

Organizational culture in sport: A conceptual, definitional, and methodological review

Christopher R. D. Wagstaff

Suzanna Burton-Wylie

University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom

Christopher R.D. Wagstaff, Department of Sport and Exercise Science, University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom. Suzanna Burton-Wylie, Department of Sport and Exercise Science, University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Christopher R. D. Wagstaff, Department of Sport and Exercise Science, University of Portsmouth, Spinnaker Building, Cambridge Road, Portsmouth PO1 2ER, United Kingdom. E-mail: chris.wagstaff@port.ac.uk

Abstract

In this article we present a review of organizational culture relevant to sport psychology. In doing so, we outline the various ways scholars have conceptualised organizational culture; definitions of organizational culture, and; methods used to study this concept. In an attempt to stimulate reflection, discourse and action, the review concludes with considerations for conceptual, definitional, and methodological approaches to the study of organizational culture in the field of sport psychology.

Keywords: cultural, duty of care, characteristics, recommendations, organizational sport psychology.

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In this paper we present a review of organizational culture relevant to sport psychology. In doing so, we outline the various ways scholars have conceptualised organizational culture; definitions of organizational culture, and; methods used to study this concept. In doing so, we first we consider the question, “where have we been?”, before reviewing extant literature on organizational culture in sport, and conceptual, definitional, and methodological considerations.

Organizational culture in sport: Where have we been?

The title of this section of the paper is intended to have two purposes. First, it is intended to facilitate reflection on the historical emergence and progress on organizational culture in sport, to which we will shortly turn. Second, the title is intended to be provocative. Why, have sport psychologists largely elided the study of organizational culture, when there have been thousands of publications on this topic in other fields of psychology? To say we believe organizational culture as a concept has “arrived” would be ignorant of many years of research on this concept outside of sport (and a small body of work within sport). Yet, the field of sport psychology has been a bit-part player in the academic pursuit of organizational cultural and arguably should have played a more prominent role. Indeed, some scholars have already commented on “the fall of organizational culture” and labelled the topic “intellectually dead” (Alvesson, Kärreman, & Ybema, 2017, pp. 105), in favour of concepts such as organizational identity, commitment, change, and sensemaking. Perhaps sport psychology has “missed the boat” on organizational culture. Nevertheless, we believe that due to a confluence of research trends and applied needs, now is an important time for dedicating greater attention to organizational culture in sport psychology. That is, there is a timely convergence of the substantial growth in organizational and cultural sport psychology research since the turn of the Century and the changing landscape of elite sport environments. In order to fully explicate this convergence, we will provide a brief overview of the emergence of organizational sport psychology and cultural sport psychology, before turning to the current elite sport landscape.

Organizational culture has been identified as having a significant influence on performance outcomes at the Olympic Games (e.g., Gould, Greenleaf, Guinan, & Chung, 2002; Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, 2001), as a source of strain for athletes (e.g., Arnold, Fletcher, & Daniels, 2013) talent development (e.g., Henriksen, 2010) and organizational functioning (e.g., Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009). In 2009, Fletcher and Wagstaff concluded their review of the then nascent research on organizational psychology in elite sport by stating:

Those governing and managing elite sport have a duty of care to protect and support the mental well-being of its employees and members. In addition to these statutory requirements, NSOs also have an ethical obligation to create performance environments which facilitate individual and group flourishing... It appears that the “global sporting arms race” has had both positive and negative consequences for those operating in elite sport. A convergence of evidence points to the organizational environment as having the potential to significantly impact on individuals’ well-being and performance. It also indicates that the climate and culture in elite sport requires careful and informed management in order to optimize individuals’ experiences and organizational flourishing. However, the body of knowledge is still in its early stages and restricted. (p. 432-433)

In the intervening years, sport psychology scholars have contributed to a burgeoning body of research examining organizational life in sport. Indeed, a growing body of literature (see, for reviews, Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009; Wagstaff, 2017; Wagstaff, Fletcher & Hanton, 2012; Wagstaff & Larner, 2015) has showcased the salience and utility of organizational psychology in sport. A forthcoming special issue of the *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* dedicated to organizational psychology in sport (see Wagstaff, 2019) provides further evidence of this currency. Moreover, in an attempt to better locate future research this field, Wagstaff and colleagues (see Wagstaff & Larner, 2015; Wagstaff, 2017) recently proposed an organizing structure for the research within organizational sport psychology based on four complementary

areas: emotions and attitudes (e.g., Hings, Wagstaff, Thelwell, Gilmore & Anderson, 2018; Wagstaff, Fletcher & Hanton, 2012; 2012; Wagstaff, Hanton & Fletcher, 2013; Wagstaff & Hanton, 2017); stress and well-being (Arnold & Fletcher, 2012; Arnold et al., 2013; Arnold, Wagstaff, Steadman, & Pratt, 2017; Larner, Wagstaff, Corbett, & Thelwell, 2017); organizational behaviour (e.g., Aoyagi, Cox, & McGuire, 2008; Arthur, Wagstaff, & Hardy, 2017; Fletcher & Arnold, 2011), and; (high performance) environments (Henriksen & Stambulova, 2017; Jones, Hardy, & Gittens, 2009; Martin, Eys, & Spink, 2017; Pain, Harwood, & Mullen, 2012). Organizational culture as a line of research inquiry should best be located within the last of these areas of study, that is, the study of organizational environments.

In addition to the developments in organizational sport psychology in the last decade, this period has characterised by a “cultural turn” (see Ryba, Schinke, & Tennebaum, 2010). Specifically, a growing body of researchers have focussed their attention on the topic of cultural sport psychology, with the aim of developing a more contextualised understanding of marginalised voices and identities (see McGannon & Smith, 2015; Schinke & Hanrahan, 2009). According to McGannon and Smith, the central reason for the advocacy of cultural sport psychology is “because culture shapes how we think, feel, and behave; we cannot step outside culture, thus to ignore it would be to miss a key matter that shapes people's self-identities and lives” (p. 79). Grounded in social constructionism, research on cultural sport psychology promotes the use of narrative inquiry and discourse psychology to develop cultural praxis (McGannon & Smith, 2015). That is, cultural sport psychology researchers seek to be emancipative, with the goal of illuminating multiple forms of knowledge and understanding and to create opportunities for individuals as cultural beings in sport contexts. The topics aligned with cultural sport psychology include: race, gender, acculturation, disability, motherhood, and sexual abuse. While each of these topics has an important place in the pursuit of inclusive and just sport, and will go some way to assisting the understanding of culture within sport organizations, the research conducted on cultural sport psychology does constitute or speak

directly to organizational culture *per se*. Indeed, despite substantial research developments in organizational sport psychology and cultural sport psychology over the past decade, the research dedicated to *organizational culture* in sport remains comparatively disjointed as a discipline and constrained by its almost exclusive examination within the field of sport management (see Maitland, Hills, & Rhind, 2015). Thus, research has often been restricted to illustrating generalized concepts of organizational culture supported by examples from sports, rather than emerging from sport-specific contexts.

