THE INFLUENCES OF LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES IN SUSTAINED MULTI-AGENCY COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

A dissertation presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of
Western Carolina University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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January 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge with much gratitude the Education and Leadership Foundations Department faculty at Western Carolina University for their continuous support throughout this academic journey; due to their influences, my approach to problem-solving and decision-making has evolved into a richer realm of thoughtfulness and consideration. My fellow students served as guiding voices, challenging adversaries and invaluable partners in projects, coursework and the occasional harebrained idea; I am thankful to know them all. I am indebted in particular to Dr. Meagan Karvonen for her guidance and encouragement as my dissertation chair, and I appreciate and value the input of my dissertation committee members: Dr. Mary Jean Herzog, Dr. Laura Leatherwood and Dr. John Sherlock.

I must also thank all the individuals who contributed to or participated in this study, for their time and willingness to share their thoughts and experiences. The passion and dedication each person exhibited for his or her work was both humbling and inspiring. I wish them all the greatest success as they move forward.

Finally, I am especially grateful and indebted to my extended family and friends for their ongoing support, encouragement and patience. I believed that I could, because they believed that I could.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated with deepest love and appreciation to my parents, who have been the kind and generous supporters of my life and to Michael, my simply spectacular husband, to whom I owe everything. I wish for you all the love, peace and beauty the world has to offer.

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ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCES OF LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES IN SUSTAINED MULTI-AGENCY COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

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Western Carolina University (January, 2014)

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Multi-agency partnerships can be a key element in sustaining growth and outreach in higher education, and the literature clearly indicates the increasing number and diversity of collaborative structures occurring on today's college campuses. However, partnership construction is a complex endeavor and attempts often fail for many reasons, including lack of support, unclear communication, cultural misunderstandings, and misalignment of goals and expectations. The purpose of this study was to explore the influences of organizational leaders and cultures on the work of sustained, multi-agency collaborations in which community colleges were one partner. In more fully understanding these two influences, higher education leaders may better nurture environments for successful collaborations. The study was grounded in a conceptual framework based upon current literature in educational partnership development and implementation, and organizational culture and leader impact. The study was then guided by four research questions that addressed the influences of institutional leaders on partnerships and on cultures, and the influence of cultures on collaborations. Cases for the study were identified through a state-wide nomination process, and three diverse, multi-agency partnerships were chosen to examine. A qualitative approach informed and directed data collection, which included individual interviews with 15 participants, five meeting and event observations, and document and artifact analysis. Data analysis was an iterative, ongoing process using a series of coding activities that combined all data sources. A collective case study methodology was used to allow emergent themes to appear from the coding, with regard to more than one partnership and contextual environment. Throughout analysis, the themes arose from data, reformed and clarified until a layered structure of findings became clear. The study proposes several findings of significance. One finding states that similarities between the cultures of the organizations and the partnerships may contribute to success; however, differences between organizational cultures does not equate to a lack of success. Another finding indicates that a participant's affinity to partnership mission and values may be linked to collaboration success. A third finding draws a link, both directly and indirectly, between specific leader actions in support of partnership work and success. While the study confirms some previous research, it also illustrates additional topics for future consideration. These include the impact of leader change, value of succession planning in partnerships, and how, within the college structure, participants may influence the organizational leader. The study concludes with implications for future research and recommendations for community college administrators and educational leadership training programs.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In the last twenty years, I have worked for organizations with a variety of governance structures, including public and private not-for-profit entities as well as a state agency housed on U.S. Forest Service property and administered through the state's public university system. Invariably these institutions were lightly staffed and underfunded for the breadth of education outreach with which each was charged. These organizations entered into multiple partnerships with different types and styles of collaborators with the common goal of leveraging limited resources into increased impact.

Thus my professional experience includes working with many partnership structures, including those which developed relationships and implemented projects that linked not-for-profit organizations, businesses and community colleges, federal agencies and entrepreneurs, and K-12 educators and university administrators. Some of these collaborations matured into stable working groups in their own right; the majority ended either when a specific goal was reached, or more often, when the partnership soured and disbanded. Reflecting on personal observation, I was often surprised by the subtle organizational influences and the impact of a leader's influence that seemingly contribute to a partnership's success or failure. My experiences align with those described by many researchers and practitioners addressing higher education partnerships and collaborative efforts.

As a doctoral student of educational leadership, I began to question what strategies could be put into place to ameliorate partnership failure and negative experiences for participants. With significantly decreased resources for publicly supported education combined with increased calls for service, it seems highly appropriate that leaders work to create the most positive environs possible for collaborations to flourish. Otherwise, these resources and opportunities could very well be squandered. The purpose of this study was to explore the influences of organizational leaders and cultures on the work of multi-agency, mature partnerships in North Carolina community colleges. Such information should assist college leaders in understanding the environment in which successful joint ventures may thrive.

Nature and Significance of the Study

Usually a collaborative project is launched with much excitement and obvious organizational attention and support. But the project may quickly languish due to many reasons, including lack of clear communication, inability to reach stated goals, and diffuse or disinterested leadership (Bracken, 2007; Clifford & Petrescu, 2012; Eddy, 2010). The effect may become more magnified when collaborations initiated by senior administrators are later delegated to staff or faculty, often with only partial explanation or direction. The results are a negative net; not only is the collaboration's objective not met, but uncomfortable and unproductive experiences for the participants can influence them to avoid future partnership opportunities. And collaborations are becoming increasingly common. When examining those partnerships specific to college settings, research indicates that they are increasing in number, complexity and purported importance to the sustainability of college and universities worldwide (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007; Gajda, 2000; Holland, 2009; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Maurrasse, 2002).

In 2004, the National Forum convened a major National Summit on higher education's response and strategy with regard to increased calls for understanding its relationship with the public. More than 250 individuals from key positions on campuses, in board rooms and non-profit workplaces participated in activities that created the working document, the "Common Agenda to Strengthen the Relationship Between Higher Education and Society" (Smerek, Pasque, Mallory, & Holland, 2005). This work led to the 2005 Wingspread Invitational Conference titled "Higher Education Collaboratives for Community Engagement and Improvement," which the facilitators described as an intermediate step in understanding "this larger national movement toward strengthening relationships" (p. 9) between colleges and community partners. "Increasing collaborations between communities and universities, in order to influence the public good, becomes paramount during this time of dramatic change," (p. 7) stated the conference leaders with regard to the value of the conference work. Through the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has created a quantitative measure by which campuses can demonstrate the breadth and detail of service to and within their geographic and academic communities (Holland, 2009).

In particular, higher education in North Carolina is witnessing an increased pressure to incorporate partnerships into strategic plans and business relationships. In 2012, newly elected Governor Pat McCrory outlined a specific education policy agenda that increased the role of higher education in economic development strategies, coupled with an expansion of college and business partnerships (Media, 2012). In the same year, the state's 58 community colleges announced that the Customized Training Program, which works to partner with industry to provide specific training curricula, served approximately 470 companies and provided education for nearly 28,000 residents (North, 2012). Partnerships are viewed as strategies to address a number of larger societal and cultural issues.

In the literature, there is much theoretical research, as well as many case studies and several models advanced addressing higher education partnership best practices (Amey, 2010; Beere, 2009; Clifford & Petrescu, 2012; Eddy, 2010; Holland, 2005; Roueche, Taber, & Roueche, 1995; Strier, 2011). However, these often present a checklist of attributes or a theoretical model that, while ideal, may be unattainable due to practical limitations. While working toward best practices, it is also valuable for research to examine the inner workings of functioning, real world collaborations. A leader in higher education with insight into the dynamics of a successful partnership can help create an environment which nurtures innovative and creative collaborative experiences (Eddy, 2010). However, there is a gap in the research literature exploring this concept, and additional study can certainly assist leaders in supporting success for their faculty and staff who participate in external partnerships.

For the purposes of this study, a partnership is defined as a cross-sector, interorganizational group, working together towards common goals that would be difficult to achieve if attempted by a single organization (Armistead, Pettigrew, & Aves, 2007). The terms *partnership* and *collaboration* are used interchangeably, and a sustained partnership can be defined by length of time in existence, evidence of surviving changes in leadership, by documentation and recognition of past successes, and by a funding stream that has diverse and/or stable sources (Clifford & Petrescu, 2012; Russell & Flynn, 2000; Walmsley, Bufkin, & Rule, 2009).

Characteristics of partnerships. Much research currently exists illustrating and defining collaborative structures, strategies and characteristics. Within higher education, partnerships may be labeled joint ventures, strategic alliances or collaborations, and can include many different types of participants. Potential members of a partnership include business and industry representatives, non-profit organizations, municipal and government agencies, K-12 systems and other colleges and campuses (Austin, 2002; Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005; Maurrasse, 2002; Roueche et al., 1995; Schaffer, 2012). Universities have long established collaborations with industry and government in order to see research turned to practical application with economic development potential. Recently efforts have increased to link campus life with the surrounding community through programs such as service learning (Amey, Eddy, & Campbell, 2010; Beere, 2009; Schaffer, 2012; Siegal, 2010; Torres, 2000).

Eddy (2010, p. 4) suggests seven common categories of motivating factors when colleges enter into collaborations with external agencies: educational reform, economic development, dual enrollment or student transfer, student learning, shared goals and visions, international joint ventures and resource savings. Organizational change is often listed as a precursor to formation, and the literature includes many case studies of partnerships whose early rationales fall easily across two, three or four of these categories (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Roueche et al., 1995; Sink & Jackson, 2002).

Several models illustrate the traditional linear unfolding of a collaborative structure. Partnerships can be forced by federal and state policy changes, budget crises, and opportunities presented by a specific circumstances (Duffield, Olsen, & Kerzman, 2012; Eddy, 2007; Kisker & Carducci, 2003). Once begun, most partnerships move through a developmental, "getting to know you" phase in which participant roles are outlined, group norms are put into play, and champions, those individuals who serve as catalysts for a positive experience, emerge from the group (Netshandama, 2010; Russell & Flynn, 2000; Spangler, 2002). In order to maintain viability, relationships require nurturing, and specific benefits expected from the partnership experience need to materialize in a timely fashion (Duffield et al., 2012; Walmsley et al., 2009).

With regard to partnership case studies and best practices for collaboration, much research describes factors that create and nurture successful partnership experiences. These include the emergence of a champion figure within the partnership, shared and balanced goal setting, and clear, actively managed communication strategies (Amey, 2010; Buettner, Morrison, & Masicek., 2002; Holland, 2005; Maurrasse, 2002; Russell & Flynn, 2000). However, it is also often noted that the impetus for entering into a partnership comes from the office of the president, while the implementation of the partnership falls to faculty and department chairs (Amey et al., 2010; Spangler 2002). Partnerships are acknowledged to be a process-oriented system, and a better understanding of the components of how a partnership is maintained can provide information to improve future endeavors (Eddy, 2010; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Maurrasse, 2002; Walmsley, et al., 2009).

Community colleges use partnerships to create beneficial workforce training programs that are applicable to local industry, and are often of immediate value to students and employers alike (Lundquist & Nixon, 1998; Thornton & Shattuck, 2006).

Often more isolated politically and geographically than their four-year counterparts, community colleges create multi-campus partnerships to address common goals. As well, they rely more heavily on their local community for collaboration resources (Sink & Jackson, 2002; Sink, Jackson, Boham, & Shockley, 2004). Also within community college partnerships, the leadership role is described as a key factor in success**.** Fulton-Calkins (2005) suggests that administrators build stronger collaborations with both local and international industries, and Spangler (2002) links to leadership the support of several themes common in successful partnerships, including flexibility and the increasing "access to and understanding of entrepreneurial opportunities" (p. 78). Certainly then college leadership is positioned to impact the success or demise of collaborations. Multiple descriptions in the literature illustrate the negative consequences when those in authority rejected, overturned or stalled the work done in the partnership, with sometimes overnight (Coburn, Bae, & Turner, 2008; Kruss, 2009).

Organizational culture. Organizational culture and leadership are two dynamics that may influence and impact the functioning of partnerships in higher education (Eddy, 2010; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Roueche et al., 1995). And the two ideas are intertwined, as the "dynamic processes of culture creation and management are the essence of leadership and make one realize that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin" (Schein, 2004, p. 1). Leaders in higher education are often asked to serve as experts in areas well outside the traditional and usually hierarchical experiences they gain while reaching their positions. Interviews and case studies suggest that well-intentioned leaders are learning as they go (Roueche et al., 1995; Sink & Jackson, 2002; Sink et al., 2004). As such, college administrators may not be aware of their current and potential impact on organizational culture or on collaboration success.

The concept of organizational culture arose in the mid-1970s with business management and anthropological studies of Japanese firms. More recently, organizational culture has been the subject of numerous examinations by sociologists, anthropologists, popular motivational speakers, and organizational and educational theorists. Morgan (1997) stated that “shared values, shared beliefs, shared meaning, shared understanding and shared sense making are all different ways of describing culture” (p. 138), and that culture is simply a “process of reality construction” (p. 138). This reality construction allows individuals to experience and understand actions, events, situations, successes and threats in a meaningful way. Schein (2004) described organizational culture as follows:

> Culture is both a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by leadership behavior, and a set of structures, routines, rules, and norms that guide and constrain behavior. (p. 1)

Later in the text, Schein (2004) defines organizational culture as the basic understandings of how an entity works, as defined by its users. Those understandings are usually created through the process of problem-solving, and have gained enough credibility through use and validity that they are taught to new group members.

Schein’s (2004) model of organizational culture is defined by three interacting levels: artifacts, values and norms, and beliefs and assumptions. Hawkins (1997) built upon Schein’s original triad of categories, adding two additional layers. These additional strata are described as emotional ground and motivational roots, both representing a more subconscious sense of identity, purpose and needs. These models are but two examples of the many constructs put forward by researchers to better illustrate organizational culture, which all have in common the underlying "concept of community and the importance of shared meanings and shared values" (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 8).

The deliberate study of organizational culture in higher education grew as a subset of those first projects completed in the mid-1980s. In higher education, the culture is described as "reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it" (Tierney, 1988, p. 3). Tierney (1988) suggests that ecology is an appropriate metaphor for describing a college's culture, as an interconnected web that can only be understood by examining not just the structure and relationships within the web, but the perspectives of the individuals who inhabit it. The idea of student culture, from the revolutionary 1960s through today's focus on first-generation student experience, can be considered a subset of the campus culture (Masland, 1985; Strier, 2010). Culture can define and illustrate how faculty interact with administration, how resource allotment is viewed by staff, and how student behavior is viewed by senior leadership (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Masland, 1985).

The role of leadership in organizational culture is often described as both a heavily influential force and a mechanism by which leaders may impact campus attitudes and expectations. Understanding the culture of an organization can provide leaders with insight into the institutional reality of daily operations and illustrate ways to influence the behavior and motivation of group members (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1984; Yukl, 2002). Yukl (2002) illustrates five primary mechanisms leaders use to influence culture: attention, reaction to crises, role modeling, allocation of rewards, and criteria for selection and dismissal. In each of these actions, leaders utilize positional authority and access to resources to demonstrate and reinforce cultural expectations. Leaders may also influence culture by changing embedded rituals, symbols, slogans, language, environment and mythology (Morgan, 1997; Schein, 2004; Yukl, 2002).

Understanding higher education organizational culture can increase leaders' abilities to address challenges, as too often leaders miss opportunities to capitalize on cultural norms when seeking solutions (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Shera, 2008). Difficult decisions forced by budgetary crises, for example, can actually increase an institution's sense of identity and purpose, instead of being divisive. Leaders can use a working knowledge of culture to "minimize the occurrence and consequences of cultural conflict and help foster the development of shared goals" (Tierney, 1988, p. 5).

Organizational culture and partnerships. Although organizational culture is often described as a crucial factor in the process of higher education partnership development and management, the relationship between the two is not well examined in the literature. Instead, research in the area of international development offers some insight. For example, one study explores "the extent to which a more explicit focus on the cultures of different organizations involved in the intervention leads us to reflect on issues of power and agency in ways that may help better explain the final effect" (Lewis et al., 2003, p. 542).

Kezar (2011) states that the influence of organizational culture in higher education is a topic significantly under-examined, for many reasons. Some suggest that there is an assumption of similarity between the cultures of colleges, K-12 systems and educational or service non-profits (Kezar, 2011; Strier, 2010), and thus the study of one is transferable to other settings. However, such assumptions create inaccurate illustrations of multi-agency collaboration successes or failures. Differences in culture can create communication problems, diverse governance structures can breed mistrust, and unconscious expectations can lead to unfulfilling experiences (Masland, 1985; Strier, 2010). Kezar (2011) states that “the awareness of difference makes the partners spend more time on partnership development, the creation of common language and communication, development of trust and other practices that develop a shared culture” (p. 209). Thus this study provides insight that may assist college leaders in understanding the impact of their actions on collaborations and organizational culture that can lead to increased success in multi-agency partnerships.

Conceptual Framework

In order to more fully conceptualize this subject, this study presents a visual representation of areas of influence on partnership work (see Figure 1). For example, the circles represent the hierarchical leader of an organization, while the hexagons represent the organizational culture of that entity. The culture and work of the partnership is represented by the rectangle in the center. Certainly the three do not exist discretely, but the graphic allows for the placement of directional arrows between them. The arrows represent the influence of leaders, both directly on the partnership and indirectly as demonstrated by the organization’s culture, as was explored in the previous description of the study’s nature and significance. The figure also suggests the potential complexity as the number of partners in the relationship increase. Kezar (2011) reminds researchers the literature has established that different organizational cultures can possibly influence the partnership itself, through varying actions and activities, even if the topic remains lightly explored.

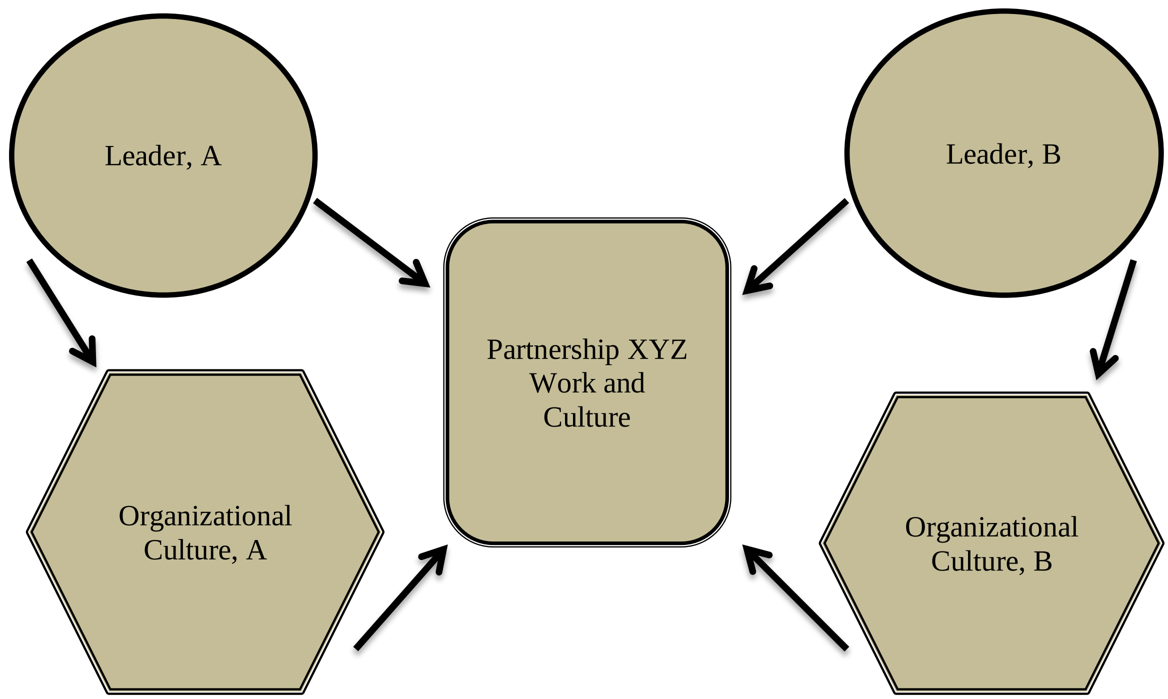

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The organizational culture of a participating agency can be explored in part through the use of Tierney's (1988) framework of organizational culture for higher education. This framework addresses six concepts deemed essential from the perspective of an ethnographer or anthropologist, in Tierney's view. The six concepts are: environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy and leadership (Tierney, 1988). Here the term *information* addresses the flow and context of data, while *mission* compares an organization's articulated purpose with its goals that become obvious by how it chooses to go about its daily activities. *Environment* is related to the political, social, demographic and geographic construct of the organization while *socialization* describes how new members experience the institution and what is necessary to excel. *Strategy* is the term used to describe the decision-making process, and outlines the penalty for bad decisions. Finally, *leadership* defines and acknowledges the identity of formal and informal leaders, and what the organizational expectations are for these individuals (Tierney, 1988).

