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Exploring Institutional Culture as a Macrosystem Antecedent to University Workplace Bullying: An Organizational Ethnography

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A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
Samuel Tristam Aldridge
August 2019

Accepted by:
Dr. Pamela A. Havice, Committee Chair
Dr. Michelle Boettcher
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ABSTRACT

Workplace bullying situated specifically in higher education has been an under-researched topic. Researchers have focused investigations in the academy toward the prevalence and nature of bullying. Consequently, institutional responses have largely centered on policy implementation in an attempt to discourage and eliminate the occurrence of the unwanted behavior. While prior research has identified organizational antecedents associated with workplace bullying, fewer studies have focused upon how certain organizational antecedents, such as organizational culture, facilitate incidents of bullying.

The purpose of this study was to explore an institution’s organizational culture to determine how culture functioned as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying. Via a social ecological lens, the researcher examined the university’s culture using Schein’s (2010) approach to cultural analysis. Observational data and individual interviews with faculty and staff at the research site enabled the identification and investigation of relevant artifacts, which uncovered the values and espoused beliefs attached to them by members of the university. The investigation yielded five basic underlying assumptions embedded in the university’s culture. The five assumptions were (a) perception not reality was what mattered, (b) employee value equaled title and position, (c) the organizational structure guided and maintained daily order, (d) rules must be followed, especially the unwritten rules, and (e) unquestionable loyalty expected and required. The researcher connected these data to existing research to illustrate how organizational culture functioned as a macrosystem antecedent to workplace bullying in a
higher education setting. Results revealed the university’s culture functioned in 10 ways that could facilitate bullying in an institution of higher education. From the results, the researcher provided implications for practice as well as suggestions for future research.
DEDICATION

To I. T. Steele. Here’s that book you and I discussed you wanted to write someday. Unfortunately, death prevented you from completing it. So, I saw the task through to completion in fulfillment of one of the simple but profound life’s lessons you taught me. Finish what you start. You are tremendously missed by everyone in the family and the community but your influence remains eternally.

“When climbing a steep hill, you are often more conscious of the weakness of your stumbling feet than of the view, the grandeur, or even of your upward progress. Persevere, persevere…” (Russell, 1952, p. 101).

To Janelle, Bryce and Levi. I did the work but you sacrificed. Thank you a million times over for your patience, understanding, and overwhelming support!
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The list of people worthy of recognition for their contributions to my life that enabled fulfillment of this project is innumerable. I can only hope words are sufficient enough to convey my heart-felt gratitude to Dr. Pamela Havice, my committee chair, advisor, mentor, and friend. My graduate education started with you. You believed in me. You walked with me through nearly 15 years of education and life. You guided me through one of the most difficult seasons of my life, and you never gave up on me – even when I wanted to throw in the towel. You have made an eternal investment in my life, professionally and personally, for which I will forever be grateful! Thank you!

Words are powerful. Dr. Tony Cawthon’s comments in January 2005 made me believe I could pursue a PhD. Without your words, I would never have believed pursuing, let alone, accomplishing this degree was possible. Along the journey you always offered sound wisdom and advice. I have never encountered a professional educational leader who was so adept at offering the perfect balance between challenge and support. You are the example I seek to emulate. Thank you, my friend, for your many contributions!

I was so honored to have Dr. Leah Hollis, an internationally recognized scholar on workplace bullying, serve on my committee. Dr. Hollis, I could never have imagined having an accomplished expert like yourself in the subject area of workplace bullying in higher education as a member of my committee. Your works inspired me and this project could not have been possible apart from your contributions. Thank you immensely for
your kind willingness to serve, and for your unwavering dedication to fostering healthy work environments in institutions of higher education.

I am especially grateful to Dr. Michelle Boettcher, who so selflessly agreed to join my committee mid-way through the project. When I lost a committee member because of attrition, Dr. Boettcher graciously accepted my invitation to serve on my committee. I could not have made a better decision. Your expertise in qualitative studies dramatically enhanced this project. Thank you so much for your contributions!

Ultimately, my completion of this project would not have been possible apart from the unwavering support of my family. My wonderful wife Janelle, and two sons, Bryce and Levi, endured hardship and made overwhelming sacrifices to assist me with fulfilling my dream. I love you all and extend my gratitude to you for persevering and encouraging me to persevere. Mom and dad, you instilled the foundation in my life which provided everything I needed to successfully complete this program. I am who I am today because of you. I love you dearly! Finally, I express my gratitude to God who sustained my life on July 16, 2017. I would never have been able to complete this project had my life been taken on that day. Thank you for the gift of life!
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The term “bully” often conjures images of the elementary school playground in which the “little” child hands over his lunch money at the bequests of the “bigger” child’s threats. Indeed, the concept of bullying has emerged in our society as a phenomenon primarily associated with the delinquent acts of children and adolescents (Harvey, Heames, Richey, & Leonard, 2006; Sallee & Diaz, 2013). These unwarranted deeds intent on delivering humiliation and harm to another individual do not cease with the onset of adulthood (Lipinski & Crothers, 2014; Fenclau, Jr., Albright, Crothers, & Kolbert, 2014; Twale & De Luca, 2008). Studies have documented the continuation of these childhood patterns of behavior into adult arenas, one of the largest of which is the workplace (Harvey et al., 2006). Rai and Agarwal (2018) identified the occurrence of these same behavioral patterns manifesting in professional work environments as workplace bullying.

Workplace bullying was perhaps first conceptualized in the mid-1970s (Lipinski, Albright, & Fenclau, Jr., 2014). Since that time, researchers around the world have been empirically investigating the phenomenon of misbehavior in the workplace. Terms such as bullying, mobbing, incivility, aggression, abuse, deviance, and dysfunction have all been used, and at times, synonymously, to describe ill treatment received in the work environment (Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013; Fritz, 2014; Gedro & Wang, 2013; Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsh, 2014). Researchers have exposed the harsh consequences encountered by both individual employees and the organization at-large when behaviors
characteristic of bullying exist within the workplace (Duffy & Sperry, 2007; Gedro & Wang, 2013; Shallcross, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013). These consequences were costly financially (Hollis, 2012; 2015; Hollis & Holmes, 2014; Namie & Namie, 2009), affected people’s health and well-being (Duffy & Sperry, 2007; Leymann, 1990) and entirely subverted the operational mission of the organization in which bullying behaviors resided (Hollis, 2012, 2015; Yamada, 2000). Despite these recent scholarly revelations, investigations into workplace bullying, specifically situated within institutions of higher education, are in their infancy.

**Statement of the Problem**

The phenomenon of workplace bullying presents significant problems for organizations and the individuals they employ. First, the overall financial burden borne by corporations in the United States (U.S.) associated with the prevalence of bullying has been estimated to cost billions of dollars each year (Hollis, 2015; Namie & Namie, 2009). Absenteeism from work (Fenclau, Jr. et al., 2014) and the unengaged worker (Hollis, 2015; Hollis & Holmes, 2014) were the most common and costly consequences of bullying. According to the 2010 National Health Interview Survey (the most recent available) conducted by researchers from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, $4.1 billion can be attributed to paid sick leave related solely to incidents of bullying (Asfaw, Chang, & Ray, 2014). Consequently, the cost of health insurance increased for both employers and employees (Bronson, 2014). Furthermore, increases in worker’s compensation and disability insurance claims (Bronson, 2015), as well as legal expenses necessitated by wrongful termination lawsuits filed by targets of bullying, also
contributed to the fiscal consequences of bullying (Matusewitch, 1996 as cited in Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsht, 2014). Finally, due to employee turnover associated with bullying, organizations incurred unnecessary costs to recruit, hire and train new staff to replace the positions vacated by the targeted employee (Hollis, 2014; Lipinski et al., 2014).

Organizations also risk not fulfilling their operational missions. When employees were subjected to bullying in the workplace, production of the employee as well as that of their colleagues declined (Hollis & Holmes, 2014; Yamada, 2000). The quality of work suffered and the organization’s reputation in the marketplace encountered significant damage due to the transmission of negative, toxic communication as employees conveyed harsh descriptions of their experiences in the work environment (Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsht, 2014). As a result, workers disengaged from the primary task at-hand (Hollis & Holmes, 2014) and the bottom line goals of efficiency and quality production were not met (Hollis & Holmes, 2014; Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsht, 2014).

Realizing the impact of workplace bullying upon people is perhaps more critical than understanding its detrimental consequences encountered by organizations. Targets, those individuals who are the direct recipients of aggressive behaviors of others on the job, suffered alarming physical, psychological and emotional maladies (Duffy & Sperry, 2007; Lovell & Lee, 2011; Shallcross et al., 2013). Additionally, negative effects of bullying upon targets have also been found to extend to co-workers and significant others (Parzefall & Salin, 2010). Ultimately, workplace bullying poses problems either directly or indirectly for all organizational stakeholders.
Institutions of higher education have not been exempted from these same problems associated with workplace bullying. Recent studies, specifically situated within the academy, have revealed a plight similar to the bullying encountered in the private employment sector (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Hjekt-Back, 1994; Hollis, 2012, 2015, 2016; Keashly & Neuman, 2010; Keashly & Neuman, 2013; Thomas, 2005; Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013). Similar to discoveries in other areas of employment, incidents of workplace bullying in higher education have been found to increase absenteeism, lower productivity and foster greater attrition (Hollis, 2012, 2015; Hollis & Holmes, 2014; Keashly & Neuman, 2010; McKay, Arnold, Fratzl, & Thomas, 2008). Employees at institutions of higher education who have been bullied have also reported experiencing similar negative psychological conditions such as stress, sleep deprivation, anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal along with physiological maladies of headaches, stomach and digestive complications as well as fatigue (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994; Thomas, 2005).

A distinguishing factor which makes workplace bullying in higher education unique from other workplaces concerns the nature of employment in colleges and universities. For example, tenure and academic freedom, concepts entirely specific to higher education, have been found to serve as conduits for creating and sustaining cultures of workplace bullying on college campuses (Taylor, 2012, 2013). Frequent changes in leadership and the hierarchal organizational structures of institutions of higher education have also made them especially susceptible to bullying (Keashly & Neuman, 2013; Leymann, 1990; Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013). Further, university cultures and
social climates, competitive workplace environments and unpleasant work conditions have been identified as enablers of incidents of bullying in higher education (Espelage, Berry, Merrin, & Swearer, 2014; Keashly & Neuman, 2010; Keashly & Neuman, 2013).

**Background of the Study**

This study explored the organizational culture of a public university located in the southeastern United States. The university is designated as a doctoral university whose Carnegie classification size and setting are a four-year, large (greater than 9,999 students), primarily residential with moderate research activity. The research site university enrolled students who represented all 50 states, the District of Columbia and more than 80 countries around the world during the 2017-2018 academic year. To protect the anonymity of the institution and confidentiality of the research participants, no additional information is provided to describe the demographics of the university.

The university was selected for this study solely for convenience of the researcher who was a former employee and consequently was embedded as an insider at the institution. Thus, the researcher possessed unrestricted access to the lived experiences of the university’s employees, which complemented the chosen research design for the study.

**Purpose of the Study**

Workplace bullying situated specifically in higher education is an under-researched topic (Lester, 2013a; Starobin & Blumenfeld, 2013). Too often, researchers have focused investigations in the academy toward the prevalence and nature of bullying (Kolbert, Crothers, & Wells, 2014). Consequently, institutional responses have largely
centered on policy implementation in an attempt to discourage and eliminate the occurrence of the unwanted behavior (Keashly & Neuman, 2013). Research has documented rates of occurrence (Björkqvist et al., 1994; Keashly & Neuman, 2008; Simpson & Cohen, 2004), described and predicted micro level determinants associated with bullying (Espelage et al., 2014), identified the psychological and physical detriments incurred by individuals (Duffy & Sperry, 2007; Kolbert et al., 2013; Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsht, 2014), their significant others, and the organizations in which they were employed (Gedro & Wang, 2013; Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsht, 2014). Nevertheless, there have been few studies aimed at understanding this phenomenon from a broader perspective, albeit from a system perspective (Espelage et al., 2014; Espelage, Rao, & De La Rue, 2013).

Being cognizant of this limitation, Starobin and Blumfeld (2013) called for institutions of higher education “to consider those institutional identities and characteristics that lead to reproducing bullying behaviors” (p. 76). Arguably, this statement is a suggestion that the source of workplace conflict in the academy might transcend one-to-one peer interactions. Indeed, researchers have suggested the nature of the academic organization possesses the ability to encourage and enable incidents of bullying (Espelage et al., 2014; Keashly & Neuman, 2010). One such characteristic is the organization’s culture. In 1997, Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, and Magley, while investigating sexual harassment in organizations, identified organizational culture as an antecedent capable of facilitating workplace harassment. Their integrated model of sexual harassment in organizations was based upon the premise that the occurrence of sexual harassment in organizations was “primarily a function of organizational and job
characteristics and is most profitably conceptualized and studied at the level of group culture and organizational climate” (p. 578). Based upon their work, Einarsen (1999) indicated that bullying was “probably caused by a combination of a social climate where hostility and aggressiveness prevail and an organizational culture tolerant to bullying and harassment” (p. 23). Given these conclusions, the need existed to thoroughly investigate an institution’s organizational culture and how it functioned as an antecedent to workplace bullying. Therefore, the intent of this study was to respond to this need by exploring a single university’s organizational culture as a macro-system level antecedent of workplace bullying.

**Significance of the Study**

Given the detriments associated with the prevalence of workplace bullying, the absence of knowledge fostering the understanding and remediation of this phenomenon in U.S. institutions of higher education is problematic. Until recently, limited research in U.S. higher education has been devoted to the study of workplace bullying (Hollis, 2012, 2015, 2016; Keashly & Neuman, 2010; Lester, 2013b). Keashly and Neuman (2010) found this lack of attention in academia rather intriguing for at least three reasons. First, workplace bullying behaviors, such as faculty and student incivility in the classroom, have existed on university campuses and been investigated for quite some time. Second, institutions have long recognized the importance of retaining qualified faculty partly due to the plethora of studies correlating characteristics of institutional workplace environments with employee retention. Finally, a well-established base of literature describing the nature of the academic profession and its organizational features suggests
the potential is present for the immergence of hostility in the workplace. Keashly and Neuman (2010) concluded the failure of academics to connect-the-dots on these prevailing studies and examine the topic of workplace bullying further is a misfortunate “oversight” (p. 49) and therefore, worthy of added attention.

As universities place increased emphasis upon degree completion, they would be well served to consider that graduating students have been shaped by their immersion in the university’s culture for two or more years depending upon the degree program and the student’s point of entry. McKay et al. (2008) warned, “it is possible that behaviors and values learned by students at university are then carried with them into the workplace” (p. 81). The implication is, if workplace bullying is indicative of a university’s culture, students could adopt the abnormal behavior and replicate it in the organizations where they acquire employment. This implicit outcome is contrary to most universities’ stated missions.

Only a few studies have attempted to investigate workplace bullying in higher education from a broader lens (Starobin & Blumenfeld, 2013). Presently, the literature has primarily focused upon defining the phenomenon, identifying its prevalence in the workplace, detecting the actors and the roles they play, as well as articulating the detrimental effects encountered by employees and the organizations where they work (Lester, 2013b). Thus, while the literature implies organizational characteristics foster bullying, extensive in-depth studies of an organization’s culture seeking to address “how” the organization’s culture inoculates bullying have not been thoroughly examined. The results of my study provided some insight into this issue.
Finally, my study offered a rare behind-the-scenes-look at the common place, day-to-day affairs occurring on a university campus. Few organizational studies targeting universities have sought to examine an institution’s culture by focusing on the common, ordinary encounters of its stakeholders. Everyday occurrences often considered mundane, such as interactions in-between meetings or conversations resulting from the institution’s recent notification of a new policy, frame and embody institutional norms and values. These formulated norms and values ultimately drive the business of the university. Thus, this study departed from the “most central discussions and debates” (Ybema, Yanow, Wels, & Kamsteeg, 2009, p. 1) normally characteristic of organizational studies. Instead, the study describes the “commonplaces” (p.1), along with the meanings assigned to them, which ultimately define the university’s culture. Successfully achieving this goal provides valuable insight to university leaders interested in understanding how a university’s culture can encourage and reinforce certain patterns of human behavior driving the performance of its employees.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Social Ecological Model**

Decades ago, Lewin conjectured that an individual’s behavior is a function of that person’s interaction with the environment in which the individual is immersed (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). Consequently, Espelage et al. (2014) deemed workplace bullying a product of a person’s interaction with the work environment. They chose to apply a social ecological framework to studying workplace bullying in the corporate sector. The *social ecological* model, originally developed by Bronfenbrenner (1977),
implies human behavior is influenced by people’s interaction with and between multiple, contextual social systems in which they function. These social systems include environments such as homes, neighborhoods, schools, communities and extended society.

There are four systems in Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) model: (a) the *microsystem*, which consists of a setting in which individuals and others interact directly with one another; (b) the *mesosystem*, which concerns interactions between more than one microsystem; (c) the *exosystem*, which involves interactions between more than one setting in the absence of directly interacting with the individual; and (d) the *macrosystem*, which “refers to the overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture” (1977, p. 515) known to directly influence the other three lower level systems. Thus, when considered from a macrosystem level perspective, bullying behavior might not be the sole consequence of conflict arising from the direct interactions of two coworkers in the same office but could instead be explained by embedded cultural norms espoused at the broader, institutional level. Indeed, the macrosystem has been deemed to consist of “those factors affecting the welfare of individuals in a more distant and least direct manner” (Barboza, Schiamberg, Oehmke, Korzeniewski, Post, & Heraux, 2009, p. 103).

As previously noted, prior research has examined workplace bullying at the microsystem level, but there have been few studies that have investigated workplace bullying from a broader, multisystem perspective consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) approach. Espelage et al. (2014) reported no studies existed which examined workplace bullying at the mesosystem or exosystem levels, and only a few have
specifically applied a social ecological perspective to studies of workplace bullying situated in higher education (Espelage et al., 2014; Starobin & Blumenfeld, 2013).

Because of the prevalence of workplace bullying in higher education, this study recognized the tremendous need to consider the possibility that solutions to the problem of workplace bullying could be ascertained by understanding the phenomenon from a macrosystem perspective. Thus, my study investigated university culture as a macrosystem antecedent since the macrosystem is concerned with “the overarching patterns of the culture or subculture…” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 527).

*Figure 1.1.* Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) social ecological framework.
Organizational Culture

Espelage et al. (2014) characterized the macrosystem as the “cultural blueprint” (p. 104), which is inclusive of organizational, social, cultural, and political settings. Among these contexts, previous workplace bullying studies (Espelage et al., 2014; Salin, 2003) had identified macrosystem factors capable of facilitating incidents of bullying. Within the organizational context, these factors included organizational culture, working conditions, leadership and management, organizational change (Espelage et al., 2014), internal competition, and systems of reward (Salin, 2003). Because organizational culture has been recognized as a macrosystem antecedent to workplace bullying in the corporate sector, the organizational culture of a university was selected as the primary focus of this study.

In Schein’s (2010) approach to organizational culture, culture is seen as being largely created through the interactions of the organization’s members. Conceptually, Schein (2010) aligned different types of cultures (mircocultures, subcultures, organizational cultures, and macrocultures) with corresponding categories (microsystems within or outside organizations; occupational groups within organizations; private, public, nonprofit, government organizations; and nations, ethnic and religious groups, and occupations that exist globally), which served to differentiate multiple levels of culture. See Table 1.1. Because Schein (2010) recognized the complexities of a global environment characteristic of modern society were being exerted upon organizations, Schein (2010) determined the need existed for an expanded perspective of understanding organizational culture. Schein’s model for analyzing organizational culture
accommodated these layered perspectives and they arrange coherently with the predominant notion of the social ecological view, which emphasizes the interactions occurring in and between social systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Swearer & Hymel, 2015).

Table 1.1

Categories of Culture and Corresponding Social Ecological System Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture Type (Schein, 2010)</th>
<th>Category (Schein, 2010)</th>
<th>Social Ecological System Characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1977)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macrocultures</td>
<td>National, global, ethnic and religious groups</td>
<td>Abstract influences - Contains overarching patterns of the culture or sub-culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Cultures</td>
<td>Private, public, nonprofit organizations, NGOs</td>
<td>Interactions between settings No one-to-one micro level interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subcultures</td>
<td>Occupational groups such as medicine, law, engineering</td>
<td>Inter-relationships between two or more Microsystems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microcultures</td>
<td>Microsystems within or outside organizations</td>
<td>Direct one-to-one interactions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consequently, my study embraced Schein’s (2010) model of analysis which permitted the investigation of organizational culture at three different levels based upon the extent to which the cultural phenomenon was revealed to the investigator. These levels, identified as: 1) Artifacts; 2) Espoused Beliefs and Values; and 3) Basic Underlying Assumptions, enabled a rich cultural analysis with each sequential level revealing deeper organizational meaning. Thus, as I explored artifacts, which Schein saw as manifestations of the organization’s basic assumptions, certain organizational values
and norms were identified. Upon thorough examination, the organization’s espoused beliefs and values ultimately yielded the basic underlying assumptions, which dictated the day-to-day affairs of the organization (Podjed, 2011; Schein, 2010). Schein (2010) defined Basic Underlying Assumptions as those “deeply embedded and unconscious assumptions” (p. 23), which form the very “essence of culture” (p. 23). Therefore, the goal of my study was to ascertain and identify those basic underlying assumptions encapsulated within a university’s culture to enable exploration of how organizational culture functioned as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying.

Research Questions

Consistent with the social ecological framework, the primary research question driving this study was: How does organizational culture function as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying? Because of the subsequent need to examine organizational culture, my study, guided by Schein’s (2010) model of cultural analysis, posed the following secondary question: What are the basic underlying assumptions of the university’s culture? Identifying the basic underlying assumptions embedded in the university’s culture enabled exploration of how organizational culture functioned as an antecedent to workplace bullying in the research site in my study.

Methodology and Research Design

Organizational Ethnography

Because of the need to thoroughly examine the hidden and deeply embedded aspects of institutional life, my study adopted an organizational ethnographic orientation to investigation. Organizational ethnographies are intended to provide rich descriptions
of everyday organizational life (Neyland, 2008). By inserting oneself into the lived experiences of organizational members, researchers gain access to those hidden mysteries and tacit meanings not easily known by outsiders (Anderson-Levitt, 2006; Neyland, 2008; Ybema et al., 2009). Commonly seen as a written account of a group of people, ethnography has been referenced as a research methodology, a written account (Anderson-Levitt, 2006; Neyland, 2008; Yanow, Ybema, & van Hulst, 2012), and most recently, depicted as sensibilities that contain unique social-world orientations (Neyland, 2008; Yanow et al., 2012). In its simplest form, organizational ethnography is the “ethnographic study, and its dissemination, of organizations and their organizing processes” (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 4). More specifically, organizational ethnography has been denoted as:

a research process involving fieldwork methods…with a particular sensibility towards often more hidden or concealed meaning-making processes, reported in a particular form of writing that places both author and reader at the scene, through actor-centered and context-sensitive analysis…grounded in layered data. (Ybema et al., 2009, Chapter 1 as cited in Yanow et al., 2012, p. 332)

Organizational ethnographies offer two things that no other methods can befittingly provide: (1) “Sensitivity to hidden dimensions of organizational life” (2012, p. 335); and (2) “Sensitivity to the interplay between actors and context” (p. 335). These reasons further support organizational ethnography as an appropriate investigative orientation.
To guide process and to retain the integrity of the organizational ethnographic research design for the duration of the study, the researcher employed the following seven characteristics of an organizational ethnography framed by Ybema et al. (2009):

1) Combined fieldwork methods. The use of fieldwork strategies which included observation, conversation, and close documentary reading;

2) A lived knowledge of the contextual setting;

3) Attention to the tacit and hidden dimensions of organizational life;

4) A context-sensitive analysis cognizant of micro-level interactions occurring within a broader social setting;

5) The assignment of meaning to organizational actors’ beliefs and actions often taken for granted;

6) The reflection of multiple voices and interpretations of the investigative phenomenon, and;

7) A well-documented position of the researcher.

Role of the Researcher

Much has been written about the relevance of the investigator’s role in ethnographic research. In traditional ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher assumes the role of participant observer. With this approach, investigators immerse themselves in a community in which they are not inside members, yet have been able to acquire access to the target population. Over time, researchers are able to build trust and their role as researchers becomes embraced by the population. This level of trust forms as a
consequence of participation in the community, which in turn, enables close observation of the culture.

In my study, I adopted the role as researcher, which differs somewhat from the traditional approach to fieldwork. Whereas the traditional approach is normally not the consequence of the researcher living and working in the community being investigated (Cunliffe, 2010), an observing participant role does require this approach (Morean, 2009). Such a role, similar to what Brannick and Coghlan (2007) described as “insider research” (p. 59), is characteristic of what Alvesson (2009) termed at-home ethnography. At-home ethnography is defined as:

A study and text in which the researcher-author describes a cultural setting to which s/he has a ‘natural access’ and in which s/he is an active participant, more or less on equal terms with other participants. (p. 159)

At-home ethnographies are distinct in that the setting under investigation is one in which the researcher either works and/or lives (Alvesson, 2009). The investigator is uniquely positioned to utilize first-hand experiences, established relationships, and access to insider information for empirical research purposes (2009). Thus, the university being examined in this study is one in which the researcher had been employed full time. Further, Alvesson (2009) believed at-home ethnography presented an especially excellent opportunity for “PhD students combining work and research in regular work organizations” (p. 161). The investigator in this study occupied that position as well.

Alvesson (2009) argued other legitimate reasons for pursuing an at-home ethnographic study exist. First, at-home ethnography has been depicted as “especially
relevant” (2009, p. 161) for conducting “research on universities and higher education” (p. 161). The study being proposed here is entirely situated within a university setting. Second, because the researcher is an insider, the likelihood of acquiring the organization’s ‘real story’ exceeds that of an outsider whose access must be negotiated (2009). Third, since greater familiarity with the setting being investigated exists, the expectation for the manifestation of greater depths of knowledge and insight into the organizational phenomenon extends beyond those of traditional ethnographies (2009). Finally, the need for, or sense of obligation of, the researcher to fictionalize or over interpret accounts of everyday organizational life is largely diminished because the insider has an overabundance of everyday accounts from which to depict the real-life, day-to-day occurrences of the organization. Ultimately, these experiences enable the researcher to remain true to what has been observed and encountered within its appropriate context and forego the enticement of interpreting social reality (2009).

**Definitions of Terms**

Variations exist in the literature over how to specifically define terms commonly associated with the phenomenon of workplace bullying (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; Branch et al., 2013; Cowan, 2012; Simpson & Cohen, 2004; Thomas, 2005). Even more uncertainty resides with classifying workplace misbehavior in higher education (Lester, 2013a). Therefore, the following terms have been defined to clarify terminology usage and to minimize confusion:
At-home Ethnography: A study and text in which the researcher-author describes a cultural setting to which s/he has ‘natural access’ and in which s/he is an active participant, more or less on equal terms with other participants (Alvesson, 2009).

Bully: The instigator of mistreatment (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011).

Climate: A summary perception derived from a body of interconnected experiences with organizational policies, practices, and procedures…and observations of what is rewarded, supported, and expected in the organization with these summary perceptions becoming meaningful and shared based on the natural interactions of people with each other. (Schneider, González-Romá, Ostroff, & West, 2017, p. 468)

Culture: “A pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 2010, p. 18).

Harassment: Those forms of unwanted aggression toward an individual that are based upon one of the following federally protected equal employment opportunity categories: “Race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information” (USEEOC, 2019, para. 2). Federal regulations further prohibit retaliatory actions against an individual who files a complaint or takes legal action due to discrimination (USEEOC, 2019).

