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Academic Executives' Perceptions of Team Relations and How These Relationships Impact
Leadership and Institutions

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Educational Administration
Higher Education

by

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May, 2020

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends. This has been a long process that has taken me away from time spent with you. You understood when I had to forego dinner invitations, game nights, birthday parties, special occasions, and holidays. You always asked about my progress and encouraged me to finish. This doctorate is not just for me but for all of us. I will always be indebted to you for your love, support, and encouragement.

Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge all of the study's participants, as they took time out of their busy days, answered questions about their relationships with coworkers, and opened up about their experiences being academic executives. I would like to take this opportunity to remember Dr. Marietta Del Favero. Dr. D. was a great colleague and professor. She was the faculty advisor that encouraged me to start the doctoral program. I will always have a special place in my heart for her. I want to thank my wife and partner, Colleen Kudla Arceneaux, who is my best friend in this thing called life. Without her support and having to bear the heavy lifting of the household, I would not have been able to complete my doctorate. Thank you Mom and Dad for everything you have given me. I hope I make you proud. I would like to acknowledge my brother, John Arceneaux, and my sister, Dana Arceneaux Courville, for taking care of our parents and understanding I couldn't always be there to help. Next, I want to thank my doctoral committee, Dr. Broadhurst, Dr. Beabout, and Dr. Welsh. Each of these gentlemen encouraged my inquiry, challenged me to dig deeper and helped through this journey. Specifically, I want to thank my chair and faculty advisor, Dr. Chris Broadhurst, for pushing me to do better, for encouraging me when I needed it, and for being a colleague and friend. Lastly, I want to thank my coworkers, my employees, and my boss who always supported my studies and the dissertation process. Thank you everyone!

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Abstract

Research suggests there are many factors that contribute to the success or failure of university leaders. This study explores one of these factors—the relationships between the university president and their executive team and the group's collective sociability—and uses social capital theory to suggest executive teams utilize relationships to influence leadership and the institution. The researcher employs a qualitative phenomenological approach using purposeful sampling to reveal how presidents and their executive teams perceive how their relational experiences impact the team and university. The research found that three themes emerged that broadly cover how organizational structure promotes or hinders relationship building, how relations are maintained and how the environment provides obstacles and opportunities for these academic executives to navigate. This study contributes to the body of literature related to educational leadership by offering current university executives and individuals aspiring to be a university or college executive insight into how the relationships among the executive team can be helpful or a hindrance.

Chapter One

Introduction

21st century post-secondary institutions across the United States face countless challenges that must be addressed by the professionals leading these institutions (Kezar, 2005; Lombardi, 2013). The leaders of these institutions are inundated by a barrage of issues ranging from maintaining regional and program specific accreditation, changing student body demographics, student access and preparation, federal and state mandates, accountability measures such as student retention and graduation rates, and a steep decline in state funding appropriated to public colleges and universities, as well as the changing professorate and technology (Kezar, 2000, 2012a; Milkovich, 2015; Newton, 2013; Reindl, 2004; Sav, 2016; Schmoll & Moses, 2002). Just as the issues are varied and complex, so too are today's universities and colleges (Bourgeois, 2016). Given that university campus operations are varied, complex, and decentralized, the presidents of these institutions do not oversee the day-to-day operations of the institution alone. Leadership of the organization is often distributed among a network (i.e., teams) of specialized professionals responsible for effectively running the institution (Birnbaum, 1988; Kezar, 2012a; Stevenson, 2001). Understanding how these team members relate within and outside their respective units is important to improve campus leadership and institutional performance.

In retrospect, universities have not always been the complex bureaucracies they are thought of as today but have evolved into stratified organizational structures. Accounts dating back to approximately 1720 B.C. reflect on the studies and training students endured and how the places where these individuals studied changed significantly over the years. It is these academic spaces that gave way to the university as an organized meeting place for students and faculty (Lucas, 2006). With that in mind, the first sign of university administrators and the role

they play are found in the royal charter for the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge (Brown, 2000; Scott, 2006). Tiers of administrators emerged, such as provosts and deans appointed to oversee the wellbeing and behavior of the students, treasurers or bursars charged with the welfare and maintenance of the university, and presidents or chancellors selected to supervise the administration (Lucas, 2006). By 1900, the structure of a president and a few professors serving as part-time registrars, provosts, and bursars proved insufficient, giving way to the rise of an administrative bureaucracy (Brown, 2000).

Borrowing from the hierarchical structure familiar in business, academia began to modify their organizations to enable universities to coordinate competing imperatives (Gumport & Snydman, 2002; Shafritz et al., 2005). Lucas (2006) refers to the bureaucratization of higher education as the response to growth in enrollment, increases in institution size, and the demands of new services, as well as to keep faculty and researchers free from the detailed and mundane, but essential, duties of running a complex organization. Educational administrative bureaucracy proved to be no different than a corporate setting or a government agency. Organizational growth led to an increased number of subunits, and the subunits become increasingly differentiated, specialized, complex, and bureaucratic (Birnbaum, 1988; Gumport & Snydman, 2002).

Organizational growth started around the turn of the 20th century, and for years after World War II, universities experienced a massive influx in enrollments. Women began entering college in larger numbers, public perception began to doubt a person's potential to rise through the ranks without a college education, and people in general began to see college as a place to meet the right people (Jenchs & Riesman, 2017). While expanding enrollments called for more student service professionals and academic affairs officers to manage the demand for additional

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services and academic programs, professionals were also needed to facilitate the finances that were aiding this expansion of access. Administrators were necessary to coordinate financial aid policies, programs, and opportunities, as well as to monitor legislative appropriations, philanthropic giving, research funding, and infrastructure expansion (Altbach et al., 1994; Jenchs & Riesman, 2017). All these trends could not be implemented and accounted for without new technologies for student learning, research productivity, enrollment management, accounting, reporting, public relations, and decision making. With these new roles and technologies came an increase in the number of professionals to administer their application.

As one can see, this expansion of student enrollment led to the creation of organization structures and positions that provided institutional services and activities. It is no coincidence that college presidents began entrusting the operations of their institution to professionals such as vice presidents, deans, and an assortment of directors and administrative staff specializing in student affairs, faculty relations, instructional development, facility management, athletics, business, and personnel operations (Birnbaum, 1988; Lucas, 2006). These teams are responsible for working closely together in collaboration with the president, all of which are responsible for leading and managing the institution and achieving institutional goals (Hoffman & Summers, 2000). The extent to how well these professionals work together as a cohesive network contributes to the performance of the institution (Warner & Appenzeller, 2011).

Birnbaum (1988) suggests that learning how colleges work requires looking at the institution as an organization comprised of groups of people filling roles and working together toward a common goal within formal structures. The executive team, often referred to as the president's cabinet, is responsible for closely working together with the president to develop and implement university initiatives. The executive team typically consists of the president, vice-

presidents, and other high-ranking administrators concerned with the management of institutional effectiveness. How well these administrators work together and with stakeholders contributes to the success of the president and the institution. Research suggests there are many factors that contribute to the success or failure of university leaders, such as personal communication skills, the willingness to build strong relationships with board members, engagement with community leaders, the executive team, the ability to manage change, and the ability to adapt to the campus culture (Trachtenberg et al., 2013).

Regardless of how complex the organizational structure becomes, for any effective work to occur, there must be a certain amount of consensus and communication among the members (Natemeyer & McMahon, 2001). This is especially important in organizations that rely on team-based work to accomplish goals and sustain institutional competitiveness (van Ameijde et al., 2009). Birnbaum (1988) held a similar sentiment that team members interact and influence each other through continuous personal exchanges. Institutional success depends on a functional executive team, and the ability of the president and team members to build relationships among themselves, subordinates, stakeholders, and lawmakers is essential in promoting initiatives and achieving the mission of the institution (Gupta et al., 2011).

Problem Statement

To face some of today's challenges, university leadership teams find themselves trying to gain public trust, reestablish credibility, and provide transparency (Bourgeois, 2016; Kezar, 2012a; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Korkmaz, 2007). It is essential for these teams to work well together to be effective, to be seen as a cohesive network, and to be able to leverage their creditability to create opportunity and affect change. Interestingly, little is known about how academic administrators work together in teams (Woodfield & Kennie, 2008). Adrianna Kezar

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(2014) provides a similar sentiment in her work related to higher education change and social networks: while networks have become part of our daily consciousness, there is still little research on the way these networks create and affect change.

The management of post-secondary institutions is a shared effort among a diverse group of professionals. Effective leaders are needed in higher education to deal with adversity, create strategic plans, reform their institutions, and make certain their institutions are sustainable and ready for global competition (Bourgeois, 2016). Unfortunately, the professionals who take on leadership roles have oftentimes spent a lifetime in faculty roles and are not prepared for the complexity and demands awaiting them. Bolman and Gallos (2011) note that many administrators found their way into the profession by chance, whether their administrative career progressed from an academic department head or evolved from a temporary, voluntary assignment that became permanent. This scenario, as well as others, may cause some team members to lack executive leadership experience; however, this shortcoming may be improved by a strong, well-constructed leadership team that utilizes their different experiences and personalities to achieve the institution's mission set forth by the president.

It is important to realize that organizational leaders face obstacles that have the potential to affect their performance (Bourgeois, 2016). These obstacles range from inappropriate behavior of staff, team conflicts, and employee issues related to learning agility, work quality, productivity and burnout. Poor performance of the president or a member of their executive team can have detrimental consequences in the achievement of institutional initiatives, can result in dismissal, and is costly to an institution (Trachtenberg et al., 2013). Unsuccessful campus administrations are a hindrance on both the financial and human resources of an institution, which ultimately creates instability and can adversely affect enrollment, retention, fundraising,

and institutional success (Trachtenberg et. al, 2013). Selecting the right mix of employees improves performance, job satisfaction, turnover, and institutional stability. Believing that university officials are intent on being good stewards of their resources and advancing their institutions, presidents and higher education executives can benefit from insights garnered from research in this area of educational leadership.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into how academic executives work together as teams and how their relationships create opportunities or challenges for the team and institution. Through a series of interviews with university executives, the researcher hopes to uncover a better understanding of the relationships among university executive team members and their perceptions as to how their social and relational experiences (i.e., social capital) influence their performance. These social interactions and experiences have a perceived value that affects change and enhances performance (Portes, 1998). Social scientists coined the term social capital to capture the notion that the investment in relationships can generate valuable gains and that social networks have value, which affects an institution's bottom line when used productively and, like other forms of capital, accumulates (Putman, 2000; Robinson, 2000; Warner, 2012) To capture the perceptions, or lived experiences, of university executives, a phenomenological research approach utilizing in-depth one-on-one interviews was utilized to investigate the experiences of 16 purposefully-selected higher education campus executives. These executive leaders consisted of post-secondary campus executives chosen from four universities located in Louisiana.

While the primary focus of the study is to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences academic executives reveal about the social aspects of leadership and the importance

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of relationships, the research contributes to the limited body of literature related to university executive teams and the impact social capital plays in the success of these professionals and their respective institutions (Hiland, 2008). Additionally, Kezar (2012b) and Posthuma and Al-Riyami (2012) note the gap in higher education literature relative to how academic administrators work together in teams and how social networking and networks create and affect change on college campuses.

Research Questions

Given that the research focusing on how the relationships among academic executive team members influence the performance of the university leadership and institution is limited, two research questions were generated from the review of literature in an attempt to identify how the social relations of the campus leadership team contribute to the performance of campus leadership and the institution. The following questions are used to guide the study: How do university executives perceive executive team relationships? How do university executives perceive these relationships impacting leadership and their institutions?

Definition of Terms

1. *Administration* - Group of individuals within an organization that share the necessity of designing effective procedures for coordinating the behavior of people (Natemeyer & McMahon, 2001).

2. *Change* - Is pervasive, affecting numerous offices and units across an institution; touching upon values, beliefs, culture, and structures, is intentional and occurs over time (Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

3. *Cohesion* - The degree to which members are attracted to their group. The total field of forces which act on members to remain in the group (Wilson, 1978).

4. *Culture* - Is the social glue that holds an organization together and unites people around shared values and beliefs (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

5. *Executive Team* - University administration is composed of two interrelated administrative cohorts: one is responsible for facilitating the management of academic departments; the other is charged with institutional administration and student services (Warner & Palfreyman, 1996).

6. *Leader* - One who develops a vision for organizational objectives supported and shared by all the staff in any position, actualizes this vision by sharing it among the staff and thus enhancing institutional success (Korkmaz, 2007).

7. *Network* - A group of people loosely connected through interdependencies such as values, preferences, goals or ideas. Networks can serve to aid social support, knowledge and change (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

8. *Organizational Structure* - Refers to the formal configuration between individuals and groups regarding the allocation of tasks, responsibilities and authority within an organization (Lunenburg, 2012).

9. *Performance* – defined as the action or process of carrying out or accomplishing an action, task or function.

10. *Reciprocity* - An attitude thought of as sensitivity to the behaviors and attitudes of others combined with the beliefs that there should be a return, balance, or social exchange of behaviors (Hatfield et al., 2013).

11. *Social Capital* - Refers to connections among individuals such as social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arrive from them (Putman, 2000).

12. *Team* - Addresses itself to the achievement of a specific task and so is driven by ends rather than by means. When the ends have been achieved a team either disbands or is absorbed into a regular unit or division with the larger organization (Helgesen, 1995).

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Colleges and universities are unique types of institutions shaped by the complexities of organizational structure and hierarchy, funding, faculty governance and administrative leadership, student life, and a myriad of internal and external stakeholders (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Kezar, 2005; Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Within this review of literature, the researcher provides a perspective of higher education institutions that highlights the interpersonal and interrelated aspects of organizational structure, teams, leadership, change, and networking under the auspices that these social aspects of an enterprise affect institutional performance (Gupta et al., 2011; Nootjarat et al., 2015). Focusing on the social constructs of the academic enterprise allows the reader a better understanding of how university leaders administer a system in which a team of professionals works together to carry out the vision of the president and the mission of the institution. The premise that performance is reliant on relations necessitates expanding on the conceptualization that organizational structure creates an environment conducive to the creation of relationships that, under the right circumstances, can produce benefits for the individual team members as well as the institution (i.e., social capital) (Carson et al., 2007; Ho & Peng, 2016; Portes, 1998). By utilizing a theoretical framework of social capital, the researcher hopes that the reader begins to comprehend how the relationships established by leaders and among team members, as well as with their communities (i.e., networks), can lead to the generation and expenditure of resources and how these generated or expended resources can affect change that either benefits or detracts from the members' institution.

<center>**University Leadership in the 21st Century**</center>

Over the past two centuries, the changing landscape of higher education has provided not only for the expansion of functional areas of the university to evolve and adapt to a growing number of college-going individuals, but also for the growth of the administrative functions of the institution (Hoffman & Summers, 2000; Lang & Powers, 2011). Birnbaum (1988) provides contrasting context related to today's institutions by elaborating how, in earlier times, institutions were small, trustees were clergymen, and administration and faculty might have consisted of a president and a handful of scholars. While expanding enrollments provided for the need of specialized professionals to serve in such capacities as counselors, deans, registrars, and recruiters, the larger and more diverse the student population became, the greater the number of services that were required and expected (Hoffman & Summers, 2000; Lang & Powers, 2011; Lucas, 2006). These services require a large investment of fiscal and human resources, and given the state of fiscal affairs of most higher education systems, this only puts more pressure on university leadership. Former Louisiana State University Chancellor John Lombardi (2013) raises a good question concerning higher education today: how does university leadership manage their institutions in these trying fiscal times? Additionally, like Birnbaum, Lombardi notes that universities are complex organizations, and many factors, not only fiscal, weigh on leaders of these institutions.

Today's university leaders face the realities of dwindling resources, changing political climate, social media and technology, and an increase of outside actors trying to dictate the course of the institution (Kezar 2005; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Lombardi, 2013). However, these are not the only issues facing 21st century university leaders. Campus presidents and their teams are saddled with issues related to an aging infrastructure, which are in the billions of dollars

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nationally. Some experts estimate that higher education institutions have around a $36 billion backlog in deferred maintenance (Kadamus, 2014). States legislatures have reduced their annual investment in funding public colleges by approximately two-thirds, and the prospects of reversing that trend do not look favorable (Milkovich, 2015; Reindl, 2004; Sav, 2016). With the reduction in state-appropriated funds, colleges have begun to look at other means of revenue, with the bulk coming from increases in student tuition and fees (Bastedo et al., 2016; Morgan, 2009; Renehan, 2015). With the increased cost of attendance, other challenges arise for university administrators to address, such as college access, diversity, and accountability. Campus leaders have to become responsive to market demand, which calls for sophisticated marketing and recruiting, innovative curricula, and professional development for faculty that address their needs (Bastedo, et al., 2016).

Organizational Structure

The predecessors to today's universities and colleges were institutions that focused more on civil duty and piousness, founded by either religious orders or royalty (Lucas, 2006; Pace, 2004). These institutions were small and catered to the wealthy or the few individuals lucky enough to escape a life of manual labor (Jenchs & Riesman, 2017). As the concept of the university grew in popularity and became central to the way of life, where these students studied, such as in public meeting spaces, rented shops in marketplaces, or the cathedral church schools, changed significantly (Lucas, 2006; Ridder-Symoens, 1992). It is these academic spaces that gave way to the college or university as an organized meeting place for students and teachers (Lucas, 2006). Just as the infrastructure of the institutions changed, so too did the administration and the organizational hierarchy. The first sign of the roles of administrators are found in the royal charters for the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge (Ridder-Symoens, 1992). These

institutions were comprised of administrators, such as provosts and deans, who were appointed

to see to the manner and behavior of the students, treasurers or bursars, who were charged to

ensure the welfare and maintenance of the university, and the presidents or chancellors, who

were selected to oversee the administration of the institution (Brown 2000; Lucas, 2006). With

the increased number of students attending college came new perceptions and expectations of the

college experience, resulting in the beginning of changes to college campuses. Students needed

places to live, buy books, eat, exercise, socialize, worship, study, play sports, and enjoy the arts.

