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Collegiate Administrator Perceptions of Organizational Culture: An Analysis of Metaphors

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Purpose of the Study

This study sought to characterize college and university administrator perceptions of organizational culture, their perceptions of themselves versus other campus subcultures, and their perceptions of themselves as members of their campus communities, through an analysis of their use of metaphors. Primary research objectives included the identification of administrator perceptions of the dominant campus culture, their perceptions of related subcultures, their perceptions of group self-consciousness, and the characterization of administrators as a legitimate collegiate subculture.

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design, utilizing metaphor analysis as the framework for individual interviews. The very nature of the problem (i.e. asking administrators to describe their perceptions of their cultural environments) suggests that personal depth interviews provide the best way to make full use of a small sample, eliciting a broad range of rich, descriptive data from each participant. Qualitative research designed to reveal cultural conditions stresses the importance of context, setting, and the subject's frame of reference (Patton, 2002; Schein, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

College and university administrators play a vital role in institutional management and growth. Yet, researchers and scholars (Austin, 1990; Berquist & Pawlak, 2008; Harman, 2002; Silver, 2003; Tierney, 2008) suggest that administrators typically feel estranged from the central purpose of the activities of the academy: teaching, research, and service. Faculty and student subcultures operate as viable groups within, and contributing to, the dominant culture of an institution. Conversely, administrators sharing the same campus lack full acceptance into the organizational

culture as an actively contributing subculture. Consequently, campus administrators perceive their institutional cultures differently from members of other subcultures, which impacts daily activities such as decision making, group interactions, group self-consequences, communication across subgroups, and overall effectiveness on the job (Silver, 2003; Swain, 2006).

Considerable debate persists concerning the existence of a definitive administration subculture in higher education (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Kondra & Hurst, 2009; Silver, 2003). Scholars continue to challenge the viability of an administrative subculture on today's college campus despite the administrator's increasingly vital role (Hellowell & Hancock, 2001; Hui-Min, 2009; Palm, 2006). The growing specialization of education in the last century spurred the development of a cadre of professional administrators at colleges and universities across the country. Faculty members previously performed administrative functions, and belonged to the college community primarily as academicians and secondly as bureaucrats; however, the new breed of administrators on today's college campus incorporates individuals with professional backgrounds in education, social and human services, business, finance, management, marketing, and other entrepreneurial fields. Their loyalties are often expressed first to their professional disciplines and secondly, to the institutions at which they are employed (Hui-Min, 2009).

This expanding group of administrators now assumes the responsibility for critical decision making in numerous areas. Enrollment management, resource allocation, academic program management, staff allocation, increasing efficiency, development of long-range plans, soliciting funds for programs or building development, and oversight of myriad legal issues embody many of these areas. The significance of the

administrator's role on campus asserts itself with startling statistics. The number of college administrators per 100 students increased from 6.8 FTE in 1993 to 9.4 FTE in 2007, an increase of nearly 40%; conversely, the number of full-time faculty only increased 18% during the same period (NCES, 2009).

College and university administrators often perceive themselves as invisible, unappreciated, and under-utilized. Though they believe that they contribute to and support the work of the entire organization, they do not always see themselves directly involved in the primary institutional mission of teaching, research, and service. Faculty members traditionally comprised the essence of an institution, and once possessed responsibility for many administrative activities. Now, faculty members view these "new" administrators with suspicion, believing that they do not understand the nature of the academic enterprise nor value the role of the faculty member. Consequently, many administrators sense that they hold a "second class citizen" status in a community where the faculty members largely determine membership (Harman, 2002; Palm, 2006; Toma, Dubrow, & Hartley, 2005).

This relegated status causes administrators to perceive themselves and their roles on campus as tenuous and lacking full credibility. As a result, the college administrator remains insular, interacting only with other administrators (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008). Administrators, like other members of the academic community, desire appreciation and recognition. They actively seek professional growth, a sense of community, shared mission or destiny with other members of the institution, affiliation across groups, and active participation in the management of the organization (Gentry, Katz, & McFeeters, 2009; Peterson & Spencer, 1990; Swain, 2006). Administrator perceptions of their status on campus significantly affects organizational effectiveness, educational quality, and

the overall health of the institution. Their integration with other subcultures, or lack thereof, impacts the institution as a whole.

During periods of change and transition, an understanding of collegiate cultures and subcultures serves a particularly important purpose insofar as cultural awareness assists administrators in interpreting and making sense of the organization (Schein, 2010; Silver, 2003; Tierney, 1990). A careful characterization and substantiation of the administrative subculture critically cultivates and furthers a productive relationship between all campus subcultures. Additionally, administrators play a more central role in servicing and interacting with students on campuses today, thus challenging the monopoly faculty members once held in the student-to-institution relationship. Faculty and student subcultures must develop a better understanding of the systemic role administrators play toward bridging the gap between them, to the institution's advantage.