In addition to Tierney's work, the culture that develops within multi-agency partnerships can be illustrated using concepts of context, power and practice, as outlined in a framework illustrated by Lewis et al. (2003). Similar to the term *environment*, *context* places the organization within "the broader societal structures and sets of meaning; be these around management, racism, professionalism, class, etc." (p. 552). *Practice* within this framework represents the daily activities of the partnership, including the emergence of new "cultural hybrids on the interface: interlocutors, brokers, etc." (p. 553). These hybrids are also described as bicultural, in that as individuals they have some working knowledge and understanding of more than one of the partners' culture, allowing them to serve as translators, or interpreters (Kezar, 2011). *Power* in this context is related directly to leadership and key stakeholders. As well, it describes the access and flow of information and the resources such as funding and decision-making authority (Lewis et al., 2003).

With regard to the similarities between the two frameworks, it is possible to merge them into a set of concepts addressing organizational cultures in the context of this study. Those concepts are: environment/social context, leadership/power, mission, practice/socialization, and information. Schein (2004) suggests three levels of organizational culture available to analyze, from "the very tangible overt manifestations that one can see and feel to the deeply embedded, unconscious, basic assumptions that I am defining as the essence of culture" (p. 25).

The first of these levels is artifacts, which include physical products of work, architecture of the environment, language, myths, stories, rituals, etc. (Schein, 2004). Defined as "their sense of what ought to be as distinct from what is" (p. 28), the second level of culture consists of the beliefs and values brought to the group by individuals bounded within the culture, and made obvious in strategies, philosophies and goals. Once accepted by the group, these values become "basic, underlying assumptions . . . so taken for granted that one finds little variation within a societal unit" (Schein, 2004, p. 31). These are represented by what the group perceives as non-negotiable and non-debatable values and action.

Within the context of this study, the influence of leaders, both on their organizations as well as on the associated partnerships, can be explored in part through the use of Yukl's (2002) framework of primary and secondary mechanisms. As demonstrated by their actions, languages, choices and priorities, leader impact can be illustrated through attention, reaction to crises, role modeling, allocation of rewards, and criteria for selection and dismissal. As well, their influences can be examined through the policies and procedures set, strategic planning in place, and response to legislative action.

Purpose and Research Questions

Multi-agency partnerships can be a key element in sustaining growth and outreach in higher education (Holland, 2009; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Maurrasse, 2002). However, partnership construction is a complex endeavor, and most partnerships fail (Holland, 2005; Strier, 2011). The purpose of this study was to explore the influences of institutional leaders and culture on the work of mature partnerships in community colleges. With a deeper understanding of these dynamics and implications, leaders such as college presidents and chief academic officers may better direct and nurture successful partnerships and relationships (Kezar, 2011). By exploring the experiences of individuals within partnership structures, the study examined the organizational cultures of participating institutions and described the culture that forms within partnerships themselves. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How are the organizational cultures of participating partnership institutions described by their members?
2. How does the leader of a participating partnership institution influence its organizational culture?
3. How does the leader of a participating partnership institution influence the partnership?
4. How does the organizational culture of a participating partnership institution influence the partnership?

Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative collective case study methodology, described as the examination of multiple cases, involving an "in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, even, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection" (Creswell, 2008, p. 476). A case consisted of a multi-agency collaboration, and was illustrated by the voices and experiences of individuals who represented each organization involved in a joint effort. In this manner more than one partnership was represented, and emerging themes from more than one collaborative entity were explored.

Potential partnerships for this study were identified via an online survey of North Carolina community college senior administrators. Survey participants were asked to identify partnerships with the system that met the specific selection criteria. Individuals from all agencies, including the college, participated in individual interviews; as well, meetings and public events related to the partnership activities were observed and artifacts and documents related to the work examined. Thus the case studies followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) structure with the problem, context, issues and lessons learned derived from multiple sources of information collected by the researcher. Of the six recommended types of information--archival records, first person interviews and focus groups, direct observations, physical artifacts and documentation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)—five were included in this study. Utilized data sources included first person interviews, direct observations of meetings and activities, examination of records, documents and artifacts, and researcher notes. The interview protocols were developed upon literature in higher educational organizational culture, community college leadership, and critical incident techniques. The protocols were twice tested with community college staff not participating in the study.

These combined sources provided a detailed description of the partnership relationships and participating entities, and preliminary data analysis began during the collection process, to highlight areas of particular interest. Each interview transcript was coded, employing Creswell's (2008) visual model, as common themes and concepts were identified as coding continued. Interview transcripts were examined in-depth, and meta-memos were created for each participant that combined transcripts with field notes and researcher memos. Meta-memos were also created for observed events and activities, and informed the partnership descriptions.

All of these data sources were drawn together in continuous review, as the coding process matured into identification of thematic categories. This process followed a model of theme development that was best illustrated by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) as “pushing forward . . . spiraling backwards . . . keeping the end point in sight” (p. 111). Both deductive themes as they appeared in the literature review and emergent themes were examined, and analysis was guided by the conceptual framework presented previously in this chapter. Organized by the research questions, findings were examined within the cases, i.e., the partnerships under study, then across cases to create a layering of major and minor themes. Trustworthiness was developed employing several strategies described by Glesne (2011), and the study incorporated the use of a project journal, field notes and memo-taking procedures throughout the collection process.

Delimitations

The following delimitations bound this study.

1. The study was limited to the experiences of representatives of organizations who are directly participating in collaborative efforts in which one partner was a North Carolina community college.
2. The study was limited to the three partnerships identified through the selection process and who agreed to participate.
3. Individuals in this study directly participated in partnership activities for a minimum of nine months. The study took place between May, 2013 and

December, 2013. It provides a snapshot of experience that may have been influenced by unforeseen events.

4. The study is limited to partnerships that have been in existence for at least two years. The goals of the selected partnerships are not specific or attributable to the related community colleges alone.

Definitions

As they are used throughout this study, several terms have specific meanings:

1. The terms *collaboration* and *partnership* are used interchangeably to lessen repetition of a single word. Both describe a cross-sector, interorganizational group, working together towards common goals that would be difficult to achieve if attempted by a single organization (Armistead et al., 2007).
2. The term *leader* refers to the hierarchical leader within an organization. This includes community college presidents, deans and program directors as well as executive directors of non-profit organizations, the chairman of a board of directors for one agency, and other board members.
3. The term *multi-agency* refers to the inclusion of organizations that have different governance structures, funding sources, mission statements, etc. Participating agencies include community colleges, state university affiliates, non-profit entities, quasi-state government agencies, and for profit businesses.
4. The term *organizational culture* is defined by Schein (2004) as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems . . . worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive" how the entity operates (p. 17).

Summary

Multi-agency partnerships can be a key element in sustaining growth and outreach in higher education (Holland, 2009; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Maurrasse, 2002). However, partnership construction is a complex endeavor, and most partnerships fail (Holland, 2005; Strier, 2011). The purpose of this study is to explore the influences of organizational leaders and organizational culture on the work of multi-agency, mature partnerships in community colleges. With a deeper understanding of these dynamics and implications, leaders such as college presidents and chief academic officers may better direct and nurture successful partnerships and relationships (Kezar, 2011). By exploring the experiences of individuals within partnership structures, the study examined the organizational cultures of participating institutions and described the culture that forms within partnerships themselves. The study also explored the role of institutional leaders on culture and on the work of the successful partnerships represented in this project.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Partnerships can be invaluable for reaching new goals and increasing capacity in higher education (Holland, 2009; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Maurrasse, 2002) as "college partnerships with public and private agencies will increase as pressures mount to do more with less" (Cloud, 2010, p. 78). However, partnership construction is a complex endeavor and most partnerships struggle to survive and thrive, often ending in failure (Holland, 2005; Provan, Veazie, Staten, & Teufel-Shone, 2006; Strier, 2011). Organizational culture and leadership are two dynamics that may influence and impact the functioning of partnerships in higher education (Eddy, 2010; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Lewis et al., 2003; Roueche et al., 1995). And the two ideas are intertwined, as the "dynamic processes of culture creation and management are the essence of leadership and make one realize that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin" (Schein, 2004, p. 1).

The purpose of this study was to explore the influences of organizational leaders and cultures on the work of multi-agency, mature partnerships in community colleges. With a deeper understanding of these dynamics and implications, leaders such as college presidents and chief academic officers may better direct and nurture successful partnerships and relationships (Eddy, 2010; Kezar, 2011). By exploring the experiences of individuals within the partnership structures, the study examined the organizational cultures of participating institutions and described the culture that forms within partnerships themselves. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How are the organizational cultures of participating partnership institutions described by their members?
2. How does the leader of a participating partnership institution influence its organizational culture?
3. How does the leader of a participating partnership institution influence the partnership?
4. How does the organizational culture of a participating partnership institution influence the partnership?

The purpose of the literature review is not to provide primary direction for the research questions (Creswell, 2008). Rather, the literature provides a context in which the study is set, amongst definitions, theories and related existing case studies. This literature review is organized into three sections, the first of which describes characteristics of partnerships in both higher education and those specific to community colleges. The section continues by examining the role of leadership in collaborations. The second section illustrates concepts in organizational culture, including constructs of culture within higher education and the influences of leaders. Finally, the third section presents current literature on the relationship between organization culture and partnerships, and illustrates a gap in research most succinctly described by Kezar (2011) when asking "if research demonstrates that culture is so important to success in partnerships, why is it usually overlooked in educational studies of partnerships?" (p. 210).

Characteristics of Partnerships

For the purposes of this study, a partnership is defined as a cross-sector, interorganizational group, working together towards common goals that would be difficult to achieve if attempted by a single organization (Armistead et al., 2007). The terms *partnership* and *collaboration* are used interchangeably. A sustained partnership can certainly be defined by length of time in existence, but should also show evidence of surviving changes in leadership. Established collaborations have documentation and recognition of past successes, and have a funding stream that has diverse and/or stable sources (Clifford & Petrescu, 2012; Russell & Flynn, 2000; Walmsley et al., 2009).

There are many reasons collaborations exist or begin. Partnerships in community service may be formed for many reasons: to improve efficiency, increase diversity of those addressing a particular social issue, build capacity or increase delivery to targeted populations (Provan et al., 2005). Partnerships in business may be formed to combat rapid changes in competitive environments and technologies, to “solve market failure problems caused by asset specificity, to strengthen competitive positions, and to absorb new knowledge” (Chung, Singh, & Lee, 2000). In a study of partnership structures and outcomes, which evolved into their theory of collaborative advantage, Huxman and Vangen (2005) expanded the list to include what they call the moral imperative, “the belief that the really important issues facing society – poverty, crime, drug abuse, conflict, health promotion, economic development and so on – cannot be tackled by any organization acting alone” (p.7). Earlier studies simply illustrated the advantage of cooperation in creating and maintaining a competitive edge, as it can provide “access to new technologies or markets, the ability to provide a wider range of products/services, economies of scale in joint research” (Mohr & Spekman, 1994, p. 135) or fundamentally sharing risks.

Partnerships in higher education. Partnerships in higher education are increasing in number, complexity and purported importance to the sustainability of college and universities worldwide (Amey et al., 2007; Gajda, 2000; Holland, 2009; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Maurrasse, 2002). They may be labeled joint ventures, strategic alliances or collaborations, and can include many different types of participants. Potential members of a partnership include business and industry representatives, non-profit organizations, municipal and government agencies, K-12 systems and other colleges and campuses (Austin, 2002; Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005; Maurrasse, 2002; Roueche et al., 1995; Schaffer, 2012).

For example, one publication compared the variety of community partners working with four very diverse urban institutions of higher education: The University of Pennsylvania, San Francisco State, Xavier of New Orleans, and Hostos Community College of the South Bronx (Maurrasse, 2002). Here the author proposed that the corporate social responsibility movement provides insight into the sustainability of such endeavors. This is one example of research that suggests the metrics formed to measure success in one arena are appropriately used to explore such education partnerships, in that "no one has quite figured out how to fairly and accurately access the progress of these highly complicated efforts" (Maurrasse, 2002, p. 132). In another more recent example, a pilot program was explored in the literature that cooperatively linked college and non-profit organizations in the creation of a nonprofit management program (Schaffer, 2012). The course was designed to benefit both students and community leaders as they worked in concert to develop curriculum, manage the program and evaluate the results.

In the literature today there is much theoretical research as well as many case studies and several models advanced addressing higher education partnership best practices (Amey, 2010: Beere, 2009; Clifford & Petrescu, 2012; Eddy, 2010; Holland, 2005; Roueche et al., 1995; Strier, 2011). For example, Wegner (2005) presents a list of factors for success developed from a group discussion including officials from University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and leaders in the state's nonprofit sector. These factors included the concept of shared narrative as well as evidence of personality traits inherent to many campus students and faculty (Wegner, 2005).

In another example, the study of a university-community partnership in Israel was examined from a social constructivist theory perspective (Strier, 2010). Here the author found "several crucial factors to be acknowledged in the process of partnership management: role perspectives, group affiliation, institutional context, power relations, the organizational culture of the partnership, and the societal perceptions of the social problems addressed" by the work of the collaboration (Strier, 2010, p. 81). These and other studies can present a checklist of attributes or a theoretical model that while ideal, may be unattainable due to practical limitations, or are not easily implemented by campus leaders.

Universities have long established collaborations with industry and government in order to see research turned to practical application with economic development potential. Kruss (2006) states that partnerships are "seen to provide a key means for higher education institutions to achieve greater responsiveness, to ensure that their research was better utilized and their technology better transferred" (p. 2). The benefits of such collaborations for the college staff include increased opportunities for publication, increased capacity in post-graduate students, enrichment of the undergraduate learning experience, enhanced academic status and the potential for lucrative, private consulting contracts for faculty (Kruss, 2006; Weerts and Sandmann, 2010). It is clear, however, that individuals need to understand and value the proposed benefits in order for the partnerships to succeed.

Recently, efforts have increased to link campus life with the surrounding community through programs such as service learning (Amey et al., 2010; Beere, 2009; Schaffer, 2012; Siegal, 2010; Torres, 2000). Through the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has created a quantitative measure by which campuses can demonstrate the breadth and detail of service to and within their geographic and academic communities (Holland, 2009). This illustrates one effort by colleges to use metrics of measurement to communicate their impact on their local regions, demonstrate growth in outreach over time and integrate the concept of collaborations into their campus cultures.

Many higher education partnerships begin based in the assumption that "1+1+1= more than 3" (Dhillon, 2009, p. 687). Administrators and policy-makers look to collaboration when searching for ways to avoid redundant efforts, expand service without increasing direct costs, and streamline educational pathways for diverse audiences (Amey et al., 2010; Eddy, 2010). Thus it is argued that 1+1 can equal more than two when organizations can achieve more by working together than when working independently. In 1995, Thomas E. Barton, Jr., President of Greenville Technical College, published an essay describing several mutually beneficial industry partnerships. One industry partner provided the college with more than $100,000 a year in "vehicles, books, equipment and delivery material" (Barton, 1995, p. 168) as well as a training vehicle fleet valued at more than $1 million. He states that the relationship "has saved the college tens of thousands of dollars over the past 10 years in donations alone" (p. 168).

However, some researchers caution that gains to the college, often described in terms of budget savings, may not include a consideration of what work becomes displaced when faculty and staff time is allotted to new efforts (Baxter, 2008; Holland, 2005). Dhillon (2009) suggests that the additional "1" represents the value some administrators perceive participants gain when serving as organizational representatives in a collaborative effort; in part, that partnership service constitutes professional development. This illustrates a tension that often exists in such partnerships, in that the participants withhold support and investment in the work; the mandate of additional responsibilities coupled with the expectation of personal growth can harm individuals' experiences, and may in fact create additional work for administrators. Many researchers call for additional research and program evaluation into the indirect costs of collaborative efforts (Holland, 2005; Strier, 2011).

Eddy (2010, p. 4) suggests seven categories of motivating factors found as common when colleges enter into collaborations with external agencies: educational reform, economic development, dual enrollment or student transfer, student learning, shared goals and visions, international joint ventures and resource savings. For example, the concept of a "P-16 pipeline is based on the belief that the pipeline requires commonality of goals" (Eddy, 2010, p. 5) and collaborations are forming nationwide to address this form of educational reform. In a 2002 study of twelve campus-based partnerships on a North Carolina community college campus, the factor of shared vision was the second most common factor identified as necessary for successful collaboration (Sink & Jackson, 2002). An examination of one component of a South African Human Sciences Research Council study provides a detailed review of specific benefits to economic development when higher education partners with industry, even as the author suggests that the tension between the two entities must be actively managed to succeed (Kruss, 2006).

Kezar and Lester (2009) describe several advantages collaboration brings to a campus, including the creation of innovation and learning (as defined by the theorist Peter Senge), the ability to examine issues from many different perspectives, the creation of a better service environment for students, and the previously mentioned professional development for employees. Organizational change is often listed as a precursor to formation, and the literature includes many examples of case studies whose early rationales and benefits fall easily across two, three or four of these categories (Roueche et al., 1995; Sink & Jackson, 2002). For example, a study of collaborations at North Iowa Area Community College illustrates the beginnings of a technology center and an entrepreneurial development center. These facilities were created through a joint enterprise to mutually increase student learning as well as support economic development for the region in a manner which wasn’t possible with the limited resources of the individual organizations (Buettner et al., 2002). In another example, one North Carolina community college works jointly with 12 distinct organizations, for reasons that span from the practical shared use of space to politically-motivated responses to community or social issues, where the college was viewed as a leader (Sink & Jackson, 2002).

Several models have been created that describe and illustrate the traditional linear unfolding of a collaborative structure. Partnerships can be forced by federal and state policy changes, budget crises, and opportunities presented by a specific circumstance; examples include one-time windows into funding agencies, hosting regional events such as a major political convention or the Olympics, and the opening of new brick-and-mortar facilities (Duffield et al., 2012; Eddy, 2007; Kisker & Carducci, 2003). In one example, found common in the literature, three institutions began to collaborate in a more formalized manner only when presented with the opportunity to secure lucrative grant funding (Duffield et al., 2012). Increased funding through partnerships is a common theme in case descriptions found throughout the literature.

Once begun, most partnerships move through a developmental, "getting to know you" phase in which participant roles are outlined, group norms are put into play and champions, those individuals who serve as catalysts for a positive experience, emerge from the group (Netshandama, 2010; Russell & Flynn, 2000; Spangler, 2002). In a study of the commonalities found in successful school-university collaborations, leaders responded as such:

> When asked, "What one piece of advice would you share with a dean, director, [or] chair about to embark on a collaborative venture?," the following were offered: (a) strive for simultaneous reform, (b) clarify goals with the partners, (c) recognize the value of relationship building and the time it will take, (d) empower key internal and external participants, and (e) provide adequate administrative support and resources. (Russell & Flynn, 2002, p. 202)

One provocative partnership model suggests that collaborations can be examined and understood from the perspective of leadership theorists Burns, Bass and Avolio (as cited by Butcher, Bezzina, & Moran, 2011), who founded the concepts of transformational and transactional leadership as existing on a continuum. Research has examined how partnerships exhibit similar characteristics, and suggests that the model can be used by leaders to deconstruct the culture of their organizations. Here a "transactional partnership is one in which the parties are concerned with the achievement of their individual purposes through the exchange of appropriate considerations" (Butcher et. al., 2011, p. 31). A transformational partnership incorporates a moral dimension into its work (Starratt, 2004) and is demonstrated when there are organizational changes occurring due to the work of the mutual collaboration (Butcher et al., 2011). These authors suggest that transformational collaborations create opportunities for value-based systemic change; this concept places a greater emphasis on shared trust and the goal of authentic engagement for all the agencies involved to maximize not only effectiveness but equality.

Another interesting concept surrounding partnerships in higher education is the application of social capital. The construct of social capital is defined by Amey et al. (2007) as the "relational trustworthiness the individual engenders" (p. 10) within the partnership; its power is increased by the number and relative distance between relationships, often defined as density. Social capital can be visually presented through network analysis, when the number of community connections an individual brings to the group, and how trustworthy and valuable other team members find the person and his or her connections, are viewed as linkages. Other components of the concept include the existence of layers of collaboration between individuals and organizations, and informal as well as formal networks. Thus the framework of social capital assists in conceptualizing the sophisticated, interconnected web of relationships in which some partnerships exist.

Established, healthy partnership structures evolve into sustainable rhythms, which exist outside the individuals who participate; those groups whose structures are more personality-driven often find themselves entering a period of ambivalence or stagnation, when participants leave (Eddy, 2010). In order to maintain viability, relationships require nurturing, and specific benefits expected from the partnership experience need to materialize in a timely fashion (Duffield et al., 2012).