More student services meant more employees providing these services and the need for more

managers to oversee these student and personnel affairs. As institutions became larger and more

complex, professionals with specialized expertise were needed to accomplish the countless

administrative duties (Birnbaum, 1988). This massive growth led to the creation of

organizational structures to help presidents, deans, and top-level executives manage departmental

personnel and activities (Hoffman & Summers, 2000). Understanding the organizational

structure of the university, which is made up of teams and various leadership positions and how

these individuals relate, can help academic leaders perform more effectively.

The focus of this literature review thus far has been on the historical evolution and

growth of the university and its administration. To further understand the role and expectations

of academic leaders, delving into different facets of traditional business settings provides context

to academic leaders' responsibilities. Borrowing from the hierarchical structures of 19th and 20th

century businesses, academic leaders began to stratify their organizations. Having a past that

predates that of the university, the history of management and organizations reaches as far back

as the origins of commerce (Natemeyer & McMahon, 2001; Shafritz et al., 2005). Although an

interesting account, most applicable to the running of a university are the tenants of modern-day

organizational theory based on the complex economic structures that took shape during the industrial revolution of the 1700s in Great Britain (Shafritz et al., 2005). These tenets center on the purpose of the organization, division of labor, and rational economic principles. It was not until the beginning of the 1900s that management and organizational theorists such as Daniel C. McCallum, Frederick Taylor, and Adam Smith Henry began to define general principles of organizational management. However, it was Henri Fayol (1841-1925) who developed the first comprehensive theory of management dealing with the various elements used to organize and manage major corporations (Shafritz et al., 2005). Fayol believed these concepts were universally applicable to every type of organization. One such concept focused on the managerial aspects of running an enterprise which concentrated on division of work, authority, order, stability, and initiative (Fayol, 1949).

It is also worth noting another organizational theorist, Henry Mintzberg, held a similar belief relative to stratification of organizations. He theorized that as organizations grow and expand their workforce, more managers are added, not only managers of operations but also managers of managers, revealing a hierarchy of authority (Shafritz et al., 2005; Lunenburg, 2012). This hierarchy consists of core operators who do the basic work of the organization and an administrative component who take on the overall responsibility of the institution (Natemeyer & McMahon, 2001). Mintzberg's conceptualization of the organization provides a familiar design of the university's hierarchical structure. Universities have directors and coordinators who specialize in various facets of student and academic life, as well as senior administrators who guide their activities and work. However, the university's origins, rooted in the ideals of faculty governance, complicate the application of business-like governance structures and processes. Regardless, the transformation of relatively simple, small colleges into organizations of great

scope and complexity necessitated the use of modern business concepts and structures (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). For more traditional faculty who saw academe as a conclave of scholars, this transformation did not come easily. To them, the formation of the administration seemed more of an invasion rather than a transformation due to the greatly differing priorities and roles (Birnbaum, 1988; Kezar, 2008; Lucas, 2006). The increased size of academic institutions, the complexity of legal precedents and federal regulations, as well as management information systems needed to keep track of students, faculty, and staff, calls for specialized expertise. In their research related to academic leadership, Bolman and Gallos (2011) note that business leaders often ask why the university does not function more like a business. These critics see institutions of higher education lacking the speed, efficiency, agility, and unified effort that exist in a business or production environment. Academics assert that the production process is much different from the educational process because each input (student) is unique.

The complexities of student life give way to specialized academic administrators who are divided based on their specialization and divisions, so they can focus on specific tasks and initiatives (Birnbaum, 1988; Shafritz et al., 2005). The addition of specialized organizational units and personnel creates a diverse set of team members. Understanding the role each member plays within this structure allows executives to effectively manage subordinates and fulfill the initiatives of the organization (Carson et al., 2007). In a traditional university setting, the hierarchical structure consists of a president or chancellor, who typically reports to a board of trustees. The president is assisted by vice-presidents, assistant vice presidents, deans, and an assortment of directors and administrative staff specializing in the various aspects of student and academic affairs, such as faculty relations, institutional development, facility management,

athletics, business, and personnel operations (Birnbaum, 1988; Lucas, 2006; Lunenburg, 2012; Shafritz et al., 2005).

Leadership

A great deal of leadership is needed to effectively direct the work of these specialized professionals and units to accomplish institutional goals and initiatives. Just as organizational structural roles differ, so too do the skills needed by those individuals assuming leadership roles within their organizations (Shafritz et al., 2005). Before exploring exactly what a leader does, how they interact with their teams, and how they collectively work to affect institutional change, it is wise to look at what leadership is and the characteristics that comprise what we call a leader. The ability to influence others usually comes to mind when thinking about the qualities or characteristics of leaders. In her work related to leadership dispositions, Carroll Helm (2010) posits that there are five dispositions every leader must possess: integrity, courage, a strong work ethic, the ability to think critically, and being a caring individual. All too often, leaders are portrayed as, thought of, or hoped to possess superhuman powers and abilities beyond that of a mortal (Bourgeois, 2016; Newton, 2013). These individuals will have all the answers, fix everything wrong with institution, and in the end, save the day. In reality, leaders are merely humans who have flaws, weaknesses, and at times struggle to do their jobs (Bourgeois, 2016; Venkatesh, 2008).

The responsibilities of leadership positions have changed drastically in the last few decades (van Ameijde et al., 2009). However, one thing has stayed consistent: a leader is one who develops a vision for institutional objectives, shares that vision with members of their community, motivates them, and aligns resources to help them achieve success (Korkmaz, 2007; Stevenson, 2001). Leaders are socio-centric, communicators, connectors, visionaries, complex

decision makers, politicians, synergy creators, and at times can, and should, be followers (Gregory-Mina, 2009; Kezar, 2008; Newton, 2013; Stevenson, 2001). This holds true for business, community, and even for academic leaders. The university president is often thought of as the creator of the institutional vision, mission, and goals, but that is not all. They have numerous roles to fulfill, many of which are not typical images of top executives (Birnbaum, 1992; Finkelstein et al., 2004). With that responsibility and visibility, the university president is usually the one scrutinized for how they run the institution and interact with their constituents. At their respective universities, the president assumes the role of the top decision maker, and regardless if they utilize a cabinet to vet decisions or not, constituents look to the president as having the final word and overall responsibility for the performance of the institution.

Leading the executive team is very important to the viability of the president and the university. In his seminal work on the principles of management, Henri Fayol (1949) states that the soundness and good working order of the organization depend on a certain number of conditions or principles (e.g., authority and responsibility, unity of direction, chain of command, order, initiative, and stability of tenure of personnel). While these principles may suggest rigidity, Fayol was adamant that there is nothing rigid or absolute in management affairs (Shafritiz, et al., 2005). The principles are flexible depending on the need; it is the matter of knowing how to use them which takes experience, tact, and proportion. Utilizing an understanding of management can help the academic executives provide direction, achieve strategic initiatives, as well as retain personnel, which is integral to the viability of the team and the university.

Because leaders cannot do their jobs alone, they rely heavily on their leadership teams to implement change, motivate subordinates, and carry out the institution's mission (Carson et al.,

2007; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Neumann & Bensimon, 1990; Nootjarat et al., 2015). In a

university setting, as stated earlier, this team typically consists of vice presidents, deans, and an

assortment of directors and administrative staff (Lucas, 2006; Birnbaum, 1988). How these

professionals interact with the members of their own teams and across unit boundaries greatly

affects the institution's performance (Korkmaz, 2007; Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001; Su, 2011;

Venkatesh, 2008). Neumann and Bensimon (1990) posit that all leaders do this differently; some

leaders believe that good leadership comes in the form of clear bureaucratic structures, while

others focus on charismatic influence, maneuvering coalitions, or building communities. Each

style is different and requires different commitments and expectations of the team members.

Team members are relied on more and more to take a participatory role in the leadership

responsibilities of the institution. The servant-leaders model tends to view leadership as an

inclusive process, no longer positional, and able to be assumed by anyone in the organization

(Kezar, 2000). The utilization of the team to provide shared leadership is also a self-sustaining

organizational practice that prevents a singular personality to make decisions (Venkatesh, 2008).

Teams

Throughout this literature review, the executive leadership of a university has been

referred or conceptually thought of as a team. A number of researchers contend that group

dynamic has a major impact on its members, on other groups, and on the organization itself

(Helgesen, 1995; Natemeyer & McMahon, 2001; Nootjarat et al., 2015). Groups are designed to

fulfill specific goals and carry out specific tasks related to the organization's mission. With that

said, groups within organizations not only fulfill formal functions but personal functions as well.

These formal groups provide members fulfillment in various informal ways, such as providing an

outlet for affiliation (support and friendship), developing identity, and developing a sense of

power (Carson et al., 2007; Su, 2011; Wilson, 1978). Understanding group or team dynamics

can be useful, especially when considering the concept of acquiring *social capital*. Executive

team members have the potential of accumulating capital from the relationships they establish

within their group.

Diverse and effective teams are needed in higher education to plan, manage, and reform

institutions to meet the changing needs of the campus, the surrounding community, and region.

The utilization of these multiple personalities provides for different perspectives that are needed

to address 21st century problems facing universities like cost of attendance, accountability,

globalization, and student outcomes (Kezar, 2000). Kezar (2000) adds that, stifling or not,

acknowledging differences actually lends to inefficiency and decreased productivity. Because of

the size and complexities of the collegiate system, universities have created executive positions

to ensure the coordination of activities and to achieve institutional goals. In Newman and

Bensimon's (1990) research related to college presidential personality types, they posit that

presidents who take on highly external affairs roles rely heavily on their executive team to

execute plans and initiatives, because the president cannot do it all.

Presidents find themselves spending a great deal of time interacting, talking, soothing,

selling, listening, and nodding. In doing so, the university president entrusts his or her team to

help manage the institution, as it is this small group of executives at the top of the organization,

sometimes referred to as the top management team or executive team, that has a major influence

on the organization (Goll et al., 2001). Empowering others to lead or share in the leadership

responsibilities provides for competitive edge, increased productivity, and institutional stability

by creating a shared perspective that keeps people, processes, and ideas in check (Eddy et al.,

1997; Carson et al., 2007; Vankatesh, 2008). Eddy et al. (1997) elaborate that no matter what the

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issue or problem, it should be addressed as a collaborative or shared effort. This type of shared or participatory model of leadership relies on interdependence and collective efforts of the team. Kezar (2000) notes that participatory leadership models create an environment where members feel included in the leadership process, so they see each other as leaders (van Ameijde et al., 2009).

The university's executive team is responsible for working closely together and under the direction of the president to develop and implement institutional initiatives. It is the direction from the president, as this group's leader, that provides the team with a common sense of purpose. Teams that share agreed upon goals and a shared purpose tend to be more motivated, empowered, and committed to their work as a team (Carson et al., 2007). The extent to how well these team members work together and support the president and one another contributes to the success of the institution. The extent to which these individuals bond with one another is referred to as cohesion. Team cohesion takes on several characteristics: interpersonal attraction, task commitment, and group pride (Wilson, 1978). Nootjarat et al. (2015) posits that these three factors help team members collaborate with each other, increase individual effort, and share attraction to a group task. Team cohesion is paramount in bringing about effective change and strategic planning, especially where the support of the president is vital to mission success. The slightest tinge of lack of cohesion can set back the success of the entire unit (Kezar et al., 2007; Nootjarat at al., 2015; Warner & Appenzeller, 2011).

Organizational Change

A cohesive team can play a significant role when leaders propose changes to campus policy or practice. Change is not unfamiliar to those in higher education, as there seems to be a constant need to adjust policy in light of financial pressures, public scrutiny, technology

innovations, or a change in demographics, to name a few (Kezar, 2005; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Pulcini, 2017). The college campus tends to be fertile ground for change given the politicized nature of different actors with different agendas and interests (Kezar & Eckel, 2002).   This does not take into account the tendency for incoming presidents and other campus leaders to feel pressure to create new initiatives (Kezar, 2009; Simsek & Louis, 1994). With varying interests, subcultures, and values, conflict and disagreement over change is likely, which makes lasting change difficult to implement. Failure to implement is common and widespread across various types of organizations, and there are a myriad of reasons for these failures, from the changes violating cultural norms, initiative-overload, a lack of synergy among similar efforts, or turnover in leadership (Decker et al., 2012, Kezar, 2009; Kezar, 2012b; Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

How Change Occurs

It has long been believed that college campuses and the individuals who work there have shied away from change. Kezar (2009) challenges this myth by saying it is not that post-secondary professionals shy away from change, but there may be too many change initiatives occurring on a campus for any of them to take root, thereby creating an illusion that change does not happen at the university. Challenging and changing situations are not uncommon for faculty, staff, students, and administrators on college campuses. Challenges and changes seem to be the expectation rather than the exception (Altbach et al., 1994). It is possible that this is true given the size, complexity, and departmentalization found on a college campus. Colleges are frequently called upon to act like businesses; however, they are unique institutions with a wider array of stakeholders than an average business (Bourgeois, 2016; Kezar, 2009). Another factor that may hamper the successful implementation of change initiatives could be that the tenure of college presidents and executive level administrators is short lived in comparison to their

subordinates, divisional heads, and tenured faculty (Korkmaz, 2007). As administrations

turnover on a college campus, stakeholders look to the new leadership to affect change on their

campuses that will fix all that ails the institution. Given that most new presidents want to be

successful and show that they are interested in making changes, they typically abandon previous

administration's efforts and set their own course. It is Kezar's (2009) belief that this continuous

rotation of short-term leadership does not allow for initiatives to institutionalize. She notes that

one way to create long-lasting change is to delegate and utilize team members that are long term

players at the college. Pulling different groups together to coalesce around a priority list of

initiatives allows for the larger community to get involved, which hopefully allows for the

longevity of the change effort.

 Change may come in response to the litany of challenges facing higher education such as

fiscal appropriations, regulatory mandates, and student outcomes, to name a few. However, what

these changes look like differs depending on what is being asked, who is doing the asking, and

when the expected change needs to occur. For example, internal and external stakeholders have

called for institutions of higher education to change to become more agile, efficient, and

effective. These groups are critical of the slow and bureaucratic nature of the institution (Kezar,

2005). Nevertheless, change does not come easily. One reason change is difficult could be

because the ones calling for change know how difficult change can be and that their position,

resources, and ongoing initiatives could be in jeopardy if a realignment of strategy occurs. This

is especially true if the change is comprehensive, cutting across the whole campus, sparing no

position, structure, or strategy, all of which are difficult to alter because beliefs, rituals, values,

and habits are involved. One particular structure that complicates change on a university campus

is the faculty governance system, as it is established to reinforce the existing relationships

between academics and administration (Kezar, 2009; Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Experienced and willing leaders might be able to navigate this treacherous slope of institutional change as long as they are sensitive to the feelings of stakeholders and the process is inclusive, communicated well, collaborative, and more of an evolutionary process rather than a revolutionary one (Kezar, 2005; Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Simsek & Louis (1994) posit that the nature of higher education makes change less likely to occur or have widespread effect because there are many different actors with many different agendas, which creates a very political environment not as conducive to change. In the end, the outcome of change initiatives is a modified institutional culture, as it modifies the vision and mission of the institution.

Culture not only can be altered because of change, it can play a significant part in the change process (Decker et al., 2012; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Natemeyer & McMahon, 2001). We typically think of culture in terms of the anthropological paradigm (i.e., social behavior and norms found in a society) rather than a mechanism or tool that can affect change. Toma et al. (2005) suggest that institutions can utilize what they are (i.e., norms, values, and beliefs) and use it to connect people, build identity, and influence effectiveness (Decker et al., 2012). By connecting people and their identity, institutions begin to utilize the dimensions of a team: shared purpose, social support, and voice (Carson et al., 2007). It has been noted that strong bonds provide for better team function and effectiveness, which are both needed to create and maintain a culture open to change (Gupta et al., 2011; Hopkins et al., 2004). Campus leaders must be prepared to effectively manage change initiatives by combating criticism related to poor communication, poor implementation, bureaucratic structures, or weak leadership (Kezar, 2009). Regardless how well liked a president or the leadership team may be, if they have violated the institutional culture at any point during the change process, the initiative will not go well. One

way to avoid such a misstep is through the utilization of social networks that support a particular paradigm shift.

Networking

One of the most important strategies for the president and their leadership teams is to develop a network of supporters. Research suggests that informal networks have a significant impact on whether individuals decide to engage in change or reform behaviors (Kezar, 2008; Kezar, 2014). This is not to say that all efforts at developing a social network are purely for economic or political gain; some individuals join networks because they get pleasure from interacting with its members (Chalupnicek, 2010; Portes, 1998). However, if the reason to network is for business or personal benefit, creating and maintaining the network of peers, supporters, or colleagues takes a great deal of social investment, time, and energy (Brass et al., 2004). Regardless, this investment has proven to pay off whether these interactions are merely for personal opportunity and growth or to benefit an organization or group (Nee et al., 2017; Street & Cameron, 2007).

Two perspectives that exist relative to improved performance are intra- and inter-network relations (Ho & Peng, 2016; Nee et al., 2017; Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001; Su, 2011). Also referred to as the closure perspective or the structural holes perspectives, these two ideas provide an explanation of improved performance. From the intra network or closure prospective, groups are typically formed by likeminded individuals, with little diversity. These homogeneous groups usually see high levels of group identification and trust, which facilitates collective action (Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001). On the other hand, inter group exchange, or the structural holes perspective, sees the interaction of actors beyond their group boarders, which leads to gaining

new information and ideas and ultimately fosters innovation and productivity (Nootjarat et al., 2015; Portes, 2010; Su, 2011).

While the concept of social networks has become part of our daily lives, there is little research on the way networks influence or create change in higher education settings. What is known is policy makers have begun to capitalize on the potential that networks have to create educational reform (Kezar, 2014). Carson et al. (2007) posit that social network theory provides an analytical approach to studying the relational influence structure in teams. The relational concepts consist of shared purpose, social support, voice, reciprocity, density, and cohesion. The relationships among these networked individuals must be one in which members feel comfortable to influence direction, motivate each other, and support the group. This shared network leadership responsibility creates patterns that will influence the development of new relationships and the reinforcement of existing ones (Carson, et al., 2007; Nootjarat et al., 2015).

Performance and Improvement

The creation and maintenance of relationships leads to the discussion as to how networks enhance performance and encourage improvement. Networks tend to create a sociable dimension for relationships to emerge within and outside group boundaries. The increased social attractions among group members allows for an increased level of trust, communication, and group identity (Korkmaz, 2007; Nootjarat et al., 2015). Birnbaum (1988) shares a similar sentiment in his work related to college personnel maintaining collegial relationships. He notes that as more members of academic units interact with one another, they tend to like each other more.