Conceptual Framework

This study used Van Maanen and Barley's (1985) theory and definition of subcultures as a conceptual framework for this study. Their definition of subculture provides a context for understanding collegiate administrators' perspectives on their identity within the dominant campus culture: "…subculture is …a subset of an organization's members who interact regularly with one another, identify themselves as a distinct group within the organization, share a set of problems commonly defined to be the problems of all, and routinely take action on the basis of collective understandings unique to the group" (p. 38).

Background of the Study

Why should we study organizational culture? Tierney (1990) suggests that administrators should become aware of their institutional cultures and subcultures in order to reduce conflict and promote sharing institutional goals. Masland (1985) and Lok, Westwood, and Crawford (2005) argue

that understanding a particular institution's culture may further explain the behaviors and decision making practices enacted by community members. Supporting these arguments, Cameron and Quinn (2006) and Smircich (1983b) cite the study of organizational culture as even more central to higher education by defining organizational culture as a phenomenon impacted by unobtrusive controls. Inherent in unobtrusive controls reside explicit and implicit influences, but when those mechanisms emerge weakly the organizational culture increases in its importance. A college or university campus demonstrates the classic example of organization with weak explicit or implicit influences (Cohen & March, 1974; Weick, 1976), which further supports the contention that organizational culture in higher education should be studied in greater depth (Ashkanasy, Wilderom, & Peterson, 2000).

Examination of a collegiate culture reveals how a particular institution arrived at its current state. On a practical level, as colleges confront the challenges of the 21st century and beyond, a better comprehension of cultural conditions may prove vital for survival and adaptation (Clark, 1972; Dill, 1982; Howard-Grenville, 2006; Tierney, 1998, 2008; Toma, Dubrow, & Hartley, 2005). As institutions and systems of higher education expand, academic culture tends to fragment. Clark (1972) noted that institutions of the higher education may actually move from "integrated academic culture[s]" to the "many cultures of the conglomeration" (p.25).

While some scholars and researchers cite the need for continued research in the area of collegiate culture and subcultures (Masland, 1985; Tierney, 2008), little published empirical work actually exists defining administrators as a higher education subculture. Austin (1990) and other scholars (Hui-Min, 2009; Helawell & Hancock, 2001; Peterson & Spencer, 1990) examined the work experiences of the midlevel and senior

administrators with particular attention to job characteristics, decision-making roles, commitment, and overall satisfaction. Hui-Min (2009) also studied all non-academic administrators in terms of routine activities, career paths, and professional affiliations. Beyond those efforts, a review of the research in this realm reveals little substantive work.

Additional prior research regarding college administrators further probed the exploration of job performance, satisfaction, work experience, training, career development, and institutional commitment (Gentry, Katz, & McFeeters, 2009). College administrators require the distinction of their own cultural identity to avoid the perception that they perform peripheral roles as dispersed participants in the campus community. In their eyes they lack definition and cohesion as a significant subgroup exerting influences on and through the dominant campus culture (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008; Kuh & Whitt, 1988).

Several scholars (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008; Clark, 1972; Kuh & Whitt, 1988) suggest that higher education administrators cannot assert their own valid subculture due to the extensive diversity of their professional duties. Yet, faculty members, who support their own affiliations to professional and academic fields, easily qualify as constituting a collegiate subculture in the eyes of researchers and scholars. Van Maanen and Barley's (1985) established criteria for subcultures (e.g., regular interaction both on and off campus, striving for group consciousness, shared problems in performing job duties, and shared values and norms as they relate to work in the college setting) justifies a thorough investigation of college administrators as a definitive collegiate subculture.

The few research efforts accomplished on this topic rely on survey questionnaires to assess cultural artifacts and conditions. Alternately, qualitative interviewing attempts to elicit individual perceptions without

providing external cues, thus, providing a more appropriate perspective for the study of the dimensions of culture (Smircich, 1983a; Tierney, 1988; Trice & Morand, 1991). Traditional studies of organizations and cultural artifacts, oriented toward quantification of rationally conceived patterns and structures, cannot adequately capture the dynamics of culture. Conventional variables such as size, control, or location are of little help in understanding institutional cohesion. Our lack of grasping cultural dimensions inhibits our ability to address the problems that challenge higher education today (Gibson, 2006; Tierney, 2008). In particular, Whitcomb and Deshler (1983) determined that during their interviews with campus groups, administrators yielded more metaphors than any other group, thus supporting the basis for further testing this methodology with administrators. Finally, a new qualitative research method contributes a valuable methodology that provides an effective means of identifying the perceptions of college and university administrators, the characteristics of the administrative subculture, and the degree of experience and social integration of that subculture in ways that previously have not been accomplished holistically (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

Research Questions

The following research questions evolve conceptually from the problem statement and focus on the perceptions of administrators concerning their cultural context and their group self-consciousness as an organizational subculture. These research questions fall into three distinct categories: 1) administrator perceptions of their organizations, 2) administrator perceptions of self versus others, and 3) administrator perceptions of community and belonging. The following research questions delineate according to those distinctions:

Administrator Perceptions of the Organization

1. How do administrators describe their organizational culture? Which perspectives do they employ?
2. How do administrators describe their organization as outsiders would view it?
3. How do the values, norms, stories, and traditions of the culture transfer to newcomers?