The second element of the confluence pointing to growth in organizational culture relates to the changing landscape of elite sport cultures (see Wagstaff, 2017). That is, recent media reports and anecdotal evidence from across a range of sports has led to questions about whether welfare, safety, and duty of care are being given the priority they deserve. At a time of unprecedented success for British sport in terms of medals, championships and profile, this raises challenging questions about whether the current balance between welfare and winning is right and what we are prepared to accept as a nation, citizen, and practitioner. In light of these questions, a recent report on and recommendations for improving the welfare and duty of care for all those engaged in sport in the United Kingdom was published (see Grey-Thompson, 2017). In March of 2017, UK Sport launched a cultural health check across all Olympic sports. The results of phase one, which surveyed 1,525 athletes, coaches, staff and stakeholders, showed that although the overwhelming majority of individuals felt positive about the UK's World Class programme, with 90 per cent reported feeling proud to be part of the system, and 91 per cent believing those involved have good intentions, 30 per cent of athletes had either experienced or witnessed unacceptable behaviour, and 24 per cent of athletes reported that they felt there were no consequences when people behave inappropriately. Those sports falling short of expected standards as identified by the survey have been given action plans following discussions with UK Sport to support change, and with funding withdrawal an ultimate possible

outcome. In sum, the elite sport landscape has changed and organizations face unparalleled pressure to ensure both welfare and winning with undesirable consequences should they fail.

To fully illuminate organizational cultural, we must understand where organizational culture research “has been”, and we now provide a review of the sport research on this concept. We then use this research backdrop to take stock and consider definitional, conceptual, and methodological approaches to organizational culture.

A review of organizational culture in sport

While sport psychologists have called for the study organizational culture within sport psychology for some time (e.g., Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009), it has been the field of sport management that has hitherto led the way (see Girginov, 2006; Kaiser, Engel, & Keiner, 2009; Maitland et al., 2015; Schroeder, 2010a). Early culture research in the field of sport management adopted a leadership-centric approach to culture change and culture strength in American universities (Weese, 1995; 1996). Specifically, Weese aimed to understand the concepts of transformational leadership and organizational culture within the administrative departments of campus recreation programmes of Big Ten and Midwestern conference universities, using both quantitative (e.g., the Leadership Behavior Questionnaire) and qualitative (e.g., the Culture Strength Assessment and Culture Building Activities instruments) methods. Weese (1995) found the programmes led by high transformational leaders: a) possessed stronger organizational cultures, with staff members sharing stories of togetherness, tight-knit family atmosphere and leaders communicating and shaping stated values (e.g., honesty and mutual respect), increasing employee commitment, and, b) carry out culture-building activities (e.g., managing change, achieving goals, coordinated teamwork and customer orientation) with members, speaking to the need for customer service. However, transformational leaders were not found to be more effective in penetrating the culture throughout at the corporate level of their respective programmes. In the second of these studies, Weese (1996), adopted quantitative measures with 19 Directors from the American Athletic

Conferences to determine if a significant relationship existed between either executive transformational leadership or organizational culture and campus recreation programme effectiveness. While the results of Weese's (1996) study did not show leadership to be significantly related to programme success, he did find a positive correlation between culture strength and organizational effectiveness, thereby producing some preliminary insights into the linkage between the concepts of leadership, culture and organizational effectiveness. These findings were supported in a review by Scott (1997), who also discussed the existence of a relationship between culture and transformational leadership, concluding that a strong positive culture in a corporate organization, established through visions, collaboration and communication, generally equates with overall success.

Doherty and Chelladurai (1999) took a unique approach by reviewing cultural diversity and its impact on organizations, and proposed a theoretical framework for managing cultural diversity as a function of the underlying organizational culture or shared values in an organization. They argued that the potentially constructive or destructive influence of cultural diversity is a function of the management of that diversity, which is ultimately a reflection of organizational culture, or 'how things are done around here'. Doherty and Chelladurai described organizational culture along a continuum of valuing similarity and diversity in the organization, and that the benefits of cultural diversity (e.g., creativity, challenge, constructive conflict) will be realised when an organizational culture of diversity underlies the management of that diversity. Moreover, the authors proposed that these benefits are heightened when the situation dictates a high degree of task interdependence and complexity, and that personal culture can manifest in organizations through symbolic (e.g., clothing, language) and substantive (e.g., values, perceptions) behaviours and while groups and organizations can benefit from multiple perspectives and perceptions of diversity.

Zevenbergen, Edwards and Skinner, (2002) adopted the Bourdieusian concept of 'habitus' (i.e., a system of embodied dispositions and tendencies that organize the ways in

which individuals perceive the social world around them and react to it) to examine specific practices and rituals (e.g., appearance, language, interactions) at an Australian golf club. They found cadets assimilating and attempting to learn the cultural system of the golf club were essential if the junior golfer was to remain a member, with those that did not conform via acculturation marginalized or excluded.

In one of the first studies to explicitly refer to organizational culture in sport psychology, Cresswell and Eklund (2007), completed a longitudinal study with professional New Zealand Rugby players, interviewing nine players and three members of team management (i.e., fitness trainers or medical staff) over a 12-month period to identify the central factors (viz. influences, antecedents, symptoms, and consequences), process and changes in the burnout syndrome. Reports from seven of the nine players were consistent with descriptions for burnout (e.g., heavy playing and training demands; injury and non-selection). Poor relationships with team and management were also noted by players as a factor in burnout, with poor communication, honesty and a lack of openness highlighted by the players.