For those networks that are characterized by group spanning or bridging relationships with groups beyond one's own, one can expect innovative ideas, challenges to current thought

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processes, and an exchange of information (Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001). In either case, the increased sociability provides for relationships to develop and the potential for increased collaboration, which has a significant impact on unit and organizational performance outcomes (Brass et al., 2004; Nootjarat et al., 2015). This is especially important in addressing some of the current issues facing higher education. These social relationships allow for the creation of new ideas, innovation, and forward thinking (Eddy et al., 1997).

The propensity to collaborate allows for the exchange of information, the facilitation of resources and knowledge, as well as enhanced performance (Ho & Peng, 2016; Nootjarat et al., 2015). In Chunke Su's (2011) research related to social networks improving individual competitiveness, she notes that organizational employees are increasingly communicating, collaborating, and sharing critical information through informal social networks. This idea that social relationships structure the flow of information among members in a network is a similar sentiment expressed by Nootjarat et al. (2015) within their research on team cohesion. This sense of common purpose and shared goals empowers members, provides for positive motivation, strengthens their commitment to the team and work, and lessens the likelihood of alienation. (Birnbaum 1988; Carson et al., 2007).

Social Capital

The interconnectedness that organizational structure provides and the social actions that persist throughout an organization are influenced by how leaders express their vision for the institution and the way they interact with their teams (Birnbaum, 1988; Natemeyer & McMahon, 2001; Shafritz et al., 2005).   These interactions affect the team dynamic and how team members work together to carry out the vision of the president and mission of the institution (Carson et al., 2007; Natemeyer & McMahon, 2001). Consequently, the actions of the team affect how the

vision inspires organizational change, how networks support that change through the creation of shared goals, and how those goals provide motivation that affect change (Birnbaum, 1988; Decker et al., 2012; Helgesen, 1995; Kezar, 2014; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Nootjarat et al., 2015).

The concepts of leadership, teams, organizational change, networks, and performance are all social in nature and are relevant to this study, particularly when it pertains to the leadership teams of a college or university. The social interactions that take place occur because of the perceived value they have to affect change and enhance performance (Portes, 1998). Coincidentally, as the institution realizes positive change and increased performance, more value is placed on their leadership teams and the relationships they hold with internal and external stakeholders (Kezar, 2015; Nootjarat et al., 2015). This value can be thought of as a virtual form of capital expended and created through social interactions.

Background

Rooted in the field of economics, the term "capital" is typically used to define an investment of resources with expected returns (Lin, 2004). The concept of capital as a resource dates back to Karl Marx and his 1867 analysis of how capital emerges from the relations between capitalists and laborers in the process of commodity production and exchange (Lin, 2004). More recently, social scientists have coined the term *social capital* to capture the notion that the investment in relationships can generate valuable gains which affect an institution's performance (Chalupnicek, 2010; Gupta et al., 2011; Thompson, 2009). Putman (2000) notes that the core idea of social capital is that social networks have value, and like other forms of capital, social capital accumulates when used productively (Warner, 2012). Just as a screwdriver can increase productivity for a laborer, so too can social networks and relationships. Furthermore, as the relationship between the capitalists and laborer produce value in the form of profit for the

capitalists and wages for the laborer, the concept of social capital generates social value jointly owned by the whole unit and its members (Gupta et al., 2011).

Expanding on the idea that relationships have value, one could say that social capital is considered a resource created as a result of interpersonal relationships within social structures. To help distill this concept, one can consider a social structure in terms of an institution (i.e., governmental agency, private firm, or educational institution). Embedded in these social structures are the norms and relations that enable people to achieve desired goals (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). Further refining of this concept can shed light on hierarchy, defined roles within a hierarchy, and the social norms accepted by individuals within the hierarchy. A prime example of a social structure hierarchy is the university's executive team. This relatively small group of executives leading the organization can utilize their relationships with the president, each other, their subordinates, and community members to have a major influence on the president and the organization's success and viability.

Social structures are not the only factor that influences the creation or expenditure of social capital (Chow, 2009; Thompson, 2009). In a study written by James Coleman (1988), he posits that social capital is an aspect of social structure, and it facilitates actions of individuals within the structure. Actions can take into account the frequency of interactions, communication channels, approval lines, and strategic planning processes. Robert Putman (2000) also speaks about structure and actions in his research and posits that actions could influence things like trust, norms, attitudes, and networks. In an article written by Janis Warner (2012), she notes that social capital consists of a stockpile of connections among people and cooperative actions made possible by the shared values, trust, mutual understanding, and behaviors that bind the members. Borrowing from this concept, one can see how the interactions among individuals within and

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outside ones' hierarchical group can benefit the mission of the institution. Managers who have

good rapport and reputations among their peers and subordinates have opportunities to utilize

accumulated social capital to propel strategic initiatives.

Putting both of these researchers' concepts of social capital in perspective, one can begin

to envision the links or bonds between the formation of social networks, the interactions among

the group or community members, resources made accessible through these networks, the use of

resources procured via these relationships, and how these resources benefit the members'

institutions. In her 2002 book *Policy Paradox*, Deborah Stone mentions that communities are

best able to overcome barriers when they have a stockpile of these trusted relationships, norms,

and attitudes. She goes on to say that this social capital is like physical assets or material wealth

and can be utilized to harness individual energies for the common good (Stone, 2002). When

one looks at the successes brought about by utilizing social capital (e.g., better knowledge

sharing, shared goals, cooperative spirit, greater coherence, stability, and shared understanding)

and compares that with typical expectations university leaders have for their executive team

members (e.g., dedicated, committed to team, loyal, confident, and trusted), it is easy to assume

that these executives know how to utilize social networks to support the president and institution.

Central Concepts of Social Capital

Conceptually social capital is derived from social norms that shape the quantity and

quality of social interactions. These norms consist of trust, networking, and reciprocity, all of

which are derivatives of the interactions among connected parties (Teles, 2012; Thompson,

2009). It is possible that the interactions exist merely as an aspect of social structure.

Individuals accept formal roles within a hierarchy and the norms associated with that

institutional hierarchy. Other interactions are facilitated actions of individuals within these

social structures. These actions can be informal conversations with coworkers, formal approval channels, strategic planning sessions, and negotiations. In either case of social structures or social actions, one can envision how structures and actions can build or block interactions between individuals, and these interactions can facilitate or prohibit the formation of networks, trust, and reciprocity there by creating or expending social capital (Chow, 2009; Thompson, 2009; Walker et al., 1997).

Depending on the strength of the bonds between the members of a group and beyond the boundaries of the group (i.e., how loose or close knit the relationships are), social capital can benefit the group in different ways. Two central concepts emerge relative to social capital theory: structure and relations (Chow, 2009). Understanding these tenets allows one a greater appreciation of how social capital can benefit the actor and institution.

Relations

Reflecting back to Helgesen's *The Web of Inclusion* (1995) and other research relative to social capital, individuals find security in their webs (i.e., networks) of social relationships and use these networks to access resources and opportunities (Chow, 2009; Chalupnicek, 2010; Portes, 1998). Hence, social capital is seen as an attribute of individuals in a social context, and the creation of social capital relies on the sociability of individuals (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1986) took note of how individuals acquire social capital through purposeful interaction that at times can result in economic gains, as well as nonmonetary gains in power and influence (Portes, 1998). Taking into account gains in social capital, one should note that these gains probably did not come easily. Much effort is expended to build and maintain relationships. For this type of capital not to erode from disuse, a continual reinvestment in these relationships is needed, as social capital is different than other forms of capital (Chalupnicek, 2010).

There are two means by which social capital can be acquired: through the utilization of strong and weak social ties among and beyond individuals of a given group (Teles, 2012). Groups that possess strong ties among its members typically imply they have common interests, a sense of belonging, and group identity (Teles, 2012). Considering the familiarity that this group displays, it is no wonder that trust levels would be elevated, which in turn facilitates productive exchange and action (Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001). While one would take this as a positive outcome, there is the belief that familiar connections tend to generate redundant ideas and information. Here is where weak ties come into play and provide benefits where strong relational ties falter. Weak ties serve to bridge relations between different social groups (Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001; Teles, 2012). Typically, these relationships require less investment of time but serve as a source for information beyond the members' immediate social circles' ability to provide (Hopkins et al., 2004). Additionally, one can see how boundary spanning provides access to a broader array of ideas and opportunities than their own network (Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001).

Structures

While relations provide opportunity and structure to collaborate and transfer ideas among group members and beyond group boundaries, the structural nature of organizations can facilitate similar outcomes relative to the creation and use of social capital (Chow, 2009; Hopkins et al., 2004; Portes, 1998; Schiff, 1992; Teles, 2012). Informal relationship, such as friends, relatives, and neighbors, provide linkages among individuals, while organizations utilize teams to improve communication, function, and performance (Gupta et al., 2011). Walker et al. (1997) posit that corporate firms draw upon their structures to provide governance to oversee and facilitate relationships (e.g., teams). Much like how strong ties foster trust and cooperation, teams play a

critical role in the performance of an institution and contribute to the acquisition of social capital (Chow, 2009; Gupta et al., 2011). When team members have strong interpersonal bonds, such as high social capital, teams function better (Gupta et al., 2011). It is far too costly for firms not to invest in relationships that will yield social capital. Those firms that do not find themselves vulnerable to opportunist behavior and are less likely to build lasting relationships with partners (Walker et al., 1997).

Critiques of Social Capital

So far, the focus has been on the positive consequences of sociability and how social capital connects people together in groups or teams that provide opportunities and value, create trust, and encourage reciprocity and networking among members (Chow, 2009; Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001; Thompson, 2009). However, there are critiques that draw concern about social capital (Hopkins et al., 2004; Portes, 1998). Some question the conceptual ambiguity of the concept of social capital, pinning the concept as blurred and fuzzy, as both terms social and capital have such oppositional meanings (Chalupnicek, 2010; Gozzi, 2003). Others posit that while groups may provide support for their members and provide a sense of belonging, they are also seen as fostering homogeneity and groupthink, as well as creating a sense of exclusivity or even being hostile towards outsiders (Gupta et al., 2011; Hopkins et al., 2004; Teles, 2012). In addition, it also has been discussed how structural design can influence the existence of social capital through a top-down approach to building social capital. Critics see these as forced and acknowledge that civic participation or a bottom-up approach is the only way to invoke trust, networking and reciprocity—all normative concepts of social capital growth (Gupta et al., 2011).

Using Social Capital as a Lens

In this study, the members consisted of the president and his or her executive team. Each executive assumes a different role in this process, but more important than their individual role is having a leader who is aware of their different roles and interactions and uses this awareness to be successful. Hitt and Ireland (2002) note that it is vital for strategic leaders to have the ability to manage the firm's human capital in ways that create competitive advantages leading to increased social capital. For the purpose of this study, the researcher acknowledged that while the organizational structure of each university is different, key features in team member qualifications and relations should be comparable. Understanding the concepts of social capital theory and recognizing how one goes about acquiring a stockpile of social capital helped shape different components of the study, especially the interview protocol. To determine the perceived role executive team members play in relation to the success or detriment of the president and institution, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The goal was to uncover the perceptions university executives hold regarding their qualifications and the role of the leadership team in the oversight of the success and viability of the institution. As mentioned earlier in this section, there is a limited body of work related to university leadership team relations. This study contributes to the limited body of literature while offering university presidents and individuals aspiring to be a university or college president insight as to what role the executive team plays in their success.

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Summary

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Colonial college leaders faced their share of campus and constituent struggles, just as 21st century institutional administrators do today (Altbach et al., 1994). While early administrators may not have had to address issues such as access for minorities and low income students,

increasing costs, student preparation, or diversity, they did have relevant issues such as war and

integration, along with timeless issues such as those related to finance, infrastructure, and

enrollment (Lucas, 2006; Morgan, 2009; Renehan, 2015). While some of these issues are

ordinary and ongoing and some are unique and unprecedented, one thing that has remained

constant is the role of institutional leaders to be the campus advocates, voices, and visionaries

(Finkelstein et al., 2009).

This is not to say that campus leadership structures, positions, or their responsibilities

have not changed. With the expanded growth, popularity, and need of higher education, the

number, responsibilities, and specializations have also expanded (Altbach et al., 1994; Birnbaum,

1988; Lang & Powers, 2011; Lucas, 2006). This expansion of student enrollment led to the

creation of organizational structures and positions that provide student services and activities.

College presidents began entrusting professionals to help manage the institution and achieve

institutional goals (Hoffman & Summers, 2000). These teams are responsible for working

closely together in collaboration with the president. The extent to how well these administrators

work together as a cohesive group contributes to the performance of the institution (Warner &

Appenzeller, 2011).

The relationships among the executive team (i.e., president and vice presidents), their

subordinates, and the networks they create with community members can be used to foster

strategic initiatives, curb criticism, and rally community support to ensure effective performance

of the institution. Social scientists have coined the term social capital to capture the notion that

the investment in relationships can generate valuable gains and that social networks have value,

which affect an institution's bottom line, when used productively, and like other forms of capital,

accumulates (Putman, 2000; Robinson, 2000; Warner, 2012).

Conclusions drawn from the review of literature include: social capital plays an important role in predicting organizational performance; teams that have more dense networks of interaction achieve a higher level of productivity than do those with sparse networks; institutions of higher education should stress the importance of social capital and emphasize that long-term interactions and mutual trust will increase the consistency of the cognition and values of internal members; and education institutions should create a cohesive atmosphere and establish closer social connections so they can accomplish better teaching, service, and research outcomes (Ho & Peng, 2015; Leana & Pil, 2006; Reagans & Zuckerman, 2001). It is the hope of the researcher to successfully convey how the creation and development of university and college leadership teams and the utilization of networking and relationship building contribute to successful organizational change.

Chapter Three

Research Methods

Since the researcher was interested in conveying meaning and essence rather than measurements and causation, an inquiry-based, qualitative research methodology was utilized to detail the experiences of the study's participants (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). A phenomenological approach was utilized to investigate the experiences of 16 purposefully-selected higher education campus executives. These executive leaders consist of post-secondary campus executives chosen from four of the 14 four-year institutions located in Louisiana. It was the intention of the researcher to gain insight and understanding relative to these executives' views, beliefs, and perceptions about how the creation and development of university leadership teams and the utilization of networking, relationship building, and social capital contribute to the interpersonal relationships among their own executive team, as well as other internal and external stakeholders, which ultimately contribute to successful organizational change (Creswell, 2007).

This chapter outlines the phenomenological research approach utilized to explore the perceptions that university leadership teams have about executive team relationships and how these relationships impact the performance of university leadership and institutions. More specifically, the methodological process considers the concept of social capital and how social capital influences executives' perceptions of their role in forging and preserving the relationships between university presidents, the members of the executive team, as well as other internal and external stakeholders. Furthermore, the researcher examines these perceptions of relationships as to whether they help or hinder initiatives developed by the leadership team and the university. This chapter of the dissertation explains the methods used to explore the topic and contains the

following sections: research design, the research participants, data collection, data analysis, limitations, trustworthiness, and role of the researcher.

Research Design

While a quantitative approach could have been used to distill meaningful results from a surveyed constituency, a qualitative methodology allows for a better opportunity to describe the lived experiences of the participants (van Manen, 2016). The researcher chose a qualitative methodology, as it is the best fit to explain a phenomenon that is present within the post-secondary education community where little research exists. Given that other qualitative approaches utilize similar research processes (e.g., a defined problem, a research question, data, analysis and a research report), it is phenomenology that provides a deep understanding of a phenomena experienced by several individuals (Creswell, 2007). Through this inquiry the researcher aimed to provide a rich contextual description of how post-secondary executives perceive relationship building, utilization of social networks, and social capital, so the reader can better grasp and understand the importance of these factors in a practical domain (Creswell, 2007; van Manen, 2016).

The nature of qualitative research serves to provide rich descriptions and explanations of the human experience. Qualitative research involves collecting and working with text, images or sounds (Guest et al., 2013). For this study, the data comes from one-on-one interviews. These interviews were recorded using a digital recorder to accurately capture the words of the participants. The words from these interviews were transcribed and then coded, grouped categorically, and structured thematically to describe the lived experiences of participants (Miles et al., 2014).

One of the most popular methodologies used in the social sciences, especially in education, psychology, and the health sciences is phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology utilized by researchers attempting to describe people's perceptions of a particular situation (Creswell, 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). This description consists of what and how a phenomenon was experienced (Creswell, 2007). This alone, how a phenomenon was experienced, made phenomenology best suited for this particular study, which delved into understanding university executives' perceptions of executive team member relationships and how they perceive these relationships impacting leadership and institutions. Other qualitative research designs were considered (e.g., ethnography, narrative, case study and grounded theory approaches), but all have limiting factors that do not align with this study (e.g., singular case, a shared culture, length of time, proximity of observer to participants, emergence of new theory), which made phenomenology the appropriate choice.

It is interesting to note that Moustakas (1994) posits that perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge. While it may seem logical to think of one's perception as knowledge, it would also seem logical that one could follow this same reasoning and suggest that knowledge gleaned from interviewing research participants would contribute to the researcher's general perception of the participants' reality. Creswell (2007) notes that phenomenology allows the researcher to understand the common experiences of several individuals in order to develop a deeper understanding into the features of the phenomenon. For this research study, a phenomenological approach was chosen to provide a rich description of the participants' perception of the phenomenon but also to provide a process to bracket the researcher's personal experiences and bias (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to describe how university presidents and executives

perceive relationships that influence the team and university. The study was designed to allow the researcher to interview senior level university executives to gain an understanding of how they perceive their relationships with team members and stakeholders as mechanisms to help or hinder institutional initiatives.

