany a high enrollment of at-risk student athletes. To complete this as a success story, and build a great ending, NCC must work diligently to complete its mission.

That mission is simple but daunting: to educate the student athletes from those racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups that they recruit. Changing an individual's social identity or socioeconomic status or pushing against his race or ethnicity is a daunting task. The support systems that make that possible cannot be elective or minimized – they cannot include two or four people – they must be mandated and overwhelming. Mark, the VPSL, realized this when he said that the College was hiring a position "very hands on, very developmental" to help first-year students. This support needs to continue to expand, and the level of student development in both numbers of people and continuity of effort must continue to grow: at-risk students need specific, programmatic assistance for all four years to prevent them from reverting to their comfort zone or being intimidated back into their previous behavior. Possibly retired professors, such as Veronica White, who I met at a game, might be interested in remaining involved as tutors or skills coaches.

Students who are part of at-risk groups or exhibit negative tendencies early in their collegiate careers could then be monitored for all four years, not simply their first or second years, and essentially "escorted" to the dais on graduation day. This, of course, goes beyond support and advising – as Andie, the AD, referred to it, it is "hand holding."

On the surface, this may appear overbearing and in excess of the "velvet paternalism" currently demonstrated by NCC. However, that level of oversight is clearly seen in the under-class ranks where the College is striving to increase retention among freshmen and sophomores – and it appears to be working. The problem is in the upper-class ranks, as demonstrated by the low graduation rates and the attrition on the team. The paternalism needs to extend through the final two years. A more viable alternative, however, might be to transition the paternalistic safeguards into student athlete self-sufficiency. This could be part of the continuing emphasis that the College places on student development. Through mandated programs on time management, problem-solving, decision-making and other adult behaviors, the paternalistic nature evolves from parent/father–child to a more mature parent/father–adult relationship.

Finally, there is the issue of retaining student athletes in general. For a College whose enrollment is built on student athletes and athletic teams, it is imperative that the College continue to invest in those programs. Coaching staffs that can lead teams and compete for conference titles are critical. NCC hired a young coach and staff; they need to continue to support those efforts. They need to continue to provide the teams with attractive facilities, uniforms and equipment along with the wherewithal to make the athletic teams competitive and the experience rewarding (but within the confines of NCAA DIII regulations). This is focused on retaining students for whom athletics is part

of their identity. Winning might be third on the list of priorities given to the coaches, but for students who identify as intercollegiate athletes, it just might be first.

My research verifies the correctness of numerous articles and recommendations for higher education to recruit low-income, minority, and first-generation students and to expand college athletic programs to attract student athletes. NCC has already done that. As this case demonstrates, however, when those at-risk categories overlap and low-income, first-generation, and minority students are also student athletes, the issues compound. Simply recruiting student athletes to build classes is insufficient: as NCC's experience suggests, there are ongoing issues with getting those students through to graduation despite an expenditure of both effort and finances. It obviously requires much more than a recruiting philosophy: Again, it requires a growing and continuing commitment to student development beyond the first two years if the College intends to see those students through to graduation as NCC is now working to correct.

Contributions to Cultural Studies

The theoretical terminology that I identified – reflect, refract, diffuse, and parallel – adds to our understanding of culture and cultural models. Through the application of those terms, analysts now have a method to decipher and diagnose cultures. My terminology takes the descriptions of the ideational and material components within the layers of the various cultural models and allows us to compare and contrast cultures, subcultures, and dominant cultures to each other. This turns the model into a process.

I applied my theoretical terminology to Schein's (2010) model and created a three-dimensional analytical tool out of a two-dimensional pictorial representation. By first converting three concentric circles into a three-level hierarchical model, I added

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height. By comparing the two cultures on each level, I added depth. I utilized the descriptions of each level to determine whether the cultures reflected, refracted, or diffused each other on each of those levels and then compared them across all three levels to create a 3 x 3 model.

This adds to our understanding of culture in several ways. First, these terms can be applied to any model with either qualitiative or quantitative analysis. Qualitatively, the analyst completes the assessment of the two cultures using the descriptions provided for each level. Quantitatively, the analyst sets a range that indicates when two cultures reflect, refract, or diffuse each other. Cultures that do not reflect, refract, or diffuse each other are not included in the model: Those are parallel cultures, each a separate entity unto itself.