Pfister and Radtke (2009), presented three studies focusing on gender differences in German sport organizations, aimed at: 1) understanding women's perspectives on leadership and how women in leadership positions manage to combine their occupations, housework and family responsibilities; 2) surveying individuals in executive positions in sport organizations to examine differences between men and women's opinions and careers, and; 3) a "drop-out" study to identify the barriers faced by leaders who left their position earlier than planned. The findings from this programme of research indicated that despite having similar qualifications and a similar commitment to sport, women did not have the same status as men at an executive level, while, gender-specific barriers hindered women in their career advancement due to them not complying with the characteristics of an 'ideal leader' (e.g., high socio-economic status, freedom from family duties and a 'thick-skin' during conflict). Later, Frontiera (2010), explored leadership and organizational culture transformation in professional sport, in an attempt to

understand how leaders in professional sport changed culture, and whether leaders were aware of different elements of organizational culture. After interviewing and observing six owners from the National Basketball Association (NBA), National Football League (NFL) and Major League Baseball (MLB), who all had experience of leading a sport organization through successful culture change, five themes were developed, forming an initial model for organizational culture change in professional sport. These themes, were: 1) Symptoms of a Negative Culture (e.g., a new leader arrives and witnesses the damage from past leadership); 2) My Way (e.g., a new leader implements a new way of doing things and sets out to communicate their values, vision and plan); 3) Walk the Talk (e.g., through both daily and key organizational decisions, the leader repeatedly emphasizes the new values); 4) Embedding the New Culture (e.g., an organization needs to experience success for members to embrace new values without reservation); and 5) Our Way (e.g., a new culture, complete with new values and improved decisions is completed). These themes highlighted the salience of leaders developing a simple vision along with a plan to see that vision realized. Recent work by Cruickshank and Collins (2012a) extended these culture change findings, with the authors conceiving culture in sport as day-to-day decisions based on management ideals and athletes' beliefs. Later, Cruickshank, Collins and Minten (2014; 2015) argued that successful culture change in an Olympic setting requires support from the CEO, coaching staff, athletes, support staff and media, while leaders use 'dark' behaviours to shape relationships and establish control to determine performance outcomes. Although, it should be noted that these authors were at pains to locate their work as focusing on the performance team (i.e., athletes and coaches) and delineate this from *organizational* culture and the organizational psychology in sport research agenda.

To further unpack the relevance of culture to the study of sport management, Girginov (2010) presented a review and argued for the interpretation of sport management as a specific cultural system of meaning and practice. In this review, it was proposed that 'seven aspects of culture' demonstrate the importance of culture-sport management research. The seven aspects,

comparable to those in Table 1, help explain how culture and sport “both strive to create order and to avoid uncertainty ... and sport managers’ beliefs, values and assumptions broadly constitute their ‘ethos’, which is often interpreted as national culture or ‘collective programming of the mind’” (p. 411). Nevertheless, according to Girginov, individuals carry cultural imprints of our upbringing (e.g., family, religion, gender, ethnicity) which we do not abandon in a given sport environment, rather we aim to accommodate differences in cultural views. Such arguments point to the importance of leadership and the need to adopt a culturally-informed approach, with Girginov concluding “sport managers thus become mediators of meaning, while sport organizations become institutions for socialization, acculturation and control” (p. 413). In 2013, Mills and Hoerber interviewed and observed youth and adult figure skaters to explore organizational culture through artefacts of their Canadian skating club, and to enable reflections on institutionalized norms that may unintentionally influence the community. The authors interpreted their results to indicate that members took pride in the unique facility of the figure skating club, emphasizing a sense of belonging. Yet, contradiction was observed regarding achievement-orientated artefacts, such as plaques, and the wall of fame, which inspired some members but not others, some of whom perceived these artefacts to reflect exclusivity.

Another key contribution to the understanding organizational culture from the field of sport management comes from Maitland et al.’s (2015) systematic review of 33 studies published between 1995 and 2013. In doing so, Maitland and colleagues structured their review according to three ‘building blocks’ of organizational culture, as suggested by Martin (2002); research paradigm and methods; the perspective on, definition and operationalization of culture; and the research interest of the study. Demographically, they found that research was heavily based in North America (almost half the studies) and Australia (four), while two thirds of the total studies collected their data from university sport organizations, six from professional sports, and the rest from local and national sport organizations. Further, all but one study

collected data from a sample of management and employees, with the one exception to this including a sample of managers only. The authors concluded that researchers should consider the views and experiences of coaches and expand beyond North America and Australia samples. They found no pattern in the researcher paradigms, methodological approach or how organizational culture is conceptualize or defined. However, they did identify trends in: a) the methodological approach taken, with qualitative researchers exploring through interviews and quantitative researchers examining using the OCAI questionnaire, and; b) the perspective, with 70% utilizing an integration perspective (i.e., culture is consistent across the environment), and supported by the observation that half of the studies reviewed conceived culture as something shared, adopting Schein's (1985) definition of organizational culture.

A notable contribution to the examination of organizational culture in sport psychology has been made through a programme of research led by Henriksen and colleagues (e.g., Henriksen, Stambulova, & Roessler, 2010a; 2010b; 2011; 2015). Adopting a holistic ecological approach Henriksen and colleagues took steps to redirect the focus in talent development from the individual athlete to the environment in which talented athletes develop. Over the course of several studies, these researchers investigated successful athletic talent development environments (ATDEs), and paid considerable attention to the organizational context of the environment. For instance, Henriksen, Stambulova, and Roessler have examined factors influencing success in a sailing milieu (2010a), track and field team (2010b), and kayaking environment (2011). Collectively, this work has located organizational culture as an important component of the holistic talent development environment, viewing culture as a series of assumptions a person makes about their environment, which are grouped into three levels (viz. artefacts, values, and assumptions), each level becoming more difficult to articulate and change. This work has shown that a hierarchal system which values open communication, promotes athlete autonomy, and supports athletes in their education and continuous development, are more likely to experience sporting success. Henriksen and colleagues (see

Henriksen, Larsen, & Christensen, 2014) summarised these findings and proposed that successful ATDEs are unique but also share a number of features, including: 1) opportunities for inclusion in a supportive training community; 2) role models; 3) support of sporting goals by the wider environment; 4) focus on long-term development rather than short-term success; 5) the integration of factors outside of sport, such as school, family and other components of the environment; and 6) a coherent organizational culture.