Administrator Perceptions of Self Versus Others

4. Do administrators perceive themselves as a separate and distinct subculture within the college community?
5. How do administrators form a sense of group community apart from other subgroups?
6. What processes do administrators employ to share problems related to job duties, tasks, and responsibilities? On-campus? Through formal or informal associations? Through professional affiliations off-campus?

Administrator Perceptions of Community and Belonging

7. Does the same sense of cooperation, consensus, and collegiality exist for administrators as it does for other subgroups? Do administrators feel separated from the activities and goals of the other campus groups?
8. How do administrators relate to one another in the workplace?
9. How do administrators relate to non-administrators in the workplace?
10. What norms govern how administrators interact with other administrators? Faculty members? Students?

Additionally, the characterization of an administrative subculture was investigated by identifying commonalities in: (a) job tasks, (b) career paths, (c) affiliations with other administrators on campus (d) assessment

of the interaction with the faculty and student subcultures on campus,(e) shared bureaucratic perspectives,(f) shared problems in performing duties, (g) group self-consciousness,(h) affiliations with professional associations and colleagues in other institutions, (i) organizational context,(j) professional development, (k) educational background, and (l) shared values and norms (Kuh & Whitt, 1988).

Methodology

Research Design

This qualitative phenomenological study explored collegiate administrator perceptions of the salient behaviors, events, beliefs, attitudes, structures and processes occurring in their organizational cultures, and studied perceptions of their individual and collective roles as administrative subculture members.

The use of metaphor analysis suggests a very specific type of qualitative methodology. In an interpretative methodology, metaphors comprise a form of linguistic analysis which assists researchers who are interested in an intensive but short-term evaluation of organizational culture (Patton, 2002; Schmitt, 2005). Since language serves as a pivotal cultural artifact, metaphors emerge from that sphere as a particularly expressive language form.

Language remains an absolutely integral and complex element of organizational culture. Every culture, discipline, perspective, organization, profession, and educational institution possesses its own unique set of conceptual components and elements from which its language or jargon originates. Consequently, language represents the concepts, beliefs, norms, values and practices of the culture, and affects the way people think about things (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Hofstede, Bond, & Chung-leung, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Smircich, 1985).

Metaphors behave as powerful forms of organizational language because they communicate symbolic meaning beyond the obvious content of the words. They help people make sense of their environment, organize information, and resolve apparent conflicts and contradictions. The process of eliciting metaphors involves using metaphors as an object of organizational culture. Schmitt (2005) and Wittnk (2011) identify metaphor analysis as means of securing imagery that mirrors organizational culture at many levels. As a linguistic cultural artifact, metaphors facilitate an individual's disclosure of his or her surroundings, allowing for imaginative and emotional descriptions while serving as a safeguard that avoids more direct or confrontational language. For example, if an individual uses the metaphor "like a zoo" or "like a family" to describe his or her working environment, those words provide specific clues as to the emotional and cultural context of the organization, without compromising the vulnerability of the respondent.

This research, therefore, relies primarily on people's words and impressions as the primary source of data. Through an interviewee's self-disclosures and the use of descriptive phrases, cultural values, beliefs and issues emerge. Respondents suggest how an organization perceives itself, how its members view themselves, how others view them, and how the organization accomplishes goals, hence implying organizational direction. Two specific strategies support the process of eliciting metaphors: (a) the use of key words of phrases in a free association exercise (i.e., suggesting the words "student" or "campus community" and asking interviewees to respond with the first word or phrase that came to mind), and (b) the use of guiding phrases to prompt metaphors (e.g., "this institution operates like…").

Thomas (1949) proposes that the study of people demands to know just how people define the situation in which they find themselves. Schein

(2010) contends that "we simply cannot understand organizational phenomena without considering culture both as a cause and as a way of explaining such phenomena" (p. 311). In other words, to understand the issue of culture, it seems appropriate simply to question participants on how they view their worlds.

For these reasons, a connection develops between a choice of methods and the major research questions. A qualitative study values participant perspectives on their worlds, seeks to discover those perspectives, and views inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participant. Each qualitative method approach assumes that systematic inquiry must occur in a natural setting rather than in an artificially constrained one, such as an experiment (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Moustakas (1994) and Rubin and Rubin (2005 describe how data unite through depth interviewing and how they associate with identified domains of understanding. As Thomas (1949) states, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (p. 301).