Second, this approach takes the analyst deep into the culture and the cultural model. It requires the analyst to understand the descriptions attributed to each level of the model being used. It then requires the analyst to apply his/her understanding of those descriptions to each of the cultures being compared. The resulting analysis can then be substantiated on the basis of the analysts detailed understanding and comparison of those descriptions to his/her understanding of the cultures.

Future Research

My research is cross-sectional. It embraces the faculty, administrators, families, and student athletes who animate the dominant culture of the College and the microculture of intercollegiate football for one season. How these cultures combine to represent the shared identity of this institution is dynamic. I would have enjoyed

extending this research and comparing other colleges, but time escaped me. Based upon that, I would suggest the following future research.

Complete a Longitudinal Study.

It would be interesting to monitor one class over four seasons similar to what Adler and Adler (1991) completed in their excellent book *Backboards & Blackboards: College Athletes and Role Engulfment*. The analysis would investigate what brought the student athletes to Northeast Christian College, what retained them, what they were attempting to accomplish, and where they were successful. This would include an analysis of the culture, how it evolved as administrators and coaches changed, and after classes of student athletes matriculated and graduated.

Complete a Study of Faculty and Staff Perceptions.

My case focused on those administrators connected to both the athletic and the college cultures as well as the student athletes in the football culture. It touched on those academic departments that interacted with the student athletes and worked with a sampling of faculty and staff. But what are the faculty and staff perceptions of this culture? How do they interpret the college culture and do they agree with my interpretation? How do they perceive their interactions with student athletes? Do they see them through the same filter: as the right niche to recruit or as an unqualified population overwhelming the campus and straining both the faculty and the College's scarce resources? An expansion of my case into those areas would round out the entire picture at NCC.

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Complete a Study of Student Athletes Who Failed to Graduate.

There are many student athletes who fail to graduate from NCC. How do they feel about their experience? What kept them from graduating? How do their parents feel about their student athletes who went to play football but failed to complete four years or emerge with a diploma? Evaluating NCC through the eyes of those who failed may shed additional light on the recommendations proposed above.

Complete a Study of Student Athletes Who Left NCC's Football Team.

NCC, like all colleges, experiences attrition. The football roster is heavy with underclassmen. The upper-class student athletes may not have left NCC – they may have simply quit the team to focus on their education. Conversely, they may have left NCC but enrolled in another college to play on that college's football team. Evaluating their reasons for leaving the team and possibly NCC would confirm whether or not they left for academic rigor, burnout, loss of interest in competitive athletics, an issue with the coach, or a desire to associate with a program that has a more extensive history of winning seasons.

Complete Additional Studies of Other Colleges.

The subject of my case study is a small, private, religiously-affiliated College in a remote area of this region. But what happens if the participating college changes? It would be interesting to compare findings in a small, public, secular college or a small, private, secular college. Conversely, a more dogmatic religiously-affiliated college might impact the espoused values and the core assumptions. A more prestigious private, secular college with student athletes who were legacies of affluent families might have vastly different perceptions of their culture. Finally, if the college was located in a larger metro

area, or if the student athletes on the football team represented a smaller percentage of the student population, the findings might yield different conclusions.

Complete a Quantitative Study.

As noted in Chapter One, Limitations and Delimitations, some may argue that I could have expanded my research with a quantitative approach; however, I would have lost the positive interaction that I experienced for four months with families and student athletes, administrators and coaches, and replaced it with cold statistical data. A focused survey, however, would now verify whether my findings are widespread or unique. Prior to this experience, I lacked the knowledge to formulate that type of survey. Therefore, a quantitative survey following up on the information generated by a qualitative case study would both augment my findings and adhere to accepted research methodology.

Consequently, the opportunity to expand this research into quantitative analysis exists. Placing the at-risk factors – student athlete, first generation, low income, and minority – in a statistical analysis to determine whether one or a combination of factors has more impact on the retention and graduation rates would prove interesting.

Concluding Thoughts

I selected a small college and its football program to research the relationship between a dominant culture and a microculture. As a case study, I entered my research with no preconceived notions or theories. My objective was to determine how that culture was transferred and what its impact was on the student athletes who are part of both cultures. In doing so, I was also able to test whether the culture exhibited congruence.