Building on his previous research, Henriksen (2015), used this ecological perspective to provide a sport psychology intervention to the Danish national orienteering team, aimed at optimising their organizational culture. An initial needs assessment with athletes and head coaches identified a team culture that was less-than-optimal, with athletes reporting unhealthy competition in the team (e.g., talking behind each other's back and not discussing strategies but keeping secrets), and a disloyal style of communication, all of which has a negative impact on performance. During a one-week training camp, members of the performance environment discussed their positive experiences and characterized what made them when at their best, identifying their 'Top-5' espoused team values (viz. "We make each other better", "We act as a team", "We train to win", "We lead professional lives", "We have clear agreements (about routines and procedures)"). Henriksen reported that the integration of the new values into the team's identity and performance environment was facilitated by several strategies: 1) Ongoing evaluation (e.g., collectively evaluating one of the values each training session); 2) Positive story of the day (e.g., speaking to a teammate about something good they had done that day and how it reflected the values); Values visible (e.g., value symbols hung on walls around the training areas); Hug or High-Five (e.g., non-verbal communication based on whether a teammate looked happy or sad); State goals (e.g., each athlete stating their desired result and process goal in an open session at the start of a competition). Evaluating the intervention, Henriksen (2015) noted that the problematic culture had disappeared, with athletes described feeling at ease in the national team with a more supportive group culture. Moreover, the coach

subsequently regularly engaged with the athletes and wider performance team and the story of their successful culture change was told to new members, thus serving as a verbal artefact of the new team culture. The programme of work undertaken by Henriksen and colleagues has significantly extended the knowledge on high performance and talent development environments in sport. While Henriksen and colleagues view organizational culture as only one element of a broader holistic ecological approach, their work has perhaps made the greatest empirical steps in the exploration of this concept in sport psychology to date. Moreover, the researchers' focus on talent development environments rather than organizational culture *per se*, arguably limits the attention they have been able to dedicate to conceptual, definitional, and methodological considerations for organizational culture as a standalone line of inquiry. Indeed, it is to a broader discussion of these considerations that we now turn our attention.

Approaches to conceptualising organizational culture

Although we have briefly summarized the literature on organizational culture in sport, we have resisted the urge to proceed directly onto definitional perspectives on this concept. We do so because a fuller understanding of such definitions requires an appreciation of the ways researchers have conceptualized organizational culture, and in turn, how it has been studied. Hence, the following sections of this manuscript will provide an overview of approaches to understanding organizational culture, definitions, of organizational culture, and the methods for studying organizational culture.

One way to distinguish approaches to conceptualising culture is to contrast those that focus on culture as something that organizations *have* and those that conceive culture as something organizations *are* (cf. Smircich, 1983). The perspective allied with “organizations have cultures” might also be referred to as an objectivist-functionalist view (see Alvesson, 1993). Researchers who adopt this approach typically conceive culture as an organizational variable or attribute that both is affected by and affects other organizational variables. The underpinning goal of researchers adopting this functionalist approach is to better understand the

empirical relationship between culture and outcomes such as effectiveness, performance, efficiency and productivity. Not surprisingly, such approaches have their strongest currency in fields such as sports management and positivistic-oriented research in sport psychology (see, for sport examples, Choi & Scott, 2008; Weese, 1996). According to Alvesson (1993), the objective-functionalist approach to organizational culture can be characterized by a technical interest, with the goal being to develop understanding and knowledge of causal relationships, before attempting to manipulate or control these variables to achieve a desired outcome. In research beyond sport (Alvesson, 2002), this approach to organizational culture has been praised for its utility for achieving high levels of employee commitment and articulation of vision in non-sport organizations (see, for a sport example, Choi, Martin & Park, 2008).

An alternative conceptual approach is the “organizations are cultures”, often referred to as the subjectivist-interpretivist view (see Alvesson, 1993). The focus of this approach is to understand what being part of an organization means to those who operate within it, and the processes by which this meaning is understood and enacted. The underpinning goal of researchers adopting this interpretivist approach is to illuminate “nonrational, taken-for-granted, underlying assumptions that drive organizational behavior and the shared interpretive schemas of organizational members” (pp. 365-366). Accordingly, from this perspective, culture is not a variable that can be measured and managed, but a root metaphor for analysing and interpreting culture (Smircich, 1983), such that “organizational culture is not just another piece of the puzzle, it is the puzzle” (Pacanowsky & O’Donnell-Trujillo, 1983, p. 146). According to Alvesson (2002), the subjective-interpretivist approach to organizational culture can be characterized by a practical-hermeneutic (i.e., describing and understanding how culture is created in organizations) or emancipatory (i.e., critically analysing the aspects of organizations that control personal autonomy). In turn, symbolism has been a central tenet of this perspective with researchers drawing from the narratives, myths, rituals, and legends they encounter in organizational life. The conceptualisation of organizational culture from this approach allows

emphasises an interest in more implicit processes of meaning-making, covert power processes, and backstage politics, and provides a rich analysis of everyday organizational life (see, for sport examples, Cresswell & Eklund, 2007; Henriksen, Stambulova, Roessler, 2010a; 2010b; 2011; Larsen, Alfermann, Henriksen & Christensen, 2013; Smith, 2009; Southall & Nagel, 2003). This approach does not necessarily propose that organizations lack culture, but that they are more alike to sites where different cultural elements are integrated (see Alvesson et al., 2017). To account for this the complexity of this approach, interpretivist organizational culture researchers have explored *inter alia* cultural ambiguities (Young, 1989) and paradoxes (Ybema, 1996), and the occurrence of subcultures (Van Maanen & Barley, 1985) and countercultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983). Such work has contributed to an increasing awareness that organizational culture is complex, and that the objectivist-functionalist (i.e., that culture can be designed and engineered) is highly complicated, if not impractical.

Another way to distinguish between organizational culture approaches is to use Martin's (see Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Martin, 1992; 2002) three-perspective (viz. integration, differentiation, and fragmentation) framework to explicate and decipher what has, and has not, been learned from a given study. Each perspective has a complementary view in relation to their orientation to consensus, relation among manifestations, and treatment of ambiguity. The boundaries of the three perspectives are viewed by Martin (1992) as permeable and indicative of the primary emphasis of a study rather than an oversimplification of the characteristics of a study. From an integration perspective, researchers emphasize definitions of culture that include an explicit focus on consensus, clarity, consistency on what is shared, and elides conflict and ambiguity within the organization. This implies a singular organization-wide notion of culture, whereby culture is that which is clear and uncontested. Martin (2002) observed that integration studies typically focus on senior leader or managerial views rather than lower-level employees, and prioritise generic consensus (e.g., assumptions) over superficial conflict (e.g., Frontiera, 2010; Schroeder, 2010b; Weese, 1995). Alternatively, some definitions stress conflict between

opposing points of view, a differentiation perspective. From the differentiation perspective, inconsistent interpretations of cultural phenomena are emphasized because they represent the real world of organizations. As such, there may be no organization-wide consensus on culture, rather inconsistency across occupational, functional, or subcultural levels is often the focus (e.g., Colyer, 2000; Parent & MacIntosh, 2013; Schroeder, 2010a). Nevertheless, subcultures are viewed as having consensus within themselves, whereby conflict between subcultures is often the focus of differentiation studies, with ambiguity in this domain being “relegated to the boundary” (Martin, 1992, p. 83). In contrast, in fragmentation studies, researchers place ambiguity at the centre of culture, whereby ambiguity is embraced, and viewed as a normal part of everyday organizational life. Researchers often present cultural irony, paradox, and tension reflective of a loosely connected web of individuals who may change positions on a variety of issues for unknown reasons. As such, “their involvement, their sub-cultural identities, and their individual self-definitions fluctuate, depending on which issues are activated at a given moment” (Martin, 1992, p. 153).