Incivility: Lower levels of workplace aggression, such as rudeness, inconsiderateness, disrespectfulness, and the failure to maintain public deference, which is capable of escalating in intensity and ultimately resulting in bullying (Fritz, 2009 as cited in Fritz,
Namie (2003) defined bullying behaviors on an intensity continuum scale of 1 to 10 with incivilities posting scores ranging from 1 to 3.

**Mobbing:** Workplace aggression whose characteristics precisely parallel bullying behaviors but are committed by a group of employees “ganging up on one individual” (Cowan, 2012, p. 380; Duffy & Sperry, 2007; Leymann, 1990; Lovell & Lee, 2011).

**Observing Participant:** An individual conducting “insider research” (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007, p. 59) who is embedded as an active participant in the cultural setting of the study usually as an existing member of the community, group, or organization being investigated (Alvesson, 2009).

**Organizational Ethnography:** A research process involving fieldwork methods…with a particular sensibility towards often more hidden or concealed meaning-making processes, reported in a particular form of writing that places both author and reader at the scene, through actor-centered and context-sensitive analysis…grounded in layered data (Ybema et al., 2009, Chapter 1 as cited in Yanow et al., 2012, p. 332).

**Target:** The recipient of mistreatment (Namie & Namie, 2011) or the person being bullied (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011).

**University:** “An institution of higher learning providing facilities for teaching and research and authorized to grant academic degrees” (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

**Workplace Aggression:** Acts of behavior occurring in the workplace intended to deliver physical or psychological harm to a worker(s) leveled by an individual or a group of
individuals who are internally or externally associated with the employing organization (Schat & Kelloway, 2005 as cited in Schat, Frone, & Kelloway, 2006).

*Workplace Bullying:* “Persistent interpersonal aggression that is both direct and indirect, verbal and non-verbal, and is aimed at one or more employees in an organization and perpetrated by one or more other members of the same organization in situations marked by power disparity” (Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsht, 2014, p. 52).

*Workplace Psychological Aggression:* Workplace behaviors whose primary aim is to enact psychological harm to another individual (Schat et al., 2006).

*Workplace Violence:* A specific form of workplace aggression intended to solely deliver physical harm to another individual (Schat et al., 2006).

**Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

Several limitations to this study are apparent. First, since the study’s ethnographic intent is to garner meaning from the observations of the at-home ethnographer and the lived experiences of individuals within the organization, the possibility existed for this study to omit viewpoints. Indeed, the study is limited in scope. Data collected in the study extended representation to five campus units. Absent from the study are the perspectives of individuals from the divisions of Alumni Affairs, Athletics, and Business Affairs. Given the institution’s size, as well as the significantly high occurrence of bullying problems on university campuses documented by prior research, the number of individuals from which perspectives could be acquired was large. Social learning theory supports the notion that as the population increases, so do interpersonal acts of aggression (Twale & DeLuca, 2008). Thus, given the population
size of the institution, the researcher’s ability to ensure every possible view was captured was limited in scope. Second, data are specific to and uniquely situated within one university community located in the southeastern U.S. The ideology inherent with the qualitative design of this study, and more specifically, the organizational ethnographic approach, assumes no goal of generalizing results since the data are predominantly “personal happenings in time in a place” (Stake, 2010, p. 88). Third, the external validity of the results of this study is questionable since it is virtually impossible for another researcher to precisely duplicate the study (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010; Morse, 2015).

Two delimiting factors in this study have been identified. First, the study was specifically designed with the purpose of gathering an understanding of how the university culture functioned as a macro-antecedent to workplace bullying. Ergo, the researcher wished to explore this phenomenon so higher education leaders could create or modify cultural norms to discourage the occurrence of incidents of bullying in the workplace. A second delimitation concerned the selection of participants in the study. The researcher intentionally chose participants who had been embedded members at the research site for at least eight years.

**Organization of the Study**

The study includes five chapters. Chapter One introduced the reader to the phenomenon of workplace bullying, establishes the research design and methodology, and situates the study within a university campus located in the southeastern U.S. The chapter explains the theoretical perspective adopted by the researcher and states the purpose of the study as well as the research questions driving the investigation. Chapter
One concludes by defining key terms and acknowledging the limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter Two presents a review of the literature concerning organizational culture along with the phenomenon of workplace bullying. The history and prevalence of the phenomenon are discussed followed by the effects it imposes upon the work environment, including the organization and the employee. Those predisposing characteristics possessed by both bullies and targets are mentioned followed by a discussion of workplace bullying in higher education.

Chapter Three explains the research methodology including the design of the study, the site selection, data collection and analysis procedures as well as the interview protocol. The chapter establishes Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) social ecological perspective as the overall theoretical framework for investigating and observing human behavior driven by people’s interaction within contextual social systems such as their organization of employment. Chapter Three explains the application of Schein’s model for analyzing organizational culture and presents organizational ethnography as the chosen methodological approach for the study. The chapter ends with the researcher’s position statement and role in the study.

The findings of my study are presented in Chapter Four. The findings are organized into three themes. Within each theme, results are arranged in connection with observations within the study. Each observation provides an extensive description of the event, including identification of relevant artifacts, and the values and beliefs associated
with the artifacts. The final section in the chapter presents the basic underlying assumptions identified during analysis.

Chapter Five concludes the study by summarizing the major results. I connect data in my study to existing research to illustrate how organizational culture functioned, or potentially functioned, as a macrosystem antecedent to workplace bullying in a higher education setting. The chapter concludes with a discussion of implications for higher education leaders and recommendations for future investigations.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The overall purpose of this study was to explore one university’s organizational culture to determine how organizational culture functions as a macrosystem antecedent to workplace bullying. The intent was to shed light upon how a university’s culture drives patterns of human behavior in the workplace and examine how the findings aligned with existing characteristics of university workplace bullying revealed in the current literature. To this end, this chapter begins with a review of existing evidence which exposes the problem of workplace bullying. The literature review starts with an overview of the historical emergence of the phenomenon and identifies the prevalence of workplace bullying. Next, the effects of workplace bullying upon organizations and the individuals comprising them is examined. The major issues related to workplace bullying in higher education are reviewed. The chapter concludes with a literature review of organizational culture and its association with workplace bullying, followed by an overview of the literature associated with the theoretical framework of my study.

History of Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying was perhaps first conceptualized in Brodsky’s (1976) study, which examined mistreated workers filing workers’ compensation claims. The study has been credited as the first source to examine behavioral problems in the workplace (Lipinski et al., 2014). Despite the recognition, Leymann’s investigations of problems in the workplace in Europe during the 1980s served as primary catalysts for launching empirical research into workplace bullying (Lipinski et al., 2014). Eventually Leymann’s
influence sparked researchers in the U.S. to initiate scholarly inquiries related to workplace behavior. By the 1990s, studies about workplace bullying were increasing and organizations facilitating the study of workplace bullying with the ultimate aim of its eradication, were forming (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2019). While the previous two decades have produced a burgeoning literature base, workplace bullying in the United States remains a significant problem.

**Prevalence of Workplace Bullying**

Workplace bullying has been identified as a serious problem, which collectively costs employers billions of dollars each year (Hollis, 2012, 2015; Namie & Namie, 2009). The presence of bullying harms organizations as well as the individual worker, their coworkers and their families. In 2017, more than one-third (38%) of U.S. workers surveyed nationally by the Workplace Bullying Institute reported either being bullied on the job or observing bullying of a coworker (Namie, 2017). To put things in perspective, when the prevalence proportions were applied to the U.S. non-farm labor force of 161,616,000, the number of people directly or indirectly affected by workplace bullying totaled 60.3 million (Namie, 2017). This quantity is indicative of nearly 30 million workers who have been bullied on the job and another 30 million who witnessed the abusive acts (Namie, 2017). Namie (2017) indicated these occurrences have achieved “epidemic-level” (p. 3) proportions with the number of those affected equal to the combined populations of six U.S. western states (2017). At the time of the survey, 61% indicated having some degree of familiarity with the concept of workplace bullying,
down 11% from the 2014 national survey in which 72% expressed awareness of bullying at work (Namie, 2014, 2017).

Gender and the relationship of power also pose concerns relative to incidents of bullying in the workplace (Escartin, Salin, & Rodriguez-Carballeira, 2011; Simpson & Cohen, 2004). Overall, 7 in 10 bullies were men (70%), while two-thirds of targets were women (66%) (Namie, 2017). The percentage of women being targeted represents an increase of 6% over 2014 results (Namie, 2017 & 2014). Men targeted women 65% of the time, and in cases where women were reported to be bullies, they chose female targets 67% of the time (Namie, 2017).

Workplace bullying is not illegal in the United States unless the cause was associated with the target’s protected class (Hollis, 2014; Lester, 2013a; Yamada, 2010). As Hollis (2014) pointed out, because federal prohibitions against harassment and discrimination in the workplace exist, does not mean outcomes will automatically prove favorable for women and racial minorities involving workplace discrimination. As well, this high percentage of female-to-female bullying means most females have no recourse of action unless the target’s employer has a policy specifically prohibiting workplace bullying. Furthermore, Masser and Abrams (2004) found females are more likely to encounter hostility in the workplace after receiving negative evaluations for assuming roles considered reserved for males.

Not surprisingly, most bullies (61%) served as the target’s direct supervisor, while 33% experiencing bullying did so at the hands of their colleagues occupying the same level position (Namie, 2017). The percentage of supervisors as targets represents an
increase of 5% over the 2014 responses (Namie, 2014). Only 6% of workers 
encountering incidents of bullying did so from a subordinate (Namie, 2017).

Race was a relevant factor associated with workplace bullying. Hispanics 
reported the highest rate (25%) of being bullied, followed by African Americans (21%) 
and Caucasians (19%) (Namie, 2017). When considering the overall rate of individuals 
affected by bullying (targets and witnesses combined), Asians disproportionately 
encountered bullying (51%), but given the low number of respondents self-identifying as 
Asian (n=30) in this survey, caution against generalizations is advised. Forty-three 
percent of African Americans, 39% of Hispanics, and 36% of Caucasians reported being 
affected by bullying (Namie, 2017). Namie (2007) previously associated 20% of 
bullying incidents with factors of discrimination.

Perhaps most alarming was the fact most employers did nothing in response to 
these unwanted acts of aggression in the workplace. By far, most people experiencing 
bullying (71%) indicated their employers either condoned the behavior or explicitly took 
actions which enabled further bullying, such as perpetrators’ retaliating against 
whistleblowers (Namie, 2017). Sadly, only 17% acted to formally address or eliminate 
the negative behavior (Namie, 2017). Even worse, bullies only suffered negative 
consequences for their bullying acts in 6% of the reported cases (Namie, 2017). 
Furthermore, the survey data discovered very few incidents resulted in actions being 
taken beyond the walls of the organization. For example, Namie (2017) revealed only 
5% sought resolution beyond the employer. Of that percentage, 3% pursued action with a 
federal or state agency and a meager 2% sought legal action. Namie (2017) noted,
“…only a small proportion of filed lawsuits ever make it to the courtroom to be tried on the merits of the cases. The vast majority are tossed by judges acceding to employer motions for summary judgment or dismissal” (p. 13).

**Effects of Bullying in the Workplace**

Workplace bullying has been known to affect work climate and organizational production. Workers affected by bullying displayed characteristics of hypervigilance (Bassman, 1992 as cited in Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsh, 2014; Lockhart, 1997) and experienced an increase in interpersonal and relational sensitivity. Consequently, they withdrew and detached professionally (Duffy & Sperry, 2007) which resulted in strained working relationships with coworkers (Lockhart, 1997) and clients of the organization (Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsh, 2014). They missed work (Kivimaki, Elovainio & Vahtera, 2000) either legitimately due to resulting health consequences or illegitimately, as a means of avoidance and self-defense. Low morale manifests and organizational production declined (Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsh, 2014). Employees wasted their time and that of coworkers while seeking informal support (Bassman, 1992 as cited in Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsh, 2014; Lockhart, 1997). Since bullying behavior subjugates targets, workers often disengaged and consequently, failed to offer valuable contributions to the organization based upon the knowledge and skills they possess (Hollis, 2012; Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsh, 2014), thereby neutralizing the very reason they were hired in the first place. Conversely, when employees make mistakes, instead of exposing them to enable improvement, they hide them for fear of negative consequences (Lockhart, 1997), which ultimately renders harm to the organization. If incidents of bullying are not addressed,
these patterns of behavior quickly assimilate into the organization’s culture and then become adopted as the norm (Lester, 2013b). Employees observed the bullying behaviors modeled by superiors, embraced them as acceptable, and incorporated them into their professional value systems (Hoel & Salin, 2003). Bullying then emerged as a systemic characteristic of the organization, was popularized as entirely acceptable, and became self-sustaining and perpetuating (Fenclau, Jr. et al., 2014; Twale & DeLuca, 2008).

An organization characterized by bullying not only harms the company, but it facilitated irreparable harm to individual employees, their coworkers and by extension, their families and significant others (Duffy & Sperry, 2007; Keashly & Neuman, 2013). Targets of bullying developed negative psychological and physical conditions. They withdrew socially due to feelings of shame and humiliation (Duffy & Sperry, 2007; Namie, 2017) which served to erode personal self-worth and cause low self-esteem (Lockhart, 1997). Their lives exhibited characteristics of constant stress, anxiety and depression (Keashly & Neuman, 2013; Kivimaki, Virtanen, Vartia, Elovinio, Vahtera, & Keltikangas-Jarvinen, 2003) which resulted in sleep deprivation (Lovell & Lee, 2011) and further complicated both physiological and psychological conditions. Some victims’ conditions have been so severe they have proven symptomatic of post-traumatic stress disorder (Bond, Tuckey, & Dollard, 2010; Namie, 2003). A study in Sweden recognized suicide as a cause of death in the workplace more so than any other workplace accident (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994). In fact, Leymann’s (1990) work estimated workplace bullying
related suicides in Sweden to account for 10% - 15% of the country’s suicides in a given year.

Targets of workplace bullying often suffer physical health challenges (Namie, 2017). Conditions such as high blood pressure and coronary heart disease associated with chronic stress have been positively correlated with those individuals encountering bullying (Kivimaki et al, 2003). Many targets have reported experiencing gastrointestinal complications such as ulcers and irritable bowel syndrome as well as Crohn’s Disease; and they routinely encounter weight gain, weight loss, and insomnia (Namie, 2003).

**Workplace Bullying in Higher Education**

Incidents of workplace bullying have been prevalent on college and university campuses (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994; Hollis, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016; Keashly & Neuman, 2010; McKay et al., 2008; Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013). Bullying behaviors at institutions of higher education have been found to consistently occur at greater rates than that of other places of employment (Hollis, 2015; Keashly & Neuman, 2013; Twale & De Luca, 2008), suggesting that problems residing within academia far surpass those of the corporate world. The role of “power” has almost always been a factor with bullying incidents in higher education regardless of position (Hollis, 2012; 2016). Nevertheless, studies investigating incidents of bullying encountered by faculty have largely been at the hands of senior leaders and supervisors (Keashly & Neuman, 2010, Zabrodska and Kveton’s, 2013).

Studies have shown faculty were twice as likely as staff to report being bullied (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). In contrast, a study situated within Canadian higher
education found higher rates of bullying being perpetrated by peers (64%) rather than superiors (45%) (McKay et al., 2008). Interestingly, Hollis (2015) found university administrators had encountered bullying either directly or indirectly at an alarming rate (62%). Comparatively, the national rate for workplace bullying among all professions cited by Namie (2017) was only 38%. The same physical, psychological and emotional complications noted above have also been documented in studies focused upon bullying targets in higher education (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994; McKay et al., 2008; Thomas, 2005; Vickers, 2014).

The most notable effects upon bullying incidents in the academy are those capable of negatively impacting the institution’s mission (Ambrose, Huston, & Norman, 2005; Hollis, 2012, 2015). For example, given higher education is a knowledge-based commodity, frequent turnover and faculty job dissatisfaction severely affects the research, teaching and service duties of bullied faculty (Keashly & Neuman, 2010). Both quantity and quality of work suffered dramatically (Hollis & Holmes, 2014; McKay et al., 2008). When these factors indicative of bullying were routinely experienced by faculty, research has attributed the negative outcomes to organizational culture (Keashly & Neuman, 2010).

**Governance Factors**

Institutions of higher education are large, complex organizations that have enjoyed relatively few organizational or governance changes during the previous half century (Brown II, Lane, & Zamani-Gallaher, 2010). They have functioned with relative ease as bureaucratic learning centers governed by faculty. Yet, as the world is changing,
dramatic changes are being imposed upon institutions of higher education. These changes, in turn, create problems for the historical organizational and governance models public higher education has so long enjoyed.

As the higher education industry in the U.S. has been moving beyond the global economic crisis in 2008, movement has occurred with a degree of trepidation. Universities encountered declining budgets, perhaps for the first time. Instead of enjoying access to unfettered resources, universities have had to learn to do more with less. Doing more with less has altered faculty roles and increased competition for resources. The increased competition for resources and shifting role demands have fostered environments capable of encouraging and sustaining workplace bullying (Marginson, 2006; Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013).

The recent fiscal crisis was not the only factor influencing organizational and governance changes in higher education. The socio-economic influence of globalization has shifted the historical focus of higher education for the public good toward marketization with an end goal of entrepreneurialism (Wildavsky, 2010; Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013). These dynamics have resulted in the movement of governance authority away from faculty and toward administrators, which has created conflict and tension between the two groups (Pierce, Trachtenberg, & Cook, 2014) and fostered an environment ripe for bullying (Twale & DeLuca, 2008). Most universities employ bureaucratic hierarchies couched as self-governance structures to direct their daily affairs but they were increasingly becoming more like entrepreneurial business organizations managed by administrators (Pierce et al., 2014; Twale & DeLuca, 2008).
Organizational Factors

When examining the bully/target relationship, researchers have discovered incidents of workplace bullying dependent upon the university’s organizational structure (Keashly & Neuman, 2010; Zabrodska & Kveton’s, 2013). High demands for performance were frequently evaluated based on ambiguous and subjective criteria, which were often fostered by the tenure and promotion structure (Keashly & Neuman, 2010; Twale & DeLuca, 2008). Further, Keashly and Neuman (2010) argued faculty were unreasonably entitlement minded and accustomed to unencumbered autonomy. These unclear standards generate frustration and can ultimately result in workplace misbehavior.

Institutions of higher education also provide unique work environments. Unlike other places of employment, faculty can acquire tenure. Tenure is a form of job security intended to guarantee academic freedom and prevent either internal or external sources from jeopardizing the purity and accuracy of knowledge using undue political or positional influence (Thelin, 2004). Regretfully, workplace bullying has encroached upon the well-intended purpose of tenure (Taylor, 2012; 2013). The primary reason for the encroachment is that tenure serves as a major insulator preventing employment termination under normal circumstances. Thus, actors resorted to bullying antics to force the target to voluntarily terminate employment (2012; 2013). Conversely, tenure can also serve as a motivator for faculty to engage in bullying. Since tenure provided sufficient job security, faculty with tenure may feel free to resort to bullying antics (2012; 2013).
Characteristics of Bullies

Researchers have attempted to construct theoretical frameworks to explain what makes a bully, a bully. The theories fall within two primary explanatory categories: (a) genetically predisposed, or (b) socially constructed (Wells, D. S., Crothers, L. M., Kolbert, J. B., Tobin, R. M., & Schmitt, A. J., 2014). The genetically predisposed theories suggest individuals were naturally “wired” to be aggressive and manifest anti-social behaviors (Crothers, Kolbert, Albright, Hughes, & Wells, 2014). Developmental brain deficiencies, gene mutations, and overdeveloped immune systems have been attributed as predisposing factors enabling bullying tendencies (Wells et al., 2014). In contrast, social learning theories have posited bullying was a learned behavior (Crothers et al., 2014). Individuals learn by observing and adopting the behaviors of mentors, particularly when those actions have resulted in positive outcomes. Learning occurs the result of positive outcomes with no concern that precipitating behaviors were negative (Crothers et al., 2014).

Bullies have also been determined to present with certain personality characteristics. Bullies maintained outwardly dominant social features but score low on social competence scales (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Wells et al., 2014). They exhibited features of vindictiveness and intrusiveness; appeared naturally distrustful of others; and were cold and otherwise socially avoidant (Wells et al., 2014). Bullies have been found to lack self-control and empathy, be depressive in nature, as well as possess Type A personalities and unnaturally high self-esteem (Pilch & Turska, 2015). Indeed, 65.9% of respondents in Zabrodska and Kveton’s (2013) study attributed the personality
of the bully as causation for the bully’s behavior. Alarmingly enough, the most common predictor associated with a bully engaging in workplace bullying is that the bully has previously been a target (Hauge, L. J., Skogstad, A., & Einarsen, S., 2009).

**Organizational Culture**

The focus of this study was organizational culture, not climate. Nevertheless, the terms climate and culture have frequently been used interchangeably (Schein, 2010; Schneider & Barbera, 2014). This convoluted use of terms has led to confusion among research consumers (Bellot, 2011). Further complicating the understanding of organizational culture are the myriad of definitions researchers have used to investigate the phenomenon (Bellot, 2011; Schneider et al., 2017). For these reasons, establishing a distinction between the terms is important.

**Climate**

Use of the term climate preceded enactment of the term culture (Ashkanasy, Wilderom, & Peterson, 2000). Originally, organizational investigations focused upon climate. Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) have been credited with conceptualizing the term during their observations of leaders at a summer camp (Ashkanasy et al., 2000; Schneider et al., 2017). The study of climate is a product of Lewin’s Gestalt psychology (Bellot, 2011; Schneider & Barbera, 2014; Schneider et al., 2017). As such, climate was viewed as “a composite of many perceptions and experiences; literally a gestalt (a whole) [that] is formed out of many observations and experiences” (Schneider et al., 2017, p. 468).
Studies investigating organizational climates predominantly centered on quantitative attitudinal research within organizations by applying a field theory lens (Ashkanasy et al., 2000). Primarily, organizational climates were defined as sets of social situations (Ashkanasy et al., 2000) created by the “psychological life space” people encountered (Schneider & Barbera, 2014, p. 3). Largely, this emphasis that climate is inherently a part of the perceptions of individuals has remained close to the denotation of the word.

Presently, climate is seen as:

A summary perception derived from a body of interconnected experiences with organizational policies, practices, and procedures…and observations of what is rewarded, supported, and expected in the organization with these summary perceptions becoming meaningful and shared based on the natural interactions of people with each other. (Schneider et al., 2017, p. 468)

My study adopted Schein’s (2010) more simplistic definition of climate. Schein (2010) stated climate is “the feeling that is conveyed in a group by the physical layout and the way in which members of the organization interact with each other, with customers, or with other outsiders” (p. 15). Thus, climate research focuses primarily upon individuals’ feelings and perceptions of practices and procedures within the organization.

In 1947, study of organizational climates shifted toward measuring overall social processes within organizations. This shift occurred based upon the influence of Cartwright and Likert (Ashkanasy et al., 2000). By the early 1980s, several factors, such as the rate at which organizational changes were occurring, changes within academia, and
the priorities of sources of research funding, turned researchers’ attention toward the concept of organizational culture (Ashkanasy et al., 2000).

**Culture**

While the conceptualization of organizational culture emerged nearly a century ago, Jacques (1951) has been recognized as the first researcher to apply the term culture to the study of organizations (Kummerow & Kirby, 2014). Jacques’ (1951) work was concerned with how employees achieved enculturation into the organization serving as the research site in the study (2014). Unlike climate, which was born in psychology, the study of culture was predominantly rooted in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology (Schneider & Barbera, 2014). Pettigrew’s (1979) study has been identified as the first to formally use the words, organizational culture (Bellot, 2011; Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990; Schneider et al., 2017). This study was largely credited as the catalyst to accelerate research inquiries into organizational culture (Schneider & Barbera, 2014).

Schneider and Barbera (2014) gave several reasons for this rise in popularity of cultural studies over climate studies. First, the anthropological lens provided researchers untapped methods to approach the study of organizations. Second, change in business schools’ curriculums to incorporate the growing interest in the role of leadership and human behavior during this era aided the popularity. Finally, organizational management recognized the need to understand organizations as more than environments of economic productivity. Indeed, a goal to study businesses as human organizations had emerged (Schneider & Barbera, 2014).
The works of researchers such as Schein (1985; 1992), revealed pronounced reasons for this insurgence in inquiries into organizational cultures rather than climates. For example, the emphasis upon quantitative analysis posed by climate research proved ineffective in ascertaining the hidden beliefs and values deeply embedded within organizational life (Ashkanasy et al., 2000; Schein, 2010; Schneider & Barbera, 2014). As well, researchers have also speculated the scholarly system during that time rejected abandonment of the dominant positivist paradigm (Bellot, 2011; Schneider & Barbera, 2014). Thus, the qualitative methods akin to anthropology and social science research provided viable avenues for the knowledge being sought by organizational managers (Clark & Rowlinson, 2004; Schneider & Barbera, 2014).

More recently, researchers’ uses of the concepts of climate and culture have overlapped. This intersection resulted primarily from the onset of quantitative instruments designed to investigate culture (Schneider et al., 2017). Tools such as the Organizational Culture Inventory (Cooke & Szumal, 1993), Competing Values Framework (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983), and Organization Culture Profile (O’Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991) emerged as viable ways to measure personal values and beliefs, and how those values and beliefs correlated with an organization’s culture (Schneider et al., 2017). According to Schneider et al. (2017):

This shift to quantitative survey methods allowed for more comparable studies of culture but at the same time began to blur the distinction between culture and climate, particularly in assessments that include perceptions of practices and routines, the stuff of climate. (p. 472)
This marred distinction between climate and culture further complicated researchers’ grappling with how to define culture.

**Defining Organizational Culture**

Definitions of organizational culture have been numerous (Bellot, 2011; Schneider et al., 2017; Wu, 2008). Verbeke, Volgering, and Hessels (1998) identified 54 definitions of organizational culture. Wu (2008) credited Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1991) with locating as many as 160 variations of definitions of organizational culture. Rather than addressing scores of denotations, authors, like Bellot (2011), have resorted to discussing the definitions of the concept in common themes. Following are Bellot’s (2011) four themes:

1. Organizational culture exists.
2. Cultures are inherently fuzzy in that they incorporate contradictions, paradoxes, ambiguities and confusion.
3. Organizational culture is socially constructed, the product of groups not individuals, and based on shared experiences.
4. Each organization’s culture is relatively unique, malleable, and subject to change. (p. 30).

Reviews of definitions originating with Pettigrew (1979) and extending to Wu (2008) range from simplistic to complex (Tambur & Vadi, 2012). For example, Pettigrew (1979) defined organizational culture as, “the system of publicly and collectively accepted meanings operating for a given group at a given time” (p. 574). In turn, Wu
(2008), seeking to once and for all end the debate over definition discussions, defined organizational culture as:

interactions among critical masses of people with different preferences and past choices that have the capacity to wield critical influences upon each other, both in the short and long terms, within and beyond the confines of organizations and resource constraints. (p. 2540)

Despite intentions, Wu (2008) acknowledged conclusions which led researchers like Bellot (2011) to adopt prevailing themes in their discussion of definitions. Wu (2008) stated:

…definitions (1) have only subtle distinctions, (2) tend to define one abstract concept [e.g., ‘shared values’] in terms of similarly abstract concepts [e.g., ‘norms’, ‘assumptions’, and ‘beliefs’], and (3) share common difficulties in empirical measurements and analysis. (p. 2535)

Researchers have generally agreed upon the overall concept of organizational culture aside from variations in the word’s strict denotation. Consequently, more recent definitions have included these shared understandings. For example, Schneider et al., (2017) defined organizational culture as:

The shared values and basic assumptions that explain why organizations do what they do and focus on what they focus on; it exists at a fundamental, perhaps preconscious, level of awareness, is grounded in history and tradition and is a source of collective identity and commitment. (pgs. 468-469)
Schein’s (2010) definition has been influential and widely accepted among scholars (Ashkanasy et al., 2000; Bellot, 2011; Schneider & Barbera, 2014; Teehankee, 1993). Therefore, my study adopted Schein’s (2010) definition as the primary denotation for organizational culture. According to Schein (2010) organizational culture is defined as:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 18)

In Schein’s (2010) opinion, three aspects of organizational culture were not debatable in terms of the definition: “the need for stability, consistency, and meaning” (p. 18). Accordingly, Schein (2010) termed these three components a “pattern” (p. 18), toward which all organizations continually strive. Furthermore, Schein’s work surrounding the concept of organizational culture, definitions aside, has been recognized as “sufficiently refined to be used as an analytic concept in its own right” (Teehankee, 1993, p. 71). Thus, I selected Schein’s (2010) approach to cultural analysis as the strategy for investigating the university’s organizational culture.