Few people approach the topic of college athletics without opinions and assumptions. Most assume that a negative relationship exists between the athletic and the

academic cultures. Many assume that the athletic and the academic cultures are incongruent. I did not find that to be true on the campus of NCC; in fact, I found the opposite. It is important to remember that this is not NCAA Division I. At the DI level, athletics has a different purpose. Take for example the University of Alabama. In 2015, a national championship season, the Alabama football team generated a revenue of $95,132,301. Head Coach Nick Saban made a salary, with bonuses, of $7,969,113, and he and his staff of nine assistant coaches and their support staffs combined to earn over $18,000,000 (Belzer, 2016). Saban's salary increased to $11,125,000, including a $4,000,000 signing bonus, in 2017 when he signed a three-year extension (Berkowitz, 2017). To put that in perspective, Stuart Bell, the President of the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, where the Alabama football team plays, was compensated with a salary of $755,000 in 2017 (Sonnenberg, 2017). Belzer's (2016) article confirmed a statement once made to me by an NCAA DI assistant coach: Football supports itself and every other sport on campus often with money to spare.

At NCC, I am almost certain that the combined salaries of the entire athletic department, their staffs, and possibly the president and the leadership team do not equate to Nick Saban's salary. Athletics at the DIII level does not bring in that kind of revenue. What it does bring in is students, and the students equate to revenue. The research suggests this as a methodology for small colleges to survive and NCC has embraced it. However, NCC also brings in a group of student athletes who might not otherwise attend college. In doing so, and possibly as a tribute to its religious heritage and mission, it provides those student athletes who might not be DI caliber with an opportunity to play

intercollegiate football and to change the course of their lives, to reach their full potential. That alone is a solid reason for adopting this philosophy.

On a personal level, similar to Edmondson (2014), in researching why these student athletes attended college I rediscovered my own motivation from several decades prior. When football ends for these student athletes, I hope that they, too, continue on to a rewarding career, carrying their "football self" with them and allowing that passion to propel them forward into another life challenge.

The purpose of any dissertation is to add to the knowledge base, but there is no agreement whether that is general knowledge, individual understanding, or both. Zoller Seitz (2014) wrote that "knowing is comprehension; understanding is deeper because it comes from empathy or identification" (para. 5). Statistics from a survey would have provided me with knowledge. Walking the town and the campus, attending practices, tailgating and watching games with parents, listening to administrators and coaches describe their college and their team, and, most of all, listening to the student athletes describe their feelings, gave me understanding - and that is priceless.

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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Guides

STUDENT ATHLETES

1. Why did you select [Northeast Christian College]?

    a. Can you name a few other choices you had to play football and get an
        education?

2. What are your perceptions of the mission of [Northeast Christian College]?

    a. Where did you acquire those perceptions?

3. What are your perceptions of the values of [Northeast Christian College]?

    a. How do they compare with the values of the Athletic Departments? The
        football team?

    b. Where did you acquire those perceptions?

4. Who or what had the most influence on you attending [Northeast Christian College]?

5. What is the history of [Northeast Christian College]?

    a. What is the history of the football team?

6. What are the most important symbols and goals for [Northeast Christian College]?

    a. What are the most important symbols and goals for the football team?

7. Who are the formal leaders of the football team?

    a. Who are the informal leaders?

8. What does [Northeast Christian College] expect of its student athletes?

9. What does [Northeast Christian College] expect from its athletic administrators?

10. How do you as student athletes differ from the general student population?

11. What are you getting out of playing football at [Northeast Christian College] – what
    does it mean to you?

12. How do you think what you take from this experience will affect you later in life?

    a. In your job, your family, as a leader in your field?

ADMINISTRATORS

1. How does [Northeast Christian College] structure its athletic department?

    a. What are the goals of the department assigned by the college?

2. What is the mission of [Northeast Christian College]?

    a. Can you give me an example of how that is demonstrated?

3. What are the values of [Northeast Christian College]?

    a. Can you give me an example of how those are demonstrated?

4. What influences the Athletic Department / football team different from the others students on campus?

5. How does the Athletic Department / football team interact with the college as a whole?

6. What is the mission of [Northeast Christian College]?

    a. Of the athletic department / team?

    b. How do these two compare?

7. What subcultures exist on campus?

    a. Within the athletic department?

8. What symbols are most important to the college?

    a. To the athletic department / football team?