In reflecting on the potential utility of Martin’s categorical approach to conceptualising organizational culture, several considerations are worthy of mention. Martin (1992) argued that although researchers may state their conceptualisation of culture, it is the cultural *manifestation* that researchers study, and which reveals how the authors of a given study define culture. Further, Martin argued that three kinds of cultural manifestation are frequently studied: forms (e.g., jargon, rituals, and stories), practices (e.g., tasks, or ways of communicating) and content themes (e.g., deeply held group assumptions, or more public espoused values of those in the organization). Although useful, Martin’s framework has been the focus of some critical debate. Specifically, some authors (e.g., Ehrhart, Schneider, & Macey, 2014) have questioned the extent to which the perspectives represent different lenses to view an organization’s culture or whether they are culture typologies. Additionally, scholars (e.g., Alvesson, 1993; Alvesson, 2002; Schein, 1991; Trice, 1991) have generally questioned whether “the essence of any culture

is pervasive ambiguity” (Martin et al., p. 732). To elaborate, Schein (1991) questioned the extent to which an organization can have a culture at all “if there is no consensus... there is conflict or if things are ambiguous” (p. 248). Others, such as Alvesson (2002), have been more accommodating, accepting that ambiguity is inherent in culture, but that it is “not something about which most researchers are concerned on the level of the collective” (p. 163). According to Ehrhart et al. (2014), part of the confusion may be due to Martin’s (2002) examples of fragmentation studies, which illustrate consensus among employees regarding the presence of ambiguity in the organization, thereby seemingly combining the integration and fragmentation perspectives. For Trice (1991), the paradoxes, contradictions, and inconsistencies that are central to fragmentation perspectives are clearly visible in organizational life, yet for him, individuals and groups within organizations do tend to share some commonalities in their experiences, perceptions, and assumptions, without which organizations would be unable to function in a sufficiently coordinated manner. Indeed, it should be noted that Martin (2002) advocated for a three-perspective theory of culture, in which integration, differentiation and fragmentation were simultaneously used to analyse organizations. Ehrhart et al. (2014) characterised this approach as studying the macro general culture, the specific subcultures that might exist, and culture strength at the same time, and argue that such broad and multifaceted, multilevel thinking could lead to interesting advancements for the field. Indeed, several sport management researchers have conducted studies using all three of Martin’s three perspectives, with relative success (e.g., for sport examples, Girginov, 2006; Girginov, Papadimitriou, Lopez de D’Amico, 2006). Nevertheless, such pragmatic approaches might be critiqued by epistemological and ontological purists, adverse to mixed-methods designs.

So far in this article, we have referred frequently to Alvesson’s (2002) work and believe readers might have interest in his eight metaphors for how culture has been conceptualized. These are outlined in Table 1. These metaphors offer both researchers and practitioners with accessible terms for the communication of organizational culture.

[TABLE 1 AROUND HERE]

More recently, Alvesson et al. (2017), reflecting on several decades of research on organizational culture, pointed to the potential value of approaches to organizational culture research aligned with Swidler's (1986) cultural toolkit approach and organizational identity. Taking the first of these, Swidler's proposed that there are not only different cultures, but also different ways to mobilise and use culture. In outlining this position, she used the metaphor of a "toolkit" to describe a diverse repertoire of tacit (e.g., attitudes, styles) and explicit (e.g., rituals, beliefs) cultural resources. This toolkit represents the resources for action planning available to a given individual at a given time. From this simplistic perspective, culture is something that provides skills and competencies that may be exploited and utilized to engage with and solve problems through strategies for action. To elaborate, according to Alvesson et al. (2017) an individual's chosen strategy for action is dependent on culture because one's culture provides and sustains the strategies of action available for pursuit.

Organizational identity has been studied as a cultural resource in industrial and organizational psychology, and offers an exciting avenue for research. This approach relates to an interest in how identities are shaped and played out in organizations, with specific reference to how social actors deploy culture as a resource to develop, sustain or change an individual or collective identity. Perhaps the most valuable use of organizational identity in the study of organizational culture lies in its utility as a constructed, performative, linguistic practice (cf. Alvesson et al., 2017). That is, shared identity within a given sport organization is developed, sustained or changed through accounts and interactions between members of that organization. These processes might take the form of narratives, conversations, and accounts of events. Over time, these (life)stories will be refined and repeated, such that they provide a rich cultural fabric that portrays the accounts of events in the organization's past and present. In turn, these accounts may provide information to individuals (e.g., athletes) and those with whom they interact (e.g., coaches, support staff, stakeholders) with information about who the individuals

within a given organization are, and who they want to become. The potential value of organizational identity as a lens to study organizational culture is even more appealing when one reflects on the increasing portrayal of individual's existence in elite sport organizations as precarious (e.g., Gilmore, Wagstaff, & Smith, 2018; Wagstaff, Gilmore, & Thelwell, 2015; 2016), and the need to enact emotional labour to be perceived as professional, often to the detriment of the individual's wellbeing and performance (e.g., Hings, Wagstaff, Anderson, Thelwell, & Gilmore, 2018; Hings, Wagstaff, Thelwell, Gilmore, & Anderson, 2018; Wagstaff & Thelwell, 2016).

To conclude this section, there are numerous ways to conceive organizational culture, with scholars continuing to debate the value of respective approaches. Perhaps the biggest challenge allied with this conceptual debate is the assertion that too little organizational culture work has translated into practice and improved the organizational lives of individuals (see Ehrhart et al., 2014). This poor translation is something that sport psychologists must be cognizant of and take steps to avoid. In doing so, sport psychologists might reflect on Dennison's (2001) five recommendations for making culture work more relevant to change and which were intended to offer a compromise between the varying approaches to organizational culture (see Table 2).