Organizational Culture and Workplace Bullying

Researchers have investigated bullying by categorizing causes of the phenomenon into two groups: (a) individual and (b) organizational antecedents (Tambur & Vadi, 2012; An & Kang, 2016). Organizational culture has been identified as an organizational antecedent (Espelage et al., 2014; Tambur & Vadi, 2012). Numerous studies have
examined organizational culture and its role in workplace bullying. For example, An and Kang (2016) sought to identify the relationships between organizational culture types and workplace bullying in the nursing industry. Using a device created by Han (2002) to measure features of organizational culture and the Negative Acts Questionnaire – Revised (NAQ-R) (Einarsen, Hoel & Notelaers, 2009) to measure workplace bullying, the results of the study revealed nurses working in a hierarchy-oriented culture were 2.58 more times likely to encounter bullying compared with other culture types evaluated in the study (An & Kang, 2016).

Likewise, O’Farrell and Nordstrom (2013) examined organizational culture types to determine if different types of cultures are more prone to facilitating bullying. Results in the study found chaotic organizational cultures to be a significant predictor of workplace bullying (O’Farrell and Nordstrom (2013). Similarly, in an autoethnography depicting lived experiences with workplace bullying, Finck (2014) determined organizational culture functioned to support and enable bullying, and organizational hierarchy supported incidents of bullying.

Other studies have focused upon measuring characteristics of organizational culture and investigating the role of organizational culture upon particular categories of negative behaviors. For example, Fitzgerald et al. (1997) examined the role of organizational culture in sexual harassment. The study found organizations, where complaints were not welcomed or taken seriously, and perpetrators encountered no consequences for negative behavior, experienced significantly higher rates of harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1997). These results were consistent with studies by Brodsky (1976).
and Hoel and Salin (2003), which determined an environment, “where there is no room for criticism and where complaining may be considered futile” (p. 213), result in bullying.

A study conducted by Galanaki and Papalexandris (2013) aimed to recommend to Human Resources professionals a common, reliable instrument for measuring the influence of organizational culture upon workplace bullying in their organizations. Results of the study determined the NAQ to be the more adequate instrument for measuring the occurrence of workplace bullying in organizations compared with self-labeling and operational methodologies (Galanaki & Papalexandris, 2013). Additionally, the study concluded organizational culture was a significant influencer upon employee behavior (Galanaki & Papalexandris, 2013). This conclusion was consistent with Tambur and Vadi’s (2012) study, which found organizational cultures possess the ability to definitively affect the behavior of employees since the values of the organization are embedded within the organizational culture.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Social Ecological Model**

The social ecological model adopted for my study parallels the conceptual origins of climate and culture. As noted above, Lewin’s (1936) work birthed climate and culture research (Ashkanasy et al., 2000). Lewin’s (1936) determination that individual behavior was a product of interactions with contextual environments also influenced Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) development of the social ecological model (Velez-Agosto, Soto-Crespo, Vizcarondo-Oppenheimer, Vega-Molina, & Coll, 2017). The social
ecological model interprets human behavior as interactions occurring among multiple, contextual social systems in which individuals are immersed (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Espelage et al., 2014). Social systems include environments where people live and interact such as homes, local neighborhoods, schools, town squares, and society (1977). Bronfenbrenner (1977) defined this model as:

> The scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the life span, between a growing human organism and the changing immediate environments in which it lives, as this process is affected by relations obtaining within and between these immediate settings, as well as the large social contexts, both formal and informal, in which the settings are embedded. (p. 514)

Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) model has been applied across multiple disciplines (Velez-Agosto et al., 2017). Applications of Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) model have manifested in fields such as education (Nazari, Farnia, Ghonsooly, & Jafarigohar, 2017; Slomp, Mombourquette, & Marynowski, 2018; Zhang, 2018), social work (Crawford, 2018; Boon, Cottrell, King, Stevenson, & Millar, 2012) health care (Atilola, 2017; Eriksson, Ghazinour, & Hammarstrom, 2018), and community development (Leonard, 2011).

There are four systems in Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) model. First, microsystems are defined as settings in which individuals and others directly interact. Conceptually, microsystems eventually migrated to include individuals’ interactions with symbolic artifacts, such as objects and symbols (Velez-Agosto et al., 2017). Second, mesosystems are characterized by interactions between more than one microsystem. Third, exosystems involve interactions between more than one setting in the absence of directly interacting
with the individual. Bronfenbrenner (1977) indicated, “…these structures [at the exosystem level] include the major institutions of the society, both deliberately structured and spontaneously involving, as they operate at a concrete local level” (p. 515). Espelage et al. (2014) provided the workplace example of decisions being made in the corporate boardroom establishing company policies which affect employees. Yet, employees encounter no direct interaction with board members while decisions are being made in the boardroom. Fourth, Bonfenbrenner (1977) defined macrosystems as the “overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture…of which micro-, meso-, and exosystems are conceived and examined not only in structural terms but as carriers of information and ideology that, both explicitly and implicitly, endow meaning and motivation…” (p. 515). Thus, macrosystems are known to directly influence the other three lower level systems. Therefore, when considered from a macroystem level perspective, individual behavior might not be consequential of direct interactions occurring at the microystem level. Instead, behavior could be explained by external exertions occurring at the macroystem level (Barboza et al., 2009).

The last two decades have produced an array of investigations into workplace misbehavior. Despite this burgeoning body of literature, workplace bullying has remained extremely costly (Hollis, 2012; 2015; Namie & Namie, 2009) and problematic (Lester, 2013b; Namie, 2017). Incidents of the phenomenon have reached epidemic-level proportions (Namie, 2017) and imposed significant harm to individuals (Duffy & Sperry, 2007; Lockhart, 1997; Keashly & Neuman, 2013; Kivimaki et al., 2003) and the organizations employing them (Lutgen-Sandvik & Arsht, 2014). The prevalence of
workplace bullying rates in higher education have been found to exceed rates of occurrence in other employment sectors (Hollis, 2015; Keashly & Neuman, 2013, Twale & DeLuca, 2008). Since institutions of higher education place tremendous value upon mission fulfillment, these prevalence rates have been identified as a severe threat to institutions (Hollis, 2012; 2015). Shifting faculty roles and increased competition for resources (Marginson, 2006; Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013) have created institutional environments ripe for bullying as have socio-economic factors imposed by globalization (Wildavsky, 2010). Rigorous organizational structures (Keashly & Neuman, 2010; Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013) and unique work environments of institutions of higher education (Taylor, 2012; 2013) have also been conducive to fostering workplace bullying. Finally, organizational culture has been identified as an organizational antecedent of workplace bullying (Espelage et al., 2014; Tambur & Vadi, 2012).

In the following chapter, I explain the methodology and study design used to investigate organizational culture at the chosen research site. My rationale for the conceptual framework I selected is presented along with the research questions I posed. I discuss how trustworthiness in my study was established and conclude with an explanation of my role as researcher.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this chapter is to explain and justify the chosen methodology and procedures for the study. This chapter includes the study design, conceptual framework, the research questions and a description of organizational ethnographies. The selection of participants, chosen interview protocol as well as justification for data analysis will be defined. The chapter includes a section establishing the trustworthiness of the study. Concluding the chapter is an explanation of the role of the researcher and the researcher’s position statement. The purpose of my study was to explore a university’s organizational culture with the goal of addressing the primary question driving my investigation: How does organizational culture function as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying?

Study Design

Strati (2000) stated that modern organizations are complex, and the study of organizations has been equally as complex. Organizations differ in size, structure and governance models. Some exist to generate profit, while others do not generate profit (Maier, Meyer, & Steinbereithner, 2016; Ruvio, Rosenblatt, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2010). There are organizations which function based upon hierarchal leadership and organizations led collaboratively in which no hierarchy exists (Diefenbach & Sillince, 2011; Edwards & Gill, 2012; Gaal, Szabo, Csepregi, 2013). Certain organizations conduct their affairs locally and other organizations are global in scope (Banerjee, 2010; Bartley, 2018; Lindh & Thorgren, 2016). There are traditional “brick and mortar”
organizations and organizations that operate entirely virtually (Bhatnagar & Syam, 2014; Clarke III & Flaherty, 2004; Powell, Horvath, & Brandtner, 2016). In some organizations, employees are intentionally involved in the organizational decision-making process (Csaszar & Eggers, 2013; Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004). In other organizations, employees are purposefully excluded, and decisions are rendered entirely by board members (Csaszar & Eggers, 2013; Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004). Certain contemporary organizations may encourage group work to maximize productivity while others maintain traditional assignments dictated by formal position descriptions (Devine, Clayton, Philips, Dunford, & Melner 1999; Strati, 2000). Further, organizations may vary in and of themselves; they may not be at all “internally uniform” (Strati, 2000, p. 17). Factor in the notion that organizations, like the contexts in which they exist, are constantly undergoing change (Bryant & Allent, 2009; Diefenbach & Sillince, 2011; Lundin & Steinthorsson, 2003). The very nature of organizations which renders them complex entities also means analyzing them is not without complexity.

Historically, the study of organizations revolved around organizational theory (Powell et al., 2016). Typically, studies have been driven by the predominant theories of their given era and have varied widely in approaches (Kontoghiorghes, Awbre, & Feurig, 2005; Powell et al., 2016; Reed, 1999). For example, organizational studies emerged within the 19th century, the result of attempts to explain the changes occurring pursuant to the influence of industrial capitalism (Reed, 1999). Thus, organizations adopted problem-solving models whose intent was to settle skirmishes surrounding the collective needs of society versus those individual wants that had been seen as impeding progress
(Wolin, 1961). By the end of the 20th century, fully immersed in a knowledge-based economy (Hudson, 2011), the study of organizations settled upon dissecting the current nature of organization and analyzing its intellectual underpinnings (Reed, 1999).

Because of the complexities defining modern organizations, the various approaches to studying organizations has also proven quite diverse. These approaches have included framing organizational studies envisaged as schools of thought, as models, as perspectives, as issues, as methodologies, as metaphors, and as research programs (Strati, 2000). Thus, most commonly, the study of organizations has not focused upon the interpersonal exchanges occurring daily within the organization (Pawluch, Shaffir, & Miall, 2005; Scott, 2009; Ybema et al., 2009). Instead, there have been rigorous studies focused around organizational theory and the nature of organizations (Reed, 1999; Strati, 2000). Existing literature has therefore, omitted descriptions of commonplace interactions in breakrooms, at watercoolers, between meetings, in hallways and elevators, strolling from the parking lot, over lunch, and of impromptu meetings, etc. (Scott, 2009; Ybema et al., 2009). Encounters such as these have been traditionally seen by researchers as matters lacking in importance, deemed nothing more than “trivial” (Scott, 2009, p. 1). Consequently, the investigations of organizational ethnography are centered in these trivial matters (Ybema et al., 2009). Since the intent of my study was to examine these trivial matters, the rationale for the adoption of organizational ethnography as a suitable methodology was further justified.

As indicated previously, for this study I assumed the position that organizational ethnography is a qualitative method of inquiry (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2010; Ybema et
al., 2009) which enables the researcher to examine deeply embedded, hidden facets of organizational life (Ybema et al., 2009). As Stake (2010) asserted, qualitative research is primarily dependent upon “human perception and understanding” (p. 11). Like ethnographies, these studies always situate people within their natural environments (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In this case, the natural environment was participants’ organizational settings.

Organizational ethnographies deliver rich depictions of everyday occurrences within an organization (Neyland, 2008; Ybema et al., 2009). Organizational ethnographers focus on everyday occurrences that are often overlooked because they appear routine and normal (Ybema et al., 2009). The goal of the researcher is to identify these common encounters occurring daily and uncover the meanings attached to them by organizational stakeholders. Successfully accomplishing this goal requires the investigator to be inserted into the lived experiences of the organizational members which enables access to these tacit meanings normally unseen and unknown by outsiders (Anderson-Levitt, 2006; Neyland, 2008; van Hulst, Ybema, & Yanow, 2017; Ybema et al., 2009). Thus, organizational ethnographic studies are intent on delivering a thorough in-depth and first-hand account of the people situated in the real-life context of the organization. As LeCompte and Schensul (1999) pointed out:

The focus of such research, then, is on what makes the people in the study tick—how they behave, how they define their world, what is important to them, why they say and do, and what structural or contextual features influence their thoughts, behaviors, and relationships. (p. 85)
Organizational ethnographic research offers two aspects other methods lack. First, organizational ethnographies provide “sensitivity to hidden dimensions of organizational life” (Yanow et al., 2012, p. 6). Because researchers are embedded in the lived experiences of their participants, they possess an uncanny ability to identify tacitly known information and to discern concealed meanings which fuel the daily affairs of the organization. Nevertheless, access to, and revealing intimate information about the organization does not always prove favorable to the organization. For example, the knowledge organizational ethnographers acquire about organizational power dynamics and politics can expose cruel interpersonal realities and reveal systemic problems with the cultural ethos (Ybema et al., 2009).

Second, organizational ethnographies provide “sensitivity to the interplay between actors and context” (Yanow et al., 2012, p. 7). With this type of study design the opportunity exists for the researcher to present a subjective orientation while situating the experiences within their broader, macro-social and macro-historical contexts (Yanow et al., 2012). Stake (2010) explained this perspective:

Two realities exist simultaneously and separately within every human activity. One is the reality of personal experience, and one is the reality of group and societal relationship. The two realities connect, they overlap, they merge, but they are recognizably different. (p. 18)

Thus, the task of organizational ethnographers is to identify, understand and render relevant descriptions of the microcosm, while considering that local meaning-making may perhaps be determined by the influence of the global (Yanow et al., 2012).
As previously noted, organizational ethnography enables examination of the everyday complexity of organizations within the framework of their social contexts. To this end, my study observed: (a) organizational culture in higher education and the phenomenon of workplace bullying in higher education, which is considered disproportionately complex, particularly when compared to other industry sectors; and (b) the organizational culture and the phenomenon of workplace bullying within a context, that of a single, research university located in the southeastern U.S.

Colleges and universities are, by their very natures, considered to be complex organizations (Brown II et al., 2010). They are complex for a myriad of reasons. Those noteworthy reasons relative to this study included college/university organizational structures, increased numbers of divisions and departments, decision-making processes, large quantities of employees and conditions of employment, and the interactions among the areas (Anderson, 1999). Workplace bullying confined within institutions of higher education has been described as complex (Lester, 2013). Defining what behaviors constitute bullying in a culturally diverse context where scholarly scrutiny and debate is considered normal can pose significant challenges (Lester, 2013). Therefore, selecting organizational ethnography as the research design for this study provided the most appropriate channel for making sense of the adjoining complexities. These complexities emerged from the study’s environmental context and those daily commonalities, along with their assigned meanings, that are acquiescent of the university’s culture.

Organizational ethnography presented the best opportunity to investigate the university’s culture. The interpretive framework employed in my study assumed
meanings arise from actors’ social interactions occurring in a specific environment (Blumer, 1969; Yanow, 2000). Accordingly, it is impossible to isolate one or more variables within the study by extracting them from the context from which the variable’s meaning is acquired, and then examine and draw any valid conclusions. The organizational ethnographic design accomplishes this goal because it enables findings to emerge as a consequence of observations occurring from the embedded, insider perspective of the researcher (Ybema et al., 2009).

Analyzing a university’s culture to determine how it can function as a macrosystem antecedent to workplace bullying cannot be accomplished by extrapolating data from the university community via only quantitative measures (Schein, 2010). Attempting to do so would jeopardize the acquisition of any overlooked and worthwhile meanings commonly understood only by insiders accepted as members of the university. Finally, the primary goal of this study was to understand how university culture functions as a macrosystem antecedent to workplace bullying. The study possesses no aim of generating theoretical constructs as a means of understanding workplace bullying.

**Conceptual Framework and Paradigm**

Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) social ecological model provided the conceptual framework for addressing my primary research question, which was, “How does organizational culture function as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying?” Moreover, Schein’s (2010) model of cultural analysis supplied the rationale and procedures for investigating the university’s culture. Bronfenbrenner (1977) concluded that human behavior was ultimately directed by people’s interactions among
multiple, contextual social systems. He envisioned these contextual social systems existing within four successive levels: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. See Figure 3.1.

![Figure 3.1](image)

**Figure 3.1.** Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) social ecological framework and behavioral interactions.

The focus of my study was upon the macrosystem, which Bronfenbrenner (1977) defined as “the overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture…of which micro-, meso-, and exo-systems are the concrete manifestations” (p. 515). Macrosystems are the “general prototypes, existing in the culture or subculture that set the pattern for the structures and activities occurring at the concrete level” (1977, p. 515). In other words, macrosystems exert power upon the other three levels which influences individual behavior within those levels. Bronfenbrenner (1977) concluded that “macrosystems are
conceived and examined not only in structural terms but as carriers of information and ideology that, both explicitly and implicitly, endow meaning and motivation to particular agencies, social networks, roles, activities, and their interrelations” (p. 515). Since the literature previously identified organizational culture as a factor capable of facilitating workplace bullying (Espelage et al., 2014), I determined that my study would adopt the social ecological conceptual framework for considering how culture functions as a macrosystem antecedent to workplace bullying.

Schein’s (2010) model of cultural analysis guided the examination of the university’s organizational culture. This model defined the following three levels of analysis for the purpose of investigating the university’s culture: (a) Artifacts; (b) Espoused Beliefs and Values; and (c) Basic Underlying Assumptions. Deeper organizational meanings are expected to be revealed to the researcher as the researcher engages in analysis while systematically moving from level one to level three. Therefore, as artifacts were examined, which Schein (2010) saw as embodying the organization’s basic assumptions, organizational core values and beliefs were identified. Then, the basic underlying assumptions were explored in greater depth for context and meaning which were ultimately revealed as the core values and assumptions governing the daily affairs of the university (Podjed, 2011; Schein, 2010). See Figure 3.2.
Figure 3.2. Schein’s (2010) three levels of cultural analysis.

The interpretivist paradigmatic perspective parallels both the social ecological model and the model of cultural analysis. The basic notion of each model is reality is believed to be constructed socially as individuals interact over time in certain settings (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Creswell, 2013; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). These interactions, in turn, serve to fashion and create the culture. Of vital importance was the understanding the interpretive paradigm always views shared meanings and constructs as positioned within their social, political, or cultural contexts (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Yanow, 2000). For this reason, meanings are local and more than one story exists (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Ybema et al., 2009).

Of primary concern was the desire to understand the social world at the subjective level (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Since meanings only emerge
resulting from interactions, interpretivists believe participating in the lived experiences of individuals being studied is necessary (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Creswell, 2013; Ybema et al., 2009). Herein lies the only way to observe conversations and acquire meaning as meaning is being constructed (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Further, because the research necessitates immersion and embeddedness on the part of the investigator (Ybema et al., 2009), no clear delineation existed between the researcher and the participant (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Knowledge acquisition involved “both discovery and invention” (Golding, 2009, p. 469). All members were equally involved in meaning-making and analysis pertaining to the study (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Interpretive research does not tend to be action oriented. Research is not expected to yield results that prompt action unless the researcher brings preconceived intentions specifically aimed at doing so (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Instead, the goal is to provide rich descriptions of the perceptions and meanings embedded in the culture as assigned by its members (Creswell, 2013; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2008; Ybema et al., 2009) for the specific culture being investigated. The goal is not to produce findings which are applicable across all cultures at any given time (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Consistent throughout my study was the researcher’s adoption of an interpretivist paradigmatic view. Samnani (2013) argued organizational studies have primarily examined workplace bullying using a functionalist approach. Consequently, absent from the literature are thorough descriptions of devastating aspects of the phenomenon situated
within organizations (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006). This investigative deficit has yielded, according to Samnani (2013), a focus upon the problem of workplace bullying solely as an interpersonal issue situated at the microsystem level. Thus, the interpretivist paradigm is compatible with the social ecological conceptual framework. Further, the interpretivist approach supports the need to contribute to existing research rich descriptive studies addressing workplace bullying in organizations. For these reasons, the interpretivist paradigm was deemed most suitable for this study.

**Research Questions**

My study was designed to address one overarching question: How does organizational culture function as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying? Given the necessity of examining the university’s culture, the study also posed the following secondary question: What are the basic underlying assumptions of the university’s culture? These questions were selected because the principal goal of the researcher was to acquire information about how university members perceived the culture of the university.

Smith and Osborn (2008), arguing in favor of the interpretivist paradigm, noted that appropriate research questions for this perspective are formed around situations in which the goal is to determine people’s perspectives about their life circumstances. The intent is to ascertain how people assign meaning to their personal and social worlds (2008). Further, in Smith and Osborn’s (2008) estimate, “research questions…are usually framed broadly and openly. There is no attempt to test a predetermined hypothesis…rather, the aim is to explore, flexibly and in detail, an area of concern” (p.
The primary area of concern in my study was the university’s culture and perceptions held by its members.

**Context of the Study**

My study investigated the organizational culture of a public university located in a rural community in the southeastern U.S. The university was designated as a doctoral granting university whose Carnegie classification size and setting is a four-year, large (greater than 9,999 students), primarily residential with moderate research activity. As previously indicated, the study was situated at this research site because of the researcher’s access as an imbedded insider. To protect the anonymity of the institution and confidentiality of the research participants, no additional information will be provided to describe the demographics of the university.

**Data Collection**

Organizational ethnographies are best served when multiple data sources are available (Anderson-Levitt, 2006; Creswell, 2013; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Stake, 2010). Furthermore, when more than one source provides the same evidence, the data are considered to triangulate or converge, which, in turn, strengthens the contributions of the data (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Stake, 2010; Yanow, 2000; Yin, 2006). Following are the types of data sources utilized in my study:

- Direct observations. The researcher as an embedded participant recorded observations of physical environments, meetings, personnel interactions, casual conversations, and business exchanges of the daily affairs occurring at the university (Ybema et al., 2009).
- Documents such as policies and procedures manuals, handbooks, forms, reports, training materials, meeting minutes, press releases, websites, social media, and other relevant and accessible university documents (Ybema et al., 2009).

- Semi-structured interviews. Creswell (2013) recommended choosing interviewees based upon their perceived ability to sufficiently respond to the research questions. Consistent with Brenner’s (2006) rationale, I chose the semi-structured format “for purposes of comparability across informants…” and because of the “advantage of asking all informants the same core questions with the freedom to ask follow-up questions that build on the responses received” (p. 362).

- Secondary Analysis. Because of the difficulty securing participation, the strategy of secondary analysis was employed to secure data from additional semi-structured interviews. “Secondary analysis is a research strategy which makes use of preexisting quantitative or preexisting qualitative research data for the purposes of investigating new questions or verifying previous studies” (Heaton, 2004, p. 14).

- Physical artifacts. Physical artifacts symbolically embody and convey meanings (Yanow, 2000). Because ethnographies are predominantly descriptive, photographs of artifacts throughout the campus such as signage, buildings, landmarks, parking lots, etc. were captured and utilized by the researcher to guide descriptions and inform meaning.
Participant Selection

*Purposeful sampling* was used to select interview participants. Securing individuals to participate in my study proved challenging most likely due to sensitivities surrounding workplace bullying. My research captured data from five semi-structured interviews. Participants in my present study included two staff members and one faculty. Participants possessed a minimum chronological span of eight years as embedded insiders at the research site. Participants from a pilot study, from which data was used as secondary analysis, included two faculty. The same selection procedures were followed in the pilot study. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to aid in the protection of their identities. Together, the five participants represented five separate units at the university. The only major divisions without representation in the study were Alumni Affairs, Athletics, and Business Affairs. To protect the participants’ anonymity, no additional descriptive information is provided.

Interview Protocol

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for formal interviews because they enabled the researcher to ask every participant the same primary questions but also allowed the flexibility to ask follow-up questions to further explore a given response (Brenner, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Participation was solicited in person and participants were provided the informed consent document. At least one week prior to the interview, participants were given the definition of organizational culture and questions that were asked during the interview. The interviews were scheduled for a
Researchers asked each participant to conduct an interview, and conducted at a location, chosen by each participant. Refer to Appendix C for the interview protocol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question(s)</th>
<th>Grand Tour Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How does organizational culture function as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying?</td>
<td>When considering the definition of organizational culture you’ve been presented, how would you describe the culture of your institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) What are the basic underlying assumptions of the university’s culture?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Tour Question</td>
<td>Follow Up Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What institutional artifacts would you say embody the shared values and fundamental beliefs associated with the members of your institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Up Question</td>
<td>Follow Up Sub-question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What would you identify as those espoused beliefs and values that are attached to these artifacts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Up Sub-question</td>
<td>Follow Up Sub-question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and describe some of the basic assumptions and ways of thinking and feeling which govern the behavior of the members of the institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 1 – Artifacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2 – Espoused Beliefs and Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 3 – Basic Underlying Assumptions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3.3. Interview questions and their relationship to the conceptual framework.*

Interviews were conducted using Spradley’s (1979) grand tour question format, which has been deemed suitable for ethnographic research (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). The interview format accommodated initial open-ended questions intended to lead to more focused questions referred to as follow up questions and follow up sub-questions to capture more specific details. The questions were designed to proceed consistent with Schein’s (2010) model of cultural analysis in which three sequential layers (artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions) revealed aspects of the
organizational culture. As I gained greater exposure to the culture when moving through the layers, greater revelation was acquired (Podjed, 2011; Schein, 2010). These embedded disclosures of the culture then enabled the researcher to address the research questions used in this study. See Figure 3.3 for an example.

**Research Process**

Procedurally, ethnographies allow a great deal of variety, flexibility and spontaneous activity (Anderson-Levitt, 2006; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Ethnographic studies do not tend to follow well defined procedures and instead function as an on-going intuitive process (Anderson-Levitt, 2006; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The initial steps of the study were like most research designs with spontaneity and flexibility predominantly occurring during the data collection and analysis activities of the study. Once the problem was identified and research questions posed, the site was selected, and strategies were adopted for locating and collecting data.

Two interpretivist approaches guided the procedures in my study. One was unique to organizational ethnographies and one was specific to organizational culture. The subsequent paragraphs describe both approaches.

**Organizational Ethnography**

The organizational ethnography approach used in my study followed the seven characteristics of organizational ethnography defined by Ybema et al. (2009):

1. Combined fieldwork methods;
2. A lived knowledge of the contextual setting;
3. Attention to the tacit and hidden dimensions of organizational life;
4. A context-sensitive analysis cognizant of micro-level interactions occurring within a broader social setting;

5. The assignment of meaning to organizational actors’ beliefs and actions often taken for granted;

6. The reflection of multiple voices and interpretations of the investigative phenomenon; and,

7. A well-documented position of the researcher.

First, combined field work methods were used in my study. Data collection in the field included the use of observations, conversations and close document reading. Foundational to these strategies are “action (talking, laughing, working, doing) and proactive perception (observing, listening, reading, smelling)” (2009, p. 6). These foundational methodological elements are what renders ethnography unique and divergent from other research strategies employed in the study of organizations.