Population and Sample

This study comprised a target population of 20 college and university administrators employed at five private colleges and universities in the New England region. Using the Carnegie Foundation classification system (Carnegie Foundation, 2010), a representative group of undergraduate and graduate institutions comprised the sample. Mid-level and senior level administrators representing the areas of student affairs, research and planning, institutional advancement, finance, and admissions constituted the respondent group, excluding presidents and academic administrators or administrators originating primarily from a role as a faculty member. This population represents a microcosm of the larger

population of higher education administrators primarily because of the institutional diversity spanning a cross-section of administrative functions.

Lastly, the final population consisted of 12 men and 8 women, with an average tenure of 7.3 years (the shortest tenure being one year and the longest being eighteen years).

Researcher Role and Entry

Invitation emails targeting selected administrators, coordinated with follow-up phone calls, accomplished the appropriate institutional entry. Since this study characterizes and describes the cultural artifacts of particular administrative subcultures, passing judgment or letting personal bias interfere would prove detrimental. The researcher used bracketing to offer interviewees a measure of comfort and empathy during interview sessions and to allow for the researcher's personal bias disclosure.

Data Collection Procedures

This study relied on semi-structured individual interviews as the primary method of data collection. Interviews invited participant reflection on the characteristics and impacts of their respective cultures and subcultures. Introducing general topics during interview sessions helped participants uncover their cultural perspectives and identify background information; otherwise, the process respected how the participant framed and structured their responses. The participant's perspective on the social phenomenon of interest unfolded as he or she viewed it. An interview guide directed the interview dialogue, with questions ranging from a mix of directional queries about cultural context and their professional situations within that context, to free association and linguistic extrapolations that solicited imagery, metaphors, and descriptive language about cultural perspectives. Substantial and detailed interview notes supplemented taped interviews.

This research represents interviews spanning the period of June through September, 2010, revealing a respondent group generally willing to talk freely, interested in thoughtful and insightful dialogue, and creative in their use of descriptive language and metaphors. As Whitcomb and Deshler (1983) observed in their study, some interviewees will articulate well but do not resort to metaphors. While this study leaves the question of cognitive styles and metaphor selection to other researchers, it remains of interest as to why some individuals provide few substantial comments about their organizations and the cultural components of everyday life on campus. Nonetheless, these individuals remained forthright and honest in their discussions and ultimately provided useful information that merged well with other interview data.

Interview sessions varied extensively, ranging from 60 minutes to 90 minutes; the average interview lasted for approximately 75 minutes.

Interviews persist as the most effective means of gathering data on beliefs, attitudes, and values because culture operates implicitly and interview questions cannot effectively inquire about culture directly. As Masland (1985) notes, interview questions must inquire about the cultural context or cultural "windows." Asking respondents what makes their college distinct or unique uncovers organizational saga (Clark 1972); asking about organizational heroes uncovers institutional history. These, and other questions, encourage a respondent's disclosure on organizational culture. Careful listening allows for an excellent means of discovering manifestations of culture through each person's perspective (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Trustworthiness

Depth interviews with several respondents at each site and institutional document analyses allowed for a triangulation of methods to test confirmability of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Select participants

were asked to review summaries of interview transcripts (member checking) to establish credibility. Interview notes were transcribed and checked for accuracy; participant comments were probed in order to secure 'thick description' so as to provide a detailed picture of their experiences and perceptions; this phenomenological device allowed for conclusions to be drawn which may be transferrable to other settings or populations (transferability). Additionally, a pilot study was conducted to test and validate the interview guide. A random sample of college administrators not included in the final sample comprised the pilot study population. Modifications were subsequently made to the interview guide that enhanced viability of the instrument and the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Management and Analysis

Complex and voluminous qualitative data accumulates while collecting information on organizational culture. A data management plan unfolds with the first interview process. While gathering information, themes and trends develop, leading to further testing and exploration of these preliminary findings as the data collection process continues.

By investigating administrator perceptions of organizational context, self versus others and a sense of community, a strategy incorporating four modes of analysis develops: (a) organizing the data; (b) generating categories and themes; (c) applying a secondary lens of linguistic analysis to the thematic clusters; d) searching for alternative explanation of the data; and e) drawing conclusions for the final report. Each phase involves data reduction as data accumulates into manageable bits. The words and acts of the respondents assume meaning and insight as the study progresses (Patton, 2002).

Phase I of data analysis revolves around conducting content analysis, which serves as basic techniques for analyzing cultural data. This

form of analysis involves locating recurrent cultural themes in the data (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). Using this approach, structuring and coding the data distill the important aspects of organizational culture. Identifying the underlying themes determines how the themes cohere. Consistency in cultural images assumes several forms, to include themes, stories, incidents, and symbols (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Masland 1985).