Research Participants

As mentioned earlier, qualitative researchers gather their data from many sources. It is rare that a researcher can analyze everything, so they must be selective when gathering data. The people, things, or documents they select constitute their sample, and the selection process is called participant selection. Participant selection is one of the most important aspects of the research design (Guest et al., 2013; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The researcher must narrow the study population by carefully choosing a sampling method. There are different methods of sampling, whether it is censuses, non-probability sampling, or probability sampling (Guest et al., 2013). Choosing one depends on the objective of the researcher. According to Guest et al. (2013), non-probabilistic sampling is the norm in qualitative research, mostly because qualitative research does not require probabilistic samples to gain insight into common processes, shared experiences, and shared cultural norms. For this study, the sample was selected purposefully. Purposeful sampling, the most commonly employed non-probabilistic sampling approach, is used extensively in qualitative research and allows the researcher to select individuals and sites for the study, as they can purposefully inform the research problem (Creswell, 2007; Guest et al., 2013).

Louisiana has several higher education institution types and governing boards that comprise the state's post-secondary landscape. For this study, participants were selected from four universities within the state of Louisiana. The reason to focus on the selected state-specific

institutions was one of convenience, but also based on similarities in enrollments, budgets, and number of employees at the universities. Additionally, it was also based on the sensitivity of the subject matter. The researcher felt his relationship and trust among the potential participants would allow him access, whereas recruiting from another state's university system would be difficult.

For this study, the researcher focused on university presidents and executive team members. To get a general understanding of what positions comprise a university's executive team, the researcher utilized the 2017 College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) *Administrators in Higher Education Salary Report*. Based on criteria defined within the report, executive teams typically consist of the campus presidents, an executive vice president, a provost, a chief business officer, a chief athletics administrator, a chief advancement officer and a chief student affairs officer (Bichsel et al., 2017). For this particular study, the researcher selected four four-year college campuses in the state of Louisiana. Utilizing the organizational charts for each institution, the researcher identified potential study participants. To verify the accuracy of this data, the researcher sent the presidents of each respective campus a short email questionnaire asking them to identify what positions they consider to be part of their executive team (Appendix A). As far as the size of the sample, Creswell (2007) posits the typical sample size for a phenomenological study ranges from five to 25 individuals, so the sixteen participants provide an adequate sample size for the study. It was the hope of the researcher that by utilizing participants from various organizational units it would provide a diverse perspective of campus contingencies.

Participants were selected according to the following criteria: (a) a public higher education institution within the state of Louisiana, (b) the institution had to be a four-year

university or college, and (c) participants had to be a member of the university's executive team. For the study, the researcher interviewed 16 participants from four Louisiana universities. The demographic breakdown of the 16 participants was four presidents and 12 vice presidents, of which two out of 16 were women and two were Black males. Cumulatively they held an average of 38 years of experience in higher education and, on average, 4.5 years of experience in their current position on a university executive team. It is also worth noting that 8 of the sixteen participants completed their undergraduate studies from the institution in which they are currently employed. While on campus, the researcher conducted four interviews per institution as well as observed a meeting of the executive team.

A primary goal for the researcher while conducting the interviews and preparing the findings section of this study was to protect the anonymity of the participants. Several safeguards were instituted to guarantee anonymity. They are as follows: (a) neither participant name nor actual professional title is used, (b) the name of the institutions will not be disclosed, and (c) any identifiable information that may link the content of the discussion with the participant will not be disclosed. These procedures were closely followed.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Data

Participant	Institution	Title	Race	Gender	Years in Current Position	Total Years in Higher Education
Dr. Cormier	A	President	W	M	2	27
Mr. Benoit	A	V.P. Finance	W	M	16	16
Dr. Bordelon	A	V.P. Student Affairs	W	M	1	18

Participant	Institution	Title	Race	Gender	Years in Current Position	Total Years in Higher Education
Dr. Guillory	A	V.P. for Academic Affairs	W	M	2	24
Dr. Breaux	B	President	W	M	3	25
Mr. Bergeron	B	V.P. Finance	B	M	1	13
Dr. Richard	B	V.P. for Academic Affairs	W	M	2	11
Ms. Fontenot	B	V.P. for Student Affairs	W	F	2	38
Dr. LeBlanc	C	President	W	M	9	40

(table 1 continued)

Participant	Institution	Title	Race	Gender	Years in Current Position	Total Years in Higher Education
Mr. Landry	C	VP for Student Affairs	W	M	4	42
Dr. Romero	C	VP for Business Affairs	W	M	7	30
Dr. Theriot	C	V.P. for Academic Affairs	H	M	1	25
Dr. Melancon	D	President	W	M	10	23
Dr. Guidry	D	V.P. Academic Affairs	W	F	2	35

Participant	Institution	Title	Race	Gender	Years in Current Position	Total Years in Higher Education
Mr. Lefort	D	V.P. for Finance	W	M	7	22
Dr. Broussard	D	V.P. for Student Affairs	B	M	3	19

Participant Institutions and Executives

For the study, the researcher selected four Louisiana four-year public universities that are geographically different but have relatively similar enrollments, tuition, degree awarding types, staffing, and operational budgets (Louisiana Board of Regents, 2019; Louisiana Office of Budget and Planning, 2019). On average, the institutional statistical data are as follows: 10,674 students, 762 employees, an average tuition of $8,367, and an operating budget of $95 million. While all the institutions are four-year universities, two award doctoral level degrees while the other two award credentials up to the master's level. For the remainder of the study, the institutions will be referred to as Institution A, Institution B, Institution C and Institution D.

Institution A

Institution A falls below the average number of employees, enrollment, and tuition of the participant group. It services a rural area of Louisiana offering masters level degrees. The university has experienced a change in leadership within the last three years, and of the four executives interviewed at this institution for this study, three have two or fewer years of experience in their current roles. While current position longevity is not prevalent, experience in higher education ranges between nearly 15 to 30 years. The institution's entire executive team

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consists of seven professionals, of whom six are White and six are male. Pseudonyms are used to reference the participants and are as follows: Dr. Cormier, president; Mr. Benoit, institutional finances; Dr. Bordelon, student affairs; and Dr. Guillory, academics.

Dr. Cormier. As an undergraduate student, Dr. Cormier attended the institution where he now presides as president. He received his doctoral degree from an institution outside of Louisiana and worked as a faculty member elsewhere before accepting a faculty position at Institution A. Getting back to the community where he went to school as an undergraduate was important to him and his spouse. A faculty position came open, and he took the opportunity. During his tenure, he served as department head for a short period but held no other leadership or management positions within the institution prior to his appointment as president. He has 27 years of experience in higher education and has served as president for two years. He does have deep roots in the community and made lots of connections as a consultant while in his faculty role.

Mr. Benoit. Like President Cormier, Mr. Benoit also attended Institution A as an undergraduate. He now leads the institution's financial services area. He has served in this position for more than 15 years. Prior to his service to the institution as the financial officer, he served as a legislative auditor for higher education institutions within the state of Louisiana for more than 20 years. He grew up in the area and has lived his whole life in Louisiana. He is deeply connected to the area and the institution and holds much of the institutional knowledge.

Dr. Bordelon. Dr. Bordelon grew up outside of Louisiana and went to a small private liberal arts school for his undergraduate career. He never envisioned a career in higher education; however, life circumstances led him to stay near his family. The path to his doctoral degree was mired with challenges, until he met the vice president for student affairs at the

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institution where he was pursuing his doctorate. This person became his mentor and encouraged him to keep pursuing his doctorate in education. After graduating, he lived abroad for two years and then came back to the United States to marry his girlfriend and settle down. They moved to the city where Institution A is located. He and his family have made a life in the community. He has been with the school 13 years and has served in his position as the executive over student services for about one year.

     Dr. Guillory. Dr. Guillory is a native to the city where Institution A is located; he, like two of his colleagues participating in the study, attended the university as an undergraduate. He worked in industry for several years but realized he wanted to pursue his dream of getting a masters. While in his master's program, he set his goal to become a faculty member. He earned his doctorate degree outside of the state and taught for years and held a department head position before he decided to return home to be the dean of the college where he received his bachelor's degree. Through changes in administration, he was asked to step down and return to faculty. He remained in his faculty role until a new administration came into office. The new president, Dr. Cormier, appointed him as head of the academic division. He has a total of nearly 25 years of experience in higher education and has been in his current position for two years.

Institution B

     Institution B is a four-year master's degree awarding institution. The enrollment and tuition cost are slightly higher than the average of the participating institutions; however, it has less employees than the average of the group and two of the other institutions. Over the past five years, the institution has had two change in top leadership. While the executive team members participating in the study have been in their current leadership positions three years or less, they have been at the institution anywhere between ten and 40 years. The institution's entire

executive team consists of seven professionals, of whom three are White males, two are White women, and two are Black males. The pseudonyms given to these participants are as follows: Dr. Breaux, president; Mr. Bergeron, institutional finances; Dr. Richard, academics; and Ms. Fontenot, student services.

Dr. Breaux. Dr. Breaux attended the university as an undergraduate student. After graduating with his bachelor's degree, he spent a few years teaching at the high school level while pursuing his master's degree. He left secondary education to take a position within the athletics department at the university. Through the twenty-five years at the university, he has held various positions with varying levels of responsibility in enrollment, housing, donor relations, and the alumni association. He also held faculty rank as an adjunct instructor. He considers his route to presidency as somewhat nontraditional as he was not tenured faculty, department head, dean, or provost. However, he feels his tenure as an administrator in various leadership roles have made him particularly effective in his role as president, which he has held for three years.

Mr. Bergeron. Mr. Bergeron serves as the head of the financial services area for Institution B and has been in the role for about a year. He worked at the institution for a number of years but left for an opportunity at another post-secondary institution. He stayed there a short period of time and then worked in municipal government for about eighteen years before returning to the university. In total, he has a little over 13 years of experience in higher education.

Dr. Richard. Dr. Richard taught in the secondary school system for a brief stint while completing his dissertation and doctoral degree. He took a faculty position at Institution B and later became the director of the program with which he was affiliated. After a few years, he

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interviewed successfully for the dean position of the college, and during this time he was afforded the opportunity to study at the Harvard Institutes for Higher Education. In total, Dr. Richard has been in higher education for over ten years and has been in his current role as head of academics for about two years.

Ms. Fontenot. Ms. Fontenot heads the student services unit at Institution B. She is one of two White females that are part of the executive leadership at the institution. While she has only two years of experience in her current role, she has nearly 40 years of experience at this particular institution. During this time, she has worked under four different presidents and numerous vice presidents, one of which serves as the current president. The two have worked together for many years.

Institution C

Institution C is located in the same geographic region of Louisiana as Institution B. However, unlike its northern competitor, it is a four-year doctoral granting university. While providing higher level degrees, Institution C has lower enrollment numbers than the average of the participating group, as well as fewer employees, but has the second largest operating budget of the participant group. The executive team consists of five leaders, of whom three are White males, one non-White/non-Black male and one White female. The administrators on this campus are by far the most experienced of the participants, having worked between 25 and 45 years in higher education. The pseudonyms given to these participants are as follows: Dr. LeBlanc, president; Dr. Romero, institutional finances; Dr. Theriot, academics; and Dr. Landry, student services.

Dr. LeBlanc. Dr. LeBlanc has over 40 years of experience in higher education. He has worked at two different universities within the state and has held various positions working

through the hierarchy of the university, as well as working at a university system level. He has served as a supervisor and mentor for a few of the participants of this study at his current institution, as well as at his previous institution. He received his undergraduate and master's degree from a sister institution before completing his doctorate out of state. Dr. LeBlanc currently serves as the president of Institution C and has been doing so for nine years.

Dr. Romero. Dr. Romero has worked in higher education for thirty years. He did not begin his career in higher education but said he stumbled into a position by chance when he accompanied a friend to the personnel office and saw an opening at the university system level. He worked his way up through the ranks over 25 years. Having never worked on a college campus, his supervisors were not comfortable with making him the vice president at the system level, so he decided to find a position on a campus. He worked in various level positions within finance at three different institutions in two different states. Dr. Romero has been in his current role as head of financial services for seven years.

Dr. Theriot. Dr. Theriot is the newest member to join Institution C, having been there for less than 1 year. Dr. Theriot heads the academic side of the university in a position similar to one he held at his previous institution. He spent 25 years at that four-year institution prior to moving to Louisiana and taking the position at Institution C. While his track to this position seems like a traditional route—earning an undergraduate degree then moving on to earning his master's degree and then earning a doctorate—he was the first in his family to attend college and earn a degree. After earning his doctorate, he taught and served as a dean of a college prior to executive administration stints at his previous institution and Institution C.

Mr. Landry. Mr. Landry is the most tenured executive interviewed during this study. He has been at Institution C for over 40 years and in his current position as head of student

services for four of those. He attended Institution C as an undergraduate. Upon graduation, he started his career as an intermural sports coordinator. He spent nearly 20 years working in various positions in campus recreation services prior to transitioning to the role of dean of students and then assistant vice president. He spent about 15 years in these leadership positions prior to his retirement. In 2015, the president of the university asked him to come out of retirement to fill the vacant vice president role. He obliged the president because it was a role he dreamed of having for years, and he foresees remaining in the position for several more years.

Institution D

Institution D is located in south Louisiana. It is a four-year doctoral degree awarding university with the largest enrollment of the participant group, the largest operating budget of the group, and the most employees of the other institutions. However, its tuition is lower than the group's average. This institution is led by a team of experienced higher education professionals with nearly 20 to 35 years of experience each. The leadership team consists of seven individuals, three of whom are White males, two White females, one Black male and one Middle Eastern male. Just as the researcher did for the previous groups, he assigned pseudonyms to the four participants from this institution. The pseudonyms are as follows: Dr. Melancon, president; Dr. Broussard, student services; Dr. Guidry, academics; and Mr. Lefort, financial services.

Dr. Melancon. Dr. Melancon is the president of Institution D and has held that position for ten years. He has over 23 years of experience in higher education and, just like two of his colleagues, he graduated from the same university he ended up working for, and ultimately heading, as its chief officer. Dr. Melancon is a White male and has what is considered a traditional experience in higher education as a student and as a professional. With a business

doctorate, he taught in the college of business and rose through the ranks of faculty and held various positions, one being faculty president and then provost.

Dr. Broussard. Dr. Broussard is one of two minorities on the executive team at Institution D. He was introduced to a career in higher education by his girlfriend who was a very involved student. He went on to get his master's in education while working on an out-of-state college campus in multicultural affairs. He went on to earn his doctoral degree while working at Institution D. He has a total of 19 years in higher education, and three of those years were part of the university's executive team.

Dr. Guidry. Dr. Guidry has been working at Institution D for 35 years. Like Dr. Melancon, she graduated from Institution D. She is one of two white females on the university's executive team. While she began her career in education, it was at the secondary school level. She ultimately left that role for a faculty position at Institution D. At the collegiate level, she started out at the university teaching math. She moved through the faculty ranks and participated in faculty governance. Two years ago, she was tapped to be the chief academic officer.

Mr. Lefort. Mr. Lefort is a White male and graduated from Institution D. After he received his bachelor's degree, he worked in the private sector for a few years after graduation. Since his first day on campus, Mr. Lefort has held various positions around campus, from housing to enrollment to financial services. In total, he has over 20 years of service to the institution and seven in the capacity of his current position. He did mention that he has worked for three presidents within his time at the institution.

<div align="center">**Data Collection**</div>

Influenced by components of Moustakas' (1994) approach to phenomenological research, the researcher utilized aspects of this data collection and analysis process. The researcher used

in-depth interviews to gain insights into the lived experiences of the participants, as in-depth interviews are ideal for capturing a high level of lived human experience (Creswell, 2007; Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013). The interviews were conducted one-on-one, which allowed the researcher to pay close attention to tone, content, and body language, as well as build rapport and maintain confidentiality (Guest et al., 2013). To capture the details of the participants' experiences, the researcher utilized a digital recorder to record the interviews and a notebook for notes. Interviews were scheduled for approximately one hour. While an hour was scheduled, most interviews lasted approximately forty minutes. The researcher asked permission to record the interview at the beginning of each session. He also asked the participant to sign the study's consent form (Appendix B).

Guided by a research protocol composed of semi-structured interview questions (Appendix C), the researcher asked each participant to answer the questions to provide insightful data while also engaging in an open dialogue with the participant (Lichtman, 2013). According to Guest et al. (2013), most in-depth interviews utilize semi-structured interview protocols, allowing for an open dialogue that allows the researcher to fully understand the phenomenon, rather than a structured protocol that does not allow for an open and honest discussion. This type of interview protocol allowed the researcher to improvise and stray away from the questions to better understand the participants' experiences. Lichtman (2013) suggests that semi-structured interviews are different than structured interviews, because they allow for detailed explanations of the phenomenon.

The interview questions were based on aspects of the social capital framework and focused on the overarching research questions: How do university executives perceive relationships? How do university executives perceive relationships impacting leadership and

their institutions? Using social networking and relationship concepts from both James Coleman (1988) and Robert Putnam (2000), questions focused on the participants' perceptions of how relationships can be mechanisms to help or hinder institutional initiatives. The interview questions allowed the researcher to gain greater insight into the relationships among executive team members and how members of the executive teams perceive their social interactions as contributing to the success of a president and institution. A semi-structured interview protocol was created to ensure the same questions were asked of the presidents and the non-presidential executives participating in the study (Appendix C). The researcher outlined the interview process prior to the interview, and permission to record the interview session was also obtained at the onset of the interview. After each interview session, the researcher transcribed the audio recording using the Sonix software, which generated an electronic word document for analysis. Prior to the analysis of the data, the researcher listened to each interview while going through the word document line-by-line to correct flaws in the transcription generated by the software. While the line-by-line review provided an accurate transcript of the interview, it also allowed the researcher to listen to the interviews again to gain a better understanding of the data.