[TABLE 2 APPROXIMATELY HERE]

Approaches to defining organizational culture

A cursory glance at just a few of the organizational culture research published within and outwith sport will illustrate the variation in definitions proposed. The challenge facing scholars is, according to Pettigrew (1990), that culture is not just a concept, but the source of a family of concepts, and it is not just a family of concepts, but also a frame of reference or root metaphor for organizational analysis. This is perhaps reflective of the broad use "culture". Indeed, there is no global consensus on what culture means (see Borowsky, 1994; Ortnier, 1984). In perhaps its most broad sense, organizational culture is an umbrella concept for a way

of thinking that takes an interest in cultural and symbolic phenomena or aspects in organizations. Culture might be understood to be a system of common symbols and meanings, not the totality of a group's way of life (see Alvesson, 2000). Culture then, provides "the shared rules governing cognitive and affective aspects of membership in an organization, and the means whereby they are shaped and expressed" (Kunda, 1992, p. 8). Alvesson (2000) described culture according to this view, not as primarily inside people's heads, but somewhere between the heads of a group of people. Such definitions define culture in terms of communication and language use, but more than discourse, and inclusive of symbols and meanings that are publicly expressed during performances, social interactions, meetings, training, travel, perhaps even via electronic media. This perspective differs from culture research that emphasizes values and norms. According to Alvesson (2000), the latter tends to be treated as measurable, easily-linked to behaviour and leader control, whereas meaning and symbolism are viewed as more complex and requiring of qualitative and interpretive research designs.

Despite the array of definitions and ongoing debate in the extant literature, some commonalities have been identified. Ehrhart et al. (2014) argued that while universal agreement on these commonalities is unlikely and possibly naïve; nevertheless, drawing from a variety of similar attempts at integrative definitional attributes (e.g., Alvesson, 2002; Martin, 2002; Schein, 1991), they provided a list of characteristics and functions of organizational culture, namely that it: is shared; is stable; has depth; is symbolic, expressive, and subjective; is grounded in history and tradition; is transmitted to new members; provides order and rules to organizational existence; has breadth; is a source of collective identity and commitment, and; is unique. Given the numerous attributes listed here, it is not surprising that definitions of organizational culture are many and varied.

Most of the definitions – where they are provided – by those researching organizational culture in sport are drawn from general organizational culture literature (e.g., Colyer, 2000; Girginov, 2006; Zevenbergen et al., 2002), with only a small group of researchers adopting a

sport-based definition (e.g., Doherty & Chelladurai, 1999; Scott, 1997). Nevertheless, the most commonly-proffered definition of organizational culture in sport (see Cresswell & Eklund, 1997; Mills & Hoerber, 2013; Southall & Nagle, 2003) is the one originally outlined by Schein (1985). In a more recent edition of his text, Schein (2010) defined organizational culture 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).

Frequently, the term organizational culture is used to describe a view of a sport organization as a stable and unique amalgamation of meanings. From this perspective, organizations are viewed as microcultures, characterized by their meanings, values, and symbols, which are shared by members of the organization. As such many of the definitions within sport-based research have been aligned with an integration perspective as outlined in the preceding section. We now turn our attention from the various conceptualisations and definitions of organizational culture, toward the lenses through which it has been studied. In doing so, we focus on the level of analysis and the form that organizational culture takes.

Levels of organizational culture. A central debate within organizational culture research has been the depth or level of analysis. This consideration should not be confused with rigour and reflect the extent to which cultural content is objectively viewable or unobservable. In short, questions of level relate to how much “digging” is required to unearth the cultural information that is taken-for-granted and ingrained within organizational life. The principal distinction for approaches adopted by researchers is between what can objectively be observed or espoused versus what is “really” going on at a deeper level (Ehrhart et al., 2014). A widely-used categorization of organizational culture level is that outlined by Schein (1985; see, for a recent review, 2010), which includes three levels of organizational culture: artefacts, espoused values and beliefs, and underlying assumptions. Artefacts are readily-accessible by those

outside the organization, but the meaning of which may not be explicit without further insight. They include dress, the organization of facilities and physical environments, brand, logos, stories, rituals, language and architecture. Importantly, while these artefacts may appear to be similar across organizations, the meaning they have for individuals and teams will vary. It is common for studies of organizational culture to begin with an investigation of the artefacts and follow this with an examination of their symbolic meaning to individuals.

The espoused values of an organization are those that are articulated by leaders (e.g., performance directors), which may or may not reflect the values or beliefs of followers (e.g., athletes, coaches, support staff). In addition to these idealistic values, of equal importance are those that are communicated and shared through social interaction and the behaviours of individuals have been labelled the values in use. The challenges of ascertaining what is “really going on” in a given sport organization, is arguably why qualitative researchers have had a long-held interest in organizational culture research. Indeed, penetrating the espoused values façade is immeasurably important, but difficult to achieve via questionnaire methods alone. According to Schein, basic underlying assumptions reflect the deepest level of organizational culture and are the core, or essence of the culture. These assumptions influence the daily behaviours of individuals are often so taken-for-granted that individuals are unable to articulate and discern them. Indeed, these basics assumptions form around deeper dimensions of human existence. Rousseau (1990) proposed two additional levels to Schein’s framework: patterns of behaviour (e.g., how members interact to solve problems) and behavioural norms (i.e., beliefs about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour).

Forms of organizational culture. In addition to considering the level at which they conduct their work, researchers must also consider what forms of culture they will focus on. Martin and Frost (1996) distinguished between generalist (i.e., holistic descriptions of culture with a variety of manifestation) and specialist (i.e., a singular focus on one cultural manifestation) studies. In line with the distinction, several cultural manifestation trends exist,

and include, inter alia, jargon, myths, stories, legends, folklore, jokes, slogans, rituals, ties, ceremonies, celebrations, traditions, heroes, behavioural norms, rules, taboos, dress, and physical arrangements. Trice and Beyer organized these manifestations into four categories (viz. symbols, language, narratives, and practices). A symbol can be defined as an object – a word, material, behaviour or phenomenon - that stands ambiguously for something else and/or something more than the object itself (Cohen, 1974). Symbols condense complex meanings in an economic manner. Language may include slang, gestures, signals, songs, humour, jokes, gossip, rumours, metaphors, proverbs, and slogans. Narratives, may include legends, stories, sagas, and myths. Practices may include rituals, taboos, ceremonies, rites, and socialization. Now we have considered the levels and forms for studying organizational culture, we will provide a review of the methods used to study and change this phenomenon.

Methodological approaches to studying organizational culture

As noted in the previous sections of this review, there is much contention regarding the conceptualisation and definition of organizational culture. Perhaps not surprisingly, this contention has an influence on debates regarding the most appropriate methods to be adopted for studying – and, in turn, influencing – organizational culture. Indeed, the methods employed are rightly intertwined with the conceptual and definitional foundations laid by researchers. For instance, those researchers that focus on culture as something that organizations *have* are more likely to employ quantitative methods, and to a lesser degree qualitative, or mixed methods. Those that conceive culture as something organizations *are*, almost exclusively use qualitative methods.