Phase II of data analysis employs the approach suggested by Whitcomb & Deshler (1983). Their three metaphoric and linguistic approaches further clarify the data analysis process:

1) The thematic approach searches for any similarity or clustering of metaphors according to the secondary subject (nonliteral description) rather than viewing meaning according to the primary subject.
2) The emotional-barometer approach analyzes metaphors for their emotionally-laden qualities, categorized by the range of emotions revealed through language choices.
3) The cultural values approach examines metaphors as surface manifestations of underlying values that particular conditions in the environment either affirm or frustrate.

Findings and Discussion

These research findings identify college and university administrators as a distinct subculture in the higher education environment. A review of interview data, a detailed analysis of the metaphors generated by interviewees, and an extensive review of published documents from each interviewee's campus comprise the total effort undertaken to address the research questions. The combination of these three research methods provides a holistic perspective on collegiate administrators and their

perspectives on campus culture. The key findings derived from content analysis highlight: 1) administrator perceptions of organizational culture, 2) administrator perceptions of group self-consciousness, 3) administrator characterization of the administrative subculture, and 4) administrator job satisfaction. Additionally, content analysis of metaphors and linguistics produce the following findings, which support initial content analysis: 5) metaphoric descriptions of campus community, 6) metaphoric descriptions of the organization as 'animal', 7) metaphoric descriptions of institutional behavior, and 8) metaphoric descriptions of the administrator's sense of belonging. The second phase of data analysis, consisting of metaphoric – linguistic analysis, highlights findings related to 1) thematic clusters, 2) emotional barometer clusters, and 3) cultural values clusters.

The results of this research identify collegiate administrators as involved and concerned with their organizations. Their collective perceptions of organizational culture establish them as participants in their organizational cultures rather than as creators of those cultures. Their group self-consciousness promotes them as a distinctive subculture in the higher education environment, even though they communicate a sense of feeling less important than faculty and student groups, and removed from the critical teaching-learning process. They exhibit considerable satisfaction with their jobs and professional fields despite their frustrations with being taken for granted. Finally, the results of this research reveal the qualitative methodology of metaphor analysis originating from semi-structured interviews as a powerful and explicit means for determining the implicit components of organizational culture.

Phase I Data Analysis

Administrator Perceptions of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture directs community behavior, work patterns, communication, and interpretation of mission. Administrators demonstrate the need to justify their existence on campus, to validate themselves, and to contribute to the survival and success of the organization. Yet, administrators largely act as voyeurs of organizational culture. They cohere as a subculture like onlookers observing the systemic interactions of faculty and students. They observe and participate in their organizational cultures, but they generally do not create or perpetuate those cultures.

Administrators comprise a group who serve other campus groups. They share perceptions, not only in bureaucratic sense of viewing the organization as a manageable enterprise, but also from the perspective of wishing they contributed more to the educational process. Despite any feelings of community or belonging, administrators persistently view themselves as incidental to the institution's "raison d'etre." This inherent 'second class' status discourages this group of committed, trained professionals, and they refuse to accept the status gracefully. Additionally, Peterson and Spencer (1990) and Silver (2003) find that administrators possess an intuitive grasp of their cultural conditions and become explicitly aware of those conditions when their actions transgress cultural boundaries.

Administrator Perceptions of Group Self-Consciousness and Morale

Administrators form a special subgroup within the dominant culture and perceive themselves as members of the campus community in a less connected way than faculty members or students might see themselves. Palm (2006) posits that external relationships contribute to the disproportionate increase of the administrator sector in higher education, and, for that reason, faculty members believe that power in colleges and universities now lies with the central administration. This causes faculty

members to believe that administrators inappropriately attribute to themselves more power and importance than they deserve. Conversely, administrators often find faculty members at the 'root of their troubles' as they attempt to manage institutions. The combined result supports a demoralized administrative subgroup. Administrators may once have felt more secure in their roles as institutional stewards and managers, but changes in society and the academy weaken that sense of security considerably (Austin, 1990).

Most administrators desire greater involvement with the heart of the educational process, but receive few opportunities or invitations to become involved in a substantial way. Administrators who teach a class or two, or who advise students, reveal greater satisfaction with their sense of campus community than those who do not; many administrators do not receive such opportunities, and for those reasons, and others, feel somewhat disconnected from the central activities of the college. Conversely, they harbor the belief that their work is crucial to the success of the organization, but no one appreciates them. These conflicting perceptions and emotions create a situation where administrators often feel frustrated, resentful, and isolated. Many faculty members, and even students, suggest that administrators possess few rights to make decisions about things in which they do not directly participate (teaching-learning), which further fuels this sense of a relegated status. This circumstance reveals itself in the comments that administrators make about their social interactions on- and off-campus. While administrators seek greater interaction with faculty members and student groups, they realize little reciprocal interest; hence, administrators find that their only viable social connections remain solely with other administrators.