Data Analysis

Open coding was utilized to analyze the transcribed interviews word for word to allow a total immersion into the data (Saldana, 2016). Each line of data was scrutinized for significance, and those significant statements were labeled with a brief phrase or description. This description is essentially a short phrase that assigns a summative or essence-capturing description of the text topic (Saldana, 2016). These phrases were then written on index cards as part of the analysis process. Further review of the data captured on these index cards allowed the researcher to note repetitive coded data or overlapping statements and ideas. The data with similar codes were

grouped or lumped together using axial coding. After the coding process was complete, the data were narrowed into themed categories. Through this process, the researcher narrowed the data into themes that ultimately revealed an essence of the participants' perceptions. Lichtman (2013) suggested that most qualitative studies generate nearly 100 different codes, narrowed to approximately 20 categories and refined to about five or six themes. For this study, the researcher was able to distill the ideas from nearly thirty-seven categories into three major themes and seven subthemes. These themes and subthemes are discussed in the following chapter where the researcher constructs a description of the lived experiences of the academic executives, which creates a universal description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Verification Procedures

Trustworthiness is the quality of a study and its findings that make it noteworthy to audiences; it is based on credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, credibility was maintained by ensuring confidentiality of the participants and utilizing the process of member checking to ensure the accuracy of the data collected. The researcher ensured the participants that confidentiality would be maintained at all times throughout the study and once the dissertation was published. The researcher did this at the beginning of the recruitment process and throughout the day of each interview. Confidentiality terms and requirements were outlined in detail in the IRB application as to the means by which names of the participants and institutions would be protected, as well as the maintenance, retention, and destruction protocol for the supporting documentation. In addition to confidentiality, the researcher utilized the process of member checking to ensure the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations of the interviews and the conclusions drawn from the analysis. Member checking is the process whereby the data collected, analyzed, and concluded upon is

reviewed by the group from which the data was collected originally. The process of member

checking is considered one of the most crucial techniques for establishing credibility (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). To accomplish this part of the process, the research emailed the transcribed

interview to the participants with a cover letter that included the themes and subthemes that

emerged from the interviews of all the participants (Appendix D).

Another strategy that the researcher utilized to ensure trustworthiness was the

consideration of objectivity and confirmability. The idea behind these issues is that the research

is conducted and presented in a neutral or unbiased way and at a minimum with an explanation

of possible biases (Miles et al., 2014). Confirmability allowed for the researcher to show that he

made an attempt to be objective during the study. The researcher used the bracketing technique,

which allowed him the opportunity, outside of the proposed study, to provide his perception of

the phenomena, as well as an avenue to express personal biases and assumptions relative to the

study (Lichtman, 2013). To accomplish this, the researcher used the digital note pad on his

phone as a journal to capture his reflections and biases on the topic. He did this immediately

following an interview or succession of interviews when something that he observed or heard

evoked a concern or prompted him to feel he needed to write about his perceived bias.

To ensure that the data collected was dependable in order to draw relevant conclusions,

procedures were set in place to capture accurate data. Creswell (2007) noted that dependability

is similar to reliability in a quantitative study. Reliability is the degree to which a measurement

is considered accurate. Creswell suggested that dependability of a study can be enhanced by the

use of tape recording and careful transcription of the interviews and field notes. For this study, a

Philips brand digital recorder was used to capture the interviews, and the researcher used a five

subject notebook to take notes during the interview process. Line-by-line coded transcripts,

overarching themes, and subthemes were shared with the participants to ensure dependability of the interview process and procedures.

Finally, the transferability of a study considers the likelihood that a study could be applied to similar situations. To do this, researchers incorporate rich details and imagery to produce vivid descriptions of the feelings and emotions of their participants (Creswell, 2007; Saldana, 2016). To ensure transferability, the researcher provided an extensive literature review, so the reader would have a basic background related to teams, organizational structure, change, and networks, as well as the theoretical framework of social capital theory that grounds the study. The researcher also provided this methodology section that detailed the population of the study, as well as described the data collection and analysis which provides the reader with the complex stories of each participant. The researcher provided these stories by capturing the participants' perspectives and discussed these, in the next chapter, in a way that the reader could identify with the participants, so they feel as if they experienced the phenomenon themselves (Creswell, 2007).

Role of the Researcher

Gathering and deciphering the data in qualitative research rested in the hands of the researcher. The researcher observed, interviewed and examined participants, transcribed notes, and analyzed data to provide a holistic view of the phenomena (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Throughout this process, the researcher constantly self-reflected on his experience as the interviewer because of his sensitivity to the fact that he may be considered an insider. While this study is about relationships and he used his role as an insider to garner participants, the researcher hopes that readers understand that professionals in the academic research realm describe the role of the qualitative researcher in terms of social relationships

(McMillan & Schumacker, 1997). To further clarify the unique role of this study's researcher for the reader, he works for one of the state's public universities in a senior executive level position and is considered to be part of the institution's executive team. As part of the institution's executive team, the researcher has had the opportunity to develop relationships with his fellow colleagues that make up the team. Through leadership change and turnover, he has experienced different amounts of team cohesion, relationship building and bonding. This institution (Nicholls State University) was removed from the sampling population to help control for researcher bias as mentioned earlier. The reader should keep in mind that the researcher works closely with his institution's president and members of the executive leadership team but also interacts frequently with executive team members (e.g., presidents, vice presidents and cabinet members) from other system schools during board meetings, through institutional partnerships, and at conferences and workshops. Be that as it may, the researcher did not want the fact that since he holds a unique social position among the participant population, which can also be seen as a benefit to get access to a group, to hinder the credibility of the study and the confidence level of the reader.

The researcher believes that his professional background as a newspaper reporter and post-secondary education administrator have prepared him for this research quest. Acquiring data through individual interviews for three years as a reporter, he utilized tape recordings and field notes to provide clear, unbiased reports for a local weekly newspaper. It is because of that experience and comfort of interviewing participants coupled with the fact that there is an appropriate fit between the research topic and the chosen methodology that qualitative research seemed appropriate for this inquiry.

Summary

This chapter provides the rationale and means for utilizing qualitative methodology to gain insight and understanding relative to these executives' views, beliefs and perceptions of how the creation and development of university and college leadership teams and the utilization of networking, relationship building, and social capital contribute to their interpersonal relationships within their own executive team as well as internal and external stakeholders, which ultimately contribute to successful organizational change (Creswell, 2007). Methods of data collection and analysis are provided as well as the limitations and possible implications of the study.

Chapter Four

Findings

The primary purpose for conducting this study was to determine how university

executives perceive the impact executive team relationships have on leadership and their

institution. The researcher was able to learn about the respondents' experiences by conducting

one-on-one interviews with participants. The accounts of the executives address the gap in the

literature regarding how university leaders perceive the impact of the relationships they maintain

in a university setting.

Interviews were conducted during the Fall 2019 Semester on September 1, September 24,

October 21, and October 29. Four interviews and the team meeting observation were conducted

on each day typically between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. All interviews were recorded, and those

recordings were transcribed by the researcher using a web-based transcription service called

sonix.ai. Upon completion of the interviews, the transcripts were analyzed for reoccurring

themes. These themes were then grouped together based on the commonality among the

paraphrased responses and assigned codes to represent the similar data types.

A detailed summary of the themes and sub-themes is given later in this chapter. An

overview of the themes is provided in Table 2. The three major themes with sub-themes are as

follows: (a) organizational structure (career choice, leadership characteristics, team), (b) relations

(relational harmony and bonds), and (c) navigating the environment (awareness and hindrances).

The emerging themes were systematically organized within the context of the supporting

literature of the study. The first theme, organizational structure, tends to mimic the discussion

from Birnbaum (1988) that universities are organizations comprised of groups of people filling

roles, many times by specialized staff, and working together toward a common goal within a

formal structure. Theme two takes a look at relationships and is structured to connect to the

study's theoretical framework of social capital. Social capital theory works under the premise

that investment in relationships can generate valuable gains. These gains (i.e., social capital) are

resources created as a result of interpersonal relationships within social structures. Embedded in

these social structures are norms and relations (Cohen & Prusak, 2001). These social norms

consist of trust, networking, and reciprocity (Thompson, 2009). Through the formal and

informal channels of social structures or social actions, one can envision how these interactions

create or expend social capital (Chow, 2009). Theme three, navigating the environment,

addresses the need for executives to have the awareness of roles, goals, expectations, and barriers

that may prove to be a hindrance in establishing effective performance of the institution.

Table 2. Emerging Themes

Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Organizational Structure	1a. Career Choice
	1b. Leadership Characteristics
	1c. Team
2. Relations	2a. Relational Harmony
	2b. Bonds
3. Navigating the Environment	3a. Awareness of Helpful Factors
	3b. The Things that Hinder

Organizational Structure

Literature suggests that organizational structure fosters an environment conducive to

creating relationships that can produce benefits for the institution as well as individual team

members (Carson et al., 2007; Portes, 1988). Universities have seen a variety of changes to their

organizational structure over time to accommodate the growing number of college-going

individuals and the specialized departments that evolved because of expanding enrollments and

needs (Hoffman & Summers, 2000; Lang & Powers, 2011). The complexities of university affairs have given way to specialized academic administrators who are divided based on their specialization and divisions (Birnbaum, 1988). This expansion and specialization led to the creation of organizational structures to assist presidents and other top-level executives manage personnel and activities (Hoffman & Summers, 2000).

Understanding the role each member plays within the organizational structure allows leaders to effectively manage subordinates and fulfill initiatives (Carson et al., 2007). It is a team effort as presidents of universities cannot do the job alone. In doing so, the president entrusts his or her team to help manage the institution. It is this small group of executives that has a major influence on the organization (Goll et al., 2001). Accomplishing their goals and maintaining their influence requires a diverse set of leadership skills. Just as team roles and responsibilities differ, so too do the skills needed by those in leadership roles. Besides the ability to influence others, Carol Helm (2010) suggests there are certain dispositions that leaders must possess: integrity, courage, strong work ethic, critical thinking, and caring.

This study reveals a group of subthemes that support the ideas of organizational structure and how synergies arise from individuals in these organizational structures assuming specialized roles within functional areas. These individuals work independently and collectively in teams to accomplish goals. Leadership depends on the team to work effectively to carry out the institution's mission. The present study utilizes sixteen interviews of campus executive team members who elaborated on their career path to and through higher education as well as provided an opportunity to speak about how the influence and characteristics of the leader affects their roles and how they interact with colleagues as a team.

Career Choice. For this subtheme, the study's participants provided insight into how some executives began their careers and how institutions and networks provided career opportunities and paths within the organizational structure of the university. For many of the participants, they remained at the university where they began their undergraduate career. The university provided a sense of identity and belonging that, for some participants, out-lasted their undergraduate experience. They transitioned from the role of a student participating in courses, sports and extracurricular activities to working as professionals in a college office. One might find this phenomenon exists as a result of continued familiar social circles or networks. These academic professionals used their insider knowledge of the shared sentiments, values and general purpose of the organization as a step to launch their career in higher education (Birnbaum, 1988). As Mr. Lefort noted:

> Like many folks, you don't tend to pursue higher education as a career path. You find
>
> yourself at an institution where you have had a positive experience. I recognized that I
>
> did not have higher education experience. I really started looking for a foot in the door.

Mr. Landry, of Institution C, noted he got his start in higher education after graduation because he knew the president and there was a position open in the campus' intermural department: "All I knew is that I wanted a job and the president made all of the hiring decisions." While Mr. Lefort's and Mr. Landry's experiences were not uncommon, some participants began their professional careers in the private sector, local or municipal governments, or the K-12 school system. However, once they made the transition to the college setting they made a career out of their higher education experience, and several mentioned how the skills they brought from outside of higher education actually helped them in past and current positions. Others, like Mr. Benoit, perceived an obligation to the institution that provided many memories: "I felt I could

help bring something to the institution to help the institution become stronger and better for our community and for our students, faculty and staff." These perceptions of connectedness and loyalty provided a bond with the institution that allowed the professionals to bring expertise and ideas to help the institution meet its mission, while gaining experience in his or her chosen profession.

While the institution provided many of the executives with an affiliation and a sense of loyalty and belonging, others cited how helpful faculty were and credited them with their success and accomplishments. Dr. Broussard noted, "I wanted to be in college forever. I guess student affairs was a natural fit. Along the way, I surrounded myself with people that I know would help me." Like Broussard, President Cormier held a similar view as he reflected on his path to a leadership position:

> Looking back, you recognize the value of the faculty member. Faculty care about students, and so that left an impression on me. Those folks were mentors, and when one of these people gets in your life, it matters to your career.

Each participant shared experiences in which someone, either a faculty member or advisor, served as a mentor and helped mold their career in higher education. A few participants credited a supervisor that had mentored them through their undergraduate career and influenced their career choice. A career in higher education was not the intended career path for most of the participants, but mentors provided inspiration for future aspiration. Dr. Richard noted:

> There were always people you looked up to. As a young educator, I was always very aware of my place and very aware of what I had to learn from other people. One in particular—her voice rings in my head. She was one of the most formative leaders in my life and I try to emulate and mimic her to this day.

Just as these mentors provided academic guidance and career advice, they also modeled behavior that impacted the professional development of these young professionals. Most of the participants spoke of their experiences in positive ways using phrases like "builds you up", "giving you special projects", and "wanted to see you grow". However, a few participants shared experiences that were less than desirable saying things like "she wasn't good with giving you personal time", "he was controlling", and "he was indecisive." Regardless of the negative sentiments the participants considered them learning experiences none the less. President Cormier noted, "When you see good leadership you can learn a whole lot. You can learn a whole lot by observing bad leadership too." It was apparent that the participants' career paths and leadership styles were influenced by experiences throughout their educational and professional lives. These experiences took shape in their careers either as examples of what to do or what not to do.

While affiliation and mentorship factored into many of the career decisions of the participants, several shared how aspirations provided the drive behind their work. One participant had actually retired for a period of time before coming back to fulfill a career goal of being a vice president. Mr. Landry reflected:

> When the president called me into his office, he asked me to come out of retirement to be the vice president. I said I needed to give it some thought, but I knew walking out of there it was something I wanted to do. It's sort of like wanting to be the head coach. After all those years, you want the next position.

For many of the participants, reaching the vice president level came after years of filling various roles at their institutions. Most took on special projects and initiatives not necessarily in their skill set or area of expertise. However, they were willing to learn, to be a team player, and to

take advantage of an opportunity, and if all went well, their aspirations of being a vice president could someday be realized. "I did everything I could in my job to get promoted," said Dr. Bordelon. Other participants expressed similar sentiments of how having a passion for their work drove their career.

Leadership Characteristics. While certain factors provided a structure that made it conducive for individuals to begin and excel at their professions, participants pointed to leadership as a critical factor in achieving success whether it being on a department or university level. In this subsection, the researcher provides participant perceptions relative to leadership, what qualities they perceive to be needed in leadership roles, and how those qualities have helped them and the institutions they serve. Interestingly, similar research notes while the responsibilities of those in leadership positions vary, two things that are consistent among their responsibilities is ensuring their teams stay motivated and that resources are aligned to help them achieve success (Korkmaz, 2007; Stevenson, 2001).

One of the reoccurring comments the participants shared was the amount of support that leaders provide their teams. Comments from participants differentiated their view of support from their view of control. "President Cormier understands what his role as a leader is… to allow his people to lead," noted Dr. Guillory. Participants associated support with guidance, advocacy, and advice rather than with words or phrases that would lead a person to think of a leader as one who controls work by manifesting characteristics of micromanaging direct reports. Even though leaders may, at times, be judged by the monetary support he or she brings to the institution or department or by their management of the work of the team, a leader's support can come in the form of inspiration and visionary statements that provide guidance and motivation. A sentiment that was shared by Dr. Broussard, who summed up his perception as such: "A leader

is the visionary, he inspires the team. That is the person who is going to start the engine. It is that inspiration, that vision that gives you a path of where you're going. That is key." Throughout the interviews, it was apparent that team members saw themselves as a means by which the vision of the president is carried out. However, they relied on a leader to provide a charge and a reason for the work they do.

Others shared their thoughts of a leader as someone who provides support by helping develop their professional skills. Mr. Lefort shared the following when speaking about a leader that was influential during his career: "He was very good about the people he hired, developing them. He was very much about developing his staff. So it was a great experience and learning opportunity while working under him." Simply, these participants saw a leader as someone who, as Dr. Bordelon noted, "recognizes the difference inside people" and takes on the role of mentor and advisor to the less experienced professionals who will become the next generation of academic leaders.

Providing the support needed by a team takes skills and these skills differ, as noted by the literature as well as in the accounts of the participants (Shafritz et al., 2005). They provided their perceptions of what leadership should be by noting certain characteristics deemed to fit the perception of a leader. Reflecting on his experience of working with a long-term president, Dr. Bordelon said, "You can't be a university president for 24 years and not be a successful manager." His insinuation seemed to reveal that his former boss had to have possessed some set of superior managerial skills that allowed him to remain in his position for over 20 years. Other than strong managerial skills, participants felt leaders must possess other traits as noted in the following quotes: Dr. Bordelon noted, "The president's area of expertise is relationship"; "The president is very much about establishing culture," noted Mr. Lefort; and Dr. Richard shared, "A

leader has to be very fair, has to be equitable and passionate." Others noted qualities or characteristics such as the ability to remember things, being a good listener, being a good moderator during discussions, being politically astute, and ultimately being the one in charge. Carol Helm (2010) refers to these types of characteristics as dispositions. She notes that leadership dispositions were essentially the values, commitments, and ethics that influence behaviors toward a constituent. In her work, Helm (2010) also refers to the five crucial dispositions: integrity, courage, caring, strong work ethic, and the ability to think critically.

One thing that was apparent among the perceptions of the participants was that leadership is an important responsibility and has to permeate from the top through the various levels of the institution. "Everything starts at the top," noted Dr. Richard, who felt that leaders set an example for those who follow. The concept of the leader as a role model began to emerge throughout the interviews. To expand on this thought of leading by modeling, Dr. Romero shared, "It trickles down. I think people around campus see how we interact. The example we set affects everybody here." Several participants noted that the leadership team sets the example for the institution and how they perceived the way subordinates looked up to them and other members of the leadership team. They modeled their behaviors based on those observations. Dr. Romero shared, "I think departments that report to me interact with other departments better because they know how I interact with the other vice presidents." Dr. Romero and several other participants shared a similar belief that comradery among the vice presidents positively influenced the relationships among their subordinates. They felt their subordinates interacted with their colleagues in a more professional manner because of the way the vice presidents socialized and respected each other.