In social science, there are two long-standing approaches to understanding the role of culture: 1) the inside perspective of ethnographers, who strive to describe a culture from the “native’s” point of view, and 2) the outside perspective of comparativist researchers, who attempt to describe differences across cultures in terms of a general, external standard. The emic and etic perspectives are often seen as being at odds – as incommensurable paradigms. Indeed,

in the large body of literature on organizational culture outside of sport, there has historically been a divide between researchers employing ethnographic methods (Gregory, 1983; Van Maanen, 1988) and those who favour comparative survey research (Schneider, 1990).

Emic accounts of organizational culture typically describe thoughts and actions primarily in terms of the actors' self-understanding - terms that are often culturally and historically bound. Such accounts are often inductively-oriented and conducted by researchers who adopt an insider's view to understand organizations *as* cultures. As such emic researchers have generally adopted qualitative methods to provide rich descriptions of what occurs in an organization and is more likely to involve sustained, wide-ranging interviews and observation of a single cultural group (e.g., Schroeder et al., 2010a). In contrast, etic models describe valuable phenomena that compare across cultures, with researchers more likely to adopt a deductive approach, attempt to isolate components of culture, or state hypotheses about their distinct antecedents and consequences, in line with the study of organizations *having* a culture. As such, etic research is more likely to involve brief, structured measures or observations of multiple cultural groups across differing settings, and commonly use quantitative methods to examine whether such frameworks are valid in the context they are applied (e.g., Choi & Scott, 2008; Colyer, 2000). In sum, although the two perspectives are defined in terms of theory, rather than method, the perspectives lend themselves to differing sets of methods.

To assist organizational culture researchers, Pettigrew (1990) noted seven issues pointing to why this area is so difficult to study:

1. The *levels* issue (it is difficult to study deeply held beliefs and assumptions)
2. The *pervasiveness* issue (organizational culture encompasses a broad number of interlocking organizational elements)
3. The *implicitness* issue (organizational culture is taken for granted and rarely explicitly acknowledged and discussed)
4. The *imprinting* issue (culture has deep ties to the history of the organization)

5. The *political* issue (cultural issues are tied to differences in power or status in the organization)
6. The *plurality* issue (organizations rarely have a single culture, but instead have multiple subcultures)
7. The *interdependency* issue (culture is interconnected with a broad number of other issues both internal and external to the organization)

In the same year, Schein (1990) proposed five categories for characterising methodological approaches to studying organizational culture, with all but one being qualitative: surveys, analytical descriptive, ethnography, historical, and clinical descriptive. More recently, Davey & Symon, (2001) recommended research on organizational culture be divided into two categories: 1) psychological perspectives that are positivist (i.e., reliant on experiments) and functionalist (i.e., common values held essential for the integration and development of a culture) in their approach, and; 2) anthropological and sociological (i.e., the study of human society) perspectives that are more subjective and interpretive in their approach. Elsewhere, Ouchi and Wilkins (1985) suggested separating qualitative studies into two categories, holistic studies (i.e., field observations) and semiotic studies (i.e., studying communication via signs and symbols). Regardless of approach to researching organizational culture in sport, there is more nuance than a simple dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative methods and several researchers have noted strengths and weaknesses of each methodological approach depending on the research goal (see Ehrhart et al., 2014; Rousseau, 1990). To elaborate, both Rousseau and later, Ehrhart et al., noted strengths and weaknesses of both qualitative and quantitative methods, and concluded that richer insights can be yielded when using multiple methods, given this coupling allows researchers to take advantage of the strengths of both approaches, while avoiding some of the weaknesses of using either approach exclusively.

Concluding thoughts

This review of conceptual, definitional and methodological approaches to the study of organizational culture showcases a very complex phenomenon. Indeed, organizational culture within and outwith the fields of sport management and sport psychology is not consistently approached or defined, and a multitude of methodological approaches have been employed. What is apparent from the preceding review, is that scholars researching organizational culture in sport have been heavily influenced by the field of organizational science, yet in that domain there is no “gold standard” approach to understanding and studying organizational culture, despite many years of debate. We conclude by providing some recommendations for researchers and practitioners seeking to advise on organizational culture change. These are certainly not intended to be exhaustive, and we merely hope to extend reader reflection.

Understanding organizational culture. The primary distinction observed within the extant and historical literature on organizational culture has been between those that conceive culture as something organizations have or something organizations are. Research aligned with the former treats organizational culture as a variable that can be harnessed for competitive advantage in sport. The goal is to understand how to change or remove a culture to benefit leaders. Research aligned with the latter captures holistic individual experiences, meanings and symbols, and typically includes individuals at various levels of organizations. We see value in conceptual and methodological innovation, but also note the importance of researchers clearly locating their work in line with the existing categorisations of organizational culture work.

Conceptual congruence. One of the largest challenges in this literature is the conceptual ambiguity. In many cases, researchers fail to define or consistently define their conceptual perspective, leaving the reader unclear as to how the work ‘fits’ into existing organizational culture knowledge. While conceptual precision might facilitate the comparison of studies and potentially the sequential development of ideas within this field, it would be impractical to call for a one-size-fits-all approach to organizational culture, particularly with the common use of subjectivist-interpretive approaches and emic, insider accounts. As such, we

recommend that researchers strive for conceptual congruence, whereby their work is presented with alignment of methodological choice with underlying epistemological assumptions (e.g., narrative inquiry with social constructionism), thus ensuring a “golden thread” across the conceptual, definitional and methodological, and interpretive elements of their work.

The unit of analysis. The appropriate unit of analysis is a crucial issue in organizational research as in many cases the focal unit of interest is a team or organization. In the case of organizational culture research, the dilemma is that the variable of interest, culture, is often measured at the individual level. In other words, individuals are asked for their perceptions about the culture of their sport organization. This results in differing levels of data measurement and analysis, whereby data is collected at the individual level but analysis takes place at the group level, to reflect culture as a collective phenomenon. Although problematic, this approach is defensible if appropriate aggregation processes are used (i.e., multilevel analyses). In order to aggregate individual data to a group level, correspondence is needed among the cultural definition, the level of data collection (e.g. individual, team, organization) and the data analysis to ensure methodological congruence.

Developing organizational culture. As sport psychology researchers get to grip with decoding organizational culture, a key consideration will be how and why the culture developed in the way it did. Schein (2010) argued that organizational founders, or significant forebears are likely to bring their assumptions and beliefs to the organization and reinforce these through what they pay attention to, devote resource to, and how they react to crises. Schein went on to propose that these are reinforced through secondary mechanisms such as organizational procedures, rites, and rituals, the design of space, stories and formal statements. Practitioners and leaders in sport organizations might reflect on how they reinforce beliefs, values and assumptions, or how they reinforce those of a previous leader. Additionally, monitoring subgroups and cliques might provide an insight into the development of organizational culture.