Administrator Characterization of the Administrative Subculture

The characterization of the administrative subculture confirms Van Maanen and Barley's (1985) subculture definition. Administrators, as a group, behave in ways that imply shared values, norms, perspectives, behaviors, and goals. They share similar types of jobs and tasks; they follow similar career paths and originate from similar non-academic educational backgrounds. Administrators seek professional development and affiliation opportunities, and attend conferences and meetings as often as possible to ensure mutual support and encouragement.

Administrators share a bureaucratic perspective of the higher education organization unique only to themselves. They view colleges and universities as educational institutions that demand their special skills and expertise. Likewise, they view the higher education organization as a hierarchy, related to organizational position and context, and to issues of compensation, rank, and authority as status symbols. Beyond these surface manifestations of viewing educational institutions bureaucratically, administrators share similar beliefs concerning the valuable and special product of the educational experience. They value recognition, appreciation for their contributions, desire for involvement in the central activities of the institution, active participation in governance and decision making, and close affiliation with other campus groups.

Administrator Job satisfaction

Administrators conveyed considerable satisfaction with their jobs, and their professional responsibilities, which transcended any dissatisfaction or frustration they implied about their organizational cultures, overall. Researchers confirm that collegiate administrators realize a measure of personal and professional satisfaction not necessarily related to their campus community relationships (McDonald, 2002; Silver, 2003). Many interviewees provided metaphors indicating frustration,

isolation, discouragement, and lack of appreciation that deny the values they most strongly uphold, even while they expressed satisfaction with their professional performance and daily routines.

Metaphoric Descriptions of Campus Community

Cameron and Quinn (2006) and Geertz (1973) remind us that each institutional culture possesses a distinct flavor. While individuals discussed similar topics from campus to campus, they used different language and symbols to communicate. Administrators at School B described their organization as a "family place," just as administrators at School D did, but the differences arose in School B's admissions professional denoting that their culture as "sophisticated" and "business-like," while the research director at School D suggested a culture "with a small, gossipy village atmosphere."

In the realm of perceptions of campus community, administrators revealed environments of strain and tension as well as environments of harmony and collegiality. In both instances, colorful, and imaginative metaphors emerged. Interviewees at School D provided metaphors that suggested harmony, affiliation, and affirmation, especially reflected in phrases like "a tight community," or "a caring, supportive place."

Conversely, interviewees at School A reflected their contention and frustration in metaphors like " this place is like a herd of elephants— it just keeps moving along, flattening you as it moves, and not just caring!"

Descriptions of campus relations at School A included, "this place is like a masquerade ball—all glitz, all superficial and artificial, but nothing real and substantial underneath, nothing you can depend on!"

Metaphoric Descriptions of Organization as 'Animal'

Some of the most revealing perspectives on administrators' perceptions of campus culture and community emerged through the use of metaphors describing the organization as an animal. Administrators described their intuitions as dogs, birds, elephants, giraffes, and jellyfish. Some of the more emotional or suggestive descriptions included a "peacock with its head in the sand," or "a tiger ready to leap on its prey."

The significance of the animal images reveals itself in the explanations interviewees offered for their metaphors. For example, all the administrators at School A used animal images with negative overtones. While describing an organization as a flock of birds might not seem explicitly negative or positive, one interviewee suggests that the indecisive and chaotic behavior of the organization resembled a flock of birds "fluttering directionlessly." Similarly, another School A interviewee's use of the image "alligator" represented an organization ready to "eat you alive, "while the "peacock with his head in the sand" image spoke to the institution's inclination for "all show- - no instincts for survival."

Metaphoric Descriptions of Institutional Behavior.

When responding to the statement" this institution operates like a …" a similar range of responses produced emotionally laden and linguistically descriptive images. Administrators used phrases and metaphors such as "an old lady," "an elementary school with the kids in charge," a "government agency," and 'a large multinational cooperation" relating to the negative connotation of higher education organizations as bureaucracy. In all of those cases, administrators provided supporting explanations, suggesting underlying tensions, bureaucratic structures, or impersonal, insensitive management styles. An

equal number of administrators described their organizations as harmonious, however, presuming a family-like resemblance. The use of similar metaphors such as a "village" or "a community" confirmed the use of "family" as a pattern for expressing an organization where the participants experience closeness, affiliation, and belonging. Administrators perceived community as a place where "you feel like you have an important contribution to make and others appreciate it," or "you feel like you fit in." The opportunity to teach, advise, or counsel students remains an important link for administrators who seek a sense of belonging to the campus community. As School C's development director expressed, "the chance to advise even a few senior students a year about career choices makes a difference in reminding me what we're all here for and how I can stay involved."

Metaphoric Descriptions of Administrators' Sense of Belonging

Not unlike other individuals, administrators self-select and gravitate to those places where they realize the greatest connection. If they choose a community where they do not ultimately fit in, they experience turmoil until they leave. The implicit norms of an organizational culture make clear the terms of the community membership (Sackmann, 1992). School D's development director once worked at School A, and notes, "I never really felt like I belonged. Now I'm back where I belong" (referring to his status as an alumnus).