Second, the researcher possessed a lived knowledge of the contextual setting. Organizational ethnographies require first-hand, daily encounters with the lived experiences of the subjects being observed for a sustained period of time (Anderson-Levitt, 2006; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Neyland, 2008; Ybema et al., 2009). As introduced in Chapter One, I assumed the role of an at-home ethnographer. Since the university was one where I was previously employed and was considered “more or less on equal terms with other participants” (Alvesson, 2009, p. 159), the data (observations, relationships and experiences) resulted from first-hand experience.
Third, attention was devoted to the tacit and hidden dimensions of organizational life. Because of the insider perspective, the ability existed for the researcher to reveal the overlooked and hidden dimensions of organizational life embedded in the culture. Often the covert knowledge that gets divulged includes political and emotional dynamics surrounding the power structure housed within the organization (Ybema et al., 2009). When this action occurs, “the entanglement of culture with power” (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 7) gets exposed. This characteristic was especially apparent in my study since the goal was to understand how culture functions as a macrosystem antecedent to workplace bullying.

Fourth, my study followed a context-sensitive analysis cognizant of micro-level interactions occurring within a broader social setting (Ybema et al., 2009). This study applied Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) social ecological theoretical lens which enabled the researcher to understand subjects’ behavior within the organization from a broader social system perspective. Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) theory defined four social ecological systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem. Behavior is influenced by the multiple interactions occurring not only within but among the four systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Thus, comprehending the how of behavior leads to the assignment of interpretations beyond the one-to-one exchanges occurring at the microsystem level. The behavior can be explained by cultural norms embraced by members of the organization. In Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) theory, the overarching patterns of organizational culture, which is the target of this investigation, are situated at the macrosystem level.
Fifth, I assigned meaning to organizational actors’ beliefs and actions often taken for granted (Ybema et al., 2009). Because daily routines and ordinary occurrences often happen apart from the conscious assignment of meaning, organizational ethnographers strive to uncover and attach meaning to the familiar (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Neyland, 2008; Pawluch et al., 2005; Ybema et al., 2009). Language usage, weekly meetings, the use of signage and organizational policies are all examples of common symbolic representations conveying meaning within the organization.

Sixth, my study captured the reflection of multiple voices and interpretations of the investigative phenomenon (Ybema et al., 2009). The researcher as an embedded insider within the organization runs the risk of falling prey to enculturation which could impede the purity of the interpretivist ethnographic analysis. Further, multiple actors likely possess varying meanings about similar artifacts and encounters which warrants consideration (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Ybema et al., 2009). Consequently, I conducted interviews across all divisions of the university, recorded various observations and reviewed dozens of university publications and documents.

Finally, a well-documented position of the researcher was considered throughout this study (Ybema et al., 2009). The position of the investigator in this study was firmly established as an observing participant and an embedded insider, the result of the researcher living and working in the community being examined.
Cultural Analysis

The second interpretivist approach which guided the steps in this study was Schein’s (2010) model of cultural analysis. Schein’s model (2010) provided a three-layered method for analyzing the university’s culture. These layers are defined as: (a) artifacts; (b) espoused beliefs and values; and (c) basic underlying assumptions. Each layer systematically reveals deeper organizational meanings when explored. Thus, I began investigating the university culture by identifying artifacts. Then, through the triangulation of data, I began uncovering the core values and basic underlying assumptions endorsed by members of the university. Triangulating the data included the use of interviews, casual observations, and the analysis of university documents. These actions occurred simultaneously and were overlapping at times.

Data Analysis

Difficulty rests with discussing data analysis as a separate, sequential research stage because of the nature of qualitative, participant-observation research. Data analysis almost always occurs simultaneously with data collection (Creswell, 2013; Yanow, 2000; Yin, 2006). Observations, participant interviews (formal and informal), and document analysis served as the primary means for accessing local knowledge in my study.

All data were analyzed narratively, metaphorically and categorically (Yanow, 2000). I used these three data analysis strategies to parallel Schein’s (2010) levels of cultural analysis: (a) artifacts, (b) espoused beliefs and values, and (c) basic underlying assumptions. First, I listened to the narratives, or stories being told through my observations, by participants in my study, and in documents I reviewed. The goal “in
listening to these narratives…” is to “…encounter metaphors, categories, markings, and other sense-making elements that reflect and shape local knowledge and help analyze that knowledge” (Yanow, 2000, p. 61). This strategy paralleled the identification of artifacts in Schein’s model. Second, I identified metaphors in the data. Yanow (2000) defined metaphor as “the juxtaposition of two superficially unlike elements in a single context, where the separately understood meanings of both interact to create a new perception of the focus of the metaphor” (p. 42). I approached analysis of the metaphors by identifying them and exploring their meanings. This strategy enabled me to identify espoused values and beliefs, the second level in Schein’s model. Ultimately, these actions generated categories and concepts which enabled data organization and interpretation (Yanow, 2000). This strategy led to the identification of the organizational culture’s basic underlying assumptions, Schein’s third level of cultural analysis. See Figure 3.4.

![Figure 3.4. Data analysis strategies.](image-url)
Document analysis proceeded consistent with a reader-response lens, meaning both the researcher as participant as well as authors were assumed to attach meanings to documents as they were scripted or read, and interpreted (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2006). In other words, no assumption existed to suggest members of the organization nor the researcher interpreted language strictly from a traditional hermeneutic perspective. The traditional hermeneutic approach is intent on acquiring the author’s original, predetermined message.

Semi-structured (formal) interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were imported into MAXQDA (version 18.1.1). MAXQDA was used to conduct Verbatim Coding. Verbatim Coding was used to analyze data from the semi-structured interviews to capture participants’ own language and to enable movement from metaphors toward categorical analysis (Saldana, 2009). Upon completion of Verbatim Coding, coded transcripts were exported for additional analysis and coding.

Next, I conducted Values Coding of the transcripts. I assigned “B” to represent beliefs, “V” to represent values, or “A” to represent attitudes. The goal of Values Coding was to identify the source(s)’ values, attitudes and beliefs (Saldana, 2009), from which interpretations could be made to understand how meanings were constructed (Yanow, 2000).

After completing Values Coding, I assigned categories. Categorical analysis involved assigning labels and their associated meanings to relevant subject matter. The categories paralleled Schein’s (2010) levels of cultural analysis: artifacts, espoused values and beliefs, and basic underlying assumptions. I assigned “1” to represent
artifacts, “2” to represent espoused beliefs and values, or “3” to represent basic underlying assumptions. See Figure 3.5. Identifying the basic underlying assumptions then enabled me to address the primary research question in my study.

The coding procedures (Saldana, 2009) were applied to multiple data sources including the semi-structured interviews, field notes and relevant documents collected during the study. Informal interviews and conversations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Strati, 2000) were recorded by the researcher in the form of field notes (Stake, 2010).

Figure 3.5. Data coding and analysis example.

Secondary Data Analysis

The use of secondary data has been recognized as a valuable research strategy for investigating organizational culture (Janicijevic, 2011). As previously noted, “Secondary analysis is a research strategy which makes use of preexisting quantitative or preexisting
qualitative research data for the purposes of investigating new questions or verifying previous studies” (Heaton, 2004, p. 14). Data from two of the five semi-structured interviews represented in my present study were incorporated from a pilot study conducted as part of the program completion requirements related to this assignment. The same analysis procedures described in the section above were applied in the analysis of these interviews. Interviews were conducted at the same research site, and within the same context and timeframe in which I was embedded as an insider for this study. Via the informed consent process, participants were aware results could be used to contribute to my present study. See Appendix A and Appendix B for the complete interview protocol. These two faculty interviews added value to the study by extending representation across five university units.

**Role of the Researcher**

The notion of the centrality of the researcher throughout the study has been alluded to in various sections of the document. Consistent with many qualitative methodologies, the researcher in the study served as participant and therefore assumed influence and offered contributions to the process and findings of the study. Like other participants in the study bring prior knowledge, education, experiences and training into the study from which they respond to questions, draft documents, engage in interactions, provide interpretations, etc. relative to the study, so too, did myself.

Consequently, my influence was felt from the moment the study was conceived; albeit, most commonly, my mark upon the study was more thoroughly recognized in research stages involving data collection and analysis. For example, I influenced semi-
structured interviews by selecting the grand tour and subsequent follow up questions which served to direct and extract certain results in the study (Brenner, 2006). This perspective is also quite clear in most interpretive research frameworks where Yanow (2000) identified the role of the researcher as that of “researcher-analyst” (p. 27). By suggesting that “the researcher-analyst’s own interpretive frame or lens is embedded” (Yanow, 2000, p. 87) in the study, Yanow is convincingly positioning the researcher as a major participant in the study. Moreover, according to Yanow (2000), a major focus of interpretation by the researcher is to convincingly sustain the case being made in the report through the selective utilization of content acquired during data collection. The researcher does so because the overwhelming amount of data acquired via observations, conversations, interviews, etc. cannot possibly be included in the report (Yanow, 2000). I followed this perspective in my study.

As previously defined, an at-home ethnography is one in which the researcher investigates a cultural environment to which access is provided because the researcher either works or resides in that setting (Alvesson, 2009). Alvesson (2009) argued other legitimate reasons exist for pursuing an at-home ethnographic study. First, at-home ethnography has been depicted as particularly appropriate for conducting investigations at universities and in higher education settings since many researchers tend to work in these environments (Alvesson, 2009). This study was entirely situated within a university setting. Second, because the researcher was an insider, the likelihood of acquiring the organization’s ‘real story’ exceeded that of an outsider whose access must be negotiated (2009). Third, since there existed a greater familiarity with the setting being investigated,
the expectation for the manifestation of greater depths of knowledge and insight into the organizational phenomenon extended beyond those of traditional ethnographies (2009). Finally, the possibility for the researcher to fictionalize or over interpret accounts of everyday organizational life was largely diminished because the insider had a large amount of data of everyday accounts from which to depict the real-life, day-to-day occurrences of the organization. Ultimately, these experiences enabled the researcher to remain true to what was observed and encountered within its appropriate context and forego the enticement of fabricating social reality (2009).

**Trustworthiness**

Strategies for determining the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiries have been established since the 1980s (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). Guba and Lincoln (1985) viewed trustworthiness in qualitative studies as the means by which rigor in naturalistic investigations could be ensured (Morse, 2015). I adopted Guba’s (1981) original criteria as the guide for establishing trustworthiness in my study. The four criteria are: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. These four criteria were intended to correspond with those aspects of positivism, specifically validity and reliability, for the purpose of establishing rigor in naturalistic research (Shenton, 2004). Thus, credibility parallels internal validity; transferability relates to generalizability; dependability likens to reliability; and confirmability constitutes objectivity (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). Within each of Guba’s (1981) four criteria are specific research strategies investigators use to ensure establishment of the given criteria.
The following paragraphs state how Guba’s (1981) criteria parallel the positivist perspective and provide examples of strategies within each criterion.

First, like the goal of positivism’s internal validity, which is to guarantee that an investigation actually measures what it purports to measure (Crocker, 2006; Payne & Payne, 2004; Shenton, 2004), credibility seeks congruence of the findings with reality, or establishment of the whole picture (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). Predominant strategies used to establish credibility include the use of widely accepted qualitative research methods (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004), early familiarity and prolonged engagement with the organizational culture being investigated (Guba, 1981; Morse, 2015; Shenton, 2004), persistent observation (Guba, 1981; Morse, 2015), triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks (Guba, 1981; Morse, 2015; Shenton, 2004). A thick description of the phenomenon being investigated, and an analysis of findings in prior studies of similarity were also suggested by Shenton (2004) as strategies for establishing credibility.

To guarantee credibility, the research method (organizational ethnography) I selected for my study is accepted throughout the scholarly community (Neyland, 2008; Watson, 2012; Ybema et al., 2009). Organizational studies have been paramount in the literature for at least a century (Ybema et al., 2009). Further, and more specifically, interpretivist organizational ethnography is also an established method (Ybema et al., 2009). I also experienced prolonged engagement with the organizational culture as an embedded insider, which enabled persistent observation. My full-time employment at the institution spanned nearly five years. In addition, I triangulated my data via multiple sources which included semi-structured interviews, documents, physical artifacts, and
direct observations. Member checks were conducted following the transcription of each interview. Participants were provided the verbatim transcript and asked to verify for accuracy (Shenton, 2004). Finally, chapters four and five in my study include rich descriptions of the contextual setting and chapter two contains a summation of prior related studies.

Second, transferability relates to the concept of generalizability (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). The ability to generalize findings from a study means there exists the likelihood those findings can be applied to broader populations and similar situations (Morse, 2015). Since qualitative studies, and ethnographic studies, tend to center on local culture-sharing populations situated within specific contextual settings, the goal is not to generalize the findings but to describe (Creswell, 2013; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999; Stake, 2010). Qualitative researchers strive toward transferability by drafting thorough depictions of the context to enable readers to determine the extent to which the findings can be applied, or transferred, to other situations (Shenton, 2004). Thus, strategies to accomplish transferability include collecting descriptive data so that rich descriptions of the contextual settings can be portrayed. Guba (1981) believed purposeful sampling, more so than random sampling, was the most appropriate strategy for accommodating descriptive data collection.

To establish transferability, I collected descriptive data to enable me to draft rich descriptions of the contextual setting in my study. This data was acquired via semi-structured interviews, observations, documents, and photographs of the physical environment. Pursuant to Guba’s (1981) assertion, I used purposeful sampling, rather
than random sampling to select participants in my study, which further enabled rich depictions of the context.

Third, dependability is analogous to reliability. Reliability refers to a researcher’s ability to duplicate a study using the same methods, procedures, and sample characteristics under similar conditions (Berends, 2006; Payne & Payne, 2004). Guba (1981) argued qualitative studies frequently involve varying realties and “instrumental shifts” (p. 86) resulting from “insights on the part of the investigator-as-instrument” (p. 86). Consequently, the capability of duplicating qualitative studies from a positivistic perspective of reliability, strictly denoted, is impossible. Nevertheless, dependability can be established through the use of overlapping methods, which Guba (1981) argued was a form of triangulation, and a thoroughly articulated research design containing clearly defined procedures (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). Thus, despite the inability to precisely duplicate the results of a qualitative inquiry because of its shifting realities, particularly due to time and space, a researcher could, from an adequate depiction of a prior study, repeat the investigative process (Shenton, 2004).

To establish dependability, I triangulated my data by using multiple data sources. I also provided a detailed description of the procedures I followed in the study. Having done so, researchers wishing to conduct a similar study in a different contextual setting will be capable of duplicating the methodology and procedures even though, as Shenton (2004) explained, results will differ. Thus, my use of overlapping methods along with a thorough depiction of the procedures support dependability in the study.
Table 3.1

Trustworthiness

|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Credibility: Congruence with reality | • Adoption of well-established research methods  
• Familiarity and prolonged engagement with organizational culture being studied  
• Triangulation  
• Peer debriefing, member checks  
• Examination of prior research | • Organizational ethnography (Neyland, 2008; Watson, 2012; Ybema et al., 2009)  
• Embedded insider (8-yrs)  
• Multiple data sources  
• Member checks/debriefing  
• Literature review |
| Transferability: Goal is to describe | • Collection of descriptive data  
• Use of rich descriptions of contextual settings  
• Purposeful sampling | • Collected descriptive data, artifacts, observations  
• Situated within context  
• Purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013) |
| Dependability: Effectiveness of chosen methods | • Description of research design  
• Description of procedures  
• Description of data collection | • Described data collection  
• Described procedures  
• Outlined interview protocol |
| Confirmability: Indicative of participants’ ideas and encounters | • Triangulation  
• Established position of researcher  
• Researcher reflectivity | • Use of verbatim coding  
• Use of multiple data sources  
• Member checks/debriefing  
• Description of researcher role |

Guba’s (1981) final criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative studies is confirmability. Confirmability constitutes objectivity (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). Objectivity, from the positivist’s perspective, is the idea that investigative results should
be entirely independent of the researcher’s inherent biases (Payne & Payne, 2004). In contrast, qualitative research is inclusive of the researcher as instrument (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2010), rendering objectivity a non-goal. Instead, the goal is to confirm results are indicative of the participants’ ideas and encounters, and not solely the inclinations of the investigator (Shenton, 2004).

To accomplish confirmability, Guba (1981) recommended the use of triangulation and researcher reflexivity. The use of triangulation supports confirmability (Guba, 1981; Morse, 2015; Shenton, 2004) since the intersecting of multiple data sources helps corroborate findings. Moreover, to further establish confirmability in my study, I provided extensive insight into my position as an embedded insider and my role as instrument. Part of my reflexivity included generic memoing (Creswell, 2013), in which I recorded personal reflections following relevant conversations or observations throughout the study. Consistent with Guba’s (1981) perspective, these strategies support trustworthiness in my study.

Position Statement

The subject of the study is of vital, personal interest to me. I possess over 20 years of employment experience in student services at four different institutions of higher education in the U.S. Institutions where I have been employed have included a private, four-year liberal arts college, a doctoral, research intensive, public university, a regional, comprehensive doctoral research institution, and a regional state university. Each institution was located in a rural community in the southeastern U.S. The positions I have occupied included entry-level, assistant director, director, executive director, special
assistant to the president, assistant vice president and interim vice president. Regretfully, I personally encountered workplace bullying at all four institutions either as the target or observer, albeit at varying intensities. All of the bullying incidents I experienced or observed were launched by direct supervisors, senior level administrators or someone occupying a position of power over the target. Despite encountering these negative actions, I have always received annual performance evaluations with favorable ratings.

My interest in this study emerged during a conversation with my mentor and academic advisor. I had recently accepted employment at a new location and we were discussing my transition. I was casually describing the environment along with my experience in a recent meeting I had with a senior level administrator at the university. Listening attentively, my mentor interjected, “That’s bullying. What you’re describing is workplace bullying.” Honestly, I had not given it much thought. I, like many, had been living with the assumption that my experiences were normal, and frankly justified because of the subordinate position I occupied. After reflecting upon our conversation, I began reviewing literature on the topic of bullying, and I realized I had indeed encountered bullying in the workplace.

As I embarked upon my investigation of workplace bullying situated in institutions of higher education, I became increasingly aware of my personal bias toward the subject. When speaking of personal bias, I am really referring to two things. First, I am referencing the passion I possess pertaining to the need I believe exists for increased awareness and understanding of the occurrence of this phenomenon in higher education. This passion extends particularly to the desire to protect targets of bullying who have
lived with the horrible consequences resulting from the unwarranted behaviors of their colleagues. Despite this strong ethical obligation I sense related to protecting targets, perhaps of equal concern, are my questions about what workplace bullying is doing to the missions of universities. Hollis (2012) pointed out how universities replete with bullying on their campuses are in effect failing to achieve their stated purposes for existing. This notion is especially disconcerting for me because I have invested my career in contributing to the fulfillment of the universities’ missions where I have served.

Second, when speaking of personal bias, I’m extracting from the personal well of lived experience. The fact that I have previously encountered multiple incidents of workplace bullying across all four institutions at which I have been employed throughout my career, has created an internal sense of incongruence with which I continuously grappled as I contemplated researching and writing about the topic. Stated succinctly, though I felt compelled, even obligated, to do so, I could locate no sense of objectivity when approaching this subject. The impossibility exists, preventing me from separating my personal experiences and my identity from my research. Thus, my acquired passion for investigating workplace bullying in higher education is a direct result of my lived experiences. Consequently, the research approach employed by my study presents a valid response to my internal dilemma as I am clearly positioned as a participant in the investigation. In fact, I’m so close an insider that, in many of the cases described by the colleagues I interviewed, I was living the experience alongside them as the incidents were occurring in real time.
Further, I fundamentally believe many existing organizational and leadership models embraced by U.S. higher education leaders are ineffective for addressing the needs of the contemporary, globalized world. In fact, I assume the position that existing models are actually capable of facilitating workplace misbehavior. Thus, I am passionate about pursuing solutions aimed at eradicating bullying tendencies on campuses and fostering environments which improve the well-being of all university stakeholders and yield institutional mission success. This study was conceptualized with the aforementioned prior experiences and ideas in mind.

Policy development has been one suggested response to the issue of bullying in the workplace (Hurlic & Young, 2014). Nevertheless, I am also aware of Klein and Lester’s (2013) assertion that workplace bullying policies were rarely effective and therefore unlikely to be the sought-after solution. Keashly and Neuman (2013) stated limited empirical research existed which identifies viable remedies for addressing the phenomenon of workplace bullying. Accordingly, it is vitally important stakeholders and leaders in higher education possess the ability to determine precisely what constituted an effective response to workplace bullying (Keashly & Neuman, 2013). To achieve this end, policies must exist, but relatively few colleges and universities currently have workplace bullying policies. Therefore, my intended outcome of this study was to gain an understanding of the role culture plays in facilitating workplace bullying at one university so future leaders will be better positioned to foster environments on their campuses absent of the conditions favorable to workplace bullying.
This chapter presents the findings corresponding to the research questions which drove my study. The primary question posed was, “How does organizational culture function as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying?” To address this question, I asked the following sub-question: What are the basic underlying assumptions of the university’s culture?

The goal of this study was to explore an institution’s organizational culture to determine how culture functioned as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying. I used Schein’s (2010) approach to cultural analysis to guide my examination of the university’s culture. My embedded role as an insider garnered unique observations and enabled me to participate in and ultimately record commonplace events of daily life at the university. Those observations are presented in this chapter. Within each of the observations, I identified relevant artifacts and investigated them to uncover the values and espoused beliefs attached to them by employees of the university. Then, I explored those values and beliefs to identify the basic underlying assumptions driving the daily affairs of the university. See Table 1 located at end of this chapter.

My research study captured data from five semi-structured interviews. Three of the participants were faculty and two were staff. Participants represented five separate units within the university. To protect the participants’ anonymity, no additional descriptive information will be provided.
In this chapter, I have organized the results according to three themes. Each theme presented data as observations in the form of an enhanced ethnographic writing style. This style situated the author as a character in descriptively articulated scenes which included dialogues, emotional responses and attention to stories and perspectives portrayed by the characters in the narrative (Ybema et al., 2009). Following each observation, artifacts and corresponding organizational values and beliefs are identified. In these sections, I incorporated data from my observations, document analysis, and the semi-structured interviews I conducted. Analysis of these data enabled the identification of organizational values and beliefs. The concluding section of the chapter provides the basic underlying assumptions of the organizational culture revealed in my study.

**Theme 1: Perception versus Reality**

Theme one contains two observations. Observation one depicts the scene a visitor would encounter while traveling to my office via the university’s main entrance.

Examination of two artifacts within observation one, signs and the physical environment, revealed common university values. Those values are identified and explained.

Observation two focused upon the artifact of language. Specifically revealed are meanings attached to common usage of the word “family”.

**Observation 1: “A Typical Day”**

The main campus entrance prominently displayed red brick signs on both sides of the roadway entrance. These signs matched the red brick architectural design of the university’s historical buildings and were embossed with the university’s name. The road was characterized by old, grey asphalt with bright white and yellow pavement markings
indicating crosswalks and traffic directions reflecting the commands to “Stop” and “Yield”. Limbs from large trees, native to the southeastern United States, hung over the roadway. Along the roadside were lampposts displaying flags with the university’s name and logo. Apparently, there had been recent road construction because freshly poured concrete curbs created islands landscaped with brick pavers matching the university’s historic red brick buildings. Inside the islands were brightly colored perennial flowers reflecting the current growing season. This main entrance was marked by manicured dark green shrubs that were shaped to form the letters “BU”, the initials representing Baxter University [pseudonym]. Students and parents frequently congregated around the shrubs for photos. The university grounds were beautifully landscaped and well maintained. Sidewalks and curbing were noticeably edged to prevent the grass from overtaking the cement. The sidewalks running parallel to the roadway entrance were older and uneven, bulging upward from the tree roots extending underground from the massive trees hanging over the roadway. Maintenance workers had used grinders to level the sidewalk to prevent pedestrians from tripping as they walk. There were no weeds in the flower beds, that were well-defined and intentionally shaped, and shrubs appeared meticulously maintained.

The first thing I noticed after making the left turn from the main highway onto campus was the make-shift, stick in the ground sign, similar to those often used by political campaigns. Positioned on the curb so that it would not be missed, the sign’s bold white background with dark lettering displaying the university’s colors, promoted a university athletic event that would be held on campus over the weekend. There were
approximately a dozen of these signs positioned along the quarter-mile main entrance on both sides of the roadway. The first lamppost I passed displayed a sign indicating that speed is checked by detection devices. The sign was positioned such that it obscured a portion of the university banner mounted on the lamppost. The second lamppost contained a 25 MPH speed limit sign, while the sign on the third lamppost informed visitors that the use of tobacco on campus was prohibited. The remaining lampposts had no signs.

At the first intersection, the university-branded way finding signs, dark with white lettering, directed visitors around campus. They contained far too much information for a motorist to read in the amount of time it takes to drive past while maintaining the campus speed limit. Unless the motorist’s eye captured the intended destination prior to passing, the sign was of little practical value. Signs were positioned outside the university’s buildings that were branded consistently with the way finding road signs. In addition to the building name, the signs contained the building’s street address and building number. Listed in smaller font below the name of the building were the names of the departments housed within the building. The amount of information printed on these signs also required the motorist to slow down or even stop to fully read.

Unlike some of the other parking lots on campus which required drivers to enter through an electronic gate that is accessed using a university issued parking decal, the lot assigned to my building maintained open access. Despite the ability to freely access the lot, bright yellow parking decals with the university’s logo were required to be displayed on the rear-view mirror or dashboard to qualify a motorist to park in the lot without a
citation. The first three spaces on the front row directly in front of the building’s entrance were marked with three signs mounted to metal posts approximately six to seven feet tall. The first space was marked with a blue sign for accessible parking. The space directly adjacent contained a sign with a message written in all capital letters which read, “Reserved for Vice President – Enforced 24 Hours”. The third space displayed a sign indicating “Golf Cart Parking”. In the right corner of the parking lot adjacent to two buildings were three more spaces marked with signs. The first sign indicated the space was “Reserved for Dean – Enforced 24 Hours”. The second space contained a sign with lettering which read, “Motorcycle Permit Parking Only”. The third space indicated it was also “Reserved for Dean – Enforced 24 Hours”. There were no visitor parking spaces in the lot outside of my building. However, some of the other main administrative buildings had allocated parking spaces that accommodated visitors and allowed short term parking. These spaces were designated with signs with messages which read, “University Visitor Parking Only” or “30 Min. Parking Only”. Outside one administrative building was a space reserved with a sign which specified, “Service and Delivery Only – Enforced 24 Hours”. Interestingly, as I drove past on this particular day, there was a car parked in the space and it was clearly not an automobile used for service or delivery. I observed no citation nor boot on the automobile despite noticing parking services staff meandering around. Parking services staff were carrying large, black, hand-held devices akin to those used by rental car businesses for checking automobiles in upon return. The parking staff used these devices to issue parking citations. As I pulled into the lot where I parked, facilities workers were maneuvering lift trucks, commonly referred to as “cherry pickers”
alongside the building. They were pressure washing the building. I selected my parking space and exited my automobile to enter the building in which my office was located.