Maintaining organizational culture. Sport organizations are sites of substantial turnover and change, and the recruitment of performance staff is a constant consideration. It follows that individuals within organizations should give consideration to the maintenance of culture when newcomers arrive, how newcomers are socialised to learn about the culture of the organization. Indeed, scholars have increasingly acknowledged the need for organizations to invest resources in socialisation processes for new members (Wagstaff & Larner, 2015). Yet, research is required to better understand these processes.

Organizational culture change. A key question facing researchers and practitioners interested in organizational culture, is whether it can be managed. The preceding review indicates the diverse perspectives on how scholars understand, define, and study organizational culture, and it follows that there exist different views on its management. Some researchers believe organizational culture to be relatively stable regardless of personnel or environmental change (e.g., Schein, 2010), whereas, others (cf. Alvesson et al., 2017) have argued that individuals have relatively little effect on culture. Ehrhart et al. (2014), conclude that a contingency perspective is perhaps most appropriate, such that there are times when leadership can have a strong influence on organizational culture, and other times when such efforts will likely fail. Clearly, intervention research is largely missing from sport organizational culture literature (cf. Henriksen, 2015), yet it is clear that such efforts are highly complex.

Leader-led or leader-informed. Much of the existent organizational culture in sport researcher acknowledges the valuable role of leadership. Hence, researchers and scholars might avail themselves of the growing research on transformational leadership (see, for a review, Arthur, Wagstaff, & Hardy, 2017) and transformational coaching (see, for a review, Turnnidge & Côté, 2018). Briefly, these approaches concern the management of meaning and emphasize culture more than conventional leadership and coaching approaches, which have typically focused on behavioural typologies, coach-athlete relationships, and outcomes, and devoted less attention to values and emotions. As such, organizational leaders might actively cultivate the

symbolic significance of shared meaning, a common history, a golden age, idiosyncratic leaders and dramatic results, which may distinguish the organization and guide culture. Elsewhere, Cruickshank and Collins (2014) reported that sceptical, social dominance, Machiavellian/mischievous, and performance-focused ruthlessness behaviours were all employed during leaders' efforts to deliver change in their performance teams. Given the stigmatised nature of socially undesirable actions, as well as their links to destructive forms of leadership, it was notable that these leaders also felt that these behaviours, when appropriately engaged, were important and effective parts of their repertoire. Cruickshank and Collins noted that some of these behaviours might align with transformational approaches, but called for further examination to further illuminate these links given their development of themes that did not relate to transformational approaches. Conceptual and epistemological debates aside, clearly leadership has an important role to play within the study and influence of organizational culture in sport and we would advise readers to explore leadership theory as part of their upskilling. We do not believe that exclusively leader-led approaches to organizational culture are appropriate, but we do feel that researchers and practitioners should be leader-informed from a theoretical perspective.

The purpose and value of organizational culture work. Most of extant research on organizational culture in sport is focused on using this knowledge for competitive advantage reasons (e.g., talent development, asset maximisation). We are not naïve to recommend that sport organizations forgo their performance pursuit, but call on researchers and scholars to encourage a balance between performance and well-being in attempts to study or influence organizational culture. Here, we see much value in incorporating the spirit, approaches, and method allied with cultural sport psychology. That is, this field has generally focused on marginalised voices, and self-identity in a move away from the “eliteness” of traditional sport psychology research. Unfortunately, the world of elite sport is volatile, complex, and results-driven, and it is likely that some organizational leaders will have little patience for “culture”, if

performance does not follow or even precede. Given the global sporting arms race which has begun to characterise elite sport (cf. Fletcher & Wagstaff, 2009), what scholars, practitioners, and organizations must ensure is that there is no domination of what Alvesson et al. (2017) have labelled “the corporate beauty industry”, whereby aesthetic and decorative surfaces (e.g., facilities, marquee athletes, corporate and socially-mediated brand) lead to a disconnect between impression management and cultural orientation to distort “normal” or “necessary”.

To conclude, sport psychologists have some catching up to do in terms of understanding organizational culture and ought to be compelled to do so given a confluence research and applied themes. Nevertheless, organizational culture remains a contentious and complex phenomenon with regards to conceptual, definitional, and methodological perspectives. We hope this review has brought to the attention of the readership some of the debates and challenges within the field of organizational culture and hope this stimulates discourse, reflection, and action to progress this line of inquiry.

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1 Table 1. Metaphors for conceptualising organizational culture (Adapted from Alvesson, 2002).

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Culture as <i>exchange-regulator</i> | Culture acts to indirectly control individual's behaviours through shared social knowledge of the relational exchange between individuals and their organization. |
| Culture as <i>compass</i> | Culture provides individuals and teams with a shared set of values that guide their goal-directed behaviour in the pursuit of effectiveness. |
| Culture as <i>social glue</i> | Culture as shared beliefs and norms that bring individuals and teams toward a harmonious and consensual existence. |
| Culture as <i>sacred cow</i> | Culture as core values that individuals emotionally identify with, are committed to, and ultimately view as sacred. |
| Culture as <i>affect regulator</i> | Culture as a means to communicate rules for appropriate emotional expressions and as a mechanism to manage the emotional expression of individuals. |
| Culture as <i>disorder</i> | Culture as a jungle of ambiguity, characterized by uncertainty, contradiction, irony and confusion. |
| Culture as <i>blindness</i> | Culture as an unconscious and largely inaccessible concept, with limited individual access or understanding of its effects. |
| Culture as a <i>world-closure</i> | Culture as a leader-created social reality that restricts individual's or team's autonomy and runs counter to their interests. |

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3

1 Table 2. Recommendations for conducting organizational culture research and practice (adapted
2 from Dennison, 2001).

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1. Take the “native’s point of view” seriously by understanding their day-to-day concerns, even if they are instrumental- or results-focused.
 2. Create a systems perspective by moving the primary focus away from the deepest levels of culture to how these levels are linked together, allowing for those seeking to understand culture to start with the outer levels of culture that may be initially most accessible.
 3. Provide a benchmark or frame of reference for data while also acknowledging uniqueness. Comparing organizations’ values or behavioural norms may provide some insights that can be referenced in terms of an organization’s unique context and history.
 4. Focus on performance implications to better make the argument that culture issues are important; otherwise it may be difficult to gain traction with sport organization gatekeepers.
 5. Highlight symbols and contradictions to better understand how the organization has dealt with problems of internal integration and external adaptation, and how different groups in the organization may view those issues differently.

4