Factors in successful partnership experiences. Much research exists describing factors that create and nurture successful partnership experiences. These include the emergence of a champion figure within the partnership, shared and balanced goal setting, and clear, actively managed communication strategies (Amey, 2010; Holland, 2005; Maurrasse, 2002; Russell & Flynn, 2000). In a case study of a Midwestern community college, Buettner et al. (2002) further described these elements as “seeds of partnerships” (p. 5) and listed them as shared or collective missions and goals between the partners, common activities which help create a base of shared experiences, opportunity to grow strategically, potential for economic payoffs within the partnership, and the potential to leverage resources amongst the partnership members.

However, it is also often noted that the impetus for entering into a partnership comes from the office of the president, while the implementation of the partnership falls to faculty and department chairs (Amey et al., 2010; Spangler 2002); a lack of leadership support or unclear communication can create concern for individuals who may not understand the project's value or impetus. Other common challenges include adequate preparation for the partnership members, continued commitment of leadership, flexibility built into the collaborative structure, and implications of sharing authority, a situation with which many academics may have little experience (Buettner et. al., 2002). In one case study of an unsuccessful collaboration between a college administration and community service agency, both a lack of communication and clarity of expectations created confusion that ultimately ended the project (Ostrander & Chapin-Hogue, 2011). The researchers propose that it was the exclusion of staff at the beginning of the program, although not deliberate, that led to stagnation. They explain that "at no place was this failure more evident than in the divergent expectations between staff and students" (p. 463), illustrating the importance of shared goals and vision.

Little research exists about the experience of the individuals who participate in the various aspects of the collaboration; most checklists for success are written from a leadership or theoretical perspective (Bracken, 2007). Partnerships are acknowledged to be a process-oriented system, and a better understanding of the components of how a partnership is maintained can provide information to improve future endeavors (Eddy, 2010; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Maurrasse, 2002).

C**ommunity college collaborations**. Community colleges are inherently drawn to collaborative work through the community ties specific in their missions (Amey et al., 2007; Buettner et al., 2002). For example, the mission statement adopted in February 2012 by Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College stated that the school "inspires, nurtures and empowers students and the community toward a better quality of life through progressive teaching, bold innovation and supportive collaboration" (Asheville-Buncombe, n.d.). President McCabb of Miami-Dade Community College reminded stakeholders that "community is our middle name" (Taber, 1995, p. 26) and that responsiveness and service to the community, working through collaborative efforts, are central to the community college mission.

Campuses rely upon partnerships to create beneficial workforce training programs that are applicable to local industry and of immediate value to students (Lundquist & Nixon, 1998; Thornton & Shattuck, 2006). Often more isolated politically and geographically than their four-year counterparts, community colleges create multi-campus partnerships to address common goals and rely more heavily on their local community for collaboration resources (Sink & Jackson, 2002; Sink et al., 2004). In one example, Blue Ridge Community College in Flat Rock, North Carolina housed 12 non-profit and government entities within their physical campus, as a collaborative way to leverage existing facilities. Sink, president of the college in 2002, stated that "physically locating these organizations and agencies on a college campus can maximize the potential of both the partners and the college, and in the process, attract new students, reach diverse populations, and provide new educational opportunities" (Sink & Jackson, 2002, p. 46).

Community colleges may also partner to address a specific issue such as minority retention or access to particular careers. For example, the Arkansas Delta Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Talent Expansion Program was formed in the mid-2000s, to "provide a systemic solution to the historic under-representation of minorities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)" (Baxter, 2008,

p. 10). In the first step of a larger initiative, four community colleges and one university joined resources to increase the number of students moving successfully between the schools, with the goal of achieving a STEM degree. Future plans of the partnership are centered upon the following:

> Focusing its energies of a collaborative and comprehensive approach to economic development in the region by sharing faculty, equipment, curricula, and best practices, and by providing a broad range of services to business and industry at a reasonable cost. (Baxter, 2008, p. 11)

Community colleges may also join forces with each other to create inter-institutional alliances, sometimes through joint program development or more comprehensive memorandum of understandings that outline cooperative arrangements. Often a response to political and economic pressure, these agreements are usually less formal than mergers, and can dissolve or adjust over time without significant legislative or legal ramifications (Eddy, 2003; Eddy, 2007). One evaluation study addressed the collaboration of five schools to counter falling budgets and pressures from governance to close small schools, sending students traveling more than 75 miles to continue their educations. Facing a fear of closure, college leaders were able to proactively lobby the state legislature for a solution that would save resources while allowing each campus to maintain its unique identity in the community (Eddy, 2003).

Role of leadership in partnerships. Fulton-Calkins (2005) sets out a call to action for all incoming community college leaders to look outward to stronger collaborations with both local and international industries. Several researchers outline key competencies higher education leaders should develop or maintain in order to support partnership efforts in their organizations, including communication skills, group facilitation techniques, flexibility and vision (Amey, 2010; Armistead et al., 2007; Eddy, 2010; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Russell & Flynn, 2000). Cloud (2010) lists collaboration as one of six "necessary competencies" (p. 76) for modern administrators, stating that "an effective community college leader develops and maintains cooperative, mutually beneficial, and ethical relationships that nurture diversity and sustain the college mission" (p. 77).

Spangler (2002) links to leadership actions the support of several themes common in successful partnerships, including flexibility and the increasing "access to and understanding of entrepreneurial opportunities" (p. 78). Amey (2012) charges college leaders with a pragmatic goal, in that "understanding these relationships, building necessary connections and finding appropriate and willing partners often lead to network analyses and cognizance of how webs of relationships, information and resources flow with, around, and through the college" (p. 147). Successful collaborations are often found in conjunction with leaders described as having *boundary-spanning* characteristics, defined in literature as the ability to build bridges between constituencies and organizations which may have vastly different missions, cultures and agendas (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Boundary spanning leaders are skilled at creating common language amongst diverse individuals, moderating conflicts, serving as interpreters of cultural differences and leading the process of balanced goal-setting that benefits all agencies (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010).

Modeling shared decision-making, and thus relinquishing authority, can be challenging for leaders who are steeped in more traditional, hierarchical roles. But with the changing nature of campuses comes the need for different leadership and management styles. For example, the “shift to collaborative decision-making requires agreement on decision-making as well as the recrafting of traditional managerial roles to include different institutional responsibilities” (Eddy, 2012, p. 129). Certainly then college leaders are positioned to impact the success or demise of collaborations. Multiple descriptions in the literature illustrate scenarios when those in authority rejected, overturned or stalled the work done in the partnership, sometimes overnight and usually creating significant negative experiences for partnership participants (Coburn et al., 2008; Kruss, 2009). Interestingly, the concept of authority is mobile within collaborations, and can be examined in conjunction with status; in this study, leaders are considered as individuals who are described as having both the qualities of authority and status.

Organizational Culture

Morgan (1997) states that “shared values, shared beliefs, shared meaning, shared understanding and shared sense making are all different ways of describing culture” (p. 138) and that culture is simply a “process of reality construction” (p. 138) that allows individuals to experience and understand actions, events, situations, successes and threats in a meaningful way. Schein (2004) describes organizational culture as follows:

> Culture is both a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by leadership behavior, and a set of structures, routines, rules, and norms that guide and constrain behavior. (p. 1)

Later in the text, Schein (2004) defines organizational culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems . . . that worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive" how the entity operates (p. 17). The concept of organizational culture arose in the mid-1970s with business management and anthropological studies of Japanese firms, who seemingly excelled in efficiency and operation. Interestingly, few differences were found between Japanese and American business structures, but the concept had captured researchers' imaginations, and a wave of studies were published beginning in the early 1980s (Cameron & Ettington, 1988; Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985). To date, organizational culture has been the subject of numerous examinations by sociologists, anthropologists, popular motivational speakers, and organizational and educational theorists.

Schein's (2004) model of organizational culture is defined by three interacting levels: artifacts, values and norms, and beliefs and assumptions. Hawkins (1997) built upon Schein's original triad of categories, adding two additional layers:

- Artifacts: which include policy documents, mission statements, meeting minutes, etc.;
- Behavior: how individuals interact, resolve conflicts and address mistakes;
- Mindset: assumptions, norms and values that inform and bound acceptable behavior;
- Emotional ground: underlying states and needs of a group which impact perception; and
- Motivational roots: subconscious sense purpose and identity that links the organization and individuals within.

Lewis (1992) also built upon Schein's model, proposing that symbols, processes, forms and behaviors could be examined in concert to reveal feelings, beliefs and values. It is the latter three the researchers suggest actually reveal the basic assumptions of culture about an organization; it is imperfect to examine symbols, for example, and draw a direct conclusion about culture. Rather, it is a groups' interpretation of those symbols that illustrates organizational culture (Lewis, 1992).

Later research by Lewis (1998) helps define each of these terms. Symbols are described as logos, ceremonies, daily rituals, slogans, and day to day work duties. Processes are "the methods that an organization uses to carry out its tasks, such as who reports to whom" while forms are "directly observable things such as the design of physical spaces, façades" and other such items as furniture, newsletters and memos (p. 254). Lewis proposes that behavior is different from these three concepts, as that not all behavior is cultural; "that is, while behavior is one embodiment of culture, culture is not the only determinate of behavior" (p. 254).

These three models are examples of constructs put forward by researchers to better illustrate organizational culture, which have in common with most current literature on the subject the underlying "concept of community and the importance of shared meanings and shared values" (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 8). However, culture can be a difficult and imprecise concept to many, as "it is a term borrowed from one discipline that yet is itself an inter-disciplinary phenomenon" (Lewis, 1998, p. 252). As well, culture is characterized by diversity, in which "simplifying this variety is one of the major challenges of organizational scholars, since such variety and disagreement inhibit theoretical development and practical application of the concept" (Cameron & Ettington, 1988, p. 368). For example, a case study of middle managers in a grocery store chain experiencing a deliberate attempt to change culture found that these individuals were less impacted by culture than by the direct action of the managers. Here these actions taken to ostensibly change the culture resulted in workers describing a sense of less autonomy coupled with career insecurity (Ogbonna & Wilkinson, 2003).

However, culture has been used to explore effectiveness and outcome management in areas of social services. In one example, Hodges and Hernandez (1999) utilized organizational culture to explore the use of data in decision-making at the Texas Children's Mental Health Plan. The authors proposed a relationship between a lack of shared mission and values and a tendency by staff to disregard specific outcomes, as well as suggesting training and professional development as key to effective use of data. Higher education organizational culture has been the study of several scholars, and will be addressed later in this literature review.

Role of leadership in organizational culture. Understanding the culture of an organization can provide leaders with insight into the institutional reality of daily operations as well as illustrate ways to influence the behavior and motivation of group members (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1984; Yukl, 2002). The common logic is that culture is created by individuals as a means of understanding the environment, and explaining how to behave within it. Thus armed with this knowledge leaders may be able to influence culture towards positive growth and efficiency within their organizations.

Yukl (2002) illustrates five primary and five secondary mechanisms leaders use to influence culture (see Table 1). In each of these actions, leaders utilize positional authority and access to resources to demonstrate and reinforce cultural expectations. For example, "one company with lower sales avoided layoffs by having all employees (including managers) work less hours and take a pay cut; the decision communicated a strong concern for preserving employee jobs" (p. 280). This particular culture, then, is seen by individuals as placing a higher value on employee retention than finding the most expeditious way to solve an issue. Yukl (2002) defines "primary" mechanisms as "offering the greatest potential for embedding and reinforcing aspects of culture" (p. 279). Secondary strategies more subtly serve to support those the researchers consider primary, and are often linked to institutional policies and procedures.

Table 1

Mechanisms Used by Leaders to Influence Culture as Drawn from Yukl (2002)

Primary	Secondary
Ways of reacting to crises	Management system design, procedures
Role modeling	Organizational structure
Criteria for allocating awards	Facility design
Criteria for selection and dismissal	Stories, legends, and myths
	Formal statements

Leaders may also influence culture by changing embedded rituals, symbols, slogans, language, environment and mythology (Morgan, 1997; Yukl, 2002). Schein (2004) lists major and minor ways that leaders communicate culture (see Table 2). Similar to Yukl's structure, these primary and secondary levers allow leaders to "teach their organizations how to perceive, think, feel and behave based upon their own conscious and unconscious convictions" (p. 246). Here again, the primary actions are considered more effective and obvious, while the secondary are more foundational. In an example of application, Yukl (2002) states that "a leader who institutes a policy or procedure but fails to act in accordance [with it] is communicating the message that it is not really important or necessary" (p. 280). Such negative influences include distribution of budget resources outside of formal strategic planning processes, inconsistent personnel management strategies and the perceived impact of personal preferences.

Table 2

Mechanisms Used by Leaders to Influence Culture as Drawn from Schein (2004)

Primary	Secondary
Reaction to crises and critical incidents	Organizational systems and procedures
Allocation of resources	Rites and rituals
Deliberate role-modeling, coaching	Design of the physical space
Allocation of rewards and status	Stories about important people and events
Staff recruitment, selection, promotion and excommunication	Formal statements of organizational philosophy, creeds and charters

It may appear that organizational culture, when broken into specific components, would seem a straightforward tool that leaders can use to influence entities towards goals and objectives. Simply put, if a manager addresses each component listed above, culture will take care of itself. However, some researchers caution against simplistic uses of organizational culture to attempt to understand complex systems, serve as a rationale for implementing hidden agendas or as a panacea for a host of managerial issues (Morgan, 1997; Tierney, 1988).

Organizational culture in higher education. In higher education, the culture is described as “reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it” (Tierney, 1988, p. 3). The concept of organizational culture as related to university life can be said to predate the late 20th century, recalling that “lofty doctrines associated with college and universities elicit almost religious emotions” (Masland, 1985, p. 158). A consideration of the term *ivory tower* suggests an expectation of organizational culture that is buried deeply into society’s consciousness. In an early and oft-cited publication, Tierney (1988) suggests that ecology is an appropriate metaphor for describing a college’s culture, as an interconnected web that can only be understood by examining not just the structure and relationships within the web, but the perspectives of the individuals who inhabit it.

Organizational culture affects many aspects of campus life. The idea of student culture, from the revolutionary 1960s through today’s focus on first-generation student experience, can be considered a subset of the campus culture (Masland, 1985; Strier, 2010). Culture can define and illustrate how faculty interacts with administration, how resource allotment choices and distribution are perceived by staff, and how student behavior is viewed (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Masland, 1985; Tierney, 2008). Culture can also be used as a basis for developing success metrics for such concepts as effectiveness and efficiency (Smart & Hamm, 1993), although this requires care to ensure transparency, as measurements in and of themselves impact culture.

Cameron and Ettington (1988) presented a framework of four types of organization cultures present in higher education, and applied this framework to a study of 334 four-year colleges in the United States that represented a diverse and inclusive population. The culture types are defined as:

- "hierarchy" – relying upon order, rules, regulation, efficiency and uniformity;
- "market" – emphasizing customer service, competiveness and goal accomplishment;
- "clan" – built upon shared goals, individuality and a sense of family; and
- "adhocracy" – emphasizing entrepreneurship, flexibility and adaptability.

As expected in the study, no one institution scored fully within one culture type; however, the colleges identified themselves overwhelmingly as strong "clan" cultures (Cameron & Ettington, 1988). The study continued by linking the type of organizational culture with perceived effectiveness regarding areas such as organizational health, student educational satisfaction, family and administrator employment satisfaction and ability to acquire resources. The "clan" culture was the predominantly successful culture in the majority of the categories (Cameron & Ettington, 1988), leading the authors to publish 20 propositions built upon the study evidence. For example, one such concept states that "the greater the discrepancy between private, organizational identity and public identity (i.e., incongruence), the lower the organizational effectiveness" (p. 388).

Role of leadership in higher education organizational culture. Understanding higher education organizational culture can increase leaders' abilities to address challenges, as too often leaders miss opportunities to capitalize on cultural norms when seeking solutions (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Shera, 2008). Difficult decisions forced by budgetary crises, for example, can actually increase an institution's sense of identity and purpose, instead of being divisive, if the strategies are grounded in the organizational values. Leaders can use a working knowledge of culture to "minimize the occurrence and consequences of cultural conflict and help foster the development of shared goals" (Tierney, 1988, p. 5). An understanding of culture can throw light onto the influence of small decisions, point out operational contradictions that may be causing conflict, and better comprehend the various viewpoints that exist in the college environment.

In one example, Kisker and Tater (2012) suggest that "organizational patterns of governance affect expectations for community colleges as well as they may influence colleges' abilities to accomplish statewide policy objectives such as cross-sector collaborations" (p. 165). In other words, the influence of legislative and municipal cultures may define those entities' expectations of a college, and ironically, may well either limit or support the reaching of those expectations. For example, a confederated system of K-12 schools may be so committed to its autonomous structure that it approaches collaborations without skills in shared decision-making, although the system may have been mandated to partner by legislative authority. The more coherent the work processes of public education, such as information management and program planning, the more likely school systems will be both willing and able to build successful collaborations (Kisker & Tater, 2012).

Kezar and Eckel (2002) present a study addressing the effects of organizational culture on institutional change, questioning whether change strategies in higher education need to be aware of the influences of individual cultures. They examined three different cultures, and implications of five change strategies, which were all built upon leadership response and method. Their findings suggest that leaders play an integral role in culture, both as it exists and through what components of leadership do not exist. For example, they suggest that change strategies built upon collaborative decision-making will not succeed in organizations where the cultural norms dictate hierarchical authority (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Even when attempts are made to create collaborative leadership through committees, the culture norm is so imbedded the temporary measures fail. Higher education leaders who have a clear understanding of what is in the middle of their organizational cultures, be it family, process or individual, are better placed to understand which change strategy or crisis management tool is going to be most effective and least disruptive (Tierney, 2008).

Organizational Culture and Partnerships

Although organizational culture is often described as a crucial factor in the process of higher education partnership development and management, the relationship between the two is not well examined in the literature. Instead, research in the area of international development offers some insight. For example, one article explores "the extent to which a more explicit focus on the cultures of different organizations involved in the intervention leads us to reflect on issues of power and agency in ways that may help better explain the final effect" (Lewis et al., 2003, p. 542). This leads the authors to propose a framework of partnership culture that incorporates three themes, linked back to work of previous researchers: practice, power and meaning.

Schein (2004) suggests that the concept of cultural intelligence may be useful in understanding the relationship between collaborations and culture, stating that:

> Because culture is so deeply embedded in each of us, this process [partnering] must confront the fundamental reality that each member of each culture begins with the assumption that what he or she does is the right and proper way to do things. (p. 388).

Schein (2004) suggests that in order for partnership members to develop the ability to work with others, each must be motivated to learn about the other, have or develop mindfulness about culture, and have an inherent flexibility and ability to learn new ways of working. A "temporary cultural island" (p. 389) is one suggested mechanism to bridge differences; here, a group of individuals actively confronts their assumptions and differences, using exploration and self-reflection to find a common language and purpose. Schein provides examples of its use to improve communication, as within the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration, where a demonstrated lack of clarity in communication between engineers and managers was linked to both the Challenger and Columbia incidents (p. 397).

However, there remains a gap in the literature about the relationship between higher education organizational culture and efforts to collaborate. Kezar (2011) asks "if research demonstrates that culture is so important to success in partnerships, why is it usually overlooked in educational studies of partnerships?" (p. 210). Some suggest that there is an assumption of similarity between the cultures of colleges, K-12 systems and educational or service non-profits (Kezar, 2011; Strier, 2010). However, such assumptions create inaccurate illustrations of multi-agency collaboration successes or failures. Differences in culture can create communication problems, diverse governance structures can breed mistrust, and unconscious expectations can lead to unfulfilling experiences (Masland, 1985; Strier, 2010). “The awareness of difference makes the partners spend more time on partnership development, the creation of common language and communication, development of trust and other practices that develop a shared culture” (Kezar, 2011, p. 209). This study begins to fill this gap in the literature by exploring the influence of organizational culture and institutional leaders on community college partnerships.

Summary

The purpose of this review of the literature was to explore current research and writings on partnerships, and examine publications regarding two organizational dynamics that may influence successful collaborations in higher education: leaders and organizational culture. The review addressed characteristics of partnerships, models and best practices, as well as the factors found common to many successful collaborations. Specific sections explored higher education partnership characteristics, with special attention to community college collaborations, along with the role of leaders’ influence in partnerships.