The ability to model desirable characteristics and be the role model needed to inspire and motivate the institution takes leaders who are self-assured and genuine. This sentiment was backed by comments provided during Dr. Richard's interview: "A leader needs to have a good knowledge of the areas they represent. A deep knowledge allows for the ability to hear other perspectives and yet to maintain your own." President Cormier built upon this when he said, "You have to be genuine. This is the only way you will be able to build trust." Other participants, such as President Melancon, held similar sentiments, saying, "Be yourself. You can't lead by using somebody else's leadership style." Dr. Guidry also said, "To be successful, you have to be able to be who you are because you can't keep a façade up very long." Knowing oneself and having the capacity to lead came from the experiences acquired through various roles held by higher education professionals and those of their respective presidents. Knowledge and experience allowed these administrators to have the confidence to make decisions that were in line with best practice or their lived experiences. This confidence in making decisions allowed them the ability to remember what they said, suggested, or did because it fit with their thought processes and instructions. Some of the presidents interviewed noted their various experiences and credited these experiences as helping them be more effective in their role. Mr. Landry went on to note:

> We are very fortunate to have someone like him (Dr. LeBlanc). He has been a
> faculty member, he worked in auxiliaries, the physical plant, is a CPA, worked in
> finance, business affairs, and at the system office. It is unique for the president to
> have all those experiences.

Several of the participants felt they had nontraditional career paths and worked their way up the chain by taking on different roles that ultimately gave them a set of experiences that made them

more effective in their current role. Their colleagues also acknowledged how helpful it was to work for a leader that understands where they are coming from, because they were once in the same or similar position and can draw from experiences when working through problems or strategizing.

Teams. Thus far, the findings discussed have described the perceptions of the qualities or characteristics one should possess to be an effective leader. However, leadership roles are not always carried out by the top executive. Leadership can be a shared responsibility. Research suggests that empowering others to share in the leadership responsibilities of an organization provides stability, productivity, competitive edge, and pride (Carson et al., 2007; Eddy et al., 1997; Vankatesh, 2008). The size and complexities of colleges and universities typically necessitates teams of diverse, highly specialized, and trained individuals who are entrusted to help manage the institution. Within this subsection of the chapter, the researcher provides the participants' experiences as part of the teams they serve and the role the teams play within the organizations.

When asked to share their experiences and thoughts about the qualities and characteristics of effective teams, participants noted traits like honesty, open lines of communication, listening, being flexible, not taking matters too personal, results oriented and loyalty. A sentiment such as, "our provost is a good communicator… she is always asking people what they think," was shared by Mr. Lefort. He continued by providing another example, "Our vice president of student affairs is an extremely good listener." These traits seem to be innate interpersonal or social characteristics or skills. For these participants, sociability provided opportunities to carry out business and allowed team members to be collaborative and innovative. When pressed to give examples of their social experiences, participants referred to hallway conversations, open

door policies, lunches together, and just a sense of familiarity among the leadership team. Dr. Guillory shared, "Team relations is a priority. Trust is going to be the anchor. It's as simple as 'we just need to get along.'" These team qualities and characteristics provided the basis of what skills the team members need to conduct their role as a leader within their own divisions and ultimately converging to support the president as the executive team.

How do they build the sense of team? The participants shared strategies they incorporate to stay connected with team members to help coordinate efforts and provide support. President Breaux shared, "I make sure my team knows I'm listening, and I hear exactly what they are coming up with. I also make it a point to get their perspective on situations." The collective nature of team leadership makes communication necessary. While President Breaux was sharing his experience as a leader and how he engaged with his team, similar sentiments were shared by participants in subordinate roles. Ultimately, team members need to know their leader is listening. To empower and to motivate their teams, leaders must engage with their team members, so they are aware that their ideas and thoughts are being acknowledged and appreciated.

As members of executive teams, the participants saw their role as assisting the president achieve goals, the mission of the institution, and the vision for the university. Speaking about the top leadership, Dr. Richard shared:

> The executives set the mood and tone of the university. The way we respond to the people we supervise sets the tone for them and those that they interact with. To do this, we need a clear understanding of what our charge is, what is important to our leader, and what we need to do to support him.

One way of supporting the president, or any leader, is helping them avoid potential "landmines." Leaders depend on their teams to provide perspective and guidance in navigating the institutional and community terrain. How teams do this depends on the structure and openness of the team. Some leaders keep a tight knit group at the top level; other leaders are open to outside advice. As President Cormier noted, he saw his team as a small formal group, but, "I call together other people for different types of discussions." President Cormier noted that the small intimate team allowed for confidentiality but bringing in others to utilize their experiences and skills ensured diverse perspectives were informing decisions.

Regardless of how open or closed the executive team system is, participants shared their perceptions of how important it was to gather varied thoughts. One way of doing that was to have a diverse team. Several of the study's participants shared their perspective of the importance of diversity of the team. The participants described diversity in various ways, lending to a belief that the participants understood diversity was more than race and gender. Mr. Lefort noted, "Successful teams have different qualities, attributes, skillsets, and knowledge base. Diverse teams are diverse in ideas, backgrounds, and skills." Dr. Guidry provided her perception by saying, "To be successful, we have to have diversity of experiences and abilities." It was apparent that the participants understood that diversity contributed to their team performance and success. The complexities of the university rely on diverse individuals with diverse perspectives to solve problems and think strategically.

Relations

Team relations is another theme that evolved from the review of data. The researcher supports this theme with two subthemes: relational harmony and bonding. This section of the chapter focuses on the interactions of the executive team and how these interactions are

perceived to help or hinder campus initiatives and leader effectiveness. Team members are relied on more and more to take on participatory roles in leadership responsibilities of the institution. Research suggests that the extent to how well teams work together and support one another contributes to the success of the institution. Literature suggests that the relations or bonds team members have among each other is referred to as cohesion (Carson et al, 2007; Wilson, 1978). Wilson (1978) proposed that team cohesion takes on several characteristics: interpersonal attraction, task commitment, and group pride. A number of researchers reference group dynamic as a major impact on its members, on other groups, and on the organization itself (Helgesen, 1995; Natemeyer & McMahon, 2001; Nootjarat et al., 2015). Groups are designed to fulfill specific goals and carry out specific tasks related to the organization's mission. With that said, groups within organizations not only fulfill formal functions but personal purposes as well. These formal groups provide members fulfillment in various informal ways, such as providing an outlet for affiliation (e.g., support and friendship), developing identity, and developing a sense of power (Carson et al., 2007; Su, 2011; Wilson, 1978). The following subthemes of relational harmony and bonding focus on the perceptions team members have relative to their relationships with other members of the executive team.

Relational Harmony. The complex nature of the university relies heavily on a web of teams and team members working together to successfully carry out the mission of the institution. As noted in the paragraph above, teams are expected to take on leadership responsibilities of the university. How well this task is accomplished depends on the relations among the members of the team. This section is influenced by two concepts found in the literature associated with social capital and social psychology theory. First, individuals find security in their networks of social relationships and use these networks to access resources,

opportunities, and to some extent, personal fulfillment (Helgesen, 1995). Second is the concept

of relational harmony, which focuses on a desired working environment for teams where they

accept each other individually and agree to work together for the collective interests of the group

(Liu, 2015).

Several factors that emerged during the participant interviews contributed to the

development of the subtheme of relational harmony: compromise, community, encouragement,

respect, relationships, and transparency. The sentiments connected with each factor fit into a

concept of personal attributes that lent to nonnegotiable soft-skills individuals expect in a

relationship. Specifically, when considering the factors of compromise and respect, participants

shared perceptions that truly reflected a sense of compromise or consensus, as noted by Mr.

Landry:

> Everybody has to compromise. It may not be the best for me or someone else, but we
>
> have to make a decision. It's got to be collaborative. Sometimes that does mean work
>
> across division lines to make sure that we can get something done.

As mentioned earlier, the point of teams is to work together to achieve divisional or institutional

goals. Compromise and consensus allow for progress but acknowledge there is margin for

disagreement. For example, Dr. Theriot noted, "We made some decisions that have been good

and some decisions that have not been, but we learned from them." To get beyond the mistakes

and disagreement takes a level of respect and trust which was noted by several participants.

President Breaux mentioned during his interview, "We respect each other's views."

While respect and compromise seem to make up some of the basic building blocks of

good relations, so does the concept of transparency. When talking about their teams, a few

participants mentioned the impact of transparency. "Transparency and open communication are

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characteristics of a successful team," said Dr. Fontenot. While addressing the notion that faculty and staff sometime feel as if the "administration is working against them" or outside of the strategic plan, President Breaux mentioned, "Everyone has to be honest, and when a question is asked you have to be open and honest." All too often university administrations are derailed because of the lack of transparency and open, honest conversations. The lack of transparency creates an environment of mistrust.

The same can be said about encouraging team members. Honest conversations about responsibilities and expectations provides for opportunities of encouragement via coaching and observation. President LeBlanc noted, "I constantly talk to my reports about their responsibilities in their respective areas." When asked to reflect about previous leaders and teams, the participants were consistent in their perceptions of leaders who, they felt, made a positive impact on their careers. Mr. Lefort reinforced this sentiment when speaking about a previous supervisor, "He took a great deal of time with his direct reports. He helped build them up." Participants seemed to be conscious of providing feedback or needing to receive feedback themselves. It was evident that they were particularly impacted by a mentor's encouragement when making their career choice to be in higher education.

Before we delve into other factors, it is important to consider the participants' perception of relationships and how they impact individual team member, as well as the institution. Dr. Theriot considered relationships fundamental to the university: "It's all about relationships—relationships with your students and administrative team." A similar perception was shared by Dr. Bordelon: "Relationships, to me, are central to all that we do." Relationship building is not easy and takes effort but is very important to the success of all involved (Chalupicek, 2010). The notion of relationships and success directly links back to the theoretical framework of social

capital, where the premise is performance is reliant on relations (Ho & Peng, 2016). It was apparent among the participants as to how important relationships were to them. A great deal of value was placed on building and maintaining good relations, and relationships are a critical piece of their daily work. President LeBlanc reflected on this thought about relationships saying:

> I came up through the ranks, and I built networks all along the way. I encourage my team to make contacts with agencies and individuals at other institutions. They should seek counsel and advice from others. Rarely one can act in a vacuum.

The collective notion of teamwork and relationships is important as we consider factors that influence relations. It is every team member's responsibility to ensure that relationships are maintained and that awareness is provided to newer members of the team. Encouragement is also is needed when discussions are taking place to "get the right people at the table" so they build relationships and ultimately accomplish their goals.

Team Bonds. The participant interviews provided insight into the communal nature of teams and a glimpse into how closely connected and dependent members are on each other. It was interesting to discover how similar the comments were from the participants when asked about their executive team. A commonly held perception—that they were not alone and cannot do it alone—emerged from the analysis of the transcripts. The idea of a collective "we" and how that was integrated into the concept of working together as a team also emerged from the analysis. Mr. Landry noted, "during the course of my career, it was all about teamwork. Because you're not going to get anything done without working together. There's not a whole lot you do in student affairs that you do individually." The complexities of the expanding modern university gave way to teams because faculty and the small administrations of yesteryear institutions could not meet the demand of student needs. To fulfill these demands and to

accomplish the mission set by the president, team members have to "scheme and plan and have a shared vision and work together to achieve that vision," as noted by Dr. Guidry. Developing plans, solving problems, and accomplishing goals were similar sentiments of the group. Dr. Romero succinctly summed this concept up when he noted, "I think it's critical that we work together well."

It was evident that participants of the study were vested in teams beyond their own divisional lines. Participants realized that resources and knowledge gleaned from other groups is potentially valuable when seeking innovative solutions. They also used the expertise from members of their teams to help augment weaknesses in their own skill sets. Team members seemed to be attentive and interested in helping their fellow team members on an individual level, as noted by Dr. Richard: "I work with others around me that build me up where I'm not necessarily as strong." Mr. Landry summed this sentiment up well by saying, "It makes a difference coming to work every day, knowing if you have an issue, it's not going to be a problem. I can go to any member of the team and say, 'I need help.'" How they go about building this friendly, reciprocal dynamic relies on the team members' determination to build rapport and create friendships. For example, the idea of being present with undivided attention was mentioned by a few of the participants as a way to build rapport. Those innate characteristics that were mentioned earlier such as flexibility, communication, loyalty, and honesty were also necessary in facilitating the rapport required to build relationships that allows for personal and team growth. Dr. Broussard elaborated,

> It's about spending time with them, talking to them, getting to know them, and letting
> them get to know you. I make sure that I am present. I go visit my team members and

talk to them about life and personal goals and their passions. The only issue that we have

is that we're so busy that we don't have a whole lot of time for each other.

The concept of friendship provides an environment conducive to a positive team dynamic.

When specifically asked about the team dynamic, participants shared their experiences, which,

for the most part, were overwhelmingly positive. Participants used words like "closeness",

"balance", "strong", "good fit", "trust", "supportive", and "good" to describe their team

dynamic. Dr. Melancon noted, "An element of closeness and friendship exists," while Dr.

Richard added, "We are also very good friends, and I think that's a strength."   Only two

participants noted perceived concerns about their teams. All of the teams interviewed had

changes in membership in the last year, which may have given cause for the negative sentiments

shared. Sometimes new additions to the groups can diminish the dynamic and create issues that

have a lasting effect, even if that individual moves on from the institution. This was the case

noted by Dr. Romero when his institution brought in an expert to help them start up a new

program: "We brought in a person with a very strong background… He was not a good fit. He

created friction. He left, but we are still dealing with the aftermath."

Navigating the Environment

Throughout the interviews, the researcher began to sense that the participants not only

expressed positive sentiments but also negative perceptions of organizational elements within

their work environments. During the analysis of the interviews, the elements that emerged were

categorized into two overarching subthemes: awareness of helpful factors and the things that

hinder. Regardless of the situation being either a hindrance or providing help, team members

found themselves either navigating toward or away from certain factors that influenced their

ability to do their jobs. The researcher titled these collective subthemes as the third theme -

Navigating the Environment. One would assume the structural components of an organization

are fairly rigid; however, a noted organizational management theorist, Henri Fayol, was adamant

that there is nothing rigid about managerial affairs (Shafritiz, et al., 2005). On the contrary,

depending on the need, executives may decide to change course, and this takes experience and

tact. Just as it takes experience and tact to manage around a certain course of action, so does the

creation, cultivation, and maintenance of relationships, which potentially leads to enhanced

performance and improvement.

Awareness of Helpful Factors. This section provides analysis of data regarding the

perceptions of university executives' experiences of navigating the complex environment of

post-secondary educational establishments. The data reveal the leaders' perceptions regarding

their ability to interpret situational and environmental awareness. The characteristics revealed in

the data are (a) institutional priorities and goals, (b) expectations, (c) results of change, (d)

institutional knowledge, (e) value of relationships, and (f) community.

The participant leaders' responses aligned with relevant literature regarding the

experience needed by university leaders to manage institutional priorities by setting goals and

expectations, utilize institutional knowledge to foster community relations, and communicate

expectations to achieve institutional goals and affect institutional change (Birnbaum, 1988;

Carson et al., 2007; Korkmaz, 2007; Stevenson, 2001). The awareness of factors that tended to

be of assistance or hindrance were evident in the responses provided by the participants. As an

example, Mr. Benoit responded when asked about institutional goals: "Some people have their

own agendas and it can prevent serving the institution in the best way. We have to be able to

work together and put the institution first." Participants discussed how they experienced

colleagues that set their own path that, at times, was counter to the institution's mission. They

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also mentioned how the silo effect seemed to be evident at some institutions or possibly develop

within an institution because colleagues felt their opinions were not considered or they took

things too personally. The participants felt this typically happened during previous

administrations when relations and lines of communication were strained. Counter to that idea, it

is teams that engage in meaningful discussions and conduct meetings where consensus is

achieved and shared goals are accepted. President Cormier described the importance of

consistent messaging relative to institutional priorities or goals: "The team recognizes that the

mission is the most important thing; we all need to be on the same page, moving in the same

direction, have the same purpose."

While organizational structure provides a manufactured flow of information, an

organization's institutional knowledge base is many times not documented in library form or

stored in a student information system but housed more in the way of antidotal stories and

accounts maintained by those colleagues with the most institutional experience and longevity.

Several accounts mentioned the impact of the longevity of the team or individual member of the

administration. President Breaux accounted longevity for his team's survival, "We have a senior

team as far as years go." Dr. Theriot had a similar experience saying, "When you have people

here 15, 20, 25, 30, 40, 45 years at the institution, it says something about their love of the

institution." A number of the study's participants served their respective institutions upward of

20 years or beyond. The participants in the study have worked in higher education for nearly 25

years on average. Participants, like Dr. Guidry, expressed their experiences of time being on the

job with sentiments such as, "I've been here forever." Two interviewees were particularly proud

to acknowledge that members of their teams held extensive institutional knowledge. Mentioning

the importance of one team member, Dr. Romero stated "He's been here forever; he's got all the knowledge of everything that has ever happened"

Not only institutional knowledge seemed important to the participants, but also how valuable the perspective was that these individuals provided. The members of their executive teams that rose through the ranks and worked in various positions and departments at the university had experiences that provided insight to discussions. The varied experience provided a broad base of knowledge when it comes to understanding, supporting, and advocating for resources to support initiatives. President Breaux supported this idea by saying, "Having people that are internal to the university that made their way through the ranks is a strength." This can lead to collaboration and innovations that may not occur with someone else who lacks particular knowledge of a potential partnering department. When it comes to managing subordinates, there was a value in knowing and having done the job of your subordinates. This limits those situations where one feels like they are being manipulated, "having the wool pulled over their eyes," as noted by Dr. LeBlanc. It also can be valuable to the subordinates because they have a leader who understand their plight.

Dr. Romero echoed this and noted that he believed the varying experiences he held provided him with a certain level of credibility among his colleagues. He spoke about the value it brought to him and this team:

> My knowledge is pretty broad. I have knowledge of a lot of different areas and that helps
> as far as having credibility with others. My experience has helped me tremendously, to
> have experience within different areas, broad experience with different areas. I have
> been able to share that experience with others.

The comments about how his experience helped him relate to his staff was a perception shared among many in the participant group. It was also evident during the interviews that the value of relationships helped the executive team navigate their daily work but also ensured their success as accounted by the academic officer at Institution D. Dr. Guidry said, "I cannot be successful in my role if I don't have really strong relationships with my deans." A similar sentiment was shared by President Cormier: "Our success is measured by the success of the people we lead."