9. Who are the formal leaders of the college?

    a. Who are the informal leaders?

    b. Why do you suggest those individuals?

    c. What do they expect from you?

10. What does the college expect from the athletic department / football team?

11. What do you expect from the college?

Appendix B

Codes

PLACEMENT IN MODEL	OVERARCHING THEMES / CODES	SUBTHEME CODES	REFERENCES TO THEMES / CODES
ARTIFACTS	*FINANCIALLY DISTRESSED TOWN*	Population decrease	Traditional Caucasian, declined for 50 years from 10,000 to 6,000.
		Employment down	Down 50%, per cap income $12K below avg., 20% below poverty level
		Employers Shuttered	Brownfield industrial site; last large employer moved out.
		Repurposed buildings	Homes to offices; businesses to small shops; several small shops closed.
		Safe	Crime is limited - alcohol and drugs, few assaults.
		Clean and neat	Traditional homes, well maintained streets, trees, river.
	UTILITARIAN CAMPUS	Red Brick	All buildings but one are red brick. Stadium, chapel, and student center are the newest buildings on campus.
		Religiously affiliated	New chapel to founding denomination. Affiliation is in bylaws, mission, vision, and scholarship awards.
		Multi-purpose facilities	Stadium: used for 5 sports; track complex: used for 3 sports; gymnasium: used for 5 sports; strength & conditioning used by all students.
		Construction	Eight facilities in 20 years; no non-academic/athletic amenities (ex: climbing walls).
		Renovation	Residence halls, academic buildings renovated over the past 20 years.
	SHARED SYMBOLS	Financial	Endowment was $20M; campaign took it to $60M. Endowment increased generous financial aid, added new programs, helped renovate/construct facilities.
		Athletic Mascot	Male; appears in multiple places; unique; used by college culture.
		Athletic Colors	Used by college and athletic cultures equally.
	DOCUMENTS	Website	All activities concerned with the official NCC website.
		Archives	All research on age of campus, buildings, enrollment, history.
		Media guides	All research on age of team, records, coaches, history, mascot.
		College newspaper	Comments by students, interviews on football team, opinions on campus.
	STRATEGIC PLAN	Pillars	Simplicity: three goals. Mission and vision align with statements of support for students/ athletes from diverse backgrounds.

ESPOUSED VALUES	*REACH YOUR FULL POTENTIAL*	**Reach Your Full Potential**	Used by everyone in administration interviews; appears in multiple documents, mission statement, websites, and strategic plan.
		Accountability	Used interchangeably w/ "responsibility" by ALL student athletes; referred to this as the core value being taught by coaches and staff / faculty as well.
		College Support	Financial Support: Over 90% receive some form of financial aid. Direct Support: College provides learning and career support centers.
		Providing Opportunities	Over 50 clubs, travel, Greek Life, pre-professional clubs - introduce student athletes to activities and life-style not seen before in their lives.
CORE ASSUMPTIONS	*COLLEGE CULTURE: SURVIVAL*	**Diverse Student Athletes**	Above NCAA DIII averages in first-gen, low-income, student-athletes, exceeds the general student population in all categories and in number of minorities.
		Enrollment-Driven Athletics	Student athletes comprise 60% of student population, football is 10% of student population, 25 teams exceeds NCAA ave by 7.
		Faculty Involvement	Faculty stay after, provide opportunities (Business, Theatre, Biology), and help with counseling. Student athletes appreciate faculty.
		Staff Involvement	Librarians, campus police, involved in supporting students. Student athletes commented positively on their relationships with staff.
		Head Coach Involvement	Head coach sets standards, holds team to them; student athletes feel comfortable discussing all activities with coaches, develop relationships.
	FOOTBALL CULTURE: IDENTIFY AS COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYERS	**Primacy of Football**	Student athletes had multiple opportunities; visited other campuses; want to play four more years, want to play immediately instead of being on second string.
		Financial Aid	Financial aid was better than other offers; suitable financial aid; liked financial aid package; not worried about financial aid
		Microculture	Recruits enjoyed NCC student athletes more than student athletes at other colleges; more fun (no references to the mascots, college viability, academic draw/majors).
		Parental Reinforcement	Parents majority blue-collar; interested in their student athletes; did not push toward other colleges; happy and proud with their decision and NCC.

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Appendix C

Replication Logic