Some administrators' descriptions of community suggest fragmentation and divisionalism. Administrators at School A identified campus community as a "series of little fiefdoms" or "little kingdoms." Other School A interviewees employed phrases like "this place is made up of many little communities—no one, big community." The admission

director at School E identified campus community as "comprised of many underground subcultures." While some administrators suggested "a camp divided" atmosphere, interviewees at schools B and D viewed their campus communities as "encompassing, " "caring," or "dynamic," implying greater trust and cooperation in those environments.

Phase II Data Analysis

Thematic Clusters

Interviewees conjured unusual and imaginative images through extensive use of metaphors. When describing her organization, School A's development officer suggested that the college is "like a luxurious ocean liner with broken engines: the engines may not be working anymore, but they've built up a head of steam that keeps the ship moving, and no one down below knows they're in any trouble—they just keep partying!" School D's student affairs officer compared the tensions between younger and older faculty to "young turks versus older gentlemen," noting that their differences accentuated the impending changes in that faculty body. School A's research officer compared their organization to "a circus"; as they observed, "this place is like a circus, with lots of things happening simultaneously, some funny, some sad, some deceitful, some innocent." Whether the development officer at School C described relations with faculty members as a "battle ground" or School E's admissions officer described administrator-student relations as "strained, as if they were part of a small business suddenly forced to grow," metaphors provided a basis for uncovering hidden feelings and sensitivities to campus relations. In all, metaphors proved effective in revealing a wide range of emotions and perceptions.

Which prevalent images, themes, and issues emerged from the interviews? Although interview questions frequently elicited "animal" and

"relationship" metaphors, other metaphors fell into six remaining categories. A total of eight categories comprised the most concise means of organizing respondent language into manageable and understandable groupings in the following categories: (a) social systems, (b) relationships, (c) animals, (d) nature, (e) entertainment, (f) water, (tension/violence, and (h) miscellaneous. Respondents most frequently described their organizational cultures in terms of social systems, social relationships, and animals. Entertainment and nature images and followed closely as popular ways of framing responses to free association questions. Remaining categories of tension/violence, water imagery, and miscellaneous imagery identified critical perspectives, but occurred less frequently than other types of images.

Emotional Barometer Clusters

Despite initial struggles with metaphor use, interviewees offered a full range of positive and negative metaphors spurned by the introduction of emotionally charged topics. Asking interviewees about their organizations remains less threatening than asking them to discuss their relations with and perceptions of other community members. The "free association" exercise marked the critical point during each interview when sufficient trust assured honest and creative disclosure.

What ranges of emotion emerged through respondents' choice of metaphors? Overall, an equal proportion of positive as well as negative emotions emerged through the interviews. Positive emotions, such as feeling connected, cooperation, respect, teamwork, affiliation, efficiency, consensus, enjoyment, satisfaction, accomplishment, and pride, prevailed as interviewees selected metaphors like "democracy," "family," "village," "community," "old friends," "country club," "academic greenhouse," "walking in the forest," and "belonging to a team." Negative emotions, such as cynicism, anger, fear, uncertainty, frustration, embattlement,

chaos, distrust, and lack of belonging surfaced as interviewees selected metaphors commonly linked with tension and violence. Images of a "battleground," a "nuclear reactor," "demilitarized zone," "pulling teeth," "pond with snapping turtle," "alligator," "porcupines dancing," "peacock with its head in the sand," "unorganized anarchy," "sibling rivalry," "rebellious mob," or "young turks versus old gentlemen" reflected these tensions. In particular, combat metaphors reflected groups at odds on campus, again in conflict with the desire for community and unity.

Cultural Values Clusters

The cultural values approach to data analysis suggests that respondents shares similar values and perspectives as metaphors illustrate individual cultural value systems. Metaphors serve as surface manifestations of implicitly held norms, mores, and assumptions about the way things should be that particular conditions in their cultural environments either affirm or frustrate.

It is interesting to note that the happiest individuals offered a relatively limited range of metaphors or descriptive language. When individuals revealed high levels of stress, dissatisfaction, or unhappiness with their circumstances, significantly more metaphors and descriptors evolved. As Whitcomb and Deshler (1983) suggest, individuals more colorfully describe pain than pleasure. Individuals expressing feelings of frustration, anger, lack of appreciation, and disconnectedness generated more metaphors than those who expressed satisfaction with their environments. This implies that those particular individuals sensed a threat to their values and beliefs, and ventilated through graphic and emotional metaphors.

Nonverbals.