The concept of organizational culture was defined, and several theorists introduced through illustrations of their conceptual frameworks. The review addressed the role of leadership in organizational culture, specific concepts of culture with regard to higher education settings, and finally the role of leadership specific to higher education organizational culture. In conclusion, the review illustrated the lack of research with regard to the relationship between organizational culture and partnerships, a previously introduced question posed by Kezar (2011) in that “if research demonstrates that culture is so important to success in partnerships, why is it usually overlooked in educational studies of partnerships?" (p. 210), a gap in knowledge this study helps lessen.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This chapter presents a detailed description of the methodology used in this study. Following a review of the research purpose, the chapter describes the project's research design, participation selection, interview protocol development and implementation, data collection and data analysis procedures. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Research Purpose and Questions

Partnerships can be invaluable in sustaining growth and outreach in higher education (Holland, 2009; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Maurrasse, 2002). However, partnership construction is a complex endeavor, and most partnerships fail (Holland, 2005; Strier, 2011). The purpose of this study was to explore the influences of organizational leaders and culture on the work of multi-agency, mature partnerships in community colleges. With a deeper understanding of these dynamics and implications, leaders such as college presidents and chief academic officers may better direct and nurture successful partnerships and relationships (Kezar, 2011). By exploring the experiences of individuals within partnership structures, the study examined the organizational cultures of the participating institutions and described the culture that forms within partnerships themselves. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How are the organizational cultures of participating partnership institutions described by their members?
2. How does the leader of a participating partnership institution influence its organizational culture?

3. How does the leader of a participating partnership institution influence the partnership?

4. How does the organizational culture of a participating partnership institution influence the partnership?

Methods and Research Design

This study used a qualitative research approach as suggested by the exploratory, open-ended nature of the research questions, directed towards consideration of the participants' shared experiences. This type of research moves towards a "goal of understanding human ideas, actions and interactions in specific contexts or in terms of wider culture" (Glesne, 2011, p. 8). As Creswell (2008) stated, qualitative research:

> Is a type of research in which the researcher relies on the views of the participants, asks broad questions, collects data consisting of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes words for themes and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner. (p. 46)

By employing qualitative instead of quantitative methods, the voice of the participants directed the focus of the study, and it is their experiences which informed the analysis and findings. Data collection methods included such standard qualitative techniques as individual interviews, participant observation and document analysis. The instrument of data analysis was the researcher herself, who was a subjective part of the partnership experience at some level, for the existing participants (Glesne, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 2006).

This study employed a collective case study methodology, described as the examination of multiple case studies to locate common themes that seem to transcend specific environments, or “how the program or phenomenon appears in different contexts” (Stake, 2006, p. 24). Case studies, whether individual or collective, require an “in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, even, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection” (Creswell, 2008, p. 476). Here the bounded system consisted of the partnerships in which the individuals participate. Glesne (2011) proposed two concepts that are common to case studies. First, they incorporate in-depth “examinations with data gathered through participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and document collection and analysis” (p. 22), Secondly, the findings are often presented first descriptively then thematically, with comparisons of multiple case studies lending themselves to an examination of themes (Glesne, 2011).

While case studies may use either qualitative or quantitative data for analysis, they provide the ability to study complex problems through in-depth examinations of the cases. Rather than limited examination of many cases, this study deeply explored a limited number of bounded systems, particularly the collaborations. By using a collective case study approach, the study includes insights into the partnership experience from a variety of perspectives. In this manner, more than one partnership was represented, and emerging themes from more than one collaborative entity were examined.

Selection of Research Sites and Participants

The study employed a purposeful and multi-staged approach to the identification and selection of partnerships for consideration. To identify potential partnerships for this study, senior-level community college administrators were invited via email to participate in an online survey; contact information was provided through the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) office (see Appendix A-1 for the email invitation to participate). These individuals included Presidents, Vice Presidents and other administrative officials for each of the 58 campuses, and a total of 127 email addresses were collected. Some individuals reported difficulty accessing the survey made available through the online website as formatted in the initial email, thus a second email updated with an additional link was again distributed to the entire population. Survey participants were asked to identify potential partnerships within the NCCCS in relation to the study definition, and answer questions about their goals, agencies, success and stability (see Appendix A-2 for survey text). In addition, four individuals via email or telephone suggested potential collaborations for consideration, in an example of snowball sampling. This approach created an inclusive opportunity for potential partnerships to be incorporated in the preliminary group under consideration for study. Additional information was gathered through websites as well as telephone and email inquiries to clarify partnership descriptions as needed.

This first stage of identification resulted in an initial pool of 14 potential discrete collaborations to study, located mainly in the central and western regions of North Carolina. Although a secondary recruitment activity had been proposed, to be conducted through the Small Business Center network, this initial group was larger than needed to reach the goal of three study partnerships, and no additional recruitment was done. The suggested 14 partnerships were grouped into three general categories: collaborations with business and industry, collaborations with non-profits, and collaborations with multiple partners from a variety of community segments, such as businesses, non-profit agencies, and government and civic organizations. Within each of the three categories, partnerships were ranked using the following selection criteria:

- Number of participating agencies;
- Diversity of participating agencies
- Age of partnership;
- Stability of partnership as reported by the survey respondent; and
- Success of partnership as reported by the survey respondent.

A numeric value was assigned to survey responses in each of the five criteria, and then summed for each partnership. Relative higher values represented partnerships that had been in existence for more than two years and included diverse members. Relative low values represented collaborations that had been operating less than two years, had fewer agencies involved and lacked diversity in membership (see Appendix B for partnership selection matrix example). The researcher contacted individuals involved in potential cases, to clarify potential limitations for use in the study, such as a lack of meeting and new agencies joining during the study period; such information was also included in the selection process. This research also included identification of the college staff person most suited to be the liaison for the research project; this person was called the “campus lead.”

The study gave close consideration to the diversity of the schools and agencies included, as a purposeful sampling of cases tailored to the study would “build in variety and create opportunities for intensive study” (Stake, 2006, p. 24). Thus the number of and types of agencies participating in the study was influenced by the criteria as well as a conscious effort towards diversity of agency type and size and partnership goals, activities and products.

Three partnerships received the highest ranking within the initial pool of suggested nominees. They illustrated an appropriate level of diversity, including at least two additional types of agencies, including non-profit organizations, state and quasi-federal agencies, and private industries. The three highest ranking collaborations were generally focused on economic development, but each was uniquely structured. Each created different work products, including population-specific recognition events and public workshops, industry training and community resource planning. Stake's (2006) suggested three reflective questions were also used to assess the partnerships' appropriateness for the study: "1) Is the case relevant to the phenomenon? 2) Do the cases provide diversity across contexts? 3) Do the cases provide good opportunities to learn about complexity and contexts?" (p. 23). The dissertation committee members provided feedback regarding the suitability of the partnerships for study; the committee unanimously agreed that the group was appropriate to fulfill the project parameters.

The appropriate college leaders and staff at each of the three campuses were contacted with an invitation to participate (see Appendix C-1 for college staff invitation to participate). In cooperation with and through the campus lead, the most appropriate staff member of each participating organization was invited to take part in the study (see Appendix C-2 for agent invitation to participate). Each person was informed of the study's purpose and scope. Every agency contacted agreed to participate in the study, resulting in 100% inclusion. For each partnership, at least three different agencies provided participants for the study; as well, partnership meetings and activities were available for observation. The fourth chapter of this document contains an in-depth description of each partnership, including agency types, organization, mission, structure and purpose.

Thus the study explored the experiences of 15 individuals who participated in one of three partnerships; a total of 13 different organizations were represented in the three collaborations. These individuals included college faculty, staff and administrators as well as agency executive directors, program managers, human resource directors and industry trainers.

Each agency representative was contacted by email with the invitation to participate, and offered an ongoing opportunity to discuss the project, answer questions and address comments, and to review the informed consent document (see Appendix D-1 for informed consent document). Two of the original 15 individuals contacted declined to participate, one due to scheduling conflicts and the other to work management concerns. Both recommended other individuals within their organizations qualified to contribute to the study; both of these staff members agreed to participate. In addition, one individual in authority within each collaboration provided a signed letter of agreement to participate in the study on behalf of the partnership (see Appendix D-2 for draft letter of agreement); these letters were provided to and accepted by the Institutional Review Board of Western Carolina University.

Data Collection Methods

The case study methodology incorporated several data sources. This research focused more heavily upon the experiences of the participants as described in individual interviews. The products of the partnership, i.e., the meetings and activities as well as documents and artifacts, offered evidence of the individuals' experiences in action.

Sources of data for this study include 15 individual interviews, observations of three partnership meetings and two public events, documents and artifacts produced by collaborative activities, a researcher journal, field notes and researcher memos.

Individual interviews. One-on-one interviewing allows for each participant to have an equal opportunity to consider the interview questions, provides personal data that might not emerge in a group setting, and provides context to experience which is not obvious in observations (Creswell, 2008). As this study sought to explore the unique experiences of individuals within the bounded system, the process of preparing for and conducting the interviews was undertaken in a deliberate and thoughtful manner. This approach is illustrated in this section through discussion of the interview protocol development process, securing of informed consent, conducting of each interview and researcher reflection.

Interview protocol. The development and use of an interview protocol or guide is often mentioned as an integral component of qualitative research methodology (Creswell, 2008; Glesne, 2005; King, 2004). This type of interview "is not based on a formal schedule of questions to be asked word-for-word in a set order" (King, 2004, p. 15). Rather, the protocol serves as a guide, allowing the opportunity to explore unexpected topics and those areas of deep personal meaning for the participant. King (2004) suggests three sources for topics to be included in a guide: "the research literature, the interviewer's own personal knowledge and experience of the area, and informal preliminary work such as discussions with people who have personal experience with the research area" (p. 15).

Drawing from the research literature, the interview protocol was influenced by Tierney's (1988) framework of organizational culture (see Table 3). While some specific questions within the framework were incorporated into the interview protocol, Tierney's work did not serve as a template for the interview guide. Instead, critical incident technique (CIT) significantly informed the draft protocol. Built upon work first used by Flanagan in 1954, this technique incorporates open-ended questioning that revolves around a specific event, incident or period of time in an individual's experience. Chell (2004) suggests the use of such leading questions as "What happened next? How did it happen? With whom did it happen? What were the consequences?" (p. 49). This allows individuals to recall detailed examples of experiences, perspectives and memories. Many applications of this technique are found in the literature in business management as well as higher education. This study employed best practices in the use of critical incident technique drawn from several researchers (Ayers, 2004; Chell, 2004; Enomoto & Matsuoka, 2007; Flanagan, 1954; Gremler, 2004).

Thus, drawing from the above resources, a pilot interview protocol was developed. The purpose of the pilot interview protocol is to allow the opportunity for feedback on the questions, and to make adjustments for clarity, timing and comprehension (Creswell, 2008). Feedback was garnered from a community college administrator on the protocol before it moved into the pilot phase. As suggested by Creswell (2008), the interview guide was structured with "instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked, and space to take notes of responses from the interviewee" (p. 233).

Table 3

Framework of Organizational Culture as Described by Tierney (1988. p. 8)

Category	Guiding Questions
Environment	How does the organization define its environment? What is the attitude towards the organization? (Hostility? Friendship?)
Mission	How is it defined? How is it articulated? Is it used as a basis for decisions? How much agreement is there?
Socialization	How do new members become socialized? How is it articulated? What do we need to know to survive/excel in this organization?
Information	What constitutes information? How has it? How is it disseminated?
Strategy	How are decisions arrived at? Which strategy is used? Who makes the decisions? What is the penalty for bad decisions?
Leadership	What does the organization expect from its leaders? Who are the leaders?

Two pilot interviews were conducted with additional community college staff that had previous experience working within partnerships but were not qualified to participate in the study. Through the use of a journal, personal thoughts, assumptions, concerns and expectations were recorded both before and after each pilot interview, a process known as bracketing and utilized to help understand influences on the interview process. Field notes were taken as well, recording information about the interview setting, environment and interviewee responses that might not be obvious in the interview transcript. After each interview, a discussion about the experience was held with each participant, and upon reflection of interviewee comments, the audio-transcripts and all related researcher notes, a final interview protocol was created for consistent use in the data collection process (see Appendix E for interview protocol).

Informed consent. As each participant would be describing his or her personal experiences, it was critical to ensure that each individual understand why the information is requested, how it will be used and stored, and what the research study intends to achieve (King, 2004, p. 17). The informed consent document was sent to each potential participant with the invitation to join the study as well as in each subsequent email. Copies of the document were provided to each participant at the beginning of the interview, and reviewed in person with each individual. One person provided a signed copy before the interview, while the remaining 14 signed the document before the interview began. In every correspondence to each participant, the researcher provided two means of personal contact and encouraged the recipient to reply with questions or comments, reiterating the cooperative and voluntary nature of the study. Four participants had questions during or after the interview about use of data and process; these were answered to the participants' satisfaction.

Conducting interviews. 15 individual interviews were conducted for this study, which ranged between 47 and 75 minutes in length. Each interview was held in person, scheduled at the convenience of the participant, and most were held at their place of work. The researcher arrived early at most locations, and remained in the area after the discussion, as "just hanging out in the environment where the interviews are being conducted will provide the interviewer with an introduction to local language, the daily routines and the power structures" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 107-108). The interview began with a brief review of the study goals and structure as well as describing and securing the completed informed consent document. The discussions followed the developed protocol, however, adjustments were made as themes and commonalities begin to emerge. Thank you correspondence was mailed shortly after each interview was completed.

To ensure accuracy in data collection, each interview was audio-taped; using Dragon "voice to text" software. Each audio recording was translated into written, verbatim transcript for use in data analysis. This incorporated a three-step process, in which preliminary draft transcripts were created, and then checked twice for accuracy against the original audio recordings. Participants were provided with a copy of their respective transcripts and encouraged to review them for accuracy as well as to discuss any questions about data analysis methods. Two individuals responded with questions about the use of specific phrases found within their transcripts; one person identified requested changes to text and both were satisfied with the detailed answers. The text changes represented edits to selected transcript statements that transitioned spoken phrases into written text; the changes were not substantial and did not change their meaning or intent. In addition, the draft case descriptions were provided to the lead individuals in each partnership for review and comment; no changes were requested to these illustrations.

Meeting and event observations. During the data collection period, five meetings or events, at least one for each partnership under study, were observed. These included committee meetings, a press conference, an awards reception and plant tour. Significant observational field notes were taken, describing the environment, participants, content, attendance and other details as well as recording personal reflections in the researcher journal before and after each event (see Appendix F for observation guide). Special attention was paid to occurrences of Schein's (2004) category of artifacts described as "observable rituals and ceremonies" as well as the "myths and stories told about the organizations" and language, manner of speaking, etc. (p. 23). These observational notes were then used to support or challenge interview data and where applicable, add to thick description (Glesne, 2011).

Documents and artifacts. Several public and private documents and physical artifacts about each organization that participated in the partnership, as well as those created by the partnership itself, were examined. These included brochures, meeting minutes, mission and vision statements, memorandum of understandings, annual reports, grant reports and marketing documentation. Documents were often provided by the participants, or sent via email upon request. Both historic and current documents can be used to support or challenge interview data, provide thick description and offer an opportunity for content analysis (Glesne, 2011). Schein (2004) lists documents and artifacts as one of the primary categories of information that can be used to describe organizational culture. For example, a brochure describing a partnership product may give insight into the relative amount of commitment by the separate entities through the text and graphic placements, as well as provide a visual link between the cultural identities of the agencies.

Documents and artifacts were placed into categories according to their source (agency or partnership) and intended audience (internal or external). The documents were examined within their categories, i.e., all marketing materials for one partnership were explored as a whole. A researcher memo was created for each category that summarized the themes represented by the artifacts. While thirteen separate agencies were included in the three study partnerships, documentation collection focused on the collaborations themselves, and contributed to the case descriptions. Intended to primarily support or challenge interview and observation data regarding the partnerships, the documents helped more fully illustrate and confirm individuals' perceptions.

Researcher journal, field notes and memos. King (2004) explains that a key feature of qualitative methodology is the "emphasis placed on the need for the researcher to set aside his or her presuppositions" about the subject under study, and encourages individuals to "remain alert to how they may colour every stage of the research process" (p. 13). To address the potential effects of significant experience working with partnership structures, a detailed journal was kept to explore and ameliorate the impact of any personal bias (see Appendix G for researcher statement of bias). The journal served several purposes, including storing the bracketing self-reflection done before and after each interview and observation (40 entries), and as a record of the researcher experiences of the project itself. Often thoughts and concerns were audio-recorded and later transcribed into journal text. Thus through the use of a journal, personal bias, assumptions, concerns and experiences regarding the interview were captured before and after the conversations were held.

Field notes were made during interviews and observations, and served to provide supporting background information that was not captured by the audio-recording; this data otherwise would not have been recorded. The notes included details about the interview and observation environments, non-verbal responses to discussion, summaries of conversations and interactions between individuals. Researcher memos written on interview transcripts and the completed interview protocols were used initially to highlight comments of interest, potential themes and areas of interest. Researcher memos were also created to summarize the common themes represented in the documents and artifacts provided to the study.

Data Analysis Techniques

In combination, these multiple data sources provided detailed descriptions of the partnership relationships, the organizational cultures of the member institutions, and the influences of leadership on both. Following Creswell's (2008) outline, analysis is defined as "engaging in the general process of developing a description, analyzing your data for themes, and providing an interpretation of the meaning of the information." As a collective case study, the data were examined and explored first within each case, then common and unique themes identified across the cases themselves.

Initial analysis actions during the data collection process included beginning a preliminary exploration of all data available, to highlight areas of interest that were explored more in-depth in later data analysis. As described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the process was a combination of "pushing forward . . . spiraling backwards . . . keeping the end point in sight" (p. 111). As the data collection activities finished, all data sources available were gathered: interview transcripts, completed interview protocols including field notes, researcher memos summarizing data found in documents and artifacts, field notes outlining meeting and activity observations, and the researcher journal.

Employing Creswell's (2008) visual model of the coding process, each interview transcript was coded (see Appendix H for an example of an interview transcript with coding). This approach is described as first "making sense out of the text data, dividing it into text or image segments, labeling the segments with codes, examining the codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapsing the codes into broad themes" (Creswell, 2008, p. 251). This analysis was then compared to other data sources, including document, artifacts and observational data, to determine areas that supported or refuted the interview data. A meta-memo was created for each interview transcript and developing partnership case description to allow exploration of dominant themes and experiences. These meta-memos combined all relevant data sources; the coded transcripts as well as observations, field notes, documents, etc. (see Appendix I for an example of a meta-memo created during data analysis). A continuous review of the meta-memos, within and between the bounded systems, created the opportunity for themes to appear, combine, recede and fall into suggested patterns of influence. Both deductive themes as appeared in the literature review and emergent themes were explored, and the themes were reconciled against the study's conceptual framework to ensure analysis was grounded in a sound conceptual base.

Throughout the coding process, additional review of the data sources attempted accurate understanding of the nuances of codes and themes as they developed, combined and became distinct. A master code sheet, as recommended by Kvale and Brinkmann

(2009) was maintained, identifying and cross-referencing themes and codes representing the participants' experiences. It was itself cross-referenced with the meta-memos (see Appendix J for master code sheet). Particular attention was paid to ensuring themes were represented by multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2008). As the data analysis continued, themes and codes were categorized as appropriate in response to each of the four research questions.

The study then examined themes and categories of experiences from a cross-case analysis perspective. As described by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), "the typical analytical strategy is to provide detailed descriptions of themes within each case (within-case analysis), followed by thematic analysis across cases (cross-case analysis)" (p. 31). This created a layering of themes, building on the concept of major and minor categories but structured by specific attributes. For example, some themes were specific to all participating community colleges while other themes emerged from the experiences of private industry representatives within one partnership. While not a quantitative study that would employ a percentage or number of occurrences as assigning a value or importance, the themes were organized by breadth and recurrence in the partnership narratives. When the coding of data sources was complete, the coded transcripts and memos were re-examined for descriptive information and participant quotations that served to illustrate the themes in the participants' own voices. The case descriptions and findings outlined in chapter four illustrate the dominant themes and recurring experiences of the participants, grounding the interpretation in the individual's personal stories through a narrative discussion (Creswell, 2008). The section addressing the fourth research question also includes a second layer of analysis, in which the influences of organizational culture on the partnerships, as described by the participants, are cross-referenced with the descriptions of organizational culture created by responses to the first research question.

Trustworthiness and credibility. Several strategies ensured that the data and analysis were reported as fully and honestly as possible, with as little regard to preliminary assumptions or preferred interests as reasonable. Along with the keeping of a detailed researcher journal and use of field notes, strategies to address trustworthiness as described by Glesne (2011) were employed. Multiple data sources including interviews, documents and other partnerships products offered triangulation of findings as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). "Rich, thick description – writing that allows the reader to enter the research context" (Glesne, 2011, p. 49) was used to record events and activities.