My custom was to arrive early for work each day. On this day, when I entered the building, the lights were still off except for the one row of security lights left on overnight. Even though I had been in this building when I originally interviewed for my position, I had not focused very much on the surroundings at that time. The time was shortly past the 7:30 AM hour and no one was here. Upon entering the foyer, visitors would notice a wayfinding sign prominently displayed on a post where the foyer intersects with the hallways leading to both ends of the building. The sign contained the names of staff who worked in the building, their office numbers, and their titles, as long as the person was positioned at the director level or higher on the organizational chart. Otherwise, only the office name was displayed next to the person’s name. Eventually, I made my way across the dark gray ceramic stone tile containing a rough-cut faux look past the seating area in the lobby. After passing the modern style furniture in the seating area, I ambled down the hallway and entered the first office suite on the right just past the building’s elevator. After unlocking the door, I entered and turned on the overhead lights. From here, I passed the graduate assistant’s desk and arrived at the door to my office. After unlocking and entering my office, I retrieved my laptop from my bag and docked it in the station on my desk. I booted up my computer, logged in and began generating the daily reports to review yesterday’s production. At approximately 7:50 AM, co-workers began arriving and the day was off to a start.
Artifacts with associated espoused beliefs and values.

In observation one, I described what I saw when traveling to my office via the main campus entrance. The description positions the reader in a ride-along campus visit experience intended to provide the perspective an employee would encounter on a typical business day. From observation one, two artifacts emerged from the university’s physical structure and environment. These artifacts, signs and the physical environment, were explored for greater meaning.

Signs.

Staff at the university were cognizant of signs and attributed meaning to them to some degree, particularly those used for reserved parking spaces. Casey Mason, a staff participant in the study, indicated:

It does have like that kind of elitist feel to it. Like with the signage with the parking. I mean, I think there are four parking spaces out in our parking lot that are reserved for titles of people that we don’t even have anymore. Like undergraduate studies, we don’t have a dean. So, our director, she doesn’t park there. So, there is a spot for a VP [Vice President] that is out there. Then, it’s like why do you have these spots for these people that aren’t here?

Addison Shelby, who was also a staff participant in the study, compared the relevance of reserved parking spaces with that of office location. Addison suggested office location and reserved parking spaces reflected an employee’s perceived value to the university. Addison explained:
Within our office, I would say the location of your office. Where your office was, just like your parking spot, the location of your office was very important. So, if you were downstairs you were seen as deemed as more valuable than those who were on the second floor.

As an embedded insider, I pondered the possible meanings associated with the university’s use of signs. Similar to participants in the study, I deduced university values based upon the messages conveyed by the signs. Taking into consideration participant data, my conclusions are stated in the following paragraphs.

The university valued athletics. For example, at the main entrance, the roadway was littered with signs announcing an athletic event. I never recall seeing signs positioned in this fashion which announced any events other than athletic events.

The university valued rules. The permanently fixed signs announced rules of importance to the institution such as the speed limit and the prohibited use of tobacco. Motorists were warned their speed would be checked. Signs defined where motorists could park and for how long. Addison Shelby, staff participant, revealed the importance the university placed upon rules during our semi-structured interview. Addison stated, “[Sarcastic tone] Oh yes…the rules. The rules. That was the first thing that they handed down, were the rules.”

The university valued employee position on its organizational chart. Signs were used to provide and preserve parking privileges for senior level university administrators (president, vice presidents, and deans). Staff participating in my study perceived reserved parking as “elitist” and believed employees were valued differently at the
university based upon assigned privileges. Further, the wayfinding sign located in the foyer of my building only published the titles of those individuals who were positioned at the director level or higher on the organizational chart.

**Physical environment.**

Baxter University [pseudonym] claimed it possessed not only the most beautiful campus in the state but also in the country. A book depicting the university’s history conveyed the following: “Those who study and teach here say the campus is the most beautiful in America” (Citation redacted to protect anonymity). The university’s faculty position announcements unapologetically stated Baxter “lays claim to being the most beautiful campus in the state. Comprising more than 1234 [pseudonym] acres, the university grounds are an arboretum-like treasure featuring gently rolling lawns, scenic ponds, and soaring pines” (Citation redacted to protect anonymity). In truth, Baxter invested approximately 3% more money in plant operations and maintenance than the average of all other colleges and universities in the state, according to annual fiscal reports for the fiscal year I analyzed (Citation redacted to protect anonymity).

Despite the university’s attention to its external beautification, some faculty and staff believed the institution was committed to perception only and lacked substance. On a certain day, I sat in my office and watched the facilities staff erect a new sign outside my building. While the facilities staff were working, a staff colleague from another department in the building entered my office and initiated a discussion about how the university seemed very big on appearances but little on substance. In Corey’s opinion, the institution placed great value on how things appeared externally versus reality. For
example, Corey explained the changes being made with the sign on this day reflected the addition of new units that would be moving into the building. However, construction and erection of the sign began prior to existing staff being notified of the change in location. Staff working in the building learned of the forthcoming change by reading the sign as it was being installed. There had been no communication with the units who would be affected by the relocation. From Corey’s perspective, these actions indicated the university cared a great deal about how things looked externally while placing little value upon its internal relations.

Dr. Tracey Jordan, one of the faculty participants in my study, expressed similar concern. Based upon Dr. Jordan’s XX [pseudonym] year experience, the university wanted to present a public image but it was actually a facade:

…the public culture is, you know, we’ve got…look at these great facilities. Look at these great things we’re doing. Look at this research we’re doing. Then, in reality it’s how can you put this together with some duct tape and staples and make it look good…Maybe not actually be good but look good.

The university valued appearance above substance. Significant financial allocations were provided for maintaining university grounds and facilities. University entrances, in particular, were well-kept, beautifully landscaped, and continually updated. Lawns were manicured and well-maintained. Buildings were aesthetically appealing and adequately preserved. Facilities operations ensured custodial staff serviced buildings around the clock. Clearly memorialized in an account of the university’s history is the belief the university possessed the most beautified campus in the United States. Taken
alone, in what some people might simply interpret as an aspiring belief, this stated opinion could perhaps be embraced by constituents of any university at any location. However, when considering Dr. Jordan’s insight along with congruent perspectives of other participants in my study, which will be provided later in this chapter, I deduced the university cared greatly about its external appearance.

**Observation 2: “One Big Family”**

Several staff entered my office one morning. Following are the contents of the brief conversation:

Staff: Aren’t you coming?

Me: Coming, where?

Staff: To the convocation.

Me: Convocation? No. I’m not a pomp and circumstance kind of person.

Staff: Awe. Come on. You have to come. Everyone always attends convocation.

After being strongly encouraged by the staff who entered my office, I reluctantly decided to attend. I had not been told by my supervisor that attendance was mandatory. Although, I later learned attendance was expected.

I decided to drive separately to the auditorium location where convocation was being held because I did not want to be unnecessarily location-bound. After locating a parking space, I entered the building. Although, I had visited other areas of the massive multi-use complex where the auditorium was housed, I had not previously been in this auditorium. The hallway outside the auditorium was relatively packed with faculty and staff who were exchanging greetings and small conversations. They all appeared
pleasant, with smiles on their faces. They were all professionally dressed except for the custodial and maintenance staff who could be recognized by the university-issued uniforms they were wearing.

I met the group from my office and we entered the auditorium and quickly located seats about a third of the way from the back of the auditorium. The auditorium was modernly designed with light colored laminate walls, matching stage front and auditorium-style padded seats. The floor declined in elevation from back to front where the stage was located. Situated in front of the stage was an orchestra pit and on each side of the stage were steps leading from the audience floor to the platform. The visible portion of the stage was approximately 50 feet wide. On this day, there were chairs on the stage where the speakers sat, and a podium standing to the right of the chairs. The platform was decorated with dark green ferns and there was a large screen behind the chairs to display the presentation. I did not realize, until after sitting down, that the auditorium also had a balcony. The auditorium was quiet, as if the location was considered solemn. When people spoke to one another, they whispered.

Since we were a few minutes early, I began counting the number of rows and the number of seats in one row, and then mentally calculated to give me an idea of how many people the auditorium could seat. There were three sections on the bottom floor and then the balcony for which to account. According to my calculations, the main section would seat exactly 328 people. The two sections on either side appeared to seat approximately 275. The precise number was difficult to determine from where I sat. I could not see the seats in the balcony but I was told it would seat approximately 300 people. After
performing the math, it appeared the auditorium would seat approximately 900 people at capacity, not including stage participants. People continued to file into the room and the bottom portion of the auditorium almost filled to capacity. I was unable to discern how many people may have been sitting in the balcony.

Eventually, the speakers emerged on the stage and the convocation program began. Someone seated next to me had a brochure containing the agenda. I asked to peruse it. In addition to the agenda, the brochure also specified the awards which would be given for contributions to research and service. Since Baxter University used the convocation to recognize the number of years of service extended to the university by its employees in increments of five years, the names of those individuals also appeared in the brochure. At the end of the awards presentation, these individuals were formally honored and given mementos honoring their years of service. I learned that one person in our office had been nominated for staff of the year. This person’s name, along with the other nominees, was also printed in the brochure.

The president of the university was introduced and ascended to the podium. The president’s speech was laced with university accolades from the prior year and culminated with the president introducing the theme for the new academic year. At one point during the speech I was elbowed by my colleague (staff person) seated next to me. She stated sarcastically, “Some family, right.” I responded with a smirked look and slightly nodded my head. Her remark was in response to the president’s comments alluding to the university as a family.
Artifact with associated espoused beliefs and values.

In observation two, I described my first attendance at the university’s convocation. This ritual ceremony was held annually to mark the beginning of a new academic year. Data triangulation led me to select one artifact from this observation to examine. That artifact was language.

Language.

During my study, I observed continuous usage of one particular phrase among members of the university community. I encountered my first introduction to the term “family” during the convocation I described in observation two. Three participants in my study either specifically chose the words “one big family” or alluded to the concept of “family” when asked to describe the culture of the university. Following are excerpts from their semi-structured interviews. According to Dr. Tracey Jordan, faculty participant:

There’s the public culture that they want people to know about, and then there’s the kind of ‘this is how things work.’ And, the public culture is, ‘We’re all one big family. It’s a small feel institution. We’re all a team.’ And, then when you open up the door and you look behind the curtain or whatever, it’s very top-down.

Casey Mason, a staff participant, articulated a very similar perspective: “The culture that’s portrayed is that Baxter is this one big happy family. We love each other. We are inclusive. We are diverse and…we are far from it.” When I asked if people used the word “family”, Casey replied:
Oh yea. Uhm…in the convocation. The president said it in the convocation. Our former president, he said it. Uhm, before about Baxter being a family, being dependent on each other and leaning on each other for things. But again, it goes back to what I said, if you’re not in that clique, or that group, then you’re not advancing, you’re not a part of that family so to speak until it’s on a grand stage, then we have to put on a show for somebody.

Addison Shelby, another staff participant, conveyed this same concept of “family” but instead used the word “circle”. During Addison’s interview, the word was used 15 times. Addison made statements like:

“I was never part of the circle because I was rogue.”

“Most of the people that were on the first floor, again, circle people…”

“And even though I was part of the leadership, I was not part of the circle.”

“If you were in the circle…”

“Only if you were in the circle.”

I was curious about participants’ perspectives on what was involved in becoming a member of the family. So, I asked this follow-up question during my interview with these three participants: “How do you get to be a member of the family?” Dr. Jordan stated:

Part of that, family, I think, that family talk comes from when the institution was much smaller and everybody knew everybody that worked at the institution. And, now it’s much bigger but it’s still trying to cling to some of the small town or small institution organization, small institution thinking but the institution is too
big for that. Uhm, there are probably…at this point and time, there are probably more people from outside the local community who have come in to take roles as faculty and administrators than there used to be and, uhm…I think there is still some, what I would consider long term faculty here who were here when it was a smaller institution. They remember those times and they all know each other across campus and a lot of the administrators here were even kind of local people who got the degrees or whatever was necessary to work up through the ranks. It’s almost like I’m starting to feel like if you haven’t been here a while, and I’ve been here XX [pseudonym] years almost…you’re an outsider. So, it’s almost like a geographic tug as far as being on that inside group. Because there’s a lot of staff members, directors level people who are a part of the local community. That’s kind of that family feel, I think. And, if you’re from outside that, you’re questioning that, or you’re not understanding that, then you’re going to be on that outside.

Addison instead articulated the concept of “family” as being a member of the “circle”. Addison believed to become a member of the circle meant:

Just giving up any control of what your brain said needed to be the correct thing to do and absolutely doing everything without question, without remark, without opinion or choice of what you were being told to do…no questions asked. Just do it. Almost like an initiation. Then, once you proved yourself to be worthy of following commands, then you were part of the circle.
Casey’s response to my question about how someone becomes a member of the family was, “…the way that you know that you are or you are not [part of the family] depends upon whether or not you see certain of these benefits like promotion, like those types of things.” Thus, university employees were familiar with the family metaphor and associated meanings with it.

The university valued appearance above reality. The university’s president allocated time during the convocation speech to attach meaning to the word “family”. Faculty and staff participating in my study provided their underlying interpretations of this commonly used term. Dr. Jordan believed university leaders wanted to present an image that the institution possessed a collegial environment, one in which everyone was equally a part of the mission. Dr. Jordan interpreted usage of the term “family” as a façade and articulated a contrast between appearance and reality: “There’s the public culture that they want people to know about…and then when you open up the door and look behind the curtain…”

Casey Mason, staff participant, stated the university assigned bogus values to the term “family”. Casey believed the university wanted everyone to think the institution was a place of collegiality, support, inclusivity and diversity but was instead a place whose reality was “far from it”. Casey stated the family façade had to be protected when they were “…on a grand stage…” because the expectation was “…we have to put on a show for somebody.”

The university valued conformity. Addison believed becoming an accepted member of the family required absolute conformity. According to Addison, this meant
“doing everything without question, without remark, without opinion or choice of what
you were being told to do…no questions asked. Just do it.” Addison likened the process
to “an initiation” in which, “…once you proved yourself to be worthy of following
commands, then you were part of the circle [family].”

Dr. Jordan’s perspective on achieving family status was similar in that if someone
questioned the rules of family adoption, outsider status would be retained. Dr. Jordan
ultimately concluded, “…if you’re from outside that [family values], you’re questioning
that, or you’re not understanding that, then you’re going to be on that outside.”

Casey suggested once an individual was accepted as a member of the family,
benefits would follow. Casey stated, “The way that you know that you are or you are not
[part of the family] depends upon whether or not you see certain of these benefits like
promotion, like those types of things.” Thus, Casey believed the university used benefits
to reinforce conformity.

Theme 2: Titles and Position

Theme two contains three observations. These observations identified four
artifacts: (a) name plates, (b) positions, (c) titles, and (d) organizational structure.
Exploration of the artifacts revealed associated espoused beliefs and values which were
often interconnected. The values are identified and explained.

Observation 1: “Where’s Your Name Plate?”

Customarily, at Baxter University, name plates bearing employees’ names, titles,
and office numbers were mounted on the walls directly adjacent office doors. Likewise,
common practice was to provide faculty and staff working in offices at the university
with business cards and name badges, which were worn on their shirts or blouses.

Glossy, wooden desk plates containing employees’ names and titles were placed on their desks. I observed this practice to be similar across most units on campus. Since I cared little for titles, I took the name plate next to my door and turned it around backwards so that the only thing displayed was the office number. I felt certain visitors could still locate me with ease by my office number that was displayed on the wayfinding sign in the lobby area. I also took the glossy name plate issued to me and placed it in one of the drawers of a credenza in my office so that it was out of sight.

Brooklyn Dansby, a staff member from the office of one of the vice presidents dropped by my office one day after visiting the supply closet. A supply closet was located in the same office suite just adjacent to the entrance to my office. After exchanging greetings, while standing in my doorway, Brooklyn asked, “Didn’t someone order you a name plate, name tag and a desk name plate?” Brooklyn would have been aware this action had been taken because Brooklyn worked in the area responsible for ordering these items after I was hired. Nevertheless, I responded, “Yes. Someone did.” Following is the conversation which ensued:

Brooklyn: Oh, where is it [pointing to the blank name plate next to the door]?
Me: It’s there. I just turned it around backwards.

Brooklyn: [Looking very perplexed] Why did you do that?
Me: I’m philosophically opposed to titles, name plates…those kinds of things.

Brooklyn: [Still looking very much perplexed] Really?
Me: Yea. I think eliminating titles helps maximize the contributions of an organization’s employees and ultimately improve the overall performance of the organization. Again, just my opinion. I know my perspective on things like this is rather radical.

Brooklyn: So, where is your desk name plate?

Me: [Pointing toward the credenza on the right side of my office] It’s in that file drawer.

Brooklyn entered my office and pulled open the drawer to the credenza that was located to the right of the TV monitor mounted on the back wall of my office. I had placed the glossy wood desk name plate in the bottom of that drawer. Brooklyn said, “Oh, I see. Here it is. But why don’t you just place this on your desk like everyone else?” I again restated my perspective. Nevertheless, I was convinced Brooklyn failed to comprehend my viewpoint since Brooklyn left my office with the same perplexed look that had been displayed throughout our discussion.

Artifacts with associated espoused beliefs and values.

In observation one, I described a casual encounter with a staff colleague who worked in a vice president’s office. This experience, though common and unscripted, provided insight into the value insiders placed upon artifacts which portrayed title and position at the university. Based upon my observation of the university’s name plates, and data provided by participants during semi-structured interviews, I also concluded employees’ titles and positions on the organizational chart bore importance.
**Name plates.**

Faculty and staff offices in most units across the university used name plates extensively. They were mounted adjacent to door entrances and placed on office desks. Faculty and staff wore individual gold or silver-plated name badges on their shirts or blouses. These badges were shiny and embossed with the university logo. Usually, the name plates adjacent door entrances were engraved and either made of metal or hard plastic. The desk plates were elaborate, made of solid wood, glossy and engraved. Unlike others I had seen which mounted a metal plate to the wooden base, these plates were totally made of wood and the information was engraved into the wood. Most of the plates I observed contained the individual’s name and title. If the individual possessed a doctorate, the title or credential was also included (e.g., Dr. Griffey Brown or Griffey Brown, Ph.D.). Based upon my experience, this pattern was used consistently for all name plates, desk plates and name badges.

*The university valued appearance and conformity.*

Brooklyn Dansby, staff from a vice president’s office, thought it was very strange when the name plate adjacent my office failed to display my name and title. Brooklyn also found my unwillingness to place my name plate on my desk inconsistent with what was considered normal professional behavior at the institution. In Brooklyn’s opinion, the problem related to appearance. I failed to maintain the institution’s unwritten standards for professional office appearance. Brooklyn wanted to know why I deterred from the norm and did not place my name plate on my desk like everyone else. The university’s use of these items seemed much more exhaustive in comparison with my
experience at other institutions. I also deduced the high value placed upon the use of name plates by the amount of money the university had to expend for these items, especially for the solid wooden desk plates.

*The university valued employee position on its organizational chart.*

The university published name, position title and credential (for those employees with doctoral degrees) on name plates as well as building directory signs. I never saw name plates reflecting credentials for masters or bachelor’s degree educational level attainment. Although, some employees with masters or bachelors level credentials independently took the liberty to note their credentials in their signature lines on correspondences. I interpreted these actions as indicative of value perception specific to title or position.

*Positions.*

All name plates and signs I observed published titles of positions, at least those positions at the director level or higher. Ergo, I believed positions and their associated titles embodied meaning. Addison Shelby, staff participant, attributed organizational meaning to university positions on the organizational chart. Addison believed employee value to the university was proportionate with the position the employee occupied on the organizational chart. Following is an excerpt from the interview:

Addison: Oh, yea. So, they [employees occupying positions higher on the organizational chart in the office] thought that my team was always second class.

Me: Did any of this revolve around titles and positions?

Addison: Oh, yea.
Me: So, would you say that an individual’s value is directly proportionate to the title they possess?

Addison: Absolutely! Absolutely! Even if it’s only like one step away. Let’s say you are clown extraordinaire and the next person is clown extraordinaire II, that person is going to be valued more as part of the team than just plain clown. So, it was very much related to the positions. It was also very much related to how relatable you were to the superiors.

*The university valued employee position on its organizational chart.* Addison’s perspective revealed the belief that employees’ value to the university was directly related to the position employees occupied. Addison included a graded position example common to higher education: Clown Extraordinaire and Clown Extraordinaire II, which referred to hierarchy on the organizational chart. Addison was convinced employees occupying positions in the office higher on the organizational chart thought the team Addison supervised was second class.

**Observation 2: “Address Me as ‘Doctor’”**

Dr. Belton Clyde fit the stereotypical description of a professor. His hair was long, bushy brown and partially gray, and often appeared uncombed. He often wore brown shirts with off-colored knit sweaters and a dark blazer, absent a tie or bow tie. His pants were dark in appearance and rarely covered his brown wingtip shoes especially when he walked. His black, rectangular shaped, lunettes-style glasses complimented his absent-minded professorial personae. Those who worked closely with Dr. Clyde were aware he was nearing retirement.
I had not yet met Dr. Clyde in person, but we were about to exchange a barrage of emails. Though he possessed a very stoic personality, staff in our office described him as kind, easy to work with, and well liked. On this day, he posed a question to a member of our staff in an email. Morgan [pseudonym] forwarded the question to me for reply because what was being asked was beyond what policy allowed. Before responding, I consulted with a supervisor in my unit to ensure my response was adequate. After receiving affirmation, I returned to my office and clicked “send” on the drafted email. Since the hour was nearing the close of business, I focused on completing a few remaining tasks before preparing to leave the office for the day. Morgan and Kaylan [pseudonym], another staff member in our office, dropped by my office as they were leaving on their way home.

Morgan: Have you seen Dr. Clyde’s email?

Me: No. I haven’t checked my email in the last few minutes.

Morgan: Well, I couldn’t believe Dr. Clyde’s response to your email. What in the world did you do to rile him up?

Me: I don’t know. Let me read it.

As I read the email, I determined Dr. Clyde was terribly offended but I did not understand why. In his response to me, he copied the staff in my office, his department chair, the dean of his college, along with the senior associate leader and the vice president which supervised my unit. Since I rarely took things personal, I replied to the issue he raised in the email. In my response, I further conceded that email is impersonal and can often be misinterpreted. I offered to take him to lunch, at no expense to him, so that we
could discuss the issues face-to-face. His response made it very clear he had no intentions of communicating with me further. He stated he would not have lunch with me, and that he had already wasted all the time he intended to waste on me.

As I read his correspondence, my inbox “dinged” indicating receipt of an incoming email. The email was a correspondence from the vice president who supervised my unit. The vice president instructed me to not respond to Dr. Clyde’s email. I concurred and called it a day. The first thing the following morning, Morgan stopped by my office to discuss the email exchange. Morgan had been included in the correspondences. Baffled because Dr. Clyde’s response was inconsistent with prior observed behavior, Morgan agreed to informally investigate. A few days later Morgan entered my office and shared the results of the informal investigation:

Morgan: Here’s what I found out. Dr. Clyde wasn’t offended by your response to his question even though he continued to argue in the correspondences you exchanged. He was offended because you did not address him as “Dr. Clyde”. You addressed him as “Belton” and he was seriously offended by your use of his first name.

Me: Wow! I have never used someone’s title during a professional discussion in which everyone ‘seated at the table’, so to speak, was a stakeholder in the issue at hand. At my previous institution of employment, I worked with some of the most accomplished individuals in their fields in the country who never demanded that anyone refer to them as ‘Doctor’. They never felt the least bit entitled or intimidated. In fact, even their students referred to them by their first names. So,
this is a new concept to me. I certainly meant no disrespect and I certainly didn’t articulate anything in the email in an unprofessional manner. This is a new concept for me, for sure.

**Artifact with associated espoused beliefs and values.**

As my employment tenure at the university progressed, I became increasingly aware university insiders assigned notable value to titles faculty and staff possessed. In Observation Two, my ignorance as a new-comer was revealed via my violation of the university’s unwritten rule to address individuals possessing a doctorate as “Doctor”.

**Titles.**

During my interview with Casey Mason, a staff participant in my study, I discovered the cultural norm associated with the unwritten rule which I had broken. The interview with Casey also provided additional insight into the concept of “family”, previously identified in Theme 1. Apparently, compliance with the “title” rule was also important for those individuals aspiring to achieve family member status. Casey explained:

You have those people on campus that want to be in that group [referring to the “family”] so they feed into that title frenzy so to speak…I was on the staff council. So, you will see people on staff council referring to the HR director. The HR director is the advisor for the staff council. So, you will have those people that know her name is Samantha [pseudonym] but they will say Associate Vice President before they say something addressing her in a question. And you will see them all across campus doing that same thing. And I’m like, they’re a
person like you are. Like there is a time and place for that…It’s like here in our office, if we’re talking to our director, it’s Meredith [pseudonym] but if I’m in a meeting, a program directors meeting or a grad curriculum meeting and I’m addressing her or saying something that she says, it’s Dr. Kendall [pseudonym]. So, it’s kind of like that, yea.

_The university valued unwritten rules._ Insiders were keenly aware of the unwritten rules that existed within the university’s culture. Employees believed these rules must be followed. Failure to address an employee with their title, especially if the person occupied a higher-level position or credential, was a violation of the organization’s cultural norm. Dr. Clyde had not been offended by the information I provided in my email response to the non-compliant policy request. Dr. Clyde was offended because I addressed him by his first name in the correspondence. In his reply, he copied the staff in my office, his department chair, the dean of his college, along with the senior associate leader and the vice president who supervised my unit. These individuals were not original recipients in our emails. I surmised Dr. Clyde’s intention was to announce my cultural violation to those individuals in my college as well as his college who occupied greater positions of authority. Furthermore, by copying the staff in my office, he also indirectly informed them that such behavior would be met with consequences (i.e., “I will tell on you.”). Thus, employees believed failure to comply with the rules required some sort of punitive response.

_The university valued employee position on its organizational chart._ Casey’s perspective also attributed meaning to the university’s use of titles in relation to position
on the organizational chart. In Casey’s example, there was no indication Samantha possessed a doctorate degree. Nevertheless, the expectation was Samantha should be addressed “Associate Vice President”, which was a clear reference to position on the university’s organizational chart.

Observation 3: “Your Position is Worthless”

Soon after arriving at the university, I realized there existed a degree of animosity between my supervisor and the supervisor of another division. Both were senior level university leaders and members of the president’s cabinet. Several months passed after starting employment at Baxter University before I was able to secure a meeting with Dr. Cameron Blind, the supervisor of the other division. The meeting had been rescheduled several times, not by me but by Dr. Blind’s administrative assistant. In fact, weeks passed before I received a response to my request for the meeting. I had not encountered this behavior when scheduling meetings with anyone else on campus.

I arrived for the meeting approximately five minutes prior to the scheduled meeting time. I was politely greeted by a student worker who promptly seated me in the obscure hallway. Dr. Blind’s office was located in one of the older, historic buildings at the university. The upstairs hallways were narrow and winding. The interior walls of the building were characterized by rustic trim that contained multiple layers of paint. The layers of paint were noticeable because of the areas on the trim that had been covered due to chipping. While waiting, I exchanged small-talk with the student worker who had seated me. The waiting area within the hallway bustled with student activity, so much so that our conversation was frequently interrupted by those passing through the hallway.
Approximately 10 minutes after the scheduled meeting time, I was escorted by Dr. Blind’s administrative assistant into Dr. Blind’s office and told Dr. Blind would be right with me. Almost simultaneously, Dr. Blind entered the large, plush office through a door on the other side of the room. Dr. Blind walked over to a small seating area in the corner of the office. I followed. The seating area contained a small couch and two chairs along with a center glass table which seemed lower to the floor than normal. The office was elaborately decorated and displayed photographs of Dr. Blind that had been taken with prominent political figures and popular national media representatives.