Notably, male and female body language differed significantly during interviews. Women exhibited particularly restrictive body language, evidenced by crossed arms and legs, or use of the desk or table as a barrier. Men exhibited more relaxed behavior during interviews, leaning back in their chairs, leaving their arms and legs uncrossed, and sporting more casual conversational tones. Overall, men and women alike, behaved cautiously at the beginning of each interview, but relaxed after answering their initial set of questions. Asking questions about organizational culture at the beginning of the interview proved particularly effective for relaxing respondents, ensuring more candid and insightful metaphors by the end of the interview. In some cases, respondents who began an interview cautiously, contradicted themselves once they relaxed. In one particular case, a discussion about the campus culture differed radically from the metaphors that followed later in the interview; that particular respondent's hesitation dissipated eventually and more 'truthful' disclosures about organizational perspectives unfolded once they felt less threatened.

Document Analysis

Document analysis challenges the gap between perception, illusion, and reality (Morphew & Hartley, 2006). College catalogs, as well as other published promotional materials, provided another dimension of administrators' perspectives on themselves and their organizational cultures. Not only did documents supplement the interview data and validate the perceptions of respondents, but they also provided a comprehensive picture of each institution's organizational culture.

Document analysis involved a review of college catalogs and promotional pieces, as well as campus newspapers, blogs, annual reports, brochures, handbooks, and other social media outlets. Reviewing college admissions catalogs and websites involved reading: (a) institutional mission statements, (b) institutional histories, (c) academic program summaries, and (d) student and faculty profiles. College newspapers and blogs provided a perspective on critical current issues that create a sense of institutional identity (i.e., what kinds of issues do community members consider important or relevant). Finally, a review of promotional publications and handbooks deserved consideration for the clues they provided regarding the cultural environment and the implicit norms and mores communicated to campus groups. The combination of these published or publically available materials served to validate or deny interview data; overall, there was significant consistency between interview data and institutional culture identification.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Higher Education Professionals

The results of this research support several recommendations for the higher education community, and for collegiate administrators, in particular.

- First, the findings suggest that administrators act as a definitive subculture, and deserve consideration for full membership in campus community. Their perceptions and behavior support their presence as a legitimate campus subculture (Hatch, 1993; Lok, Westwood, & Crawford, 2005), deserving of the recognition and appreciation they sorely lack as they devote themselves to their organizations. Colleges and universities would be well served to begin to look at the

important contributions its administrators make to the organization and to create more opportunities to allow faculty, students, and administrators to work together, both within and external to the institution.

- Second, if collegiate administrators feel disconnected from their organizations, as they manage key areas of the college (finance, fundraising, marketing, student personnel), they ultimately suffer demoralization and frustration. Those emotions negatively impact the work administrators accomplish for their institution (Martin, 2002). Presidents and senior executives need to develop an awareness of how all campus groups perceive themselves and their connection to the campus community, for the success and cohesion of the organization.
- Third, cultural data retrieved through metaphor analysis serve several functions. Whitcomb and Deshler (1983) and Dill (1982) offer some suggestions for ways to use the findings from this type of research, to include: (a) the promotion of institutional self-awareness, (b) using metaphors as a catalyst for discussion on campus that impact ways to manage change, and (c) as reflections of emotional barometers that affect decision making. Tierney (1988) and Smircich (1983b) supplement this list by suggesting that institutional self-awareness resulting from the analysis of cultural data serves as a means of conflict resolution and effective management. A significant implication of this research suggests that as administrators manage institutional affairs, they need a framework for understanding themselves and their organizations that allows for sensitive and responsible leadership. Bringing campus groups together to discuss the

organizational culture, specifically to create institutional subculture metaphors, provides a means to this framework.

Recommendations for Further Research

Several issues deserve further consideration, based on these findings:

1. Greater exploration of the differences between mid- and senior level administrators representing different professional areas.
2. Further exploration of the differences between the cultural perspectives of senior and mid level nonacademic administrators representing different lengths of service at their institutions.
3. Identification of perspectives on leadership as a means of affecting perceptions of organizational culture.
4. Further analysis of the linguistic methodology to build cohesion within a campus community as a prelude to a cultural audit.
5. Greater investigation of the degree of an administrator's involvement in the educational enterprise as it relates to satisfaction or feeling connected.

Summary

The results of this study confirm many of the findings identified through prior research, particularly relating to administrator's perceptions of professional and personal job satisfaction, professional affiliations, career paths and backgrounds, and management styles (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984; Berquist & Pawlak, 2008; Chaffee & Tierney, 1988; Kondra & Hurst, 2009; Thompson & Luthans, 1990).

The results of this study also validate the interpretive qualitative research methodology, and the detailed analysis of metaphors as a means of uncovering administrator's perceptions of organizational culture. The findings confirm that administrators possess a unique

perception of organizational culture that defines their cohesiveness as definitive collegiate subculture. Furthermore, findings suggest that administrators value and desire greater involvement in their campus communities, seeking respect and appreciation from other campus groups. The implications for higher education suggest that awareness on the part of presidents and senior leadership to include administrators as full members of the college community will empower administrators as full members of the culture, while capitalizing on the contributions they make to their organizations.

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