Interviews were audio-recorded and from these recordings, verbatim interview transcripts were created for each individual, in a three-step process. Using voice to text software, rough draft transcripts were developed. Then the drafts were twice corrected against the audio recordings. As well, case descriptions were developed, drawn from participants' language and perspective. Creating opportunities for participant feedback, the study used member checking of both transcripts and drafts of case study findings to ensure accuracy of data and analysis, a measure of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) construct of credibility in qualitative research. In addition and with regard to credibility, the data was closely explored for examples of negative case studies, where exceptions to the research arose.

With this study, "generalization is not the goal, but rather transferability—that is, how (if at all) and in what ways understanding and knowledge can be applied in similar contexts and settings" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 31). Components of this research are thoroughly described, including the literature review, participants, methodology and findings; this helps illuminate the study from a variety of perspectives and informs future researchers of the potential practical application of this work in other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the influences of organizational leaders and organizational culture on the work of multi-agency, mature partnerships in community colleges. The study used a qualitative, collective case study methodology that incorporated the experiences of those who actively participated in the three collaborations under examination. Individuals and organizations were invited to participate after a state-wide process of exploring potential study candidates and ranking activity to ensure criteria satisfaction and diversity.

Data collection methods included 15 individual interviews, observations of three meetings and two public events, document and artifact analysis as well as use of a researcher journal, field notes and researcher memos. Data analysis included coding of data sources to allow for emergent themes to arise; "meta" researcher memos allowed for more comprehensive concepts to appear while regular review and checking of data sources highlighted specific sub-themes within the participant experiences. The following chapter includes detailed descriptions of each case study as well as exploration of the data analysis organized by research question.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the influences of organizational leaders and cultures on the work of multi-agency, mature partnerships in community colleges. By exploring the experiences of individuals within partnership structures, the study examined the organizational cultures of participating institutions, including the role of leaders. As well, the study described the culture that forms within partnerships themselves as illustrated by the participants. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How are the organizational cultures of participating partnership institutions described by their members?
2. How does the leader of a participating partnership institution influence its organizational culture?
3. How does the leader of a participating partnership institution influence the partnership?
4. How does the organizational culture of a participating partnership institution influence the partnership?

This chapter first presents case descriptions of three partnerships of which one participating agency is a North Carolina community college; these descriptions include illustrations of the partnership environment as described by the participants in relation to Tierney's (1988) framework of organizational culture (see Table 3). .A summary of the case descriptions precedes the more in-depth illustrations (see Table 4). The chapter continues by addressing the individual research questions, with subsections exploring

Table 4

Summary Case Descriptions

Partnership Name	Description
Minority Enterprise Development Week Committee of WNC	Multi-agency, non-profit organization that recognizes and supports minority business owners and entrepreneurs; active for 30 years.
Haywood Certified Entrepreneurial Community Team	Partnership formed between college staff and representatives from three economic development agencies, for the purpose of securing the Certified Entrepreneurial Community designation.
Burke Manufacturers Executive Council	Collaboration initiated in 2008 by college administrators to improve communication with and service to regional manufacturing industry; membership now includes more than 12 businesses and two economic development groups.

major concepts related to each. The key findings were obtained from interviews, observations, document analysis, and researcher data including a study journal, memos, and field notes. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Case Description: MED Week Committee of Western North Carolina (MEDW)

This collaboration has been in existence for thirty years, a fact that the group members have marked with the launch of a new partnership brand and logo, increased service to the community and celebratory public recognition events. The Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week Committee is currently comprised of individuals representing:

- Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (AB Tech), including faculty and workforce development staff;
- Three distinct regional economic development nonprofit organizations, including one agency administered through Western Carolina University, another organized as a regional resource governed through a public-private partnership as chartered by the North Carolina State Legislature, and one representing a county chamber of commerce; and
- Two U.S. Treasury Department certified community development financial institutions (CDFIs), one which serves the needs of multiple counties while the other focuses upon the population of a Native American community. With a formal definition established through the Reigle Community Development and Regulatory Improvement Act of 1994, CDFIs traditionally provide credit and lending services to underserved populations.

The purpose of the partnership is to create and implement events and activities which recognize, support and celebrate the achievements of minority business owners in Western North Carolina. Committee tasks include activity planning, fundraising through sponsorship, implementing a regional awards program, and marketing the Committee’s work. The products of the partnership include a website, resource catalog, promotional materials to build awareness, a week of economic development educational programs in late September, a recognition program and awards reception where minority business owners and supporters are celebrated, and recently added, a slate of monthly programs targeting minority business development and sustainability needs.

Organized as an independent 501(c) 6 nonprofit organization, the partnership and its Committee operate with a formal set of bylaw and term limits for members. The structured hierarchy employs a board of directors model including the roles of chairman, vice chair, and secretary. All Committee members are also board members; thus the terms are used interchangeably. Subcommittees are structured and tied to the specific partnership tasks. When originally authored, the bylaws defined which organizations, and sometimes specifically which individual position within an agency, should serve in the partnership. However, the current Committee recently amended the bylaws. Members felt the language was significantly outdated with regard to which agencies still exist in the region, as well as those which have been recently created, and what roles staff play in the agencies. This change broadens the criteria for serving on the Committee to include any person who is interested in participating, regardless of title or employer.

The Committee was first created and organized by regional leaders in 1983, in response to a United States Presidential Proclamation recognizing a specific annual Minority Enterprise Development Week that included activities and celebrations to recognize the accomplishments of minority business owners. Initially, the Committee hired a small paid staff to oversee work, as it served simply as an advisory, awareness and fundraising group. Within the last decade, however, the Committee transitioned to an all-volunteer group whose members serve in all capacities. While the members universally declared the importance of the group's work and its connectivity to their professional lives, participation in the partnership is not part of any Committee member's formal job description.

As this organization is celebrating its thirtieth year of service in 2013, Committee members describe a stable identity that developed well before current board members began serving. One individual, in her ninth year on the board, stated that there had “been so many predecessors before us that have really branded this group, and the work that we do, so it’s like working off of a template.” Most institutions that today have representation on the board have been active in the partnership for more than ten years, with some having tenure for the entire three decades, illustrated by one person’s statement that her group has been participating in MEDW for “a long long long long time.” “I feel like it’s been an integral part of this organization since I’ve been here, for the last ten years, and it was here well before then,” another individual indicated; she continued by stating that each group “has always had a huge sense of responsibility in showing up to the table . . . and giving back to the community, sponsoring the events.”

Documents illustrate that each participating organization has made ongoing financial or in-kind contributions to the partnership. Donations from individuals, small organizational grants and corporate gifts also secure a stable funding base. “Banks and people support us every year,” explained one Committee member, “we just take time to send out the sponsorship letters and we get the money back in.” Another stated that “I’ve never seen it where the money didn’t come in” and that sponsors “think it’s a wonderful kind of promotion, to be able to say that they do this kind of thing.” One individual, employed by a nonprofit agency, exclaimed that in “most places you work for, you’re saying ‘Oh my God there’s no money there, and we’ve got to go out and get some money’ . . . but I’ve never seen it where that money didn’t come in” for the partnership.

Socialization, new participants and new work. Evidence exists that new members are socialized both formally and informally. During one meeting, an existing "new board member welcome email with follow up background material" was referenced, however another individual indicated that the group had debated the need for a formal process but had yet to move forward in creating one. One individual discussed the "very open culture of the monthly meetings," and the use of humor to lighten the environment. She stated that "it's just part of it, the jokes and the culture of the organization, so I think people just have to experience it to find out if they're compatible, if they are comfortable participating in the jovial joking." She later suggested that she was "probably more sensitive to how people respond to the dynamics" and that some board members had received more informal mentoring than others when beginning service.

New board members are invited to join in part due to their community or organizational titles and roles, but also in consideration to the suitability of working with the group. "We do sort of hand pick our successors," stated an outgoing board member, "which may not be the best way to do it, but we have to be comfortable they are going to work well with everybody else." Another participant described her initiation to the group as such:

> When I first got here, there was another representative, another guy that worked here that was on the board and he took me to a meeting or two, and I just kinda fell in love with it, because it was all these folks sitting around saying "you know, how can we promote and support these businesses, these minority business owners" and that's very important to me personally since I'm a minority.

Most of the Committee members outlined a plan of work that was well established across a calendar year. New initiatives were described as relatively rare, and in one case, an individual suggested that “it would be great to do something out of the box, but I don’t know what that would actually look like.” However, recent leadership efforts by the chair combined with community pressures have created need and opportunity for an expansion of activities. Individual board members champion new projects, and bring a perceived need or opportunity to the group. New ideas are debated in an informal process, although new ideas do become incorporated into the formal voting process of the board. In one example, a member described this process:

> People were complaining about it, but no one had really moved forward . . . once it was decided on, I just took the lead and contacted the vendor, got approval from the Board on what I could spend. I shared the suggestions with the Board Chair and one other person; we make up the marketing committee; we narrowed it down before we presented it to the entire Board for comment.

Respect, trust and relationship building. All the Committee members described their fellow members of the partnership as a valuable network of colleagues; the impact of these relationships extends beyond the work of the partnership itself. One member stated that “when I have an issue at work, I’ll pick up the phone and call someone that I know from the board to brainstorm, or maybe refer to someone, I don’t give it a second thought and that’s because of the partnership.” A second individual stated that “it’s extremely collaborative, this is one of the most collaborative groups I’ve ever worked with . . . there’s a shared value system; we’re just all working towards the same goal.” Another person described the network as people who “refer clients back and forth all the time to get them the help they need, put them in the right spot." And finally, a fourth board member explained that "there's a respect for each other's position since we have worked together for so long." She further illustrated her motivation to participate:

> It all comes down to relationships and the people around the table, and I have worked with them in other ways and on other projects for years, and I knew it was people who got things done and were doing good things. We were all focused on an unspoken set of values and for all the right reasons.

Recently there was a need for the partnership to address a peripheral situation involving a local city government task force that was publicly complaining about the quality and scope of the work of some of the participating agencies. The partnership was mentioned in a negative light in some reports, and at the time, "our meetings became a safe place to talk about what was happening [in the community] and the descriptions and portrayals of the service providers as a whole," shared one member. Within the group, she explained that:

> We had a level of trust, that we had a knowledge of what the other organizations were actually doing, where the complaints were true or not true. We knew it was a safe place to calmly process what was going on; I think it would have been harder for the individuals involved had we not had the Committee to bring us together to be able to process.

Decision-making and conflict. Within the partnership, decisions are made primarily by consensus during the Committee meetings, assuming a quorum of board members is in attendance. Topics are first introduced for discussion at the appropriate time on the meeting agenda. Based upon that discussion, motions are formally brought before the group, with a second motion required to bring the action to a vote of the Committee present. Votes are made verbally and publicly.

None of the Committee members described conflict as an obstacle to getting the work of the partnership accomplished. One individual stated that:

> It's a small group and I think that's important because as a small group we can better support each other and make decisions quickly and move rapidly . . . it doesn't mean that we always agree on everything but we have a comfort level to agree to disagree.

Another member was more practical, stating that "everyone's very busy and I don't think that people are really invested in having a real serious conflict." One individual did describe a point in the past when other board members, who have since completed their service term, "somehow or another seemed to have a different agenda . . . that just seemed out of line with our mission." She indicated that it was a source of tension amongst the Committee members, and she felt that no one addressed the issue. "When you're in a group like that, people have allotted tenure and have been there for a while, and have a name or work for a certain entity in town, sometimes people are afraid and intimidated to say anything," she explained. She admitted that "it was just luck of the draw that those folks were coming off the board at that time, and we really haven't had any problems since then . . . but I don't this we really worked through it." She later indicated that this experience may have influenced the board towards updating the bylaws, but that other factors, such as the fact that several agencies named in the bylaws had closed or absorbed into other organizations, were equally as influential.

Leadership. Some board members spoke specifically of the positive influence of the current chair, tying his leadership directly to the increases in community support activities, and efforts to quantify the partnership's outreach. This individual was employed by one organization when he joined the board, but moved to a position in the community college during his tenure as chair. His new status meant that the college now had three representatives on the Committee, significantly more than any other agency. He offered to resign both as the chair and as a board member; however, the Committee members as a whole requested he remain. One individual described the process of reaching this decision:

> We had to look over our bylaws and make sure that would work because the bylaws forced representation from certain entities . . . I actually called board members when he told me he was leaving, to ask people if they were okay with that, because we didn't want too much representation, didn't want to be too heavy with one organization . . . so I actually talked to all the board members who weren't already from AB Tech and said "how do you feel about this" and the consensus was [he] was a good leader, we need his leadership more than we really care about the balance.

Misalignment of mission and expectations. While the partnership mission is officially described in documentation as "to provide the best leadership and direction for the promotion, establishment and development of minority businesses in Western North Carolina through education, communication and advocacy", some board members described a "misalignment" of the mission both within the partnership and between the partnership and the participating organizations. "We still have a person or two who sometimes says 'well, that's not our target group and we need to be doing more of these basic types of programs'," stated one person. She continued by suggesting that "sometimes it's difficult to have a consistent vision, no that's not the word, a consistent idea of who we serve and what our market is." Another individual opined that another well-known regional group should be participating more, that "what I feel like they are saying when they do finally come, is that we are interested in being inclusive and diverse in this community and while we may not serve this target market, we're going to find a way to bring them to the table." She stated her hope that this group "does some work towards that . . . so we can bring all those folks to sit at the table."

Some board members described tension between the partnership work and their employers' expectations. "We all have full time jobs and while they are related to [the partnership], none of us even have a portion of our job dedicated to working on this Committee," explained one individual. Another stated that:

> Over the last few years [the partnership has] been working more with people who are starting up, whether they've just recently started a business or want to start a business; we've gotten moved into that direction by some things going on in the community . . . my organization is really about existing businesses, we may allocate 15% of our resources to new businesses.

A third Committee member explained that "I'm not saying that [agency] doesn't support this, they do, but if they probably had their rathers, they would rather I didn't spend time on that, but they don't ask me to stop or cut back, it's just that there is so much to do."

Case Description: Haywood Certified Entrepreneurial Community Team (HCEC)

This collaboration formed as the result of an opportunity created by a regional economic development commission that serves twenty three counties in Western North Carolina. In 2007, the commission launched the Certified Entrepreneurial Community (CEC) initiative, where community leaders would participate in self-analysis and monitoring activities; these actions would provide evidence of an area's commitment to supporting entrepreneurism. Examples of such evidence include multiple, active support agencies available to new and growing businesses as well as existence of supportive regulations and funding opportunities. The goal of the process of becoming a CEC was to both recognize the work already underway in many areas, as well as create a strategy to support entrepreneurs in the future. The result of the process was intended to be a community-wide strategic plan. Upon learning of the initiative's launch, five individuals in Haywood County and their related organizations formed a team in order to gain the new certification credential. In 2007, the team was comprised of individuals representing:

- Haywood Community College (HCC) administration, and its affiliated Small Business Center, a quasi-state agency;
- Two county-based economic development organizations, including one member and volunteer-based nonprofit 501(c)3 organization and one county agency; and
- One regional agency, a 501(c)4 nonprofit corporation administering the U.S. Small Business Administration 504 loan program and serving as a regional business incubator for a 10 county area.

The purpose of the partnership was to complete the Certified Entrepreneurial Community certification program, and to be the first in the region to gain the credential. Stated one participant, "frankly, we were driven to be first because we wanted the affirmation . . . we wanted to show we were official." Initially each person saw that many of their organization's existing programs fit into the credentialing process. One team member explained that "from day one we each had activities we were already doing, that we could add in." As the partnership formed, it was very task oriented; the commission had provided both the structure of the project, as well as support to the teams as they completed the requirements. To accomplish the project, the team members attended a formal training session held by the regional economic development commission. Afterwards they met often each month, dividing up the tasks required as evidenced in the partnership's documentation. While there was a chosen leader of the group, the process of meeting, delivering information and making decisions was informal. Each individual's specific organization voiced support for the project, and although one person surmised that "there was probably some resistance because it took time and effort to do that every week, but we were committed," there is no evidence that any organization or team member felt tension between their job responsibilities and this project.

In approximately one year, the team completed the certification process and met its goal as the first county in North Carolina to gain the credential of a Certified Entrepreneurial Community. While the group stopped meeting on a regular schedule, once the process was complete, they do meet as required by the CEC program's continuing reporting requirements. Most team members also participate in a related committee hosted by the county chamber, and a member explained that "the business development committee is the glue that keeps us together between big projects."

The team had also become the self-described "poster child" for the CEC program, visiting other counties in the region and doing regular presentations illustrating their approach to the process. The group has been described as projecting a "very strong image . . . everyone is well-pressed, and they are very professional and well-spoken, and the team is strong-willed, they bring the intimidation factor." Two of the group members credit their work with this team for facilitating new professional development opportunities; one individual was asked to serve on a statewide board for rural economic development, the other presented a case study of the partnership at a national conference.

Socialization, new participants and new work. Four of the original five team members are still involved, while the fifth person stepped aside as he relocated to another part of the state. Staff transition has occurred at the program oversight level, as the regional economic development commission has experienced changes in both leader and management positions. The commission has recently experienced a significant loss of public funding and potential for reorganization. As those changes occurred, the team met with the new program manager, where they "just talked, talked about how our team functions, our culture and what we expect" from the regional organization.

Although the original project was completed and goals met, the group maintains an identity and program of work, and the team members all expressed concern for the committee's future. Explained one person, "this spring, we realized we probably needed to expand our committee, we just need to bring more people into the process, key people," while another stated that "you have to keep that continuity, you don't want it to die," expressing concern that the work of the group might be perishable. He continued:

> I hate to say it, but personalities play into this thing too, we're trying to continue the program; if there's a change or one of us leaves . . . we have to have someone to step in that can continue this on for the community.

The group members described a process of hand-selecting the new participants, taking into consideration both their professional and community roles as well as their personalities; a team member stated that "handpicking those people, trying to get the same types of people and not look at peoples' titles; just because someone was the chairman of the county commissioners did they need to sit on this committee." The concept of mentoring was mentioned often, and described as carried out on a one-on-one basis without a formal process in place. "We are starting to bring in new members now and transition them, educate them" stated one individual, while another described her approach to socialization as "you get them involved, involved now, try to get them to take ownership of the different projects, not just the CEC but at a broad community level so they have the big picture." One member suggested that new members would not have the same experiences as she:

> We are actually trying to bring in some younger people to . . .be a part of this program and it's not going to be the same, because it's almost like when you go to that team bonding ropes course type experience . . . we are sending our new people to the training but it's still not going to be the same.

Collaboration, trust and relationships. Members of this team were already successfully working together in various ways, formally and informally, in the community before the CEC initiative was announced. There is evidence that this relationship foundation supported the success of the team. In one example, a member explained that “we had the key players and we worked on so many other projects before; we were tied together already by a working committee with the chamber.” Another stated that “we had that history, we knew that if [team member] said he would do something that he would, and he’d follow up, and so we all knew that about each other already.” “We knew each other and we had a lot of trust, that the friendships, personal and professional friendships were there before we even got started” explained a third member.

Although the group had a specific goal and structure with which to work, and divided the work between them, every member described a collaborative process approach, and credits that in part for their success. “It just made sense that we all worked together in what I call a collaborative effort, and all of us were willing to do that,” stated one group member. Echoing this theme, another said “I learned a long time ago, if you’ve got a team working together you can accomplish so much more.” This was juxtaposed the experiences of other teams when one individual explained that “not all communities are like this, where there’s a sense of working together or cooperation or collaboration.” He stated that:

> It was a good working group, but I could see in another community if you don’t have that initial willingness to work together . . . we all had a desire to work together and that doesn’t always happen due to the personalities.

The trust built before and during the process was made obvious by the group members as they described their experiences. One person said, “there was a trust among the team members that no one was clawing their way to the top while beating the rest down; it didn't have that perception." She described the work process as such:

> We shared the work so no one person was doing it all, and we held each other accountable; when one of us got in trouble and our time was taken up with something then someone else stepped in . . . the burden was shared equally among everyone.

Some group members explained that this level of trust, as well as the relationships that were strengthened, were valuable to their organizational roles. "It [the team] really brings minds and resources to the table, I think that's the greatest thing that came out of the initial project" stated one member. Another said that while certification was the original goal, "the team has continued, because there are things we can tackle, because we all work so well together." She continued by discussing the lack of need for formal meetings:

> We know that it's [the certification project] together just because we have so much trust and value those relationships that we have; we didn't feel like we needed to meet . . . we know what needs to be done and what each of us brings to the table and we just do it.

A third team member stated that "anytime now I have a project of that magnitude, since that particular time . . . either I go to get them involved, or I know what their skill set is and how I can use them on the new project."