As we sat down, Dr. Blind said, “Well, I guess by now you know that Blaine [referring to my supervisor by first name] and I do not see eye-to-eye.” Dr. Blind had not greeted me, nor exchanged any pleasantries. Our meeting began simply with that statement. Slightly confounded by the comment, I responded, “No. That’s not something we’ve discussed.” Dr. Blind countered, “Well, we don’t. And, you also need to know that everything you are doing over there [referring to the unit where I worked] is worthless, absolutely worthless. Your position is worthless and the work that you are doing over there is worthless.” The position I occupied was a new position. My position had been created by Dr. Blaine Gace, my supervisor, when Dr. Gace acquired supervisory responsibilities for my unit. Prior to my arrival, my unit reported to Dr. Blind.

Quite frankly, I was astonished by Dr. Blind’s comments. This conversation was perhaps the most unprofessional I could recall encountering with a senior level administrator. My response yielded an innate outburst of laughter. At that moment, I
interpreted Dr. Blind’s comments as an attempt to intimidate me. My mind wandered as Dr. Blind continued speaking. My thoughts compared Dr. Blind’s competence and professionalism to that of other university senior leaders I had encountered at my prior places of employment. In my mind, I concluded Dr. Blind resided at the low end on the spectrum and mentally validated my sarcastic response of laughter. While my mind wandered, Dr. Blind’s comments sounded like a muffled trombone. Eventually, my mind refocused upon the conversation at-hand. Dr. Blind continued:

Blaine thinks s/he can take these resources and run that unit. Fine. I told the president, ‘Mr. President. Let Blaine take it. Blaine can have it but you will regret it.’ I’ve been here a long time. I’m not going anywhere. You know Mason [pseudonym]? I’m the reason Mason is no longer here. Mason’s gone. I had Mason run off. [Mason was a Vice President who had recently resigned.]

At this point in Dr. Blind’s tirade, I interrupted and said, “If you want Blaine to receive this message, you will have to deliver it yourself. I’m not delivering your message for you.” Dr. Blind hesitated momentarily, as if appalled by my interruption, and then continued on a diatribe for the next several minutes. I was unable to otherwise interject or respond. Dr. Blind spoke the entire half hour we met. At the conclusion of the conversation, I offered to work with staff in Dr. Blind’s area on items of mutual responsibility. My offer was met with an insincere nod and I was promptly shown the door. There were no cordial exchanges nor good-byes uttered.

Following the meeting, I met with Blaine, my supervisor and shared my bizarre experience. The exchange below describes the crux of our discussion:
Blaine: You know why Cameron hates me so much, don’t you?

Me: No. I sure don’t.

Blaine: Well, Cameron hates me because I made the mistake one time of not addressing Cameron as Dr. Blind. I used Cameron’s first name; and unfortunately, there were some students present who overheard me. I mean, I was wrong. I should not have addressed Cameron by first name but what the hell, right? We’re adults. It wasn’t that big of a deal.

**Artifacts with associated espoused beliefs and values.**

In Observation 3, I described my first one-on-one encounter with a senior university leader and member of the president’s cabinet, whose behavior proved less than professional. I had never met Dr. Blind, nor had any prior contact. Consequently, Dr. Blind’s behavior during the meeting could not be explained by anything I had previously done. I suspected the treatment I received during the meeting was more the result of the animosity that existed between Dr. Blind and my supervisor. The source of their contention appeared rooted in two things: the recent modification of the organizational reporting structure and my supervisor’s use of Dr. Blind’s first name.

**Organizational Structure**

Organizational structure played an important role in the affairs of the university. The onboarding session for new employees began with an introduction to the university’s organizational structure. Vice Presidents and the units reporting to each administrator were presented. The introductory section in the university’s catalogs also described the organizational structure. These listings contained the names, titles and units reporting to
each administrative leader. Supervisors were required to review the university’s reporting structure with staff to ensure reporting lines were understood. Supervisors were even expected to control the behavior of employees reporting to them. Quite frequently, I overheard the phrase, “they report to you” being articulated.

On one occasion, my supervisor phoned me to discuss the behavior of an employee who reported to me. The employee’s behavior had been reported to him independently by a second-hand source. I questioned why the inquiry was being directed toward me. The response I received was, “She reports to you.” Since I had not been employed at the university very long, the question being directed to me seemed strange. I thought, “How could I explain someone’s behavior with which I was unfamiliar?” Instead, I believed the more plausible course of action would be to ask the employee directly.

Based upon these observations and data collected from participants in my study, I inferred the organizational structure at the university carried meaning beyond a visual paper display that outlined how the university units were organized. The organizational structure affected the daily business of the institution. The organizational structure appeared to define power, assign employee duties and responsibilities, determine resource allocations, and prescribe employee behavior.

*The university valued territorial boundaries.* Power struggles existed among university leaders for control of units and resources associated with the units. Dr. Blind began our meeting by informing me that conflict existed with my supervisor. The conflict apparently stemmed from animosity resulting from my supervisor’s recent
acquisition of a university department which previously reported to Dr. Blind. Although the change was a directive of the president, Dr. Blind interpreted the acquisition as a territorial encroachment by my supervisor. Dr. Blind stated, “Blaine thinks s/he can take these resources and run that unit. Fine. I told the president, ‘Mr. President. Let Blaine take it. Blaine can have it but you will regret it.’”

Ultimately, these power struggles manifested in the daily business affairs of the university. Casey Mason, staff participant illustrated how the structure of the university often dictated the delivery of services provided to students. Casey stated:

…whatever it is that is related to [a certain student type] whether it’s registration issues, whatever, anything that is [student type] related, it has to come to our unit. Call Barry [pseudonym]. Call Sally [pseudonym]. If it’s anyyyyyyyyything [verbally stressing] about [student type]. If a student has problems registering, call Barry. If they can’t get into their [student] account, call [this office]. I mean, that’s not our job. We don’t work with registration. We shouldn’t have to fix a student record when a process that was run in the Registrar’s office caused the error. But then, it comes back to [this office] needs to fix it. No we don’t. And, that’s just kind of like the understood norm around campus. If it’s anything [student type] related, nobody else on campus is supposed to do it.

Casey articulated the commonly held assumption across campus that duties performed, services provided, and behaviors prescribed were defined by territorial boundaries. Even if one unit possessed the ability to respond or provide assistance, that unit withheld response if it encroached upon another area’s defined territory.
**Titles.**

*The university valued unwritten rules.*

My encounter with Dr. Blind, described in Observation 3, further exposed the importance people placed upon following the unwritten rule about titles. When Dr. Blind referred to my supervisor, Dr. Blind always used my supervisor’s first name. Further, Dr. Blind also referenced the vice president by first name who had recently resigned. This vice president and my supervisor were known to be professional allies. This pattern was not followed when Dr. Blind mentioned the president. The president’s title was used. Despite the emphasis the culture placed upon the use of titles, I found Dr. Blind’s behavior less than coincidental. I believed Dr. Blind wanted my supervisor to know that my supervisor’s first name had been used in a meeting with one of my supervisor’s direct reports. I adopted this belief because Blaine, my supervisor, emphatically stated the reason for the initial animosity. Blaine had addressed Dr. Blind by first name in a location where the conversation had been overheard by students. Consequently, Dr. Blind had been gravely offended.

**Theme 3: Control and Manipulation**

Theme three consists of four observations. Observations one and two contain the same artifact, observed behavior. Observations three and four each identify and explore one artifact, performance evaluations and athletics, respectively. Ultimately, theme three reveals seven common values, three of which were determined to overlap.
Observation 1: “I’m Watching You”

This morning’s commute to the office appeared no more unusual than any other morning. The gray, misty sky hung overhead, heavy with fog. The air was damp with morning dew and the sun began to peak through just enough to cause the morning dew to glisten the surroundings like dim sparklers. Like usual, I had arrived early. Normally, the dull asphalt parking lot would have been entirely empty aside from the university-branded vehicles parked in their designated spaces. Their windows were systematically covered with water from the overnight dew, a clear indication they had been parked there all night. Since the parking lot tended to be empty this time of morning, my custom was to circle directly through the lot with no consideration for the markings on the pavement. Customarily, I pulled through the space I selected which was located in front of the building’s main entrance and along-side the four to five other automobiles that were owned by some of my colleagues who were also early arrivers.

This morning, however, was different. Upon turning the corner and entering the parking lot, my normal driving path had to be averted. I noticed a silver, four-door, full-sized luxury car conspicuously parked alone near the end of a long row of yellow painted parking spaces. As I swerved to avert my normal path to miss this unusually parked automobile, I noticed what appeared to be a senior university administrator sloped in the driver’s seat with the seat lying backwards. At that time, my unit had been reporting to this administrator for approximately six months in an interim capacity. Shaking my head, I thought, “Surely not.” I parked and made the short 20-yard walk to the entrance of our building. Upon entering, several of the other early arrivers were congregated in the
foyer, which had been decorated with modern art provided by students in the Fine Arts
department. After we exchanged the common morning greetings, I said, “Hey. Did any
of you guys notice the silver, four-door luxury car parked in the parking lot when you
arrived this morning?” “No”, they replied. I asked, “Doesn’t Dr. Laski [pseudonym]
drive a silver, four-door X model [pseudonym]? I ask because I could have sworn that
Dr. Laski was laying back in the driver’s seat when I passed by that car just now.”
Someone said, “You know what? Dr. Laski does drive a silver, four-door X model.”
Almost instantly, everyone raced to the front of the building to look out the front doors at
the parked car. In amazement, they all concurred, “That is Dr. Laski’s car.” “Well”, I
said. “Dr. Laski is sloped down in the front seat incognito apparently checking to see
when everyone arrives at the office.”

Artifact with associated espoused beliefs and values.

Observation 1 described the strange behavior I observed one morning when I
entered the parking lot outside the office building in which I worked. Schein (2010)
recognized observed behaviors as artifacts and indicated they were difficult to decipher
apart from an insider’s interpretations. In this instance, the behavior was interpreted by
those of us who had observed a senior level administrator monitoring the arrival time of
the employees working in our building. Employees commonly referred to this type of
behavior as “micromanagement”. This behavior was not limited to this observation
alone. Participants in my study also discussed similar behavior.
Observed behavior.

The following is an excerpt from my semi-structured interview with Addison Shelby, staff participant. Addison described rules that had been established in the office to micromanage employees’ time. Addison stated:

So, you basically were to come in and sit at your desk and start working and just continue to do that. No taking a break or stopping at somebody’s desk and asking, ‘How is your day going?’ I recall at one point in time, it became so severe that an actual…from 8 o’clock to 9:15 you are to do this; at 9:15 to 12, you are to do “B”. And, every minute of your day was accounted for with some sort of task even though everyone would get their job done.

I wanted to be certain Addison’s unit had not experienced problems with employees failing to properly manage their time in the office. So, I asked a couple of follow-up questions.

Me: Was there a problem with people mismanaging their time? Was there a problem with people taking advantage of…of not working for a half-hour a day?

Addison: No. Not particularly. Uhm, it would not be possible even if you wanted it to be. That’s what sparked the whole conversing from one cubicle to another because you literally could not. Stopping [work] and walking to someone else’s cubicle would obviously hinder you from continuing to do your job. So, you would have to continue to work and just speak to others that way.
The university valued controlling employees’ time. Based upon multiple observations, including the behavior described in Observation 1, and data collected from Addison, I deduced university leaders believed monitoring employee time from arrival through the end of the business day was of vital importance. Addison was not the only employee in that office who had expressed to me their experience with supervisors micromanaging their time. Two other staff members who worked in Addison’s office independently made similar statements to me which led me to conclude this behavior was embedded in the culture of that office. Further, on one occasion, a third employee from that office applied for an open position in my unit. I served on the search committee. Upon arrival at the interview, the employee revealed the interview must be completed within an hour. Throughout the interview, the employee noticeably watched the clock to ensure the interview concluded with enough time for the employee to return to the office. The interview had been scheduled during the employee’s allotted lunch break.

I also believed this behavior reached beyond one office and extended to other units across campus, including my own. On multiple occasions, my supervisor confronted me about an employee who reported to me. This employee was from a foreign country. I was aware the culture of that country viewed time differently than that of the United States. Consequently, this employee would consistently arrive five to twenty minutes beyond 8:00 AM each day. Regardless, the employee would always remain at work at least 30 minutes beyond 5:00 PM each day. Being cognizant of cultural differences, and because this employee was competent and productive, I chose to supervise this employee’s time outside the standard 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM business hours.
I realized my choice to adopt this approach was seen as unacceptable within the campus culture because it was met with criticism from my supervisor and other employees in the unit.

Finally, throughout my study, employees working in various units frequently made references to time management. I overheard comments like, “You better not be late” or “You better pay attention to the time”. I also observed employees looking at other people and pointing to their wrists repeatedly to convey the message, “Pay attention to the time”. These innuendos were often sarcastic in nature.

**Observation 2: “And, My Staff Are Watching You”**

“Hurry. You’ve got to see this”, Aiden [pseudonym] exclaimed rushing into the office suite. “I think Bailey [pseudonym] is in the bushes outside our building.”


Aiden replied, “In the front. Right out here.”

Several of us got up from our desks, left our office and moved into the hallway to peer out the window. I was the first to the window.

Me: Yes. That is Bailey! Bailey is in the bushes. Now [Bailey] is moving out walking through the flower bed at the end of the building. [Pointing toward Bailey’s location] See? Do you see [Bailey]? Over there! [Bailey] is carrying a notepad and pencil.

Someone from the group: Yea! I see [Bailey]. I do see [Bailey]! Oh my gosh! What in the world is this [person] doing? Can you believe it? This [person] is
spying on us…Looking in our windows to see who is in their office. I mean, what other explanation is there for it?

Another person from the group: Seriously. This is crazy!

Artifact with associated espoused beliefs and values.

**Observed behavior.**

*The university valued controlling employees’ time.* The events depicted in Observation 2 occurred just past the 1 o’clock pm hour. Some of the staff in the office were convinced Dr. Laski, senior university administrator, had instructed Bailey to see if the staff had returned on time following lunch. Bailey worked in Dr. Laski’s office and reported directly to Dr. Laski. Whether or not this motive was ultimately true did not matter. The staff working in our unit firmly believed there existed no other explanation for such bizarre behavior. Since this event occurred soon after Dr. Laski’s observed behavior described in Observation 1, these staff members were further convinced of this explanation.

**Observation 3: “I Will Be Evaluating All Staff”**

Today’s staff meeting began much like other regularly scheduled staff meetings, which were being led by Dr. Jamey Cary. Dr. Cary had been appointed interim leader of our unit following the departure of Dr. Gace. Initially, we had to adjust to Dr. Cary’s leadership style. Having had a career only as a faculty member with no experience leading staff, Dr. Cary always began these meetings with some expose’ regarding current trends in higher education. Despite Dr. Cary’s well-meaning intentions, the 20 – 30 minute presentations seemed nothing more than lectures more appropriately situated for
the academic classroom. The presentations bore no relevance to our unit and more specifically, had nothing whatsoever to do with the day-to-day business affairs with which staff in our unit were tasked. In a matter of moments, my phone lit up. The text message read, “WTH? I’ve got work to do. I don’t have time for this!” A few minutes later, I received another message from a different colleague. “Does Dr. Cary have a clue? No one knows what Dr. Cary is talking about. Dr. Cary doesn’t even know what Dr. Cary is talking about.” I peered inconspicuously around the blandly decorated conference room and noticed several colleagues doodling on the provided agenda. Several other staff members were viewing their handheld phones. At least two staff members decided to bring laptop computers to the meeting and appeared to be working. Engagement by staff with the agenda was minimal. Solicitation of staff for agenda items prior to the meeting had been absent. Our input had not been sought which likely explained the lack of engagement. Likewise, Dr. Cary appeared frustrated by the staff’s lack of engagement.

Seated at the head of the table, with back to the windows facing into the parking lot, Dr. Cary finally completed the opening presentation and began moving line item by line item through the published agenda. The final item on the agenda read, “Annual Performance Evaluations”. Dr. Cary proceeded to update the staff on how performance evaluations would be handled. Dr. Cary stated, “I will be evaluating all staff in the unit.” This meant the supervisors in their areas would no longer be evaluating the staff reporting directly to them. Following Dr. Cary’s statement, the attention of the staff perked. Everyone looked around at each other with perplexed displays on their faces.
Artifact with associated espoused beliefs and values.

Performance evaluations.

Like many employers, the university used an annual evaluation period to examine employees’ performances related to areas of responsibility within their positions. The Human Resources office provided a standard evaluation template to be completed by each employee’s supervisor. The process required the supervisor to select a rating for each area being evaluated. If they chose to do so, supervisors could also provide comments associated with their ratings for each area. The form included a section that allowed employees and supervisors to define annual performance goals. Once the supervisor completed the evaluation, the supervisor submitted the evaluation to the employee and scheduled a meeting with the employee to discuss its contents. At the conclusion of the meeting, the employee was required to endorse the evaluation, regardless of whether or not the employee agreed with the assessment. Following the meeting, the supervisor also endorsed the evaluation and then submitted the completed evaluation form to Human Resources for inclusion in the employee’s employment record.

Performance expectation plans and progressive discipline practices were also used to evaluate and improve employee performance. Despite the stated goal of performance improvement, these instruments were perceived by many staff members to be punitively focused. For example, according to Baxter University’s policy regarding performance expectation plans:

In situations when the employee’s performance or behavior is not what is expected, the supervisor may create an opportunity to improve the
behavior/performance by completing a Performance Expectation Plan (PEP)…The PEP is an alternative tool used to document an employee’s performance/behavior prior to suspending or terminating an employee. The PEP can also be used in conjunction with a Written Reprimand in hopes of improving the employee’s behavior or performance. (Baxter University Progressive Discipline Policy, p. 3)

Meanwhile, the actual Performance Expectation Plan document stated the following:

The Performance Expectation Plan is a positive tool to help employees understand their performance by gaining a greater comprehension of their work expectations. With this knowledge, employees are in a greater understanding of their work expectations. With this knowledge, employees are in a better position to assume personal responsibility and excel in their position. At the heart of this process is a belief that every employee has potential to be successful. This process also acknowledges that collaboration and communication are essential between an employee and their supervisor. (Baxter University Performance Expectation Plan, p. 1)

An apparent discrepancy existed between the policy’s punitive goal and the “positive tool” statement on the actual PEP, which was placed in the hand of the employee.

*The university valued controlling employee behavior.* In Observation 3, a meeting was described in which staff in my unit were abruptly informed they would no longer be evaluated by their immediate supervisors. Instead, we were told we would be evaluated by the recently appointed interim dean, who had not been in the position long
enough to observe staff performance from the prior year. Despite having the right to disagree with a supervisor’s evaluation, the evaluation would not be changed, and the evaluation became a permanent fixture in an employee’s file. Thus, employees believed performance evaluations enabled significant power exertion over employee behavior.

During my interview with Addison Shelby, staff participant, Addison described a situation in which a supervisor sought to control an employee’s behavior via threat of formal reprimand. I asked Addison if one of the goals of the environment at the university was to control the behavior of employees. Addison stated the following in response to my question:

…Their behavior, their appearance. There…there was an instance in which the group I was in charge of was hardly ever seen. We were on the second floor of this particular building. They never really met with parents or students, mainly computer work. However, one employee got a nose ring and colored her hair a certain shade of red that was not natural and she was asked to color her hair back and remove her piercing or she would get reprimanded. And that was just one instance.

One faculty participant identified the university’s use of the tenure and promotion process as a means of controlling faculty behavior. Dr. Tracey Jordan stated:

Well, I think the institution here definitely uses that power, the dangling of tenure and promotion, over everybody because they know they are going to tweak that to squeeze a little bit more work out of you with no complaint. ‘We can ask them to do this. We can ask them to do that. And, they’re not going to…they may not be
happy about it, but they’re not going to complain because they know that we are
dangling this out in front of them for later.’ That seems pretty apparent to me.
And, uhm…uh, they kind of work out of fear. There’s…there’s, maybe not stay
up at night nightmares but a little bit of fear. ‘I better make sure I’m doing this. I
better make sure somebody sees that.’

*The university valued its formal system of bureaucracy.* Employees with whom I
interacted at the university considered performance evaluations nothing more than
bureaucratic tools within an established governance model whose purpose was to benefit
those individuals controlling the bureaucratic system. Employees complained about the
uselessness of the evaluations. Evaluations were only conducted once each year and
resulted in no benefits for employees. For example, annual performance evaluations did
not lead to salary increases, promotions or any other direct employee benefits.
Ultimately, employees believed performance evaluations were solely used for justifying
an employee’s termination of employment. The statement in the university’s progressive
discipline policy regarding PEPs served as a point of reference.

**Observation 4: “I’ll Have the President Deal with You”**

On Monday, the first day of classes for the fall semester, I received a phone call
from the university’s athletic director. He called to inquire about getting a football player
enrolled in graduate school. Although the football player had recently completed a
bachelor’s degree at a university whose athletic programs competed within the
Southeastern Conference, the player still retained a year of playing eligibility. The
athletic director stated the football coach had already advised the player that acquiring
enrollment as a graduate student would not be problematic. After I hung up the phone, I informed the provost and my direct supervisor about the athletic director’s request. Because of existing polices and compliance regulations, the provost indicated the university would never agree to admitting a student this late in the academic year.

The following day, I received a voice mail message from the head football coach. He was very kind. His comments were not demanding but he politely requested assistance getting his player admitted into a graduate program. When I returned his call, he was unavailable. So, I left a voice mail message which informed him the player did not satisfy admission requirements for any of the university’s graduate programs. My message encouraged him to contact the provost if he had future inquiries regarding the admissibility of the player.

One week later, my office received a request for assistance from the Registrar’s Office regarding the football player’s enrollment record. We were baffled by the request since the player had never been admitted to a program. Our investigation revealed an employee had overridden a system hold and had enrolled the football player in a graduate program. I forwarded the request we received from the Registrar’s Office to the provost and my supervisor, so they would be aware of the situation.

After arriving home from the office that evening, I received an email correspondence from the provost. The provost instructed me to contact the student and department and get the football player’s application completed. The provost stated the president had approved a provisional admission status. Since the drop/add period for enrollment in the fall term had already passed, and the provost had previously indicated
that taking this action would violate policies, I felt very alarmed by the request. I had been asked to retroactively create an application for admission for a football player who had been improperly enrolled so that the appearance would reflect as if the player had followed the admission process just like any other student. In my mind, taking this action would be unethical.

The following morning, I contacted the Human Resources Office to request guidance regarding my response to the provost’s request. However, prior to my meeting with the Human Resources representative, the provost phoned me to determine if I had taken the requested action to complete the football player’s application. Following are the contents of that call:

      Provost: Have you taken action to create the application and admit the student?
      Me: No Ma’am. Unfortunately, I have not.
      Provost: Why not?
      Me: Unfortunately, I can’t take that action.
      Provost: Why not?
      Me: Well, unfortunately, my position does not possess the authority to take the action you’re asking me to take.

At this point in the call, the tone being used by the provost shifted dramatically. The provost’s tone became less than cordial and quite combative.

      Provost: If you can’t do it, then who should?
      Me: Well, I guess you or someone in your office.
Provost: No one in my office can do it. We don’t have the ability to create and process applications. You need to do it.

Me: Unfortunately, I can’t do what you’re asking me to do. I mean, I’m not an expert in athletics compliance but it seems to me after reviewing their standards, that the action you’re asking me to take is a violation.

Provost: [Very forcefully] No, you’re not an expert on athletic compliance and I’m telling you the president admitted the student. Are you refusing to follow a direct order?

Me: No Ma’am. I’m not. I’m just telling you that my position does not possess the authority to take the action you’re asking me to take.

Provost: You’re being insubordinate and refusing to take a direct order. I’ll have the president deal with you.

Me: Are you threatening my job?

Provost: You’re trying to put words in my mouth. I’ll not allow that.

Me: No Ma’am. I’m not. I’m just asking you to clarify the statement you made.

It was your statement. You said you were going to have the president deal with me.

Immediately following my statement, I heard a “click” and then a dial tone. The provost had ended the call by hanging up the phone.
Artifact with associated espoused beliefs and values.

Athletics.

Commonly, athletics occupies a prominent position at colleges and universities largely because they are connected with positive benefits resulting from institutional branding and reputation (Emma, n.d.). My observations, and the participants in my study, identified athletics as a relevant artifact worthy of investigation. For this reason, I deemed it important to explore the role and meaning athletics assumed on the Baxter University campus, and how that impacts the culture. The results are presented in the following paragraphs.

Casey Mason was one of the staff participants in my study. Casey’s employment role at the university provided opportunities for direct involvement with athletics. Casey’s semi-structured interview provided insight into how daily business affairs at the university interact with athletics. Casey’s perspective is provided below:

Yea, athletics is definitely something that is valued, specifically football. Uhm, the world seems to revolve around athletics and football here at Baxter. A lot of things…a lot of rules are bent or broken to accommodate athletics. Still even after almost XX [pseudonym] years being here, there are still things that are done that shouldn’t be done, rules that aren’t followed, deadlines that aren’t followed, all because athletics has already promised somebody something. And we have to come behind them and fix it…Get a student a grad assistantship so they can coach or get them into a grad program, so they can play football and a lot of times they would come, go to that first class for attendance verification and they would...
never attend class again. Then, when football season was over, they were gone… since I’ve been here, probably in the last 6 years there’s probably been about 5 or 6 instances where that has happened. Where a student was denied [admission] in one program but because athletics wanted that student to either play football because they had another year of eligibility or they promised them they could coach, another program agreed to admit that student. So, the student would submit another application for that program and they didn’t meet the admission requirements. They didn’t meet the deadline for that program. This was something that we were told to do. We had to admit this student after the deadline.

At this point in the interview I interrupted Casey and asked who directed them to take the action to admit a student who failed to satisfy admission requirements. Casey responded:

We were told by the provost who at that time was supervising us. We were told by the interim president, uhm, our director now. The director has had us do it before. So, yea and it’s all because the director was dictated to do that. The director was definitely a complier.

I was curious to know whether or not these directives were uniquely specific to situations involving only athletes. So, I asked Casey, “Do you ever see situations like this that are not athletes?” Casey replied, “Very rarely but we do see some. We have that student every once in a while.”

Dr. Tracey Jordan, one of the faculty participants in my study, provided a similar perspective of the role of athletics. Following are Dr. Jordan’s comments:
Athletics...college level athletics to me is one of those curious things that a lot of people call for at a specific institution. A lot of people say it’s the front porch. It’s what brings people in. And, I tend to look at things like budgets and subsidies from the academic side and the sports side...and I used to be a huge college football fan. There was like a six or seven year period where faculty here got no raises at all but one year the football coach got a 33% raise because he had a good season. And, I just became very soured on a lot of that. Uhm, I wouldn’t say at my institution, at least in my college, that athletics is a huge thing. Maybe I try to ignore it because of some of my bitterness towards it. I look at facilities like a football stadium and I think if we had an academic building that was used six or seven times a year, it wouldn’t be allowed on our campus. You know? They would take that away. They would fill it up with something else.

The university valued athletics. As a faculty member, Dr. Jordan believed the university placed greater value upon athletics, particularly football, when compared with academics. Dr. Jordan pointed out that faculty failed to receive salary increases over a span of five to seven years. Nevertheless, the football coach received a 33% salary increase at some point during that same time. Additionally, Dr. Jordan found the university’s expectations regarding the use of athletic facilities inequitable compared with the university’s use of academic facilities.