Providing opportunity and help through tough times were also mentioned as hallmarks of having good, strong relationships. President Cormier noted, "If you have a good relationship with people, they will open up and do anything they can to help you." Assistance was seen as needed not only through the course of tending to day-to-day operations but also through the process of bringing about change on the college campus. Specifically, several participants reflected on their experiences as a new administrator or as part of a new administration and how that initiated a change in culture and institutional trajectory. Earlier in this section, while discussing longevity, President Breaux shared his perception about longevity and how it served as a strength. He also thought there were some negative implications of longevity that were worth investigating. As he acknowledged the value of the experience, he seemed keenly aware of the pitfalls of too lengthy a tenure within an institution, including the tendency to resist change, reluctance to accept innovation, and tendency to keep the status quo. Change does not come easily, and a few participants shared their experiences. Dr. Guillory said, "I feel like most of the things we are trying to accomplish we end up, the three of us, the new members of the executive team, starting something and pushing the others to get it done." Hesitancy to change was expressed by several participants. Dr. Theriot was one of those willing to share his experience: "There has been a little bit of concern about all the changes. It takes a while to

change the culture of an institution, but I think the new administration is delivering information and that helps." This is a good example of how astute leaders and leadership teams realize the importance of communication and inclusiveness to help ensure success of implementing change or even a simple initiative. Kezar (2005) writes about this extensively in her works relative to institutional change. She notes that experienced and willing leaders were more likely to survive the treacherous slope of institutional change as long as they are inclusive, willing to collaborate, and communicate well. However, their attentiveness to relationships does not always offset deficiencies elsewhere in their personalities or those of their team members.

The Things that Hinder. Just as there are factors that contribute to successful leadership, such as setting goals, clear expectations, institutional knowledge, execution of mission, and capitalizing on opportunity, there other factors that hinder progress. These factors tended to emerge as participants referenced negative perceptions related to their work, their team, and past administrations or teams they experienced through their careers. These factors ranged from generally negative comments to more specific perceptions of the bureaucratic nature of the institution, leadership constraints, and micromanaging to issues dealing with community relations and their immediate predecessor.

Participants shared thoughts that were negative in nature relative to leadership whether perceptions of alienation, being underutilized, or being confrontational. A sentiment that set the tone for this section and seemed applicable to this research was a seven word sentence uttered by President Cormier: "There is a limit on your leadership." From experience, the researcher knew this was reality; however, to hear a university president verbalize one's fate reinforced the reason why leadership is so difficult. President Cormier also noted that his first experience in leadership

and his interest to move up in the ranks was deterred because of how he felt in his first leadership

role. He equated the position as a paper pusher and there were no opportunities to really lead:

> I served as a department head, and I found it worthless. You were unable to lead your
>
> faculty. You were unable to lead a program. The provost made all of the decisions.
>
> Department heads were people who did administrative work; it was a very boring job that
>
> wasn't about leadership, so I quit.

The feeling of being underutilized either as a leader or on the leadership team was a reality for

some of the participants. This perception, for most, seemed to stem from a controlling

supervisor. The need to control people or situations, as suggested by research, may be

influenced by leadership traits that lead to perceived leadership flaws like control and weakness

(Bourgeois, 2016; Venkatesh, 2008). While these participants overcame their initial feelings of

hesitancy to pursue a career in higher education, others saw this type of control as systemic

issues that resonated from the system level.   This was the case when Dr. Bordelon provided his

account of a previous president's demise: "It started from the beginning. The incoming president

was told in no uncertain terms could he make changes to the leadership team. It was not his team

to build, and his team knew that."

Related to the factor of control is the idea of micromanaging. Participants shared

negative perceptions of control, as well as how micromanaging limits productivity and fosters

distrust. For example, Dr. Fontenot shared, "A few members of the team worry that Dr. Breaux

micromanages. His micromanaging affects trust." While some perceived micromanaging as a

concern, none of the participants admitted to micromanaging as one of their own traits, skills, or

personal limiting factors. The opposite seemed to be the consensus, as expressed by Dr. Theriot,

"One thing that has made me be successful in higher education is that I've learned to never

micromanage. Let people do their jobs." It is interesting to note that while a few participants, including Dr. Fontenot, noted a colleague, president, or predecessor as a micromanager, none of them confessed to being a micromanager themselves. This isn't surprising because of the negative connotations associated with micromanagers. This was a sentiment shared by Laura Hills (2017) in her work related to micromanagement. She did not recall anyone who ever admitted to being one as no one wants to be a micromanager. She also noted that micromanagement is easy to recognize when observing it in others, but few recognize when and if they have the problem themselves.

Comments like these seemed to echo the sentiments of some participants that there was an element of control at all levels of leadership, but there also seemed to be an element of exclusion from the actual leadership role. At the very least, participants expressed the existence of a perceived lack of inclusion. As supported by one participant, Mr. Benoit shared his experience with a new leadership team:

I guess you could say it is not as inclusive. There are some things that go on on campus that I don't know about. I think some team members don't always inform all the senior staff of the issues. They bring me in when they need me.

This silo effect or lack of inclusion is commonly referenced in higher education circles. The nature of specialized skillsets may tend to create an "us versus them" mentality, and it is certainly evident in the conversations with the participants. As noted by Mr. Lefort, "Folks get siloed. It's just easier not to deal with people." Not only was the silo effect a condition to focus internally because of differing skills and initiatives, it was a coping mechanism to survive a decade worth of massive budget cuts to Louisiana universities and colleges. One participant, Dr. Bordelon, summed up his thoughts as such, "Higher education was under attack by the state and

was the 'whipping boy' of all society's ills." These budget cuts strained relationships as financial constraints always are difficult to maneuver. As one would expect, struggles unfolded on campuses as leaders tried to secure enough funding to protect their business units. One participant noted that, "It was times like these when things don't go so well is when dealing with money and the lack of money." For the most part, the university is a fairly communal organization. Ideals of shared governance, teaching, and inquiry typically provide transparency. However, it is an organization, and organizations are prone to conflict (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014). Participants described situations where colleagues became frustrated, showed aggression to others, became estranged from work groups (silos), and even suggested signs of sabotage. Omisore and Abiodun (2014) noted these very same attributes as psychological or physical signs of conflict.

Through the interviews one of the most prominent factors that emerged was the perception of the predecessor. Participants would use certain terms like "the previous president" or "my predecessor" or "the person that held that role before me." It was notable that the majority of these comments were of negative perceptions that existed with the participants. Descriptions of the person or their leadership style ranged from "naysayer", "showed favoritism", "a tyrant", "would lecture", "brash", "rigid", and "autocratic". Dr. Guillory shared the following:

> Me and the provost never got along. She nixed all the people who were in her way. So when Dr. Cormier became the president, she went back to faculty. To be honest, some of the people we inherited were not good leaders. They couldn't get their faculty to pursue things or accomplish anything.

These leaders seemed to play favorites, manipulated situations but mostly caused a lot of frustration and resentment among their team, subordinates, and others at the institutions. It is apparent that these leaders lead with a stern fist, because the ill effects of their legacy lasted for years after they left their positions.

Summary

Three major themes emerge from the analysis of the 16 interviews with executives from four Louisiana universities. The three themes that emerged were (1) organizational structure, (2) relations, and (3) navigating the environment. The section dealing with organizational structure provides a glimpse into the career choice, leadership, and teamwork experiences of the participants. The second section provides experiences the participants had related to relations and how they learned to network and build rapport and how they used these bonds to navigate their careers. Finally, navigating the environment deals with the executives' abilities to scan their work environments to avoid confrontation, navigate challenges, and take advantage of opportunities that arise.

The institution, its people, and its structure emerge as significant takeaways from the interviews. Participants were either drawn to a career at their current institution or another because of their experience as an undergraduate there. Eight of the 16 participants graduated from the institution where they currently work. Most did not choose a career in higher education as their destiny but merely fell into a position, were mentored along the way, and given opportunities that aided in their progression as a leader at the institutions. Once in the higher education field, networking and building relationships proved important to the participants, with many saying that these relationships helped propel their careers, added to their experience, and helped them navigate pitfalls of administrative life. Participants were keenly aware of situations

or people that either aided or hindered them, their departments, colleagues, or the institution they

had experienced. In the next chapter, the researcher unpacks these themes and summarize the

perceptions of these university executives.

Chapter Five

University administrators have come under scrutiny in recent years as cost of attendance rises for the student and the public outcry for accountability manifests in the form of onerous reporting measures and performance metrics (Bourgeois, 2016; Kezar, 2012; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Korkmaz, 2007). To surmount these challenges, university leadership teams find themselves trying to improve public trust, reestablish credibility, and provide transparency. It is essential these teams work well together to be effective, seen as a cohesive network, and able to leverage their credibility to create opportunity and affect change. Institutional success depends on a functional executive team, and the ability of the president and team members to build relationships among themselves, subordinates, stakeholders, and lawmakers is essential to achieving the mission of the institution (Gupta et al., 2011). However, little is known about how these academic administrators work together in teams (Woodfield & Kennie, 2008). This study explores how 16 higher education executives perceive executive team relationships and how they perceive these relationships impact leadership and their institutions. A phenomenological qualitative study using social capital theory as the theoretical framework was conducted on participants chosen from four state public four-year institutions. This chapter discusses the findings reported in Chapter Four by connecting the themes to each other, to the theoretical framework, and to the research questions. Following the discussion section, implications for future practice, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research are explored.

Discussion

The findings of this study fill a gap in the research related to higher education as it pertains to gaining a better understanding of the lived experiences academic executives revealed about the social aspects of leadership and the importance of relationships. In fact, several

researchers have established that there is a gap in the literature relative to how academic

administrators work together in teams and how social networking creates and affects change on

college campuses (Hiland, 2008; Kezar, 2012; Posthuma & Al-Riyami, 2012). The shared

experiences of the academic executives were categorized into three major themes: (1)

organizational structures, (2) relations, and (3) navigating the environment. Overall, the findings

present that the participants shared many experiences, most of which were tied deeply to their

loyalty, enthusiasm, and commitment for the institutions they work and the students they serve.

Relationships

Participants' experiences revealed that academic executives value and understand the

importance of building and maintaining relationships. They found the concepts of compromise,

transparency, communication, collaboration and friendship were all needed as part of the

discourse within college administrations to create an environment of success and effectiveness.

While part of discourse is the healthy debate of issues, Liu's (2015) work related to relational

harmony addresses the existence of disagreement but stresses the ideals of respect and

compromise to create a desired environment conducive to working together for the collective

interest of the team. Participants agreed that when it came down to making a decision, they work

together to move initiatives along. While the decision made may not have been the best decision

for all of the team members, it was reached by compromise and consensus. Ultimately, decisions

are made, and teammates must work beyond their disagreements, but to do so takes a level of

respect and trust.

Research within the literature on social relations notes that increased social attractions

among group members allows for an increased level of trust (Korkmaz, 2007; Nootjarat et al.,

2015). It is imperative that teams, especially the top executive teams at universities, take the

time to get to know one another. Birnbaum (1988) notes that the longer members of a work unit interact with one another, the more likely they were to like each other. Participants provided examples of how they build rapport and remain connected. They mentioned taking advantage of hallway conversations, open door policies, or understandings that dropping-in to talk is acceptable, having lunch together, and finding time outside of work to enjoy each other's company. Some participants noted that finding the time can be difficult, and they wished they could visit more often. Regardless of the time constraints, not only did the participants expressed how they enjoyed the sense of comradery that existed among their teams but also stressed how these friendships made a difference going to work each day knowing there was a support system in place to help work through difficult issues and to create innovative solutions.

The communal tendency of groups and the concept of friendship provides for an environment conducive to a positive team dynamic. It is important to note that a number of researchers contend that group dynamic has a major impact on its members, on other groups, and the organization itself (Helgesen, 1995; Natemeyer & McMahon, 2001; Nootjarat et. al, 2015). For the majority of the participants, they described their team dynamic as being positive and effective. Only two participants noted concerns about their current team. It is important to note that both individuals were from the same institution which had a new group of administrators take office after a fairly contentious selection process. It was clear to the researcher that the two administrators had different perceptions. While their perceptions may be influenced by the growing pains of a new administration and these perceptions may change as they build rapport with each other, it is impossible that these administrators will work within a vacuum. The complexities of today's universities necessitate team-based approaches to accomplish the mission set by the president. To do this, open and honest communication must exist among the

executive team, and an increase in social interactions needs to be fostered to increase trust and group identity.

The Predecessor Effect

While the section of the data analysis related to navigating the environment of the university was based on team members' awareness of goals, expectations, opportunities, and barriers, environmental awareness became overshadowed by how individuals can affect the culture of an institution. In the previous example, the two administrators were on opposite sides of an administration change. One kept his position under a previous administration, and one was demoted. After a subsequent change at the presidential level, the tables turned, and the once demoted administrator is now on the executive team and has close ties to the president. This example is one that would be considered textbook, as it highlights the interpersonal and interrelated aspects of organizational structure, change and leadership (Bourgeois, 2016; Shafritz et al., 2005; Venkatesh, 2008). To the researcher, a sense of heightened awareness existed among the participants of this relationship and the previous relationships. What became interesting about this set of interviews and subsequent ones was the emergence of a major concept that needs discussion and further research. Participants, not just at this institution, had vivid descriptions and stories about how predecessors affected team dynamic by strictly controlling and micromanaging their institutions. This propensity to be controlling led to perceived inefficiencies, ineffective teams, loss of motivation, morale issues, and, many times, turnover.

The researcher terms this phenomenon the predecessor effect. From the participants, these predecessors seemed to play favorites, manipulated situations, and fired or demoted employees they did not like, but mostly these leaders caused a lot of frustration and resentment

among their teams as well as the institution. One participant spoke about the former finance executive as being a tyrant over his staff and constantly lecturing other vice presidents on spending and processes. To her, it was belittling to "get the adult lecture" from your colleague. As suggested by research, the need to control people or situations may be influenced by leadership traits that lend to perceived leadership flaws like control and weakness (Bourgeois, 2016; Venkatesh, 2008). Participants described these predecessors as tyrants, bullies, paralyzing leaders, and negligent. These qualities or dispositions are juxtaposed to the critical skills of integrity, courage, critical thinking, and caring that Helm (2010) provides in her work. Campuses controlled by these types of leaders are described as sickly, run down, and in need of rescuing. It has been mentioned before, but administrators of this caliber are a hindrance to the institution, and their actions run contrary to what researchers believe leaders should be doing: developing a vision, sharing that vision, aligning resources, and motivating staff to help them achieve success (Korkmaz, 2007; Stevenson, 2001; Trachtenberg et. al, 2013).

These extreme cases of unpopular leaders tend to give way to a shortened tenure of the executive. However, the residual effect of how they affected the culture tends to last long beyond their departure. This residual effect consequently sets the tone and approach for the next administration, which also reinforces the idea of the new leader as the savior. All too often, leaders are portrayed as, thought of, or hoped to possess superhuman powers and abilities beyond that of a mortal (Bourgeois, 2016; Newton, 2013). These individuals will have all the answers, fix everything wrong with institution, and in the end, save the day. In reality, leaders are merely humans who have flaws, weaknesses, and at times, struggle to do their jobs (Bourgeois, 2016; Venkatesh, 2008). As one participant noted, "the current president is judged on the previous president's poor performance."

Team Roles

While this section of the findings is based on concepts found within organizational structures such as career choice, leadership, and teams, the discussion here focuses on how participants found that their roles within organizational structures allowed them to excel in their professions as academic executives and assume leadership roles within their institutions. It is worth noting that the intent of the study was to treat the leadership team as equals and not differentiate between presidents and vice presidents; however, after analyzing the interviews it was apparent that the president assumed and was perceived to be the first rank in charge. As noted by Dr. Romero, "The president has a vision and he is going to implement that vision. There is no doubt that he is in charge." While the president may be perceived as first among equals, we understand that university presidents cannot do their jobs alone, so they rely on their leadership team to oversee the operations of the institution (Carson et al., 2007; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Neumann & Bensimon, 1990; Nootjarat et al., 2015). Research suggests that organizational structure fosters an environment conducive to creating relationships (Carson et al., 2007; Portes, 1988). How well these leaders relate and manage their relations with one another greatly affects the institution's performance. The relations that took shape for the participants came in the form of formal role relationships, such as president to vice president, mentor to mentee, as well as role models.

While the institutions provided many of the participants with an affiliation and a sense of loyalty, other participants described how their career trajectory was influenced by a faculty member, staff member, and even the president of the college or university. Several of the participants of the study are first generation college graduates. The relationship among these individuals became one in which members felt comfortable to influence direction and motivate

each other. This relationship created patterns of influencing new relationship and reinforcing existing ones (Carson, et al., 2007; Nootjarat et al., 2015). These individuals began their careers as an undergraduate uncertain of a degree much less a career as a university president or executive. However, a faculty member's inspiration and motivation can be life changing, as was the case for at least three of the participants. Reminiscent of the literature related to career pathways of higher education professional, many of the participants said they never intended to work in higher education, but found their way into the college career arena because they were introduced to collegiate work as a student worker, through their first job after graduation, or by knowing someone who worked in higher education (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). Participants shared their perceptions of a duty they bear as a leader to be a role model for their teams and others interested in a career in higher education.

We should also consider that the small group of executives at the top of the college organizational structure has major influence on the school. These leaders not only assume their roles in various specialty areas of administration but also assume the role of role model for their direct reports, other professionals, and students on campus with aspirations of becoming a college administrator. Universities have programs such as career services and mentorship programs, as well as graduate assistantships that can provide the next generation of administrators hands-on responsibility and experience. Participants were very aware of how important being a role model is to setting the tone for the whole university. Participants shared their experiences of how the way they treated another executive team member affected how that division's personnel would interact with their direct reports. Participants equated it to a trickledown effect, as "everything starts at the top", and that academic executives need to be aware of their role of mentor, leader, or coach. The role is crucial in providing guidance and

shared responsibility that will ultimately provide for institutional stability, increased

productivity, and competitive edge by creating a shared perspective and experience.

Addressing the Research Questions

Two research questions were developed at the onset of this research to help guide the

study: 1) How do university executives perceive executive team leadership? 2) How do

university executives perceive these relationships impacting leadership and their institutions?