Decision-making and conflict. The team members were unanimous in describing a general lack of conflict with the team, as well as a collaborative decision-making model. Some members attributed this directly to the people involved:

> We were five busy people that were very passionate about the assignment . . .we realized very quickly that we did not have time to involve politics, we didn't have the time to have people that would want to drag it down or people that basically were going to have a different opinion.

Another attributed the lack of conflict to the method in which the group approaches work:

> Whichever seemed the best path we just agreed upon it . . . we would all go off and do our job and come back and report, and then adjust. Then we would take another part, go off and do that; [it] was a very functional way, very organized systematic seamless transition.

One team member suggested that there were and are differences of opinion, but that using "logic and facts" the group intentionally works toward a common solution, and then moves forward. He suggested that "there was a common goal here from the beginning, and maybe that's the key because sometimes you have to put your feelings or thoughts aside."

Two team members expressed some conflict and dissatisfaction regarding the role of the regional economic development commission. Of the commission, one individual stated that "there were some promises made to us that did not get fulfilled in a timely manner early on" but that the team decided to move forward with the project. Although somewhat unsure of the organization's expectations; they believed the importance of the work overrode concerns regarding process. Another suggested that in "looking back, they didn't know what they wanted us to do, we didn't know what we were supposed to be doing, we had to figure it out."

Leadership. While there was a designated formal leader of the team, the group members each described the leadership roles others took in completing the task. "We appointed [team member] by unanimous decision to be our team leader because we figured he was the broadest with economic development for the county." However, as the group undertook the project, the members described different roles in the group that emerged, and nearly each member indicated skill and expertise driving that occurrence. In one example:

> There were a lot of different assignments; the way we did it, we all have different strengths and so we assigned . . ."you do this piece, you do that piece" . . . we would all come together right here at this table and bring it together.

Driven to success. These individuals described themselves and their fellow members as assertive, focused and competitive, as a way of illustrating the importance they placed on reaching their goal. One person summed up this concept:

> I guess being competitive would enter into it because I think we were all competitive; well, I think we're obviously driven people and . . . probably all strong people, we had the same goal and we thought this would be good for our community.

"We all said we want to do it and we want to be first," and "this is important to the county and we were willing to put the work in to do it" are two statements that illustrate the motivation that each team member described as both a passion for reaching the goal, and a view of the achievement as an investment into the community. The team saw themselves in competition with other regional county groups. Although completing the process first did not garner additional recognition, they believed the "bragging rights" would be valuable marketing for bringing new economic resources to the area. One team member described the team's vision:

> If you're not working together, becoming a team; well I think we're a strong team because even though we're different personalities, probably, but we all have that sense of the bigger benefit: what we can accomplish if we work together.

Case Description: Burke Manufacturers Executive Council (BMEC)

This collaboration was initiated by the administration at Western Piedmont Community College in 2008, with the purpose of creating a communication mechanism between the college and the private sector. This mechanism would help ensure that the college was responding accurately to the needs of local industries, especially manufacturing. Originally titled the Burke County Manufacturers Association, the preliminary vision of the college staff was to organize and launch the structure of the group, but to turn ownership of the partnership to industry representatives within a short period of time. In the first two years the group hosted "a couple of small level meetings, provided some training sessions around lunches and generally bumped along," recalled one participant.

Approximately two years ago, two local economic development organizations joined the partnership, and suggested a strategy planning session, more targeted invitations to participate and a branding effort. Also at this point, there was an increased interest from businesses to participate, as the private sector was experiencing "the other side of the economic downturn, through the trough of the recession, companies were starting to hire." The group was renamed the Burke Manufacturers Executive Council, a quarterly slate of meetings and activities were scheduled and two cochairs from local manufacturing companies were selected. Today the Council is comprised of individuals representing

- Western Piedmont Community College (WPCC), from both curriculum and continuing education areas;
- Two county-based 501(c) 3 nonprofit economic development organizations; and
- More than a dozen manufacturers in the region.

In documentation from 2010, the mission of the partnership is described as "to provide a mechanism and open forum that will allow local industries to communicate and network towards the aims of greater individual and regional stability and growth." While the quarterly meetings are open to a large group and held at various manufacturing facilities, a smaller planning committee, informally called the executive leadership team, meets regularly to plan for the next slate of events and activities. This committee is comprised of college staff, individuals from the economic development agencies, and the cochairs of the partnership.

As described by the members, the purpose of the partnership centers upon networking and synergy. As one individual suggested:

> It's not only about networking, but to be able to share best practices with our other industry partners, and also to be able to take advantage of say, a training opportunity that we could do in a cohort type fashion . . . when it's too expensive to just send one person.

One of the benefits of building relationships is the identification of some specific training needs that address individual workforce requirements; because of the existing partnership structure, the college was successful in securing outside funding to deliver two new training programs. One individual opined that the collaboration is an opportunity to partner with the companies to better understand specific job and training requirements. He stated:

> We better understood some of the workforce needs, of what may be preventing companies from investing here . . . it helps us all understand how we can help them, and I think the companies have been very receptive to the fact; at least they think we're listening now.

Socialization, new participants and new work. Community college staff and representatives from the economic development agencies are the primary agents for attracting new members. As one industry participant explained, these individuals are "very very instrumental in helping with our participation." Documents and participant descriptions outline early outreach efforts to industry that were met with only moderate success. "When I first got there, there were more representatives from the community college and chamber, and Burke Development, and only three manufacturers; my plant manager stopped going." The branding effort, which included press releases and other media communication, was done in part to attract and retain key individuals from the manufacturing community. Stated one person:

> We just thought it would be a more indicative name . . . for example, most of the people that come are the managers, the highest level people in the organization, so we just wanted it to have its own identity.

Building relationships. As the partnership mission is to build a communication and networking structure, participants enthusiastically illustrated the value of new relationships. One industry member stated:

> An example of that was right down the road, at the function I went to, which was just a couple of weeks ago, [community college staff person] said to me “there’s someone I want you to meet.” It turns out to be a woman who was in HR in the next plant right down the road, and I’ve already written them about training that I want to do with them . . . so in getting to know these people, I wouldn’t hesitate to call them and say “I’ve got a training issue and we want to know what other people are doing.” You can’t benchmark unless you know somebody’s approach.

Another suggested that “we are looking to make a group versus everyone standing alone without having answers.” “I think it’s important to meet people, and to know who’s down the road, because you don’t care about their troubles and how a law affects someone else, unless you make a personal connection,” she explained.

Council participants also discussed the importance of the relationships created by the individual personalities. Individuals described the cochairs as “very energetic, young, just resourceful people who are making a difference.” Another explained that college staff are critical to success as well:

> One of the most important, or something that can really make or break it, your people at the community college . . . they are tremendous to work with; when I first started here we had another individual; before I was doing Burke Executive Council, I had another individual I was working with . . . it was not a good experience.

Decision-making and conflict. All participants indicated little conflict within the group. Often activity and event topics are championed by individuals in that area of expertise, such as equipment training or human resources, but topics are spread across the calendar to attract a variety of participants. “I’m in HR, so I am always thinking about topics like OSHA and the Affordable Care Act, but I’m reminded that not everyone’s thrilled to listen to a two hour talk on that,” recalled one participant. The smaller group sets the meeting agendas and makes most of the decisions, and much of the task-oriented work is completed by email, even before the planning meeting occurs. There is evidence that the full membership is consulted only on occasion. One person explained an unusual occurrence:

> We needed to get grant money for it, so the whole group had to agree, so at our last meeting we took up discussion, to make sure everybody would be supportive of the program . . . we gave them all the information and let them vote on it.

Leadership. Although the ownership of the partnership is intended to sit with the industry representatives, including the two cochairs, participants describe very strong leadership continuing at the college level. Industry representatives describe the college staff as “tremendously accommodating, flexible and patient” when discussing partnership work. Stated one individual, “if we do not have the support from the community college that we have this [the partnership] would be nothing.” She continued by stating that “if we lost those specific individuals somewhere along the way, lost that support, it would be nothing like it is.”

Often college staff are responsible for coordinating event and activity details. One cochair stated that “they do a lot of the grunt work; they really make it easy on us.” One industry representative provided an example:

> He just called not too long ago and said “people are interested, would you host the next tour and what subject would you like to talk about” and I said “I don’t know

> what the big issues of the day are for manufacturing; I know what they are for us." So he's chosen the subject and . . . explained that the presentation is something that will be very broad ranging, and he might even do it.

Differing expectations. One college representative outlined a source of tension in the differences in culture between higher education and private industry. The college's hierarchy, state requirements and limitations, open access policy and semester calendar are listed as potential impediments to offering workforce training services to manufacturing. It is "our lack of efficiency, or bureaucracy on our side, combined with their lack of ability to be flexible on their side," that creates this tension. He stated:

> They [manufacturing company] were entitled to training dollars that were part of the expansion, part of the economic benefit package for expanding. But because of what we had to offer, because we're constrained by the state system, it was just not fitting in with them, with what they wanted to accomplish so they left money sitting on the table, which in fact is a very common occurrence.

Community college staff described the Council as a mechanism to educate the manufacturing entities on both the opportunities the college presented, and the limitations of the higher education system. One person stated that industry must understand that "the college system is more about accountability, regulations and paperwork," which can come into conflict with the goal of collaborative planning for workforce needs.

Research Question One: Descriptions of Organizational Cultures

The participants involved in the three partnerships under study described the organizational cultures of their institutions using terms that illustrated mission and service, structure and governance, funding, and decision-making strategies (see Table 5).

Table 5

Themes Within Participants' Organizational Culture Descriptions

	MEDW	HCEC	BMEC
College Participants			
Focus on mission to serve students, community	√	√	√
Planning in conjunction with the user	√		√
Influences of hierarchy	√		√
Influences of facilities	√	√	√
Strong campus, community identity	√	√	√
Non-College Public Agency Participants			
Influence of economic pressure	√	√	√
Focus on service to clients	√	√	√
Influence of structure and governance	√	√	√
Community relationships and networking	√	√	√
Diverse sources of ideas and strategy		√	
Industry Participants			
Impacted by recent growth and transition			√
Invested in employee development, retention			√
Commitment to community			√
Teams and structure			√

In this section, the themes that emerged from these descriptions are grouped by type of organization, in three categories: community colleges, non-community college public agencies, and private industry.

Each partnership included representation from community colleges; interestingly, although all three collaborations have economic development goals, college representation is not limited to staff directly tied to workforce development, but included administration and curriculum staff as well. Each partnership also included diverse public economic development agencies, which vary from membership-based or county government organizations to federally structured regional agencies and state-supported institutes. The BMEC collaboration also included private, for-profit manufacturing industries.

Organizational culture in community colleges. Staff and faculty from the three community colleges outlined their campuses' organizational cultures in similar terms and themes as each described their professional roles and experiences. For example, each college was described as having a strong focus on service to students and community, being impacted by hierarchy and facilities, and having a strong campus community identity. These concepts are presented in the following section.

Focus on service to students and community. Depending upon the individual's specific role, each person described service to the student, the business community, or the county community as a primary mission of the organization. From AB Tech, one participant stated that "what you need to know to do well in our culture is understand our students," which he felt is critical for those coming from either a university or private industry setting. Another opined that the local community did not recognize or understand the many resources and supports the college brings to the region, in part because the campus lacks a strong marketing effort. "I think that we are so wrapped around making sure that we're providing the best service to our community, that we sometimes forget to say, we're doing a great job." In particular, he was strongly motivated to join the staff when he became aware of the college's efforts towards diversification:

> I was intentional with coming here because I saw the commitment [the college] is making to being inclusive, not just of their student population but in the employee population, they had it woven into their strategic plan; they took money that was for college use, basically discretionary funds . . . it is bookstore revenue over which the college has complete control . . . we set aside thousands of dollars of it to go to diversity scholarships and that was monumental . . . it could have gone to buy furniture, it could go to buy a vehicle . . . this diverse population now has an opportunity to go for a whole academic year.

One participant described a tension that continues to occur as the college moves through a period of rapid growth and expansion; he suggested that the purpose of college's service is itself in transition:

> The community college was originally created to help people get jobs, to get people employable skills so that they could become employed in the two years; we have lost that kind of focus and made it more about academics, preparing people to go to four year colleges.

HCC staff echoed the student-focused mission, as one person stated that "it's all about the students, the students are the reason you are here" and another suggested that, for new staff, "if you keep your focus on the students and the community, you'll be successful." This focus helps create reasonable boundaries for one staff member's professional role, in contrast to other colleges that serve multiple counties or regions; she expressed that “I’m clear, I know that I have to serve the business community of Haywood County, that’s very clear . . . I am driven by local small business owners.” In placing the student or client at the center of the college mission, the campus is also experiencing dissolution of traditional boundaries between college divisions, as represented by a new and highly anticipated campus facility supporting the craft industry. Explained one administrator:

> It should be transparent to the student . . . they don’t care if it is a curriculum program, they don’t care [if] it’s continuing ed; they want to learn to throw a pot, so we’re trying to change the culture . . . develop a new model.

A similar model and focus on constituents at WPCC is also influencing staff away from traditional, somewhat isolated college roles. Two people described this as a thoughtful, deliberate shift within the campus’ culture. With the client or student at the center of the college mission, faculty and staff are encouraged to “break down the barriers” and:

> Approach projects, problems and challenges, with an open mind; ask “how do you resolve this?” Don’t say “oh this is curriculum, we can’t do this” . . . it’s always been our philosophy [with businesses] to ask, “tell us what you need and we’ll help you figure out how to get there” and we’ll figure out where it fits, continuing ed or curriculum, later.

In addition, this focus encourages staff to develop a variety of approaches to work planning and communication. Stated one faculty member:

> We’re pretty good at being chameleons in education, we have to be, to reach all of our constituents; if I am talking to high school students, I am one person, and if I

> am talking to grade school students, I'm another person, and if I am working with industry, I know how to be that person.

Planning in conjunction with the user. The community college participants also described organizations which include students and external stakeholders in planning for growth. One faculty member described a formal process of inclusion in program planning:

> One step in preplanning is identifying students and potential students that might be interested in that degree, as well as companies that might hire graduates from that program; and what they'll pay them . . . it's got to be a living wage that graduates are going to make typically, before we move forward.

At WPCC, the process was described as less formal. An administrator explained that he "will call people, HR individuals or plant managers and say 'this is what I think I hear' and ask them if the idea is worth pursuing; just bounce ideas off of them very casually." He further illustrated his rationale for this approach, stating that "without bringing in the user, we were like a doctor telling the patient where it hurt." He said:

> For example, we might be analyzing a class or something like that; we all get in our own worlds, and don't realize we're not even getting input from the users themselves; wait a second, maybe we need to get the students involved in this and people from industry.

Influences of hierarchy. Participants described their institutions in terms of the internal hierarchy and organizational structure, as well through the impact of the college system and state legislative framework. For example, at AB Tech, the development and implementation of a new program of study was described as a proscribed process. The approach includes initial preplanning, then “moves through feasibility study to see if there are signs it’s a viable program” then moving through an implementation, as well as evaluation protocol. Individuals involved in the process include the appropriate department chair, dean and college vice president as well as staff at the NCCCS office.

Also at AB Tech, one participant illustrated the limitations of internal hierarchy, in a description of challenges faced when attempting to innovate. He put forward a suggestion regarding a more cost effective method of providing students with classroom materials. While it was positively perceived, there was no mechanism to carry the concept forward. “It’s a great idea,” stated the college staff person, “but it’s bogged down in procurement now and I may just have to let it go for the time being, it’s too out of the box.”

Internal hierarchy at WPCC is described by staff as less of an impediment. One person stated that “we all try to think flat; we respect the chain of command when we need to, but there’s no problems working with or talking directly to anyone . . . I think, you know that promotes teamwork, promotes ownership and buy-in.” However, another individual explained that “to be successful here you need to know the expectations of your job, what your immediate supervisor thinks, and what that person’s expectations are,” indicating that the internal structure remains important to accomplishing work.

Within the hierarchy of the larger community college system, and the requirements of the North Carolina State Legislature, several participants outlined negative impacts on the organizational culture of their campuses. One individual explained that he uses his personal tablet during professional meetings, because “when I take my tablet out, when on college business . . . I’m doing everything that makes the college look very progressive, but we're a semi, quasi-state agency so progressive is sometimes frowned upon." An administrator at HCC described the challenges faced when explaining the budgeting process to a new director:

> She was a small business owner, and when she wants something she just buys it, and there's only one source of revenue, there's only one expenditure account, it's very simple; coming here she had to learn the budgeting process . . . state funds, county funds, private funds . . . so I am mentoring her navigating that whole system and that culture.

Another college administrator explained that:

> The college is very strict and rigid . . . through the North Carolina Community College System we have theories, well defined communities and activities, groups and procedures for arriving at our decisions . . . our struggle at least on the extension or noncredit side is we have to be able to turn quickly.

Later he stated:

> The running joke amongst a lot of industry partners is that North Carolina is one of those states that will spend $20 to track and account for a 25 cent pen; it's the college system, is more about accountability, regulations and paperwork . . . sometimes it causes an internal conflict, because I want to do things as efficiently and as skillfully as possible, yet I spent a significant amount of time just doing paperwork.

At HCC, a staff person who heads a college-affiliated economic development entity stated that, with regard to budget, "I'm funded by the state legislature, and so there's a certain amount I receive . . . they've got this formula . . . I'm bound by what happens in Raleigh."

Influences of facilities. Several participants described their college's organizational culture in terms related to physical facilities, including buildings and grounds. For example, at AB Tech, limitations of classroom space are a major consideration in new program planning and responses to growth. One faculty member described a campus that is at capacity during the morning and early afternoon, driving new classes into late afternoon or early evening periods, as well as into online and hybrid models. He stated that "pretty much nothing is coming on board that's going to be the traditional program, during traditional hours . . . we really don't have the physical space to add anything during our peak times." The college does provide non-classroom areas to economic development agencies for nominal cost. A non-profit director, located on the college campus, positively described the impact of sharing spaces with other support agencies, in that "there's a lot of energy about being co-located together" and that "we have hallway meetings all the time, you don't have to schedule so much."

At HCC, a recently opened facility represents the new model of cooperation between the areas of continuing education and curriculum programming. Regarding a new creative arts center, a staff person explained that "in colleges you have curriculum, continuing education and they are two totally different animals; what we did is we brought them together under one building." Regarding these two areas of the college, "we're asking them to share space, equipment, we're asking them to share resources, and they're used to every program having their own resources and equipment." The opening of this new facility created the need to readdress some policies and procedures, such as safety and equipment training, underlining a secondary impact of the new model. The public opening event also served as a singular point of celebration for the campus community. Stated one staff person:

> It was the most incredible thing, because that day, everyone was celebrating the building, because they got the connection between the kind of building it is, and the kind of arts that we are turning out . . . the other day I took a local banker who is interested in the wood program and we talked to some of the students . . . you can feel the light and they're so inspired by the building.

At WPCC, a recent campus expansion allowed for the workforce development staff to be housed near county and public agencies with similar missions. "It was impressive," a college staff person stated, as his department "went from having to remember to set up a meeting, then follow through, to being able to have hallway conversations that precipitate action." He credited the structure for supporting a more collaborative and creative workspace due to the proximity of different organizations with complementary purposes.

***Campus as community*.** All of the community college staff who participated in the three collaborations under study described a strong community identity within each campus. For example, one faculty member described the closeness of the staff even during leader transitions, stating that "with everything that we've gone through, there's still a close bond among departments and divisions." Another individual described her campus as:

> A family atmosphere and I don't know, it's just a great place to work . . . when someone falls on hard times we all rise to the challenge . . . I have a colleague

> who has cancer right now, he's taking a leave of absence, and we're going to divide up his work until he thinks he can get back.

At WPCC, faculty and staff attributed open, honest discussions and the valuing of diverse perspectives to a strong community identity. For example, one individual found the campus fostered "a level of trust and honesty amongst ourselves, and we can be frank in our discussions certainly, internally . . . we'll say 'great idea but we see some problems' and everybody will listen." He continued with a comparative description:

> We are very open and honest . . . I've got some friends that work at industries, for some terrible organizations; I mean it's just the total opposite [of the college], total backstabbing, you're doing a project and yet everyone knows it's not going to work and it's just games.

He finished the discussion by stating that the campus community feels "we're all painted with the same brush, we're all in this together, and it creates a family feel to the organization."

Organizational culture in non-community college public agencies. A diverse group of public agencies are present in the three collaborations under study. They include membership-based nonprofit organizations, state and local government agencies, and CDFI entities, which are federally sanctioned community development funds that provide both education and loan programs to underserved populations. While funding sources and governance structures vary in this category of agencies, participants used similar terms to describe their organizational cultures, including the impact of the economic downturn, mission focus and relationships with similar organizations.