Staff believed those individuals associated with the university’s athletic programs, particularly football, received preferential treatment. Observation 4 described the university president dictating the admission of a football player apart from the admission
process, seemingly at the request of the athletic department. Furthermore, notable exceptions were extended to this player which would not have been provided to a non-athlete. Thus, my personal experience as an insider was very similar to what Casey explained during the interview. In fact, later in the interview, Casey revisited the topic of athletics and stated the position more emphatically:

Whatever athletics wants, athletics gets. So, it’s like, ok we’ve had these meetings where we’ve told them [athletic department] you can’t offer a student a grad assistantship if they haven’t even applied for admission. You can’t offer them an assistantship and have them move to the state…pick up and leave and move to the state and get here and start working and they are not a student or start practicing and they are not a student. But in the end, they always get what they want because they call me and I say the student has not been admitted. The student hasn’t applied. They don’t meet the admission requirements. They [athletic department] go to the director [of the graduate school]. If the director doesn’t give them what they want, they will go to the provost. And from there, sometimes it goes straight to the president. And, we get that directive mandated down. Or they know the XYZ [pseudonym] program will admit any of them. So, they call Aidan [pseudonym] [program director] and Aidan is like, ‘Sure. Let them in.’ I’m like, ‘It’s killing your program because you are getting somebody in here for one semester. They aren’t doing any work. They aren’t attending classes.’
The university valued blind conformity. The provost received a directive from the president to act in circumvention of university policies and procedures after a request from the athletic department. In turn, the provost demanded that I carry out the president’s directive. My objection to take the action due to ethical concerns was met with hostility and a threat. Thus, the expectation was for me to unquestionably comply with the request.

Other faculty and staff at the university expressed precisely the same perspective. For example, according to Dr. Tracey Jordan:

When you open up the door and you look behind the curtain or whatever, it’s very top down. Uhm, decisions are made that you are really not supposed to question. If you do question, you raise some eye brows. Even when you…even when I have found evidence from outside the institution, maybe from the university system and brought it back in to the organization and said, ‘But look’. Then, you’re told, ‘But that’s not how we do it here.’ So, there…and, it’s very uhm…like I said, it’s kind of a top-down culture…don’t question a lot.

Addison Shelby believed this type of obedience gained one membership into the family. According to Addison:

Just giving up any control of what your brain said needed to be the correct thing to do and absolutely doing everything without question, without remark, without opinion or choice of what you were being told to do…no questions asked. Just do it. Almost like an initiation. Then, once you proved yourself to be worthy of following commands, then you were part of the circle.
The university valued the organizational chain of command. Despite disagreeing with the president’s directive to admit the football player, the provost complied with the request. Furthermore, the provost expected me to comply with that same request. When I objected, the provost issued a threat by appealing to the chain of command: “I’ll have the president deal with you.”

Faculty and staff at the university recognized the chain of command as a vital part of the university’s culture. In reference to the chain of command, Dr. Tracey Jordan stated:

I actually got a few things done. I kind of used that [chain of command] to my benefit recently because I just mentioned to some people that I was having a problem, not with any one of them, necessarily, but there were some issues. I needed some things done that weren’t getting done. And, I mentioned it. Well, my next step was going to be writing directly to the provost. [Laughing and snapping fingers] Then, things started happening because they didn’t want anybody going around to the provost. They looked quite shocked actually. I told them that face-to-face. I was like, ‘Well, you know? I’ve been working on this for months and nothing is moving. So, I’m going basically straight to the top after this, if this doesn’t happen.’ And, then things started happening and I kind of knew they would [Laughing].

Dr. Jordan recognized the day-to-day value of the chain of command. The university culture espoused the belief that employees who occupied positions situated higher on the organizational chart possessed greater authority. Thus, the implication of this belief was,
by appealing to a greater authority the actions of others could be dictated. Therefore, Dr. Jordan determined the best way to accomplish the desired results was by appealing to the Provost, someone whose title was positioned higher on the organizational chart compared with Dr. Jordan’s supervisor. Casey Mason, staff participant in my study, summed up the chain of command rather succinctly: “Yea. It [chain of command] was very formal. Uhm, if you had something [a desired action], you had to go up your chain [of command].”

**Basic Underlying Assumptions**

The final section in this chapter presents the basic underlying assumptions of the university’s culture which emerged following a thorough examination of the artifacts and the beliefs and values the faculty and staff attached to these artifacts. In the paragraphs following each assumption, I first identified the artifacts examined and then revealed corresponding values and beliefs assigned to them. Each assumption section concludes with an articulation of the basic underlying assumption. The purpose was to succinctly illustrate how I arrived at the basic assumptions by following Schein’s (2010) three levels of cultural analysis. See Table 4.1 below.

**Assumption 1: Perception Not Reality was What Mattered**

I observed the university’s physical environment as pristine and well-maintained. Additional exploration of artifacts implied the university promoted its campus as an aesthetically superior venue. Further investigation identified appearance as an important cultural value despite participants’ perspectives that rendered this value incongruent with senior leaders’ stated intentions. Eventually, I discovered university insiders were
### Table 4.1

**Step 1: Mapping Study Results to Research Question - What are the Basic Underlying Assumptions of the University's Culture?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three Levels of Culture (Schein, 2010)</td>
<td>• Signs, physical environment, language, name plates, positions, titles, organizational structure, observed behavior, performance evaluations, athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artifacts</strong></td>
<td>• The university valued the role of athletics, rule compliance, employee position on organizational chart, appearance, conformity, controlling employee time and behavior, chain of command, and system of bureaucracy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Espoused Beliefs and Values** | • Perception not reality mattered  
• Employee value equaled title and position  
• Organizational structure guided and maintained daily order  
• Rules must be followed, especially the unwritten rules  
• Unquestionable loyalty expected and required |
| **Basic Underlying Assumptions** | |}

expected to embrace and sustain perceived aspects of the university as reality. This basic underlying assumption of the culture required employees to adopt and promote perspectives of the university believed by participants in my study, including myself, to be keenly crafted facades.

Examples of overarching facades included the presentation of the university as a family, and the presentation of university assets such as facilities and programming. Ultimately, facades were determined to have permeated many aspects of the culture. In
addition to observations and textual analysis, data supporting this assumption included the participant statements of Dr. Tracey Jordan, Casey Mason, and Dr. Avery Lane.

**Assumption 2: Employee Value Equaled Title and Position**

During my study, I noticed reserved parking signs positioned in various parking lots at the university. I observed name plates and name badges along with how they were positioned and used. I overheard individuals being addressed by credential and position title. Encountering these artifacts revealed the university valued hierarchy and position on the organizational chart. Eventually, I learned the university’s culture assumed an individual’s title defined the value of the individual to the organization. Further, the university believed an individual’s title should govern that individual’s behavior within the campus community. Thus, an employee’s value to the university was considered directly proportionate to the employee’s title and position on the organizational chart. My personal encounters with the culture as an embedded insider, document analysis, and the participant statements of Addison Shelby and Casey Mason supported this assumption.

**Assumption 3: The Organizational Structure Guided and Maintained Daily Order**

The university familiarized employees with the organizational structure as soon as they were hired. The first module of the onboarding training session for new hires introduced employees to university leaders atop the university’s organizational structure. University publications detailed the organizational model. As I investigated this artifact, I learned the university assigned value to its organizational structure beyond a paper description displaying how university units were
organized. The university’s organizational structure provided the formal means for guiding and maintaining day-to-day order at the university. The structure prescribed interpersonal relations; that is, the structure determined who interacted with who, how interactions occurred, where interactions occurred and when they occurred. The structure also governed employee duties, which meant employees decided what university constituents to serve and how to serve them based upon location in the organizational structure. My observations, document analysis and the participant statements of Addison Shelby, Casey Mason, Dr. Tracey Jordan, Dr. Ashton Reese, and Dr. Avery Lane supported this basic underlying assumption.

Assumption 4: Rules Must Be Followed, Especially the Unwritten Rules

The university prominently displayed rules. Signs on campus announced important policies and university publications memorialized them in documents such as formal policy and procedure manuals. As my identity as a university insider progressed, I discovered the university had unwritten and unpublished rules, as well. During my investigation I learned the university culture valued employee compliance with rules, especially the unwritten rules. Violating a parking regulation would likely not lead to interpersonal conflict but failure to comply with an unwritten rule could yield instability among colleagues. This basic underlying assumption that all rules are expected to be followed was supported by my observations, document analysis, and the participant statements of Addison Shelby. However, my personal encounters with the unwritten rules provided the most revealing evidence because “new comers” fail to recognize the existence of unwritten rules until the rules are broken.
Assumption 5: Unquestionable Loyalty Expected and Required

I observed members of the university community using the term “family”. I witnessed the behavior of senior university leaders and their staff. I explored how the university evaluated employee performance.

Further examination revealed expectations for the behavior of university employees. I was expected to situate my name plate on my desk like every other employee at the university, and address people using their credentials or titles. The organizational culture demanded respect for the chain of command. Directives were expected to be carried out without question when issued by someone higher on the organizational chart regardless of whether or not the directive was perceived to be unnecessary or unethical. Employees were expected to conform to these standards imposed by the university culture or face reprimands. Employees were reprimanded informally and formally depending upon rule violation and supervisor discretion. Eventually, I concluded the goal of the university bureaucracy was manipulation and control of employee behavior with the objective of sustaining the existing system of governance. Thus, this basic underlying assumption of the university culture that required unquestionable loyalty to rules and the individuals with authorization to force compliance, enabled the model to be sustained. Data supporting this assumption included numerous observations, document analysis, and the participant statements of Addison Shelby, Casey Mason and Dr. Tracey Jordan.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of my study was to explore one institution’s organizational culture as a macrosystem antecedent to workplace bullying. My primary goal was to address one overarching question: How does organizational culture function as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying? To achieve this goal, I posed a secondary question: What are the basic underlying assumptions of the university’s culture?

I adopted Schein’s (2010) three level approach to cultural analysis to guide my investigation of the university’s culture. Through the utilization of this approach, I uncovered five basic underlying assumptions of the university’s culture. In this chapter, I discuss my findings by illustrating connections in the existing literature. By tying the basic underlying assumptions in my study to the literature, I explain how those assumptions have enabled the institution’s culture to function as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying. The chapter concludes with implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

Assumption 1: Perception Not Reality was What Mattered

Data in my study revealed deeply seeded and widely held beliefs embedded in the university’s culture. First, university employees were expected to adopt university promoted perceptions as reality. Based upon my observations and those of the participants in my study, the university apparently intended to present external images of values it did not actually possess. The university’s espoused values were deemed
inconsistent with the institution’s actual values. For example, the university presented the image of itself as a family with values of collegiality, support, inclusivity and diversity. Instead, participants exposed this image as a facade.

When members of an organization possess values, which differ from those espoused by the organization, workplace bullying can ensue. Strandmark and Hallberg (2007), using a grounded theory approach, attempted to ascertain the origin of workplace bullying among individuals employed in the public service sector. Participants in their study represented health care, social services, law enforcement, and education. The study results found individuals who “did not comply with the norms and values that characterized their working groups” (2007, p. 335) became targets for bullying. These individuals were targeted intentionally because of their “differing values” (2007, p. 336).

Likewise, studies have found individuals with increased stress have responded by withdrawing or lowering engagement in the organization. This withdrawal and lack of engagement was, in turn, interpreted by employees as rejection of the organization’s values (Baillien, Neyens, DeWitte, & De Cuyper, 2009; Hoel & Salin, 2003). Once interpreted as rejection of values, insider employees turned to bullying behavior to establish positions of power (Strandmark and Hallberg, 2007).

Furthermore, the accepted use of facades and business practices involving deception could create an environment conducive to bullying within the university culture. D’Cruz, Noronha, and Beale (2014) discovered when an “organizational context promoted manipulative practices where secrecy, deceit, bias and nepotism prevailed” (p. 1446), bullying was present. By promoting values inconsistent with employees’
experiences and incorporating deceptive business practices into employees’ duties, the university environment encouraged bullying.

Environmental surroundings have also been linked to organizational bullying. Studies have identified deviant behavior and hostility as responses to certain physical characteristics of the work environment deemed uncomfortable or unpleasant by employees (Anderson, Anderson, & Deuser, 1996; Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Zapf’s (1999) work compared a group of individuals who had been bullied with a group of individuals who had not experienced bullying. The results revealed the group which had encountered bullying behavior consistently rated their work environments negatively. In my study, Baxter University prominently maintained university grounds and facilities. One staff participant referenced an out-of-sight office location whose arrangement and decor were disparaging compared with other offices. Addison Shelby described the workgroup of the unit Addison supervised as “hardly ever seen”. This workspace was accessible through the backdoors of the building via the parking lot, on the second floor, and arranged with cubicles. In comparison, Addison labeled the work environment of other employees in the office as “beautifully decorated” with “over-the-top furniture”. Still more, Addison indicated human interaction was largely prohibited in this office space. Addison stated:

Uhm, there was to be no more chit chatter…So, no more chit chatter. Shut them down. No more speaking…or no more of that personal interaction and having that comradery and ‘how’s your mom and them’ as they say in the south, you know?
Thus, work performed repeatedly in a closed-in environment with cubicles and limited human interaction could raise employees’ levels of discomfort and lead to bullying antics (Zapf, 1999).

**Assumption 2: Employee Value Equaled Title and Position**

The culture at the research site valued employees based upon titles and positions employees were assigned. The university afforded employees perks and benefits based upon position. For example, reserved parking spaces were provided to employees. Coveted office space and location was provided to those individuals in more prominent positions. Addison Shelby, staff participant stated the perspective quite well. According to Addison:

> Within our office, I would say the location of your office. Where your office was, just like your parking spot, the location of your office was very important. So, if you were down stairs you were seen as, deemed as, more valuable than those who were on the second floor which is where my team was…so, you know…very much the over the top furniture that could be in people’s office. Somebody may have some very beautifully decorated office while we had cubicles. That also alluded to…you know. You kind of knew your rank in the office based on that sort of thing. So…The doors in which you come in and come out. Most of the people that were on that first floor again, circle people, deemed more important, better titles, etc. were very much coming in and out of the front doors. While my group was coming in and out of the back doors which led to the parking lot.
Furthermore, Addison believed employee value at the university directly correlated with employee position. Addison stated:

Oh, yea. Absolutely! Absolutely! Even if it’s only like one step away. Let’s say you are clown extraordinaire and the next person is clown extraordinaire II, that person is going to be valued more as part of the team than just plain clown. So, it was very much related to the positions.

Employee value to the university also manifested in the way titles were used; that is, how individuals were addressed or not addressed. Casey Mason, staff participant, referred to this practice as “the title frenzy”. Dr. Belton Clyde had only been offended by my failure to address Dr. Clyde as “Doctor”. In essence, I devalued Dr. Clyde when I addressed Dr. Clyde as Belton. The associated issue of inequity raised by Dr. Tracey Jordan, faculty participant, was also noteworthy. According to Dr. Jordan:

When we talk about…equitable, that’s another word that [the dean] likes, that don’t seem very transparent or equitable. I don’t understand. So, I kind of try to be thankful for what I’ve got and not dwell too much on what other people have because there’s no rhyme nor reason for it. I haven’t even been able to figure it out. Some places the squeaky wheel gets the grease kind of thing. And that doesn’t seem to be the case. [Head shaking] I don’t know. I don’t know.

These practices are problematic. Studies have attributed a person’s positional status in the organization with workplace bullying (Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001; McKay et al., 2008). Further, other studies, such as Moreno-Jimenez, Rodriguez,
Moreno & Garrosa (2007), have revealed workplace bullying occurs in organizations characterized by inequity.

In addition, research studies have demonstrated personal conflicts, like the one I encountered with Dr. Belton Clyde, can lead to bullying (Baillien et al., 2009; Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2011; Zapf, 1999). Espelage et al. (2014) concluded “work related or personal conflicts that are played out at work may escalate into repeated bullying behaviors” (p. 107). Thus, my situation with Dr. Clyde could have created an opportunity for the emergence of bullying, had my supervisor not instructed me to discontinue future contact. According to Mathisen et al. (2011), “Supervisors who fail to intervene when confronted by growing frustration and interpersonal conflict amongst team members may indirectly encourage victimization processes within their departments” (p. 638). Henceforth, other employees in my office worked directly with Dr. Clyde.

Existing literature has identified devaluation of the professional role as a bullying strategy (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Escartin, Rodríguez-Carballeira, Zapf, Porrua, & Martin-Pena, 2009; Escartin, Zapf, Arrieta, & Rodríguez-Carballeira, 2011; Jenkins, Zapf, Winefield, & Sarris, 2012). “Devaluation of the professional role involves belittling the importance of the role of the employee, unjustifiably altering the employee’s responsibilities, or assigning the employee responsibilities that are non-essential, unrealistic, or beneath his or her position” (Kolbert, Crothers, & Wells, 2014, p. 89). I had encountered devaluation in my meeting with Dr. Cameron Blind. Dr. Blind stated emphatically at the onset of our meeting, “…you also need to know that everything
you are doing over there [referring to the unit where I worked] is worthless, absolutely worthless. Your position is worthless and the work that you are doing over there is worthless.” Dr. Tracey Jordan also experienced devaluation. Dr. Jordan expressed the following:

…sometimes I think that is my main job, is assessing whatever we’re doing…

Like somebody will tell you, ‘You have to write this report.’ Ok, I guess. ‘What needs to be in the report? Can I see the documents, you know? Well, we’ve got this for you and we’ve made a template to do it this way.’ Well, then maybe you do the report. I like to do things ahead of time, get that off my plate and do something real. Soon, I discovered that if you do it quickly, you will either be asked to do more. Or, a few weeks, a month later, they will come back and say, ‘Well, you know what? That really wasn’t right. What we asked you to do.’ Really? And, they will always direct it [the excuse to justify] to whatever the external body was. ‘Well, the State changed their mind. The accreditor changed their mind.’ And, I’ll say, ‘That seems odd. Can I see that memo? Well, you know, you just need to do this new template.’ So, there’s just this whole thing of…it’s like they think I’m dumb or they are trying to keep me dumb…So, in many instances like that, kind of the administrative areas I do a lot of things that I don’t think, one, are necessarily important or needed, or maybe even really required outside the institution. It’s just…Ok. I need to check this box. They’re going to be on my case until I do it. I better wait until the deadline or maybe even
a day or two past the deadline because if I do it early, they are just going to make me do it again or do it differently.

These manifestations of employee devaluation provided supporting evidence suggesting the culture’s basic assumption equated employee position with employee value. This assumption appeared to function as a facilitator of workplace bullying.

**Assumption 3: The Organizational Structure Guided and Maintained Daily Order**

Organizational charts have traditionally been viewed as graphical tools which display relationships among the components making up an organization. More specifically, they display position hierarchy, reporting structures, unit functions, and even position relevance (Cea Moure, 2011). The value attached to the organizational chart at the research site extended beyond a graphical representation of the university’s organizational structure. On a daily basis, the organizational structure at Baxter dictated power, determined interpersonal relations, prescribed employee behavior and directed employee duties. Even the most commonplace behavior of employees revealed this reality. For example, while Brooklyn Dansby was visiting the supply closet in my office suite, Brooklyn questioned the whereabouts of the name plates which published my name and title. My failure to announce my position on the organizational chart by concealing these representations of my position was interpreted by Brooklyn as unacceptable.

Addison Shelby, staff participant, provided insight into how employees at the university viewed others based upon position. Addison stated, “Oh yea. So, they [employees occupying positions higher on the organizational chart in the office] thought that my team was always second class.” As indicated earlier, previous study results have
attributed a person’s positional status in the organization with workplace bullying (Hoel et al., 2001; McKay et al., 2008). Specifically, within higher education, Keashly and Neuman (2013) determined “that an individual’s location within the institutional structure, as defined by the occupational group and hierarchal and/or professional status, may leave specific targets vulnerable to abuse from particular actors/agents” (pgs. 11-12). Likewise, Zabrodska and Kveton’s (2013) study revealed higher position in the university’s hierarchy corresponded positively with higher rates of bullying.

Organizational change often involves organizational restructuring (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Kwon, Oh, & Jeon, 2007). Prior to initiating my study, Baxter University had recently experienced restructuring. My position was one of several new positions created pursuant to the restructuring process. Dr. Cameron Blind’s meeting with me began with Dr. Blind announcing existing conflict between Dr. Blind and the person who had hired me. The restructuring had forced Dr. Blind to relinquish resources from, and control over, certain functional areas of the university. I interpreted this restructuring as the source of conflict between Dr. Blind and my supervisor because of Dr. Blind’s comments to me. Dr. Blind stated, “Blaine thinks s/he can take these resources from me and run that unit. Fine. I told the president, ‘Mr. President. Let Blaine take it. Blaine can have it but you will regret it.’” Thus, I interpreted Dr. Blind’s attempts to intimidate me and devalue my position, in part, as manifestations of workplace bullying resulting from organizational restructuring. This point of view is consistent with results from prior studies. Citing studies by Skogstad, Matthiesen and Einarsen (2007), and Baillien and De Witte (2009), D'Cruz et al. (2014) identified
organizational change as “the most important organizational antecedent of workplace bullying” (p. 1435). Other studies have provided empirical evidence showing positive correlations between workplace bullying and organizational change (Baillien & De Witte, 2009; Kearns, McCarthy, & Sheehan, 1997; Salin, 2003; Spagnoli, Balducci, Fraccaroli, 2017).

As previously indicated, the organizational structure provided the formal means for guiding day-to-day business affairs at the university. The following example illustrates how the organizational structure influenced an employee’s daily duties and decisions. Dr. Avery Lane, faculty participant, spoke about engaging in matters related to student enrollment in a program. “Every time we’ve tried to cap enrollment, like say admit 20 for spring, 20 for summer, we are told we can’t. You are not allowed to do that. And, they have always talked to us about…” At this point, I interrupted and asked, “Who are the ‘theys’ that you are referring to?” Dr. Lane responded:

Well, the people all the way up the administrative line. It would start with the Dean of the College. It would go to the Dean and then it would go to the Provost and from the Provost I’m assuming, and this is purely an assumption, that the president has something to do with it. Then, that would come back down and would be no, we can’t. And, actually, it would go department chair, dean and then go all the way up. And, we can’t. We’ve asked and asked and asked…

Dr. Lane lacked influence over position duties that are typically afforded faculty in their program. Indeed, bullying has been linked to work settings that provide individuals limited control over their own work (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994).
Furthermore, Espelage et al. (2014) noted “organizations that emphasize…very formal work environments have been found to have higher rates of workplace bullying” (P. 105). Thus, these examples pointed to a formal organizational structure which limited employee control over their work. These characteristics have been found to enable bullying.

**Assumption 4: Rules Must Be Followed, Especially the Unwritten Rules**

According to Schein (2010) understanding “the rules of the game” (p. 15) is an importance facet to interpreting and analyzing organizational cultures. Schein (2010) saw the rules of the game as “the implicit, unwritten rules for getting along in the organization, ‘the ropes’ that a newcomer must learn to become an accepted member, ‘the way we do things around here’” (p. 15). In the following paragraphs, I provide examples from my study along with references to prior research studies supporting connections between workplace bullying and the underlying assumption of the university’s culture denoted in this section: Rules must be followed, especially the unwritten rules.

My haphazard exchange with Brooklyn Dansby concerning the whereabouts of my name plates, which led to Brooklyn’s uncanny response, was indicative of my failure to comply with the university’s appearance standards to prominently display titles. My behavior had violated an unwritten rule. While I encountered no bullying at the hands of Brooklyn, this interaction was an example of how bullying has previously been shown to emerge. Specifically, Baillien and De Wittte (2009) discovered breaching cultural norms may cause other employees “to adopt a negative attitude towards them” (p. 330) and
result in victimization. My actions violating this organizational norm could have led Brooklyn to adopt such an attitude.

Similarly, in my opinion, my encounter with Dr. Belton Clyde had been nothing more than a routine email response to a common question I would have received on any given business day. However, following an informal investigation from staff in my office, I discovered I had violated a serious unwritten rule embraced by the university. I incorrectly addressed Dr. Clyde. My rule violation was met with Dr. Clyde’s outrage. Dr. Clyde responded by informing my supervisor, the Dean in Dr. Clyde’s college, as well as the staff in my office, about my breach of protocol. Fortunately, in my case, my supervisor intervened. Nevertheless, Dr. Clyde’s response was akin to a conclusion reached in the following study. Hauge, Skogstad, and Einarsen (2011) determined the behavior of employees who violate acceptable rules and norms “may evoke aggressive behavior in both co-workers and supervisors” (p. 623). Dr. Clyde’s comments to me were aggressive in nature.

My supervisor’s conflict with Dr. Cameron Blind existed, in part, because my supervisor referred to Dr. Blind by first name with students present. Coincidentally or not, Dr. Blind showed no interest in meeting with me until sometime after the conflict incident had occurred. Dr. Blind had begun our meeting by pointing to the conflict. During the meeting, Dr. Blind always referenced my supervisor, along with the former vice president, by first name. However, Dr. Blind, only mentioned the President by title. In addition to the loss of resources and control surrounding the recent restructuring at the university, Dr. Blind had been offended by my supervisor’s violation of the university’s
unwritten rule requiring the use of titles. Hoel and Salin (2003) concluded bullying can be “an intentional response to norm-violating behavior and an instrument for social control” (p. 208). I interpreted Dr. Blind’s decision to meet with me, and my experience during the meeting, nothing more than a response to the conflict with my supervisor and an attempt to intimidate and assert power over me.

**Assumption 5: Unquestionable Loyalty Expected and Required**

Espelage et al. (2014) noted, “organizations that emphasize strict conformity, power imbalances, and very formal work environments have been found to have higher rates of workplace bullying” (p. 105). The reality these conditions existed at Baxter University was without doubt. Four of the five participants in my study described these conditions. They made statements such as:

“When you open up the door and you look behind the curtain or whatever, it’s very top down. Uhm, decisions are made that you are really not supposed to question. If you do question, you raise some eyebrows.” [Dr. Tracey Jordan]

“Well, I think the institution here definitely uses that power, the dangling of tenure and promotion, over everybody…” [Dr. Tracey Jordan]

“And, he [my supervisor] said he didn’t care if we wanted to talk to the dean or anything like that, whether it was a complaint or not, he wanted you to come to him first.” [Dr. Tracey Jordan]

“If we’re all one big happy family, why can’t I talk to someone about a question or idea that I have without having to go through the chain of command?” [Dr. Tracey Jordan]
“Yea. It [the chain of command] was very formal. Uhm, if you had something [a desired action], you had to go up your chain.” [Casey Mason]

“If the director doesn’t give them what they want, they will go to the provost. And from there, sometimes it goes straight to the president. And, we get that directive mandated down.” [Casey Mason]

“So, yea and it’s all because the director was dictated to do that.” [Casey Mason]

“…they didn’t meet the admission requirements. They didn’t meet the deadline for that program. This was something that we were told to do. We had to admit this student after the deadline.” [Casey Mason]

“Uhm, there was to be no more chit chatter. So, no more chit chatter. Shut them down. No more speaking.” [Addison Shelby]

It would start with the Dean of the College…Then, that would come back down and would be no, we cant. And, actually, it would go dept chair, dean and then go all the way up. And, we cant. We’ve asked and asked and asked… [Dr. Avery Lane]

Statements like these were indicative of the university’s culture that expected conformity.

The following paragraphs cite examples from my study which reflected the university’s attempts to control employee behavior and require conformity with directives. They conclude with connections to the literature.

Addison Shelby, staff participant, stated, “Oh yes…the rules. The rules. That was the first thing they handed down, were the rules.” Addison was referring to rules
governing how her employees were to behave and invest their time on the job. Addison stated:

So, you basically were to come in and sit at your desk and start working and just continue to do that. No taking a break or stopping at somebody’s desk and asking how is your day going. I recall at one point in time, it became so severe that an actual…from 8 o’clock to 9:15 you are to do this; at 9:15 to 12, you are to do ‘B’. And, every minute of your day was accounted for with some sort of task even though everyone would get their job done.

Two other employees working in Addison’s office independently provided information which supported Addison’s perspective. Additionally, I experienced this mindset shared by the employee in that office who had applied for a position in my unit.