Several conclusions were drawn at the end of the literature review, such as: teams that have more

dense networks and interactions achieve a higher level of productivity; college and universities

should stress the importance of social capital and emphasize that long-term interactions and

mutual trust will increase the awareness and values of internal members; and universities should

create a cohesive atmosphere and establish closer social connections so they can accomplish

institutional goals (Ho & Peng, 2015).

When considering the first research question, "how do university executives perceive

executive team relationships?" the general sentiment among the participants was that they felt

good about their team dynamic and responded positively about their relations with each other.

There seemed to be an awareness that there is a communal nature to teams and a shared

responsibility of leadership. One of the participants, who has a total of 42 years of experience in

a university setting, said, "…during my career, it was all about teamwork. Because you aren't

going to get anything done without working together." For the most part, what was apparent

with these participants is that they prioritized relationships. One of the participants, Dr. Guillory,

went so far as to say that, "team relations is priority." The participants also shared strategies on

how they try to stay connected and build rapport: hallway conversations, open door policies, and

lunches together. There was an overall sense of familiarity among the leadership teams, as the

participants described them. For these participants, being social provided opportunities to carry out business and allowed team members to be collaborative and innovative. Chalupnicek (2010) notes that relationship building is not an easy task and takes a great deal of effort but is very important to the success of all involved.

Shifting to the second research question, the participants shared an underlying sentiment for success. One way to ensure this success is through stable, reciprocal relationships. Research shows that empowering others to share in the leadership responsibilities of an organization provides stability, productivity, and competitive edge (Eddy et al., 1997; Carson et al., 1997; Venkatesh, 2008). Collectively, the participants saw their roles united in assisting their institutions to the achieve goals and mission of the institution, as well as carrying out the vision created by the president at their respective institutions. The participants also saw it as every team member's responsibility to ensure that relationships were created and maintained and that awareness is provided to new members of the team. As President LeBlanc noted, "I consistently talk to my reports about their responsibilities."

Participants also seemed very aware of the value of the knowledge and resources that can be realized through working with other groups. While these relations may not always be easy to maintain and can be difficult as teams to facilitate, Liu (2015) addresses this in her work on what she called relational harmony. The idea focuses on a desired working environment for teams where they are to accept each other as individuals as a means to work together for the collective interest of the team. This was s sentiment that was shared during the interview with Mr. Landry: "Everyone has to compromise." There was overwhelming consistency that the participants saw that they had a role in forming and developing relationships. They were also very astute to the potential opportunities and obstacles that can emerge based on how relationships are managed.

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Connection to the Theoretical Framework

Social capital theory serves as the theoretical framework for this research. Conceptually, social capital is derived from social norms that shape the quantity and quality of social interactions (Thompson, 2009). Social scientists coined the term social capital to capture the notion that the investment in relationships can generate valuable gains, which affect an institution's performance (Chalupnicek, 2010; Gupta et al., 2011; Thompson, 2009). The core idea of social capital is that social networks have value, and like other forms of capital, social capital accumulates when used productively (Warner, 2012). Expanding on the concept that relations have value, one could say that social capital is considered a resource created as a result of relations within social structures.

This study reveals themes that support the ideas of organizational structure and how synergies arise from individuals in these specialized roles and functional areas. These individuals working collectively in teams accomplish goals and create value for themselves and the institutions. Participants of the study were very aware of the hierarchy and their role within the hierarchy.

While organizational structure provides a venue for a hierarchy of leadership and united goals, actions are carried out by those working within these structures. Putman (2000) posits about structure and actions in his research and notes that actions can influence things like trust, norms, attitudes, and networks. Given the audience understands the concept of structure, actions are those activities that provide the social element to the structures of an organization. To build upon that thought, participants described actions found in social relations such as relationship building activities like hallway conversations and attending meetings, social functions, and lunches.

Team relations also emerged as a theme from the review of data. The complex nature of the university relies on a network of teams and team members working together to successfully carry out the mission of the institution. As one of the core concepts of social capital, the utilization of networks to complete tasks and achieve goals contributes to the accumulation of capital. Both relations and structure were identified as important concepts to consider in the findings. Participants spoke of their experiences as part of teams and how important their interactions with teammates were in accomplishing goals and meeting institutional priorities. The following findings support this notion.

Implications for Future Practice

This study investigates university executives' perceptions of their working relationships with their colleagues and how their relationships create opportunities or challenges for the team and institution. For this study, only president and vice president level executives participated. Their accounts were captured using one-on-one interviews that were recorded to aid with the data analysis. The findings of the data analysis provide several emerging themes and subthemes that can provide awareness to the importance of relationships as well as have implications for future practice and research. The researcher hopes the experiences shared by the study's participants will provide insights to individuals aspiring to be a university or college executive and how relationships can be helpful or a hindrance.

To shed light on the future implications on practice, the results could be utilized to inform professionals currently at the executive level, those new to leadership positions and those aspiring to be university executives as to how important the role of a mentor plays in career choice and trajectory. It is a familiar adage among many higher education professionals and shared by the participants in the study that they never intended to make a career in higher

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education administration but happened into the role by circumstance (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). Universities could benefit from a formalized campus-based mentorship program for new and up-and-coming university administrators. In their research related to mentoring higher education administrators, Kutchner and Kleschick (2016) note that mentoring enables professionals to pass knowledge to another via a formal or informal process. The two describe mentoring as the nexus between sharing knowledge and professional development. They also note mentoring programs provide benefits to the mentor as well, as knowledge is shared by both. Models of formalized programs exist, and schools, boards, and professional organizations have developed programs to train the next generation of college leaders. Take for instance the Association of California Community College Administrators. Their program was created to prepare junior-level administrators for senior positions (Valeau & Boggs, 2004). Locally, the University of Louisiana System has its own Management and Leadership Institute which is a two semester program geared toward mid-career faculty and staff members looking to broaden their leadership roles.

While a system-wide approach provides an opportunity to learn about leadership, colleges and universities would benefit from their own campus-based program. Providing a program that is assessable to more of one's campus would allow universities to transfer institutional knowledge on a much broader scale. Participants would benefit from acquiring a basic knowledge of leadership skills needed to navigate the institutional environment. Participants would also build bonds and relationships with employees they would not normally work with on a day-to-day basis. A sense of community with shared vision will begin to be built as multiple cohorts complete the program. Although a mentor program may not ensure a career

in the upper leadership of an institution, it could provide those aspiring to leadership positions a set of skills to help them navigate the complex structure and bureaucracy of a university.

While formalized mentorship programs have the potential to impact the future workforce, there might be avenues by which current leaders provide their experiences through a less formalized program. Interacting with team members in the role of a coach provides opportunities to be supportive (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007). Coaching can be as simple as sharing experiences of success and failure, being in their shoes as a follower and reminding aspiring leaders to be flexible (Newton, 2013). Another opportunity for experienced leaders to share their professional stories is through lectures and informational sessions. This type of forum on their campuses may inspire less experienced employees to take on roles that will open career opportunities in leadership and administration.

Another implication on practice this study could inform is to provide university leaders a glimpse into the skills and leadership characteristics participants felt were important to be successful academic leaders. As noted earlier in the literature review, leaders in educational institutions are generally faculty members that do not have formal leadership training (Birnbaum, 1988). Participants cited traits such as loyalty, honesty, openness, and transparency as critical traits of an effective leader. While these traits are thought to be inborn personality traits, they are skills and behaviors that can be learned and developed (Kalargyrou et al., 2012). These researchers provide three skills of which to be mindful: (1) problem-solving skills, (2) social-judgement skills, and (3) knowledge. Knowing what leadership skills to look for in potential candidates for leadership roles can help better determine professional fit and limit employee turnover. Turnover and poor professional fit have the potential to create negative monetary and morale impacts to the team and institution.

Lastly, the concept of the predecessor effect on institutional culture and current leadership performance has interesting implications for practice in the higher education arena. Multiple participants noted their predecessor's influence on the culture of the department and institution. Expanding on this area of research could allow for successors to mediate the difficulties that arise out of the sheer fact of their predecessor's longevity (Horiuchi et al., 2013). For a practical approach to aid novice leaders in their new leadership roles, institutions should incorporate a component of the onboarding process to include a discussion of campus or departmental climate and culture. A human resource professional or an appropriate supervisor could provide an overview of the predecessor's leadership style, issues that may have been present during that person's tenure and shared sentiments of direct reports. Knowing what landmines to avoid while beginning a new leadership role can prove to be invaluable when it relates to team morale and building rapport.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations to this research that must be addressed. First, as this was a qualitative study with 16 participants, the results cannot be generalizable. While a diverse sample of administrators was attempted, several factors contributed to less heterogeneous mix than anticipated. 14 of the 16 participants were male, two female, and 13 participants were White, two Black, and one Hispanic. Although this sampling is indicative to the population of university leaders nationwide, it does limit the experience and perspective of female and non-white academic executives. Because the demographic landscape in higher education administration is majority White, a limited voice is provided when talking about executives' lived experiences. In 2016, less than 30% of university executives were women and only 14% of higher educational administrative positions were held by individuals of a race or ethnicity other

than white (Seltzer, 2017a; Selzer, 2017b). Women and people of color would definitely provide

a different perspective of leadership as their experience rising to an executive position is worth

noting. BlackChen (2015) notes that women in higher education have a daunting task of proving

themselves in this male-dominated field. African Americans face similarly inequities in the

field, as they are more likely to be employed in lower level administrative positions (Danish,

2009). A larger sample size may allow for a more diverse population, which may contribute to

different perspectives. Another consideration to make is related to the similarity in the

institution size, budget, and location of the institutions. Much like the considerations around a

similar participant demographic, having similar institutional statistics may lead to similar

experiences. Studying experiences of academic executives from different institutional types,

institutional sizes, and regions may provide different perceptions among those who lead the

institutions. The researcher also considered that as state financial allocations to higher education

have dwindled over the past several years (Louisiana Board of Regents, 2017), fiscal concerns

may have impacted the responses of the study's participants. Second, researcher bias was

predicted to be a limitation. The researcher is an executive at a university within the state of

Louisiana and knows and has worked with some of the participants. While the familiarity may

have helped secure the participants for the study, there is a concern that the participants may

have some hesitation or not be completely forthright when sharing their perceptions and

experiences. Lastly, the participants all hold high-profile positions at their universities and may

have had concerns sharing their perceptions with the researcher.

While there is a significant amount of research on teams, organizational structure and

behavior as well as social capital, there is a limited body of research relative to academic teams

and how they maintain relationships with each other and constituents. Future studies should

build upon this research. Implications for future research include focusing on the phenomenon of the career trajectory of executives who progressed into top leadership roles from their undergraduate career at the same institution. Future research could also study the perceptions faculty and staff have of how the leadership team of the university or college is managing relationships with institutional constituents. The subject of the predecessor effect should have more research dedicated to how this individual has a considerable influence on the institution. Multiple participants in this study referenced their predecessor and how that individual affected the culture within the division or the institution. Lastly, more research needs to be conducted on the role mentors play in the careers of academic executives. Many of the participants noted they would not be in their current position if it were not for a faculty member, previous supervisor, or colleague who invested time in them by giving them special projects, pushing them to experience challenging situations, and encouraging them on career decisions. Additional research for college and university executives to reference relative to managing relationships could have a positive effect on the tenure and success of the leaders and their institutions.

Conclusion

This study sets out to uncover the perceptions of university executives as they relate to relationships and the impact they have on leadership and the institution. The researcher uses the concept of social capital theory to frame the study to support the idea that executive teams must be aware of and utilize relationships to influence the performance of the team and ultimately the institution. It is certain that university leaders face obstacles that potentially threaten their performance (Bourgeois, 2016). These obstacles range from team conflict to employee behavior issues to learning agility, work quality, productivity, and burnout. Lackluster performance of the leadership team can have detrimental consequences on the success of institutional initiatives, can

result in dismissal, and is costly to an institution (Trachtenberg et al., 2013). Unsuccessful campus administrators have proven to be a hindrance on the financial and human resources of an institution, creating instability and ultimately affecting enrollment and retention, funding, and mission (Trachtenberg et al, 2013). It is critical at this juncture for university professionals to be aware of how relationship building and networking are critical to the bottom line and longevity of the institution, as well as a contributing factor in the success of the leadership team and the individual team members, especially the president.

The study's findings provide insight into how university executives perceived relationships with their teammates and how these relationships impacted leadership and their respective institutions. Through the research process, several themes and subthemes emerged, providing a way to organize the participants' perceptions of team relations. These themes broadly cover how organizational structures promote or hinder relationship building; how team relations were maintained and fostered; and how the environment provides opportunities and obstacles leaders need to be aware of to be successful in their positions.

The researcher summarizes the findings into four categories for readers to consider. First, participant perceptions of the team as a social unit was prevalent throughout the research data. The idea of sociability ties into the concept of Social Capital Theory and how social situations provide benefits on professional and personal levels. Second, participants had vivid descriptions of how predecessors affected team dynamics by either being too controlling, dictatorial, or ineffective, a perception that the researcher has termed the predecessor effect. Third, the convergent thoughts of participants about their roles in the organizations. Participants were very aware of their role relative to the success of their unit, the institution, and the president. Most participants shared their perspective of a good, effective executive team as one

of the most important priorities of the administration.   They noted a top leadership team sets an example for the whole institution: how the executives relate to each other influences how units below the executive level relate to each other to support the mission of the university. Finally, the participants shared their thoughts about how to prepare and influence the next generation of university executives. Participants shared ideas of bringing awareness to the importance of relationships. While many of the participants held various positions within their institutions, they felt this was a unique characteristic and thought it was important to get professionals involved and introduced to other areas of university administration. Participants also stressed networking in professional organizations and with colleagues at other colleges, universities and state agencies.

While the primary focus of the study is to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of academic executives relative to the social aspects of leadership and the impact these relationships have on leadership and institutions, the researcher hopes that the findings presented in this body of work will contribute to the limited body of literature related to university executive teams and the impact social capital plays on the success of the leaders and universities.

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<h1 style="text-align:center">Appendices</h1>

Appendix A. Proposed Letter to Presidents Confirming Executive Team Member Positions

Dear President _____,

I am not sure if you are aware but I am in the dissertation phase of the Education Leadership PhD program at the University of New Orleans. My dissertation deals with how university presidents and their executive teams perceive their social interactions influence the team and university. To get a general understanding of what positions comprise a university's executive team, I utilized the 2017 College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) Administrators in Higher Education Salary Report. Based on criteria defined within the report, executive teams typically consist of the campus president, executive vice president, provost, chief business officer, chief athletics administrator, chief advancement officer and a chief student affairs officer. I plan on interviewing 10 executives from our system member schools. To make sure I am capturing accurate data for my participant pool, do you mind providing me a list of position titles you consider as part of your executive leadership team? By responding to this question, you are not being quoted or mentioned in the study. My question to you is only to verify the executives that you consider part of your executive team. I appreciate your time and consideration. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me or my dissertation chair, Dr. Christopher Broadhurst at (504) 723-9542 or (504) 280-6026 respectively.

Sincerely,

Alex Arceneaux

PhD Candidate

University of New Orleans

Appendix B. Proposed Recruitment and Consent Form

LETTER OF RERCRUITMENT AND CONSENT FOR ADULTS (Typically used for studies that would not exceed minimal risk or for studies that would qualify for exempt status)

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Christopher Broadhurst in the Department/Division/College of Education and Human Performance at the University of New Orleans. I am conducting a research study to discover how do university leadership team members perceive relationships as critical factors that influence the performance of university leadership and the institution?

I am requesting your participation, which will involve about 1 hour of one-on-one questions (Include the expected duration of the subject's participation). Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty, (it will not affect your grade, treatment/care, whichever applies - select only one). The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation is that this study will contribute to the body of literature related to educational leadership by offering presidents and individuals aspiring to be a university or college president insight into how the relationships among the executive team and stakeholders can be helpful or a hindrance.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me or Dr. Christopher Broadhurst at (504) 723-9542 or (504) 280-6026.

Sincerely,

Alex Arceneaux

By signing below you are giving consent to participate in the above study. (Release statement for videotaping or relinquishing confidentiality must be inserted here if applicable.)

_____   _____   _____

Signature   Printed Name   Date

 If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, please contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon at the University of New Orleans (504) 280-3990.

Appendix C. Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Participant #: _____   University: _____

Personal History

- Tell me about your path to working in higher education.

- Prior to your current role, what experiences working on teams have you had?

    o   Were they particularly effective or ineffective teams? Why?

Current Role

- Tell me about your current position.

- What training did you receive for your current position?

- Why do you think you were selected for this role?

The Campus Leadership Team

- Describe the team dynamic (working relationship) of the executive team, as you

    perceived it.

- How do you believe the relationships maintained and created by team members impact

    the performance of the team?

- How do you believe the relationships maintained and created by team members impact

    institutional change?

- Take me through your last meeting.

- Describe a situation where a relationship impacted institutional change?

- What do you believe characterizes a successful and efficient team?

- Do you perceive this team as a successful team? If so, why? If no, why not?

- What comes to mind when considering your team members' relationships with

  institutional constituents?

- How do you see your role in facilitating relationships among your team?

- What can higher education leaders do to enhance awareness of social networking and

  relationship building?

Appendix D. Letter to Participants Providing Transcript of Interview

Dear _____,

      I want to thank you again for participating in my study of leadership teams. Attached to this email is a transcription of our interview. Please note that all names, institution names and professional titles were not used in the study. Pseudonyms were used when referring to you, your colleagues or the institution you work. I have also included the themes and subthemes that emerged from the interviews of all 16 participants. I enjoyed our conversation and appreciate your assistance in making my study come to fruition.

Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Organizational Structure	1a. Career Choice 1b. Leadership 1c. Team
2. Relations	2a. Relational Harmony 2b. Bonds
3. Navigating the Environment	3a. Awareness of helpful factors 3b. The things that hinder

Sincerely,

Alex Arceneaux

PhD Candidate

University of New Orleans

Vita

Alex Ryan Arceneaux is the Executive Vice President for Enrollment and External Affairs at Nicholls State University. His career experiences include stints in journalism, banking, and higher education. His higher education career started in the registrar's office at The University of New Orleans. Since then, he has served as a chief of staff and the executive vice president. He believes these positions have given him a unique perspective of the university and feels this is an asset he brings to the institution and the divisions he oversees. His research interests include social capital, higher education administers, university presidents, and leadership.