Influences of economic pressures. Participants often mentioned organizational responses to the recent recession and changes at the state legislative level in descriptions of current culture. For example, one MEDW participant outlined the impact to service in that her organization is offering fewer loans; entrepreneurs must borrow more money to fund new businesses, and credit regulations are more stringent. She stated that:

> It's not that we're so tough, but it's the times, the economic times; I know when I first came here we were more set up where people came in and got loans of $2,000 or $3,000 and then they would pay them off; now loans are $10, $15, $20, $25 thousand.

She described an agency-wide conversation about providing the most appropriate service within these financial requirements, offering clients accurate and current information.

Another MEDW participant discussed the tension in her organization created as public funding for general operating support decreased, while funds for specific projects increased, causing a shift in mission focus and concern regarding sustainability of staff and projects. She described this as "a double-edged sword:"

> We have actually had several small funding sources added for particular services or projects . . . we've got a pot of money to do this, and a pot of money to do that; it creates a certain amount of uncertainty and ambiguity; what are we doing about this service, what's being combined, is the funding source going to continue to support this person we've worked to integrate within this scheme, and we like, and who does really good work?

Organizations that rely on community volunteer support illustrated a decrease in service forced by business entities that are no longer able to provide the same level of participation. One HCEC participant outlined her agency's changing commitment from a local business, in that "those five people dwindled down to three, and then those three people were doing the work of five . . . my involvement from that particular organization dwindled down, I see them probably 50% of what I used to see them." She explained that regional community relations positions were being combined, so that she was unexpectedly sharing resources or competing for funds with five other agencies.

In both the HCEC and the BMEC partnerships, direct loss of funding to public agencies recently occurred. The organizations had absorbed the change and even communicated pride in their ability to work as a team to continue operations. Stated one individual:

> At the beginning of the recession we were dealt with the shock that one of our partnering organizations was going to pull $35,000 in funding from us . . . I'm proud that we came out, it took everyone but we're on the other side of that.

Within the HCEC collaboration, economic pressures have precipitated two significant potential changes in structure. The participating regional economic development commission recently suffered a significant loss of state funds, forcing the organization to reexamine its mission. A staff person stated that "right now, we are in transition, and so we are really looking closely at who we are and who we're going to be; it's stressful, it's political." A county economic development agency, previously administered by an appointed board of directors, may soon be absorbed into the local nonprofit chamber of commerce. The discussion was instigated by county commissioners, and is under study as a potential action; however, if it moves forward, one partnership participant would have a significant change in his relationship with his collaborative peers.

Focus on service to clients. All of the public agencies share a common mission of service. Some are focused on membership groups or community businesses, regional economic development entities, or specific underserved populations such as the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian. Echoing the participants' descriptions, documents, media and annual reports illustrate such mission statements as "creating economic opportunity for the people of the mountains and foothills of North Carolina" and "supports the development of new businesses and the growth of existing businesses by being a community-based provider of training, counseling, and resource information." Many participants described an organizational pride in the success of those they serve. One MEDW participant explained:

> We've had a lot of press about the success of our own clients and how lending has increased in this area, how we've been able to bring capital to the area . . . while we may not have done as many, may not have been able to help the people that were at the lowest part of the rung of the ladders, we were able to still continue lending.

Influenced by structure and governance. Participants in these public agencies all described their organizational cultures in part through structure and governance, and most individuals suggested that his or her agency was traditionally organized within their industry standard.

Most non-profit organizations and CDFIs are structured with an executive director position supported by program managers. They also employ a board of directors, chairman and officer positions, and committees assigned to specific tasks, pretty much the kind of typical nonprofit." Usually the oversight board positions were filled with volunteers, and were described as "working boards" that have significant ownership and investment into the organization. In some entities that structure is carried forward to impact how the agency approaches work. One individual stated that, in her organization, "we all have particular roles that we all play, so I think that would be the most important thing to emphasize that person's particular role . . . your specific role in the team."

Other organizations were described as less formal. One participant in the MEDW partnership stated that her agency has "an executive director making the operational day to day decisions, and hands it to everyone . . . there's not a lot of hierarchy" and that "there's five of us in the office, we're pretty casual, we try to be professional, the culture is relaxed." These organizations have a local or population specific service mission, with a focus on service to a specific local populace. In the MEDW partnership, membership-based and CDFI organizations shared a common long term commitment to working with small neighborhood communities, or even individuals. This mission is supported by the less structured environment, in that individual relationships with clients can be built. For example, one person discussed her pledge to work with two minority entrepreneurs:

> I decided to work with them because it was important to me and to [organization]. . . two years in the making just for what, you know that some people could come in here and it's probably taken them a month to get started . . . so there's the barriers, those are just so hard for these folks.

Another MEDW participant illustrated her organization's mission in terms of commitment, as she defined her group's purpose as "the idea of building financial wellness in your community, helping people have better opportunities, in the long term." She finished the discussion by stating that "we have a vision for the community, a long term vision, but we don't have any control over a lot of that vision, we can just try to promote [it] and that's going to take a long time."

In contrast to the membership organizations and CDFIs, government agencies were described as more complex in both funding and structure. They often work with larger geographic service areas or broader communities, and have the capacity and resources to address more long-term projects. One HCEC participant stated his small agency is directed by "a nine member board . . . made up of two county commissioners, representatives from four municipalities, the ESC, the chamber of commerce and county's advancement foundation." Another regional development group is "a statewide organization . . . funded in part by the US Small Business Administration and the state of North Carolina matches those funds." A third entity is administered in part by Western Carolina University as well as a federal agency. Such structures, with complex groups of stakeholders, often result in decision-making occurring at a distance from the agency, competition for resources across wide geographic areas, and highly regulated policies and procedures.

One HCEC participant described a macro-level philosophy when working with regional economic development opportunities. He stated that "we talk about regionalism a lot" and "we all compete with one another for a particular project but we work together . . . if I lose it for my county and it goes to another county it's still good for the region." Another person described region-wide capacity building as a goal for her organization, stating that in the smaller, more rural communities, "they really have to work together, in order to build capacity to attract some larger corporations, we help organize events . . . and just funnel opportunities, funnel all and any kind of business interest" to those outlying service areas. She summarized the agency's primary function as dispersing opportunities, "what we do is really the trickle down."

Participants explored the value of investment in long term projects, including the impact of private industry commitments to asset-building linked to attracting other large companies. These organizations communicated to local and state officials the economic value of capacity building across decades. One individual took pride in his region's success, saying that "I think that to me was a big accomplishment, trying to get the civic leaders to understand . . . you have to have patience because it didn't happen overnight," as he outlined a 10 year project to redevelop an abandoned manufacturing site.

Staff at government agencies, in particular, described constraints to work due to a lack of independent decision-making or funding authority. In the MEDW partnership, one agency representative explained that organizational short-term strategy planning was hampered by a lack of communication, saying about project funding, "we don't know, they don't know, it does create a certain amount of ambiguity; and that's all out of our hands; it's completely way down the road in Raleigh or in DC." She outlined the impact of a limited decision-making capacity:

> There's a lot that comes down from the Small Business Administration, a lot that comes down from our internal organization in Raleigh, there's a lot that comes down from Western, so there's a lot that just have to say yes to . . . so we like to have a lot of say about what we can control, which is not that much.

Community relationships and networking. Participants from public, nonprofit organizations in all three partnerships described their entities as invested in professional networking, connections to the community and public visibility. Within the MEDW partnership, one individual, who works with a Native American population, stated that "we want to try to keep a good reputation, and it's really easy to not, all you have to do is turn one loan down and they're all over town talking about it, so you have to be very careful." She stated that "it's a very small community and for those people, there's not a chain of command . . . they'll complain to the chief, you would never think of complaining to the mayor of your town if you didn't get a loan."

Several individuals illustrated personal ties between organizations as influencing their work. One person attributed an ease of working with the community college system "because one of our loan officer's spouses is someone who worked there, coming from Southwestern Community College, and knows all the community college ties." Another individual indicated that her choice of residence had been influenced by the partnership; she moved to the county in part, because the existing collaborative team had been successful without requiring significant support. She stated that, even though she does not interact with the group as much as with other groups she serves, "I actually live there, so I probably see that team more than any other team."

Several participants described themselves and their organizations as working beyond the boundaries of their job or organizational structures, in order to serve the community. One membership-based director explained that:

> If you're a member of the chamber, you're considered to be taken care of by the chamber; if you're not a member of the chamber, we do not give you top priority,

> let's put it that way, although we do try to help everyone . . . it's good for the region.

Another participant who worked with business expansion described himself as "a resource to help people, [direct them] where they might be able to go to get the help that they might need," whether that assistance was related to his agency, or if he directed them to another service provider, often within the same partnership.

Community support is described in different ways, ranging from an active board of directors and volunteers to a statewide network of professionals. Stated one MEDW participant:

> A lot of what we do is education and training, to help people be successful, and when you have a large bank of experts and professionals in the community to call on; it makes it a lot easier to do our job.

Another MEDW participant illustrated her entity's work with partner agencies across the state, stating that they "have specialists in Hickory for government contracting, in Charlotte for exporting and strategic planning; we just have people across the state with certain expertise with certain kinds of businesses." Her organization's focus on professional development encourages networking opportunities, and annual meetings are a place where:

> We get to know each other, we know who we can call if we have an issue with a certain kind of business; "didn't so and so say they had this kind of a problem with a client,' so you can on call them.

One participant in the HCEC collaboration partially attributed the success of his agency to a "collaborating, cooperative effort" with other county agencies and private industries.

He stated, “I think I’ve been very fortunate and blessed in various things to have the support, because if you don’t have community support you wouldn’t be able to accomplish anything.”

Diverse sources of ideas and strategies. Specific to the HCEC partnership, the concept of strategy arose in that new ideas, problem solving approaches, and mid-program changes came from several different sources, including individual business owners, staff, volunteers, or students. Once a new concept is introduced, the agencies use similar approaches to vet the opportunity:

> We get suggestions from anyone, from members, or staff or the board, just whoever happens to think of that great idea at the time; it falls to me to move it forward, so then I research it, try to find a good model that would fit into this community and I try to find one that I like and present it to the stakeholders . . . and then I find my cheerleaders.

Organizational culture in private industry. The BMEC partnership includes representatives from local manufacturing companies; these individuals include plant and facility managers as well as owners, human resources staff and training professionals. The individuals interviewed described the corporate cultures using similar terms and concepts, which are organized into such themes as growth and transition, employee development and commitment to community.

***Impacted by growth and transition*.** One individual described her organization as undergoing a significant period of growth, when the purchase of a new site increased staffing and capacity. “We literally doubled in 2007, just like that, and we are bigger and better than people expect,” she stated, describing the organization’s multi-million dollar investment in new facilities and equipment, actions that required increased and specialized training for employees. A professional from another company also described a recent change that impacted culture, in that the organization was sold to a smaller company. The employees had expressed concern that the smaller organization was less stable and had fewer cash reserves than the previous owner; however it was the larger company that declared bankruptcy after the transition in ownership. She described the outcome:

> A lot of people lost a lot of money in the stock . . . I have people who still haven't retired because they never recovered from the loss, terrible . . . for the workers, it's kind of a love-hate relationship with them, because they're still our biggest client.

Employee development and retention. Both of the partnership participants described employee hiring, training and retention as a challenge, and both illustrated strategies each company used to attract and maintain workers. One individual outlined a regional perception that manufacturing jobs were unstable, and workers were prone to sudden and often long term furloughs. Acknowledging that this perception was one reason vacant positions were difficult to fill, she explained that the organization worked actively to maintain its workforce without reductions or layoffs throughout the financial downturn. She described a company mandate to "manage the workforce without letting people off; we reduced hours, would try to have vacation time, unpaid days off, we used to have voluntary layoffs a lot we don't have that now, and we're proud of that." However, she also explained that with 250 employees, this company also has "over 60 people shortly celebrating 25 year anniversary milestones . . . we have a very, very low turnover rate."

Training programs created in conjunction with WPCC were also mentioned as a strategy to offer current employees professional development and a path to promotion. Finally, as a new benefit, the organization recently implemented a uniform program, in which the company provided both uniforms and laundry service. Previously employees had offered a voluntary, unsubsidized uniform program; the motivation behind the benefit was described as twofold: employees present a clean, consistent appearance to customers, and the cost of clothing and laundry absorbed by employees is eliminated.

Another company uses a "gain-sharing program" in which cash bonuses are paid to employees when a goal is met regarding reduction in product waste. This participant explained that the company, during the economic downturn, chose to continue this benefit program. She stated that:

> The woman who worked with me was laid off, so I took on two, sometimes three jobs; we did what we had to do, and the company recognized that and was fair and gave it back to us in gain-sharing . . . their goal is to make people part of the process [the gain-sharing program] so it's not just the check, people understand they are part of the success.

She also outlined the increased investment into new equipment and technology:

> We've been blessed with shareholders, stockholders I guess, who have given us money even during the recession; they didn't say "we're going to maintain our profits and you're just going to have to manage" . . . we've done a tremendous amount of asset growing in the last couple of years, and it's benefited everybody.

Professional development was mentioned by one training manager as a strategy to support leadership growth within the company, as she explained that programs and training are available for plant workers that reached beyond the industry standards:

> We did leadership for supervisors, we did leadership for associates . . . this is not normal to put leadership in safety programs, but we wanted our people, not just our supervisors, but our people to take that leadership role . . . there was another set of classes later that were coaching, not just for supervisors, but for people who are natural leaders.

Commitment to community. Both representatives of for-profit industries felt that collaboration and community commitment were part of their organizational cultures, and described their work with WPCC as important components. One company representative explained:

> Because we worked so closely with the college, they're aware of our hiring and training issues . . . they're putting the people into class who are willing to go in on their own time, and learn and sort of reeducate for manufacturing.

Beyond the single campus, her company has worked with several regional colleges, attended job fairs and hosted information sessions for incoming students.

Another representative described the success of a cooperatively developed training course:

> There are twenty to thirty people per class . . . I have four graduates of the program working here now . . . hopefully these other employees, the other individuals have had a better chance at work . . . it's really contributed, I think it's

> a really good benefit for the community, and we helped develop that, so that can help us put people to work.

Both individuals underscored the value their companies place in community relations, one individual stating that “everybody in these plants wants Morganton to be successful, so the argument is, what do we need to do to keep ourselves successful, because it’s a big part of the community and has been for many years.”

Teams and structure. Partnership participants characterized both organizations in terms of size and structure. One company has a “president, a CFO, a COO, several directors and departments or groups; we have four plants and about 800 people.” A second company has “260 employees who work in three shifts; we have functional departments like human resources, engineering, materials, and we have our production force and we’ve production supervisors, and then the team leaders for manufacturing.”

One company also used cross departmental teams to address “wildly important goals, or WIGS.” These WIG groups met regularly to address corporate issues, solve problems and suggest improvements. An employee explained that this team structure also includes accountability for a personal goal:

> We all have a team that we’re working on, and so we’re trying to meet specific goals in those teams, sometimes production goals or some other training goal; and we also have to have every two weeks, a personal goal that gets reported out in the team . . . that keeps us from pushing our personal goals too far out into the future.

This team structure was also described as facilitating communication and operations coordination, and providing a forum to resolve conflicts.

While both companies were described as structured, there was also opportunity for employees to make decisions and air grievances. "There is a chain of command, certainly," stated one individual, continuing with "it's important that you know your supervisor and the expectations of your job." Authority "depends on how big the decision is, how much money's involved" in this business, but employees "can go to any level of the organization that they want to and speak their minds." For example, she explained that she had given the CEO's mailing address to an employee who wanted to express his disagreement with the uniform program.

Summary. The participants involved in the three partnerships under study described the organizational cultures of their institutions using many terms found in Tierney's (1988) framework of organizational culture (see Table 3). In both community colleges and public agencies, mission and service to their constituents are themes found in the data, as well as strong relationships, the impact of facilities and the value of a strong identity within the campus community. Other themes included the impact of economic pressures, and the influence of the hierarchical system under which each operates. Public agency representatives described the influence of governance, community relationships and networking between organizations. Participants from private industries described their organizational cultures in terms of hierarchy, corporate growth and investment, and employee training and retention (see Table 5).

Research Question Two: Influences of Leaders on Organizational Cultures

Individuals participating in the three collaborations under study described leaders' influence on their organizations in such terms as bringing change, managing administration, fostering strategy and vision, and building staff relationships (see Table

6). Those participants from community colleges identified leaders that were one or two levels above their positions in the formal campus hierarchy; i.e., directors and department chairs related to deans and vice presidents, while those in senior administration saw their leader as the president. The descriptions by individuals from government agencies and nonprofit groups were influenced by the size of their organizations. In agencies with few

Table 6

Influences of Leaders on Organizational Culture as Described by Participants

College Participants	MEDW	HCEC	BMEC
Bringing change	√	√	
Managing administrative tasks	√	√	√
Staff support and empowerment			√
Leading strategy	√	√	√
Non-College Public Agency Participants	**MEDW**	**HCEC**	**BMEC**
Managing crises	√	√	
Coordinating board and community support	√	√	√
Managing daily operations and staff	√	√	√
Supporting professional development	√		
Planning for leadership succession		√	
Industry Participants	**MEDW**	**HCEC**	**BMEC**
Making decisions			√
Displaying authority			√
Interacting with employees			√

staff, the participants themselves identified as leaders, most often working in partnership with leaders from other groups as well as with their governing boards.

Leaders in community colleges. Leaders in community colleges were often described as influencing their organizations through a number of administrative responsibilities. These activities included fiscal planning and budget management, coordination of governing boards and college affiliates, fundraising, and activities required to meet the policies and procedures set out by both the NCCCS and the state legislature.

Bringing change. Two community colleges, AB Tech and HCC, had experienced significant transitions in the president's office in the last decade. One campus welcomed its third senior administrator in a four-year period just three years ago, while the other replaced an interim president of eight months with a permanent position while the study was underway. Each new administrator brought new priorities to their campuses that impacted organizational strategy, division of resources, and/or campus structure. At AB Tech, staff reported an increased emphasis on workforce development, as it was "one of the president's babies, he brought the idea in, because he did it when he was at his last community college down in Indiana." This change resulted in more staffing in that area, as well as an aggressively increased goal for service. At HCC the interim president impacted organizational culture by creating a new division and adding staff, again focused on workforce development, because:

> He'd come from an area where workforce development was important . . . he felt a stronger workforce development position was important, so the person I report

> to now has that position, and typically you don't think of an interim president making a lot of changes but he was a very influential man.

New presidents influenced the culture of campuses as well by recrafting existing policy and procedures, reorganizing departments and influencing future job descriptions. On both campuses, staff and faculty described as challenging the period of transition to new leadership, and one individual suggested the changes were, in part, responsible for staff turnover. He stated that:

> We've gone through three presidents in four years and all that that means, changing technology, changing procedures at the same time, at the same time as you're going through your reaffirmation, and all of this hitting at the same time.

He described a campus that is "flushing out really good people . . . they are saying 'my job five years ago as a department chair is not anything like it is now'." Staff changes have also occurred at the dean and director levels. The transition period of socializing and orienting a new supervisor to the culture was also described as challenging by faculty and staff. One participant stated:

> I have a new boss, so you know I'm not even sure he's aware of [the project]. He's so new, he's probably been here a couple of months now, a couple or three months, so he's really just still trying to get an understanding of the full division; my department is so vast, it's five different programs.

He illustrated the tension that occurs when administrators bring new ideas and advocate for different priorities; "change can be difficult," he stated simply.

Leading strategy and innovation. Presidents and senior administrators lead the long-term strategy planning process for their campuses, as well as the method in which new degrees or programs are institutionalized. Each college was described as having a formal strategic plan, which was usually linked to metrics required by NCCCS and the accreditation process. In illustrating the planning process, one faculty member explained that institutional goals were "usually coming down from the president's office, that's usually the president's office saying 'okay, how effective are we, are we really meeting our goals' as part of that discussion, he [the president] heads up our annual strategic planning process." Another campus participant at AB Tech described leader support for an innovative department reorganization and work approach:

> When they . . . saw this nontraditional organizational chart, and they saw each position outlined, and how the goal was at the center, and the positions interconnected together . . . they got excited . . . and they bought it, saying "we'll try it on a small scale."

At HCC, where a new model of cooperation has been implemented that breaks down barriers between different divisions of the campus, senior administration was responsible for leading that strategy forward. In order for such an initiative to have an opportunity to succeed, explained one individual, "you have to have several champions . . . looking at the college as a whole plan. I have a colleague on the curriculum side . . . we get it." In describing the initiative's implementation, she commented that the strategy "takes courageous decision-making, it also takes a president who is in favor of that model."