This practice of micromanaging appeared consistent with my observations and those of colleagues in my unit. My colleagues and I had observed a senior university leader conspicuously sitting in an automobile, with seat sloped backwards, outside our building. Apparently, this leader had been monitoring the arrival times of employees. Not long after this incident, we observed a member of this senior leader’s staff hiding, with pen and paper in hand, in the shrubbery outside the windows of our building. We deduced we were being monitored, if not for the sake of time orientation, certainly for presence in the office. Our conclusions cannot be certain. Nonetheless, these observed behaviors proved bizarre and troublesome to the observing staff. Interestingly, a study by Appelberg, Romanov, Honkasalo, and Koskenvuo (1991) linked workplace conflicts to time sensitivities and chaotic work environments. Further, Einarsen et al. (1994)
positively correlated high pressured work environments, where individuals had limited control over their work, with incidents of bullying. The scenarios depicted above pointed to a culture characterized by employees who possessed very little control over their daily work duties and who were forced to account for every second on the time clock.

Certain employees at the university benefited from membership in an elite group known as “family”. According to Addison Shelby, staff participant, acquiring family status required, “doing everything without question, without remark, without opinion or choice of what you were being told to do…no questions asked. Just do it.” Addison stated, “…once you proved yourself to be worthy of following commands, then you were part of the circle [family]”. Hoel and Salin (2003) concluded, “Organizations characterized by an extreme degree of conformity and group pressure seem to be particularly prone to bullying” (p. 211). They believed “work environments where employees are hesitant to express their views and opinions” (2003, p. 213) are commonplace for bullying.

This belief was a basic assumption embodied in the culture at the research site. The expectation was to always follow directives, without questions, issued by your superiors. I had experienced consequences associated with violating this assumption when I refused to take actions dictated by the provost I believed to be unethical. The provost received a directive from the president requiring circumvention of university policies and, in my opinion, NCAA athletic regulations, after a request from the athletic department. The provost demanded I act to comply with the request. My refusal to comply was met with hostility and a threat from the provost.
The point I found most interesting was the provost had initially expressed opposition to taking this action until receiving the request from the president. Rather than questioning, the provost issued the directive for the request to be carried out. Then, the provost seemed entirely comfortable subjecting me to hostility and threat when I objected. Hoel and Salin (2003) believed the intent of this type of authoritarian leadership style is to generate an environment of fear “where there is no room for criticism and where complaining may be considered futile” (p. 213).

Consequently, when workplace environments are characterized by dictatorial, authoritarian leadership methods, environments can pose grave danger within organizations for the following reasons. First, according to Einarsen (1999), bullying occurs in organizations where perpetrators believe senior leaders in the university support, either directly or indirectly, bullying antics. This idea can be traced back to Brodsky’s (1976) study which proposed, “for harassment to occur, the harassment elements must exist within a culture that permits and rewards harassment” (p. 83 as cited in Hoel & Salin, 2003, p. 212). Second, according to Kolbert et al. (2014), “The bullying of subordinates is intended to communicate to the group as a whole, ‘No one should challenge me. I am powerful’, thus serving a maintenance function to indicate one’s level of power within the organization” (p. 92).

My encounter with the provost could be interpreted in one of two ways. The behavior could be explained by assuming the provost believed the president condoned the hostility and threat; or the provost intended to establish a position of power and send that message to me and my co-workers. In this instance, I believe the first explanation is the
most likely for the following reason. Both the president and the provost had established lengthy employment tenures at the university. In the opinion of Hoel and Salin (2003), mimicking can assume a vital role in facilitating bullying:

Situational factors, such as the ‘watch’ culture, where the individual is allocated to the same tightly knit work team, possibly for years at a time, also suggest that there is little room for diversity. Moreover, in an autocratic leadership culture, where one’s superior has been brought up within the same tradition, it is difficult to break out of the cycle and embark upon cultural change. (p. 211)

Furthermore, Keashly and Neuman (2013) concluded, “It may be that academia is a particularly vulnerable setting for such persistent aggression, as a result of tenure, which has faculty and some staff in very long-term relationships with one another” (p. 12).

**Conclusions of the Study**

The aim of this study was to explore an institution’s organizational culture to determine how culture functioned as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying. I used Schein’s (2010) approach to cultural analysis to guide my examination of the university’s culture. My embedded role as an insider garnered unique observations and enabled me to participate in and ultimately record commonplace events of daily life at the university. First, I identified relevant artifacts and investigated them to uncover the values and espoused beliefs attached to them by members of the university. Second, I explored those values and beliefs to identify the basic underlying assumptions driving the daily affairs of the university. See Table 5.1.
Step 1: Mapping Study Results to Research Question - What are the Basic Underlying Assumptions of the University's Culture?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three Levels of Culture (Schein, 2010)</td>
<td>Signs, physical environment, language, name plates, positions, titles, organizational structure, observed behavior, performance evaluations, athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>The university valued the role of athletics, rule compliance, employee position on organizational chart, appearance, conformity, controlling employee time and behavior, chain of command, and system of bureaucracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espoused Beliefs and Values</td>
<td>Perception not reality mattered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employee value equaled title and position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizational structure guided and maintained daily order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rules must be followed, especially the unwritten rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unquestionable loyalty expected and required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Underlying Assumptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once these values and beliefs were revealed, I connected data in my study to existing research to illustrate how organizational culture functioned, or potentially functioned, as a macrosystem antecedent to workplace bullying in a higher education setting. See Table 5.2.
Table 5.2

**Step 2: Mapping Study Results to Research Question – How does Organizational Culture Function as a Macrosystem Antecedent to University Workplace Bullying?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Framework (Schein, 2010) Basic Underlying Assumptions</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Perception Not Reality Mattered** | • When employees’ values differ from values espoused by the institution (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007; Baillien et al., 2009; D’Cruz et al., 2014)  
• When work environment is deemed uncomfortable or unpleasant by employees (Anderson et al., 1996; Zapf, 1999) |
| **Employee Value Equaled Title and Position** | • When inequities exist due to employee position (Hoel et al., 2001; McKay et al., 2008; Moreno-Jimenez et al., 2007)  
• When institutions allow personal conflicts to escalate apart from intervention (Baillien et al., 2009; Mathisen et al., 2011; Zapf, 1999)  
• When institutions tolerate devaluation of the professional role (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Escartín, Zapf, Arrieta, & Rodríguez-Carballeira, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2012) |
| **Organizational Structure Guided and Maintained Daily Order** | • When power imbalances exist due to positional status (Keashly & Neuman, 2013; Zabrodska & Kveton, 2013; Hoel et al., 2001; McKay et al., 2008)  
• When organizational changes, such as restructuring occur (Baillien & De Witte, 2009; D’Cruz et al., 2014; Kearns et al., 1997; Spagnoli et al., 2017) |
| **Rules Must Be Followed, Especially the Unwritten Rules** | • When employees violate unwritten norms, values embedded within the institutional culture (Baillien & De Witte, 2009; Hoel & Salin, 2003) |
| **Unquestionable Loyalty Expected and Required** | • When employees possess limited control over their work (Appelberg et al., 1991; Einarsen et al., 1994)  
• When strict conformity is required (Hoel & Salin, 2003) and workplace misbehavior is tolerated (Einarsen, 1999; Kolbert et al., 2014) |
My study results revealed the university’s organizational culture functioned in 10 ways that could facilitate bullying in an institution of higher education. First, when employees of the university possess values which differ from those espoused by the institution, workplace bullying can ensue. A university’s accepted use of facades and business practices involving deception can contribute to these value inconsistencies and could create a campus conducive to bullying. Second, unpleasant and uncomfortable work spaces with limited human interaction could foster incidents of bullying. Third, too much emphasis upon positional status accompanied by workplace inequities can yield bullying. Fourth, university leaders at every level who fail to create an atmosphere in which workplace conflicts are addressed and successfully resolved may result in bullying. Fifth, management practices consistent with employee devaluation can give rise to incidents of bullying. Sixth, universities possessing highly formal and rigorous organizational structures leading to power imbalances are conducive to the emergence of bullying. Seventh, organizational changes at the institution can provide opportunities for bullying. Eighth, violating the university’s cultural norms can lead to bullying, particularly for new employees who are unfamiliar with the institution’s unwritten rules. As well, failure to properly enculturate within the university’s established culture can result in bullying. Ninth, environments which limit employees’ contributions and control over their work can provoke incidents of bullying. Finally, institutions characterized by authoritarian leadership styles which demand strict conformity and tolerate workplace misbehavior can enable and sustain bullying.
Implications of Study Results

Despite the inability to generalize findings in this study, several implications for practice can be suggested. First, universities should revise hiring procedures and on-boarding programs to fully convey institutional values to prospective and new employees. Human Resources officials and hiring departments should devise adequate methods for communicating the underlying beliefs and values, which drive daily business affairs at their institutions. Developing these approaches would enable both employees and hiring officials to ensure value compatibility and the degree of “fit” between prospective employee and department. Ultimately, this determination could lead to reductions in conflict and prevent the emergence of incidents of bullying.

Second, university leaders should carefully contemplate workspace arrangements, office aesthetics, and space assignments when considering space allocations, workspace alterations and renovations. Despite negative results from spatial management research (Kim & de Dear, 2013), institutions of higher education have incorporated the use of practices, such as shared workspace, within the policies governing their management of workspace resources. Numerous institutions allocate office space and define recommended workspace size based upon employee title and position appointment at the institution. This practice could further exasperate antecedent conditions for bullying and foster an unhealthy culture. Thus, university leaders may wish to revisit how workspaces are arranged, aesthetically displayed, and assigned to ensure establishment of positive organizational cultures.
Third, universities should devise leadership training programs with the goal of creating institutional cultures that discourage the emergence of workplace bullying antecedents. Prior research has identified antecedents. Thus, responsibility now resides with institutional leaders to intentionally develop training programs aimed at cultivating healthy workplace interactions among faculty and staff.

Fourth, institutions must adopt policies requiring workplace conflicts to be addressed. Too often, incidents of bullying occur and remain unaddressed by supervisors and institutional bureaucracies. A major problem associated with successfully remedying this issue concerns the prevalence of incidents of bullying occurring at the hands of a supervisor. When the bully is the supervisor, any university policy requiring supervisors to address bullying behavior would be irrelevant. Therefore, the adoption of policies requiring collective groups such as councils on civility, faculty senates, or committees to investigate and address incidents of bullying would prove most feasible.

Fifth, university leaders should deemphasize organizational structure and emphasize organizational mission. When daily business affairs are strictly prescribed by employee position on the university organizational chart, innovation and creativity are stymied. This repression of human resources threatens fulfillment of the institutional mission. Instead, university leaders must intentionally deploy communicative strategies which emphasize employee contribution to mission fulfillment.

Sixth, change management strategies adopted by universities should incorporate tactics that ensure stakeholder inclusion. Too often, institutional changes are implemented in silos. When collaboration is absent, stakeholders’ contributions are
omitted and morale declines. These conditions foster unhealthy cultures in which incidents of bullying emerge.

Finally, university information technology use policies should be revised to address cyberbullying. I reviewed 35 information technology policies at the research site university in my study. None directly prohibited cyberbullying. Since cyberbullying has been found to be a more toxic and prevalent form of bullying, universities must respond by altering policies to prohibit its practice.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

While numerous studies have investigated organizational culture and its role in workplace bullying (An & Kang, 2016; Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009; Finck, 2013; Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Galanaki & Papalexandris, 2013; McKay, 2014; O’Farrell & Nordstrom, 2013; Pilch & Turska, 2015; Tambur & Vadi, 2012), fewer studies have been situated in higher education institutions in the United States (Hollis, 2016; Lester, 2013). Thus, a plethora of research remains necessary if this phenomenon is to be fully understood.

First, institutions would be well served to more adequately understand their own organizational cultures and how those cultures possess the ability to function as incubators and sustainers of workplace bullying. While workplace bullying spans the entire industry of higher education as an epidemic, the conditions and associated consequences are local and specific to each institution. Arguably, local solutions can be identified as well. Thus, this recommendation calls for more localized research at
individual institutions and encourages more researchers to examine the cultures of their own institutions.

Second, the concept of ergonomics and aesthetics within the work environment is less understood within the context of institutions of higher education specifically related to the influence upon the institution’s culture. Modern practices like shared workspaces have been found to increase employee stress, harm interpersonal relations and decrease supervisor support (Brown & Zhu, 2016; Morrison & Macky, 2017). Organizational cultures with these characteristics are ripe for bullying. More research concerning the influence of spatial management upon organizational cultures, specifically situated in institutions of higher education, is necessary.

Third, since bullying incidents have been determined to occur more frequently at the hands of individuals who are positioned higher on the organizational chart (Espelage et al., 2014), leadership training is critical for supervisors at every level of the university. The role of various leadership styles, along with the characteristics and quality of leaders in relationship to workplace bullying have been studied extensively (Dussault & Frenette, 2015; Francioli, Conway, Hansen, Holten, Grynderup, Persson, Mikkelsen, Costa, & Høghinsert, 2018; Hoel, Glaso, Hetland, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2010; Mills, Keller, Chilcutt, & Nelson, 2018; Onorato, 2013; Soylu, 2011; Tuckey, Li, & Chen, 2017; Woodrow & Guest, 2017). However, studies examining leadership training specifically focused upon content related to workplace bullying in higher education are relatively non-existent. While training exists for university employees on how to recognize and respond to bullying (Kelly, 2012; University of California at Santa Cruz, 2019;
University of Massachusetts, 2019), literature was scant, if none, on programs with content designed to train leaders about creating cultures and climates which discourage antecedents to workplace bullying in the academy. Thus, curriculums of leadership training programs require thorough examination to ensure program effectiveness.

Fourth, institutional leaders tasked with implementing change should carefully consider the effect of change management strategies upon the university’s culture. Similar to leadership, significant research exists on the topic of change management in organizations (Aslam, Muqadas, Imran, & Saboor, 2018; Krogh, 2018; Lines & Smithwick, 2018; May & Stahl, 2017; Rosenbaum, More, & Steane, 2018; Wincek, Sousa, Myers, & Ozog, 2014) and in institutions of higher education (Bruckmann & Carvalho, 2018; Dasborough, Lamb, & Suseno, 2015; Deem, 1998; Doyle & Brady, 2018; Farquharson, Sinha, & Clarke, 2018; Pitkin, 1992; Vosse & Aliyu, 2018). Information lacking from the current literature base are studies addressing the relationships between change management strategies and university cultures intent on the elimination of bullying. Therefore, further inquiries investigating change management and university cultures would prove worthwhile.

Cyberbullying is viewed as a more convenient and prevalent form of bullying, in that harassment is not location or time bound (Choi & Park, 2019; Coyne, Farley, Axtell, Sprigg, Best, & Kwok, 2016). While my study did not directly investigate cyberbullying, this form of bullying manifested in my exchange with Dr. Belton Clyde. Dr. Clyde’s rants occurred entirely via e-mail. Yet, Dr. Clyde refused to engage with me in-person even at my requests. Dr. Clyde’s cyberbullying has been categorized as flaming, which
involves sending angry or rude electronic messages to someone or to an online group (Watts, Wagner, Valesquez, & Behrens, 2017). Consistent with the lens applied by Hollis (2016), Dr. Clyde’s behavior could be understood as public shaming. Regardless, additional investigations into cyberbullying in the workplace are needed (Hollis, 2016). More specifically related to my study, further research exploring connections between organizational culture and cyberbullying should be pursued.

My study also did not address how the influence of local community cultures in which universities are located may affect bullying in the institution. Dr. Tracey Jordan, faculty participant in my study, suggested the “one big family” mantra of Baxter University might be attributed to influencing factors from within the local community. Thus, investigating external factors exerting influence upon university cultures would be worthwhile.

Examining athletics as an artifact in my study revealed certain underlying values and beliefs embodied in the culture. Athletics, in its own right, is a business within the business of higher education and significantly shapes institutional culture. A number of researchers have explored organizational culture and athletics (Jayakumar & Comeaux, 2016; Mazerolle & Eason, 2018; Powers, 2015; Scott, 2012; Smith, Stewart, & Haimes, 2012; Steele, 2016) but I located none who investigated athletics and organizational culture for the purpose of examining associations with workplace bullying. Consequently, further research with this objective is required.

Finally, the scholarly work of a number of researchers has done much to raise awareness of the devastating effects of workplace bullying in higher education.
Nevertheless, more research is needed to fully understand manifestations of this phenomenon in our institutions. For example, questions related to how higher education governance models might influence bullying, and how bullying functions based upon institution type and control remain unanswered. Ultimately, all issues associated with workplace bullying in higher education demand scholarly attention because the costs attributed to bullying for institutions and individuals affected by the phenomenon remain far too high to ignore.
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Informed Consent Form: Pilot Study

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

1. My name is Tristam Aldridge and I am a transient student at [Redacted] currently enrolled in a qualitative research course (EDUR [Redacted] Qualitative Research in Education). I am pursuing a PhD in Educational Leadership: Higher Education Administration at Clemson University and this course has been approved to satisfy curriculum requirements of my program. As part of the requirements for this course, I am required to conduct a qualitative research project. The purpose of conducting this research project is to satisfy the course requirements and acquire experience with designing and implementing a qualitative research project which could ultimately inform my future dissertation proposal.

2. The purpose of this research is to capture the voices of graduate program directors about how institutional mission creep interacts with their enrollment management duties. The research questions guiding this study are: 1) What does the interaction between institutional mission creep and the institution’s graduate enrollment management agenda mean to graduate program directors; and 2) What do the perspectives of graduate program directors reveal about the interaction between institutional mission creep and the institution’s graduate enrollment management agenda?

3. Participation in this research will include completion of a digital audio recording interview lasting not longer than 60 minutes in duration. The interview will be semi-structured, meaning that the interviewer will guide the interview via several prepared open-ended questions that extend the freedom to ask follow up questions based upon your responses.

4. Risks: While your responses will remain entirely anonymous and a pseudonym name will be assigned in an attempt to further disguise your identity, because of other identifying characteristics that will be reported such as geographic location of the institution, gender, number of years of employment at the institution, college of employment, etc.; and the fact that this research project is a course requirement at a specific institution rather than a more comprehensive research project, your identity could potentially be deduced by the professor facilitating this course or from those other students enrolled in the course to whom the research results will be reported. This means there are potential career-related risks which could result as a condition of your participation in this study.

5. Benefits: Current literature fails to capture faculty voices regarding the interaction of institutional mission creep and the enrollment management duties of graduate program directors. Thus, this study presents the opportunity for your voice to be heard on this subject, albeit in a small way. You will also receive the benefit of contributing to the learning experience of a PhD student. Ultimately, your contributions will serve to inform the research agenda of a PhD student preparing for a dissertation. By extension, your
participation in this study will raise awareness to an unaddressed topic which could provide insight that would govern future research.

6. Statement of Confidentiality: Your responses will remain anonymous and you will be assigned a fictitious name. As well, pseudonyms will be assigned to any persons, places or things you might reference in your responses which could serve as identifiers. The principal investigator will be the only person who has access to your digital audio recording. The recording will be destroyed immediately following the assignment of a course grade. Until that time, the digital recorder will remain in the sole possession of the principal investigator.

7. Right to Ask Questions: You have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher’s course instructor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at.

8. Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. During the interview, you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

9. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board under tracking number __See Course Instructor___.

Title of Project: Graduate Program Directors’ Perspectives on the Relationship between Institutional Mission Creep and Graduate Enrollment Management Duties: An Ethnographic Case Study

Principal Investigator: Redacted, Ph.D., College of Education Building, Room XXX, XX 30000. 555-555-5555. redacted@baxter.edu

Course Instructor: Redacted, Ph.D., College of Education Building, Room XXX, XX 30000. 555-555-5555. redacted@baxter.edu

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

Participant Signature Date

Investigator Signature Date
Appendix B

Interview Protocol Pilot Study

Interview Protocols
Guided Questions for Semi-structured Interview

Title of Study: Graduate Program Directors’ Perspectives on the Relationship between Institutional Mission Creep and Graduate Enrollment Management Duties: An Ethnographic Case Study

Interviewer: __________________________ Date: _________ Time: 

Interviewee: __________________________

I. Talk about your involvement in the institution’s graduate enrollment management (EM) agenda.
   a. Discuss your knowledge of the EM agenda.
   b. Discuss what you perceive as your roles and responsibilities associated with the institution’s EM agenda.
      i. How are your roles defined/determined?
      ii. How much input do you have in defining your roles?
   c. Tell me how your traditional roles/responsibilities as program director have been affected, if at all, by the recent implementation of an institutionalized EM agenda.
      i. How has your teaching load been affected, if at all?
      ii. How has your research agenda been affected, if at all?
      iii. How have your service commitments been affected, if at all?
   d. Tell me about your work load relative to your duties associated with the institution’s EM agenda.
      i. Talk about compensation related to your duties
      ii. Are you compensated financially or in the form of course releases?
Appendix C

Semi-structured Interview Protocol

WORKING DEFINITION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Definition of **Organizational Culture**: A pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 2010, p. 18).

2. **Question 1**: When considering the definition of organizational culture you’ve been presented, how would you describe the culture of your institution?

3. **Question 2**: What institutional artifacts (symbols, rituals, etc. such as tailgating at sporting events, the use of campus signage, or titles when addressing others, for example) would you say embody (that is, convey and retain) the shared values and fundamental beliefs associated with the members of your institution?

4. **Question 3**: What would you identify as those espoused beliefs and values that are "attached" to these artifacts?

5. **Question 4**: Please identify and describe some of the basic assumptions, that is, those rules, norms, and ways of thinking and feeling which govern the behavior of the members of your institution. These may be written, such as in the form of policies, but are also commonly, unwritten rules which “outsiders” would not be aware of unless they violated them.
Appendix D

Informed Consent Documentation

Information about Being in a Research Study
Clemson University

Exploring Institutional Culture as a Macrosystem Antecedent to University Workplace Bullying: An Organizational Ethnography

Description of the Study and Your Part in It

Dr. Pamela Havice and Tristam Aldridge are inviting you to participate in a research study. Dr. Pamela Havice is a Professor in the Department of Educational and Organizational Leadership Development in the College of Education at Clemson University. Tristam Aldridge is a student at Clemson University currently enrolled in EDL 9910 Doctoral Dissertation Research. He is pursuing a PhD in Educational Leadership: Higher Education and this course satisfies curriculum requirements of his program. He is running this study with the oversight of Dr. Pamela Havice, the Principal Investigator (PI).

As part of the requirements for this course, Tristam Aldridge is required to design and conduct an original research project. The purpose of conducting this research project is to satisfy the degree requirements of the program and acquire experience with designing and implementing a qualitative research project which serves as his doctoral dissertation.

The purpose of this research study is to explore university culture, which encapsulates the institution's characteristics, its values, norms, etc., as a macrosystem level antecedent of university workplace bullying. Consistent with an organizational ethnographic method, the focus of the study is upon describing the organization's culture. The primary research question guiding this study is: How does organizational culture function as a macrosystem antecedent to university workplace bullying? Because of the subsequent need to examine organizational culture, the study seeks to address the following secondary questions: 1) What are the underlying assumptions of the university's culture; and 2) What do these basic underlying assumptions reveal about university culture as a macrosystem antecedent to workplace bullying?
Your participation in this research will include completion of a digital audio recording interview lasting not longer than 60 minutes in duration. The interview will be semi-structured, meaning that the interviewer will guide the interview via several prepared open-ended questions that extend the freedom to ask follow up questions based upon your responses. The interview will be transcribed verbatim and the electronic transcripts will be stored on a password protected portable drive. The digital recorder will be stored in a locked fire-proof safe with possession of the password residing with the Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator. Upon completion and publishing of the research project, the transcripts and recordings will be deleted. Following transcription of the interview and prior to publishing the study, you will be asked to review the transcript of your interview for accuracy and may at that time request omission of any statement of the recorded interview. **Risks and Discomforts**

Your responses will remain entirely confidential and attempts will be made to conceal your identity. A generic pseudonym (fictitious) name, such as Employee 1, Employee 2, Employee 3, etc., will be assigned to you and a pseudonym name will also be assigned to the institution. To further disguise your identity, the study will refrain from providing any personally identifying characteristics such as age, race, gender, position title, numbers of years of employment and department of employment. Nevertheless, since the proposed study is an organizational ethnography in which the institution’s culture must be thoroughly depicted, the possibility exists that a reader, familiar with the co-investigator or the institution, could deduce the institution’s identity and by association, your identity. This means there are potential career-related risks which could result as a condition of your participation in this study.

**Possible Benefits**

Workplace bullying situated specifically in higher education is an under-researched topic. While prior studies have identified its prevalence and nature, few investigations have been aimed at understanding the phenomenon from a broader, system perspective. More specifically, no studies have focused on how a university’s culture might function as a conduit to workplace bullying. Thus, your participation in this study will help generate awareness to an under-researched topic which will provide insight for governing future research. Consequently, this study presents the opportunity for your voice to be heard on this subject, albeit in a small way. You will also receive the benefit of contributing to the learning experience of a PhD student. Ultimately, your contributions will aid the PhD student in fulfilling the dissertation requirement of the program of study.
Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your confidentiality. We will not tell anyone outside of the research team what information we collected about you in particular. Your responses will remain confidential and you will be assigned a fictitious/generic name. As well, pseudonyms will be assigned to any persons, places or things you might reference in your responses which could serve as identifiers. The principal investigator and co-investigator will be the only people who have access to your digital audio recording. As previously noted, the interview will be transcribed verbatim and the electronic transcripts will be stored on a password protected portable drive. The digital recorder will be stored in a locked fire-proof safe with the principal investigator and co-investigator possessing the safe password. The recording and the electronic transcripts will be destroyed immediately following the completion and publishing of the project. Until that time, the digital recorder and portable storage drive will remain in the locked safe or the sole possession of the co-investigator or principal investigator.

We might be required to share the information we collect from you with the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance and the federal Office for Human Research Protections. If this happens, the information would only be used to find out if we ran this study properly and protected your rights in the study.

Choosing to Be in the Study

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. During the interview, you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

If you choose to stop taking part in this study, the information you have already provided will be used in a confidential manner.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Pamela Havice at Clemson University at 864-656-5121.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the
Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-0636 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC’s toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this form will be given to you.
Appendix E

IRB Approval Notice

From: Amy F Smitherman <smithe3@clemson.edu>
Date: Wednesday, May 10, 2017 at 9:57 AM
To: Pamela Havice <havice@clemson.edu>
Cc: Nalinee Patin <npatin@clemson.edu>, Samuel T Aldridge <samuela@clemson.edu>
Subject: IRB2017-177 Approval for Exploring Institutional Culture...

Dear Dr. Havice,

The Clemson University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the protocol “Exploring Institutional Culture as a Macrosystem Antecedent to University Workplace Bullying: An Organizational Ethnography” using expedited review procedures and has recommended approval.

Your approval period is May 9, 2017 to May 8, 2018. Your continuing review is scheduled for April 2018. Please notify our office if your study has been terminated or completed before the review period.

Please find attached the approved, stamped informed consent document to be used with this protocol. As principal investigator, you are responsible for maintaining all signed consent forms for at least three (3) years after completion of the study.

No change in this approved research protocol can be initiated without the IRB’s approval. This includes any proposed revisions or amendments to the protocol or consent form. Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, complications, and/or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance immediately.

All team members are required to complete the CITI human subjects training course, http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/training.html, and review the IRB policies on Responsibilities of Principal Investigators and the Responsibilities of Research Team Members available at https://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/resources.html.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact us if you have any questions and use the IRB number and title when referencing the study in future correspondence.

Good luck with your study.
Sincerely,

Amy Smitherman
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Website: http://www.clemson.edu/research/compliance/irb/
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