Staff from AB Tech and HCC both described an executive council structure; a group of senior administrators that work with the president to both make operational decisions as well as craft strategy and new initiatives. While this was seen as an efficient and effective approach, some comments were made that indicated the council's influence on campus operations could produce a negative result. For example, a program's recent and unexpected surge of enrollment growth created pressure to build capacity:

> Where [enrollment growth is] going so fast it catches the attention of our administrators, the council, who say "oh, we need to add this to this site, and we need to add this to this location" and you're going, "yes, but who's going to teach those classes" and then you get into marketing and it gets unmanageable.

Fostering staff development. Faculty members at WPCC described a leader that encourages innovation and autonomy. One staff member stated that he felt confident in his authority to implement programming:

> My boss trusts that I am making the right decision, which is good, because that frees him up to do other stuff. He can be at a higher level of decisions regarding the college, he doesn't find that he has to micromanage . . . I am very fortunate to be able to operate in that environment, I think there are probably other institutions that, on the personalities of the individual that is in the presidential role, may not have that comfort level to turn their people loose to be successful or not.

Another person described a mutual level of understanding between the president, vice presidents and deans that has developed in part due to their lengthy working relationships. He explained that he had "learned a lot from the leaders I've worked with, a lot of good leaders who taught me how to look at things in the big picture, how to solve problems."

Leaders in non-community college public agencies. Participants described leaders in these organizations as influencing culture through several mechanisms. These levers included implementing board or governance policies and procedures, setting customer service standards, managing conflicts, leading fundraising efforts and supporting staff professional development.

Coordinating board and community support. All of the agencies in this category have some form of governance or advisory board, with whom the leader works at several levels. Some of those boards consist of volunteers, while others include county or regional appointed or elected positions. Two included members appointed by state legislative or gubernatorial representatives. The relationship between director and board members was itself influenced by the size of the group, the geographical distance between members, the size of the organization and its budget, and personal connections outside the board structure. For example, participants in the regional economic development agencies described their leaders as political and focused on statewide initiatives. Their supervisors were physically absent from the organization often, as they cultivated relationships with board members throughout North Carolina.

Leaders worked in concert with governing boards to set the policies, procedures and strategic direction that guides their organizations. “Our board is made up of bankers and business owners,” stated one participant, and “they pretty much set the agenda, and our executive director is always working with the chair.” Leaders also coordinated with and influenced board members to serve as advocates amongst the constituent groups; one individual described them as “our cheerleaders in the community.” If the governing board had fiscal authority over the agency, the director coordinated budget and fundraising efforts, usually with a selected finance committee.

Directors often influenced the governing boards by steering particular opportunities into their discussions, or championing new causes. One individual explained that her new director was “bringing new leadership concepts to us and being open to new ideas and new thinking.” The participant felt that the organization had increased its responsiveness to board concerns, clients and staff due to her influence. Another individual, who serves as a director, stated that she “learned this in my previous involvement, it’s how to have a good board, how to have them working for you and not against you.”

Managing crises. Leaders at four participating agencies were managing staff conflicts or significant financial crises during the study period; the influences of their actions on the participants were uniformly described as negative and discouraging. The governance board of one small organization launched a feasibility study it be placed under another partnership agency; evidence seen during a meeting observation demonstrated that the process was negatively impacting staff morale. A participant from a regional economic development group explained that legislative lobbying by senior staff had not ameliorated a significant state budget reduction. One staff person from a local nonprofit declined to comment on leaders’ influences, due to ongoing staff concerns and mediation launched by the board of directors. Finally, one partnership participant became the focus of a traditional and social media report, due to an appearance in a photograph posted by a personal acquaintance on a social media site. During the study period, the situation escalated publicly and the participant’s employment was terminated.

Managing daily operations and staff. Participants often described leaders as managing the groups’ daily activities. A MEDW partnership participant stated:

> Our executive director makes the day to day decisions, and she does all the grant writing, ultimately she needs to sign off on [programs] and make sure they're where the organization wants to go, and she answers to her board and they make all the decisions on huge organizational pieces.

Some individuals indicated that directors brought new program concepts to the implementation stage, in response to a newly perceived need in the service community, and set the standard of customer service for a group. In the role of leaders, one executive director explained that:

> I tell people here regardless of the day you're having, try not to let it show, and regardless of how many things are failing in this event, try not to let it show, just keep that smile on your face.

She stated that the most important aspect of her organizational culture is "Southern hospitality," and that new employees or volunteers spend their first day "on the front line, which would be answering the phone, taking care of members; our members have become accustomed to expecting a lot," and a high standard of service.

Directors also managed staff concerns, and served as the final authority on organization's detailed work, that which exists outside the influence of the governing boards. One executive suggests on which volunteer boards her staff serve, in order to balance and maximize the organization's outreach. For another individual, her director oversees and sets the tone for work planning:

> If she needs to intervene . . . if two of us have strong ideas and dominate the conversation, she's just say "okay, let's just do it this way" and you say "okay,

I've had my piece, she's let me have my say, and everyone understands how I feel" and then we can move on.

Supporting professional development. One participant spoke at length about the support leaders at her entity gave for professional development and growth, and its positive influence on culture. She felt that the organization's commitment to personal growth was viewed by staff as a significant benefit, and described her opportunities:

> We can go back to school, we can take classes, we can go to seminars, we can do stuff online, we can read a book, you can start a book group and they're encouraging those of us who've been here for a while to share our skills and knowledge, and to lead sessions at our annual training.

Planning for succession. In the HCEC partnership, two organizational leaders specifically discussed leading planning efforts for succession, as a process of identifying supporters in the area and mentoring them into new positions of authority; this occurred both at their organizations and within the collaboration. One individual explained that the governing board of directors was "getting tired; they're [board of directors members] not in leadership roles so it's a whole changing thought process to bring in more people . . .get more people involved, particularly women, and particularly young people." Another leader expressed concern that, within the partnership, most team members would be retiring or moving into new professional positions. He expounded on this at a countywide level, stating that "we know things change, people are going to be retiring in some key positions in the community, so we need to bring younger, newer people into the partnership and our organizations."

Leaders in private industry. Leaders of the manufacturing companies that participate in the BMEC partnership were illustrated in relation to highly structured organizational charts. Each of these companies had leadership positions titled president, chief operating officer (COO), chief executive officer (CEO) and plant manager. The reach and responsibilities of these positions were similar between the organizations, with an adjustment of scale. One company had multiple facilities in the U.S. and Mexico, while the other had four facilities within one county.

Both presidents were described at the primary authority figure, with responsibility for contract negotiation, fiscal decisions and stockholder relations, all of which impacted organizational culture. One employee outlined the influence of the president's position through her description of a monthly manager's meeting. She explained that, "if you walked in, you would know exactly who the president is, he's sitting at the head of the table and everyone's looking at him." She described the meeting as "every single department in the company, including the admin group, is present, saying 'what am I doing, what's my results, what are my new things, what am I doing to improve, what innovations have I done' . . . it all comes into that meeting." She compared the president's role in the company to that of the father role, or the head of household.

Another individual explained that larger initiatives were often implemented by senior leaders and information was passed down along a chain of command. She illustrated this process through details of the company's recent uniform program. "I got a call from my manager," she explained, "and his manager for that matter." In implementing the project, she stated that "our corporate office talked to their corporate office, and then the local [representatives] came and met with me." She indicated that the decision to implement the uniform program was made by the CEO, and that plant managers and their peers had not been included in the discussion.

Although both participants described a formal hierarchy, neither individual felt restricted by the structure, or described leaders working in isolation. Although the previous example of the uniform program implementation illustrates a one-way flow of information and decision-making strategy, this same individual described a level of autonomy in her position, stating that "my manager trusts me, I'm not micromanaged, I can make the decisions I need to make." At another company, it is the daily interactions of the COO with employees that influenced the culture. He was present and accessible to employees at all levels of the company, and was described as a person with whom the staff felt comfortable discussing company issues, asking advice, or teasing with humor. She explained that this person is:

> All over talking to everyone . . . because of who he is, the meetings tend to get something done, he never forgets anything, he writes everything down, he'll go back and say that "you said you were going to do this, so what are you doing."

She stated that he is "a very powerful force, but one of the kindest managers I've ever known." When in conversation about a conflict within the company, she asked him to "be straighter with me, because I'm not sure if you're yelling at me or being nice." She explained that this individual:

> Keeps the floor running, keeping the operations going smoothly . . .if we say someone is blocking an audit, he takes care of it; he calls them up and says 'Gee, I heard so and so needs to do an audit, are you going to do that.' But he doesn't yell, he just gets it across.

Continuing the family metaphor, the employee labeled the COO "the Mom of the company."

Both individuals felt their immediate leaders were available to speak with any individual within the company without regard to their position, even within the hierarchy. One manager's door was never closed, "even when he's talking to someone." A training manager stated:

> I can go to my boss or I can go straight to my COO, and have done that frequently; I don't feel that I'm a step down on the matrix even though I am, I am part of the group.

Summary. Individuals working within the three collaborations under study described the influences of leaders in their organizations using a variety of terms. Leaders in community colleges and other public agencies were most often described as influencing culture through managing administrative tasks and daily organizational operations, leading strategy and bringing change based upon their previous professional experiences. The strategies leaders used to approach crises were also a significant influence. In private industries, leaders were described as the peak of a structured hierarchy whose approaches to interactions with staff defined their influences on organizational cultures.

Research Question Three: Influences of Leaders on Partnerships

Leaders of organizations participating in the three collaborations under study were described by the participants using various measures and examples of support. These influences were themselves impacted by the age of the partnership, the size and complexity of the participating institutions, and the role the reporting individual played in his or her entity. With regard to this research question, leaders are defined as those who hold a position in authority to the individual, and their direct impact on the partnership was explored through language and actions. Each participant described support from his or her leaders was within four categories of action:

- Time available away from normal job responsibilities;
- Use of organizational resources, such as funding, room space, membership benefits;
- Prioritization of collaboration activities within organizational goals; and
- Personal participation in partnership activities and events.

Support from leaders is discussed in more detail in the following section.

Leaders in community colleges. Within the MEDW partnership, faculty and staff described leader support from their direct supervisors, but did not mention influence on the partnership at the presidential level. One department chair indicated his previous dean "who had been here for years, was very supportive." Although the collaboration activities were not part of the chair's formal role on campus, the dean supported time away to attend meetings, events and functions. An AB Tech program director, who joined the college while already serving on the board, felt his supervisor did make the collaboration's goal a work priority. He:

> Asked [his] chain of command "how do you feel about me serving on the Board, and how do you think this connects to the vision, mission and values of AB Tech," and to have the leadership say it definitely connects because you're working with businesses . . . that's a great way of doing it, so we support you.

In a measure of personal participation, he explained that his division leader attended some of the Committee's events and activities, a level of support he had not received from his previous employer. In prior years, "out of 14 departments only one department head" had attended workshops, receptions or programs, so that "having my division chair . . . was like 'wow, this is fantastic'."

Although HCC has recently changed presidents, the senior college administrator at the time the collaboration began was described as very supportive. Participants attributed this perspective, in part, to her personal experiences as a small business center director; thus she had an understanding of the work required, and value of economic development initiatives. One college staff member described the impact of this support in garnering time and priority:

> If you don't have support from the top down, to do the work that I do . . . it makes it a lot more difficult; you can do it but it just doesn't make it quite as easy. So if I need to travel here, or do this, or do that, [the president] was in full support of that, it wasn't a struggle to get permission . . . she embraced the program.

When asked about the potential impact of a new president, both college staff indicated that the transition was not expected to influence the work of the collaboration; each anticipated ongoing support from the new leader. "We know what to do and we do it," stated a college administrator; we "haven't found a president yet that does not support our efforts."

Within the college, one partnership participant was previously supervised by another, but a recent reorganization had moved the supervisor into a new collegiate position. However, this new role was seen as not affecting her value and support to the collaboration. The supervisee, in this case, described the individual as a key voice on campus for communicating the group's work, in that "she's very politically savvy and understands the whole economic development thing, so she continues to be a good fit for this team."

The BMEC collaboration had been launched by the college president at WPCC, thus support was obviously present at its inception. The college president:

> Wanted to make sure that we were indeed with the private sector, in terms of better understanding what their workforce needs are, and wanted to make sure our role serving Burke County . . . was being fulfilled by serving the private sector.

Demonstrating support in priority, resources and personal participation, the president himself brought together the senior leaders from local manufacturing industries. He had gathered the "decision-making managers, individuals that are CEOs, owners, plant managers," to ask how the college might better support their operations, primarily through workforce training. Although he has since reduced his role and active participation in BMEC was now occurring at a dean and director level, both college participants credited his initial vision and ongoing support for the group's sustainability. A college staff member explained that:

> It's one of those things that we can always talk about, "we need to do this" but who's going to take the lead, and make it happen, so we had to be the person to do that . . . it was really our senior administration that kind of put the line in the sand and said "we need to do something."

Leaders in non-community college public agencies. The MEDW partnership included a variety of nonprofit organizations, government agencies and two CDFIs; each institutional representative described leaders' impact on the Committee's work in terms of the four categories previously listed. Stated one program manager, "my boss is always happy to see the results [of partnership media coverage], and he's never concerned when I'm at meetings, or at the reception.'' She added that her agency was a recurring financial sponsor of the annual event. An individual from a CDFI explained the position of her organization's director:

> She's very supportive, she is always positive, she attends the MED week recognition event . . . she doesn't care that I am doing this today [the interview]; I was at the committee meeting for nominations earlier this week, and it can take some time; if you're going to ask for all those hours to travel, exactly how much time can you take out of the day? But no, she's fine with it.

In one example of a leader managing work priority, the executive director of one partnership group had recommended one participant take a temporary leave of absence from the Committee. This was "not because of any conflict with the agency, or the mission" but for the benefit of the individual, explained another participant. Rather, the director had an awareness of the person's work load and demonstrated concern over stress levels. That person has since rejoined and remains active on the Committee.

Several participants stated that their supervisors had themselves served in the MEDW partnership, and some attributed this experience to the high level of support. In response to his request to join the partnership, one individual explained that his supervisor stated, "I know what to expect . . . I know what they'll ask of you and I'm ok with that." Other leaders were supportive, in part due to the recognition participation brought to the agency. For example, the vice chair of the committee stated that:

> Our assistant executive director . . . she sat on the MED Week Board before me and . . . our regional director . . . both of those, they really are very supportive of what we do with MED Week, and having someone be part of the Board, because it's so important to recognize and support minority owned businesses.

She explained that leaders are engaged in part because their institution receives "certain encouragements, I guess . . . the right words, from our funding sources, federal and state" to work with the communities that are the partnership's targeted audience.

One individual who spanned roles within a membership organization and a county government economic development position credited a new leader at the former for a significant increase in resource support to MEDW activities. Award winners now received a variety of member benefits in the local chamber of commerce as well as admission to several regional networking and professional development activities. She described the leader as someone who is skilled at "just inviting people to the table . . . sometimes it's just invitation and leadership," she suggests, that draws new or increased commitments to the group.

Within both the HCEC and BMEC collaborations, leaders of the public agencies were often themselves the partnership representatives. Thus their contributions include all four categories of support actions:

- staff time investment in attending meetings as well as managing and attending partnership activities;
- allocation of organizational resources, in one example providing the physical space for meetings while others secured funding and used the professional network to promote the events and workshops;

- prioritization of the partnership within organizational work plans; and
- personal participation in activities, including hosting events or teaching workshops.

While they described a certain level of decision-making autonomy in their positions, each garnered support for the partnerships from their advisors and peers. For example, within the HCEC group, two individuals each worked with their governing boards to garner support from county commissioners, the related boards and the larger business community.

Leaders in private industry. Leaders in private industries were placed within a strict hierarchical structure. Some leaders were at a geographic distance from the partnership and its activities. One BMEC participant clearly delineated two leaders in her company; the first, the plant manager who was responsible for daily operations of the facility, and her supervisor, located at a corporate office in another state. Regarding the facility manager, she said "I'm not sure he really sees the value of it." She later opined that it was a lack of exposure to the current partnership activities that caused this individual's disinterest, explaining that 'he values some of the work we've done, as far as developing the manufacturing certification program and the maintenance certification programs . . . he's just not really been involved in a training." She suggested that his future support would be a function of exposure and participation.

With regard to her participation, however, "lucky for me, I've a very flexible schedule and I don't report to the plant manager, I report to the corporate office." She described organizational support for the collaboration, including her investment of time as well as opening the facility for tours and as a training site. Her supervisor and the company's senior management felt that BMEC was "important, it's good community support, I don't think they would ever say not to do it."

Another manufacturing industry representative from a smaller, more regional company described positive leader support for BMEC programs. Originally the corporate CEO attended partnership functions, but routine participation now occurred at a managerial level. She stated that the CEO "loves it [the partnership], he's just really busy, really busy; he did try to go to things that were of very specific interest to him." This participant was working in concert with another corporate director to both attend meetings and host partnership functions. The company recently opened its manufacturing facilities to the partnership participants as part of their quarterly meeting agenda. The CEO was "very enthusiastic, he's very enthused about it and his immediate reaction [to event hosting] was 'go for it' because it pays to know your neighbors."

. One participant also described a negative example of the influence of corporate leaders. She explained that when the partnership was in its infancy, college staff had contacted her previous supervisor. The campus representatives had offered support, saying "we have things that we can do for you, but it didn't come through the ranks, well, it didn't happen." She declined to suggest a reason for this individual's disinterest, but explained that after an employee change, college staff again put forth the invitation to participate in the partnership and assist in the creation of training programs, and this time the leader was receptive.

Summary. No matter what type of organization he or she represented in the three collaborations under study, all of the participants described the influence of their leaders on the partnerships within four categories of support. These categories including personal participation in activities, providing organizational resources such as funding or space, including or prioritizing the partnership within institutional work plans, and allowing staff time to collaboration needs.

Research Question Four: Influences of Organizational Cultures on Partnerships

Numerous researchers suggest that organizational culture influences the goals, work and products of an agency, in that it shapes how the organization defines its role in community, adapts to its external environment, and integrates internal processes in order to thrive (Hodges & Hernandez, 1999; Lewis, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1984; Schein, 2004; Tierney, 1988). Individuals working within the three collaborations under study described the influences of organizational culture on their respective partnerships through a variety of situational examples; the terms participants used often mimicked the language employed in culture descriptions of their workplaces. Interestingly, it was sometimes the voices of those working for other agencies that explained the impact of culture; for example, it was the director of a nonprofit organization that provided specific insight into the influence of the local community college. The participants' experiences are described below, organized by type of institution. As well, each section includes a table illustrating the culture's influences as related to the organizational culture descriptions explored through responses to research question one.

Influences of community college organizational cultures on partnerships. The relative impact of college culture on the three partnerships was influenced by several factors, including the age and stability of the collaboration, and its goals and outcomes. For example, MEDW participants described an influence that was equally balanced with that of many partners, as the college is only one of several contributors. In contrast, the college culture in the BMEC collaboration was described as having significant influence over its success. The participants' experiences are outlined below, in categories related to their descriptions of their organizational cultures. These categories include service and mission, the campus as community and impact of hierarchy; a visual representation of the data analysis can be found in Table 7.

Service to students and community. The method by which an institution chose to enact its mission is a component of organizational culture. In the case of the three participating community colleges, their missions all included a component of economic development and service to their community, according to individuals' comments and documentation. Therefore, direct participation by faculty and staff in each partnership represented one mechanism the colleges have employed to place their mission into action. An AB Tech director stated that the college "has a mission and a goal to work with businesses" and other staff understand "that's what you're doing" in MEDW. Another individual on campus explained that collaboration "is really part of what we do now, no one even questions whether we should be at the table or not." In part due to their length of participation, the college traditionally provides not only staff time to MEDW, but also space for partnership programs, funding through sponsorship, and support from the marketing and communications staff to help promote workshops and activities. When working with the business community, a college program director is "always talking it up," for both the benefit of the partnership and the campus. He stated:

> When people find out we're involved in minority business development, they pay more attention; the college looks good, and we might get another sponsor for our

programs . . . I don't mind wearing the two hats, it is worth it, even if I can get one more person to a workshop or to nominate someone for an award.

Table 7

Evidence of Community College Cultural Influences on Partnerships

Culture descriptor	Evidence of influence	MEDW	HCEC	BMEC
Service to students and community	Direct participation	√	√	√
	Seen as mechanism to reach goals	√	√	√
	Support through sponsorship, space	√		
	Networking in business community	√		√
	Direct support to peer agencies		√	
	Training responsive to student and business needs			√
	Recruitment of new participants			√
Planning in conjunction with the user	Seen a mechanism to ensure quality program development			√
Campus as community	Networking with potential participants on campus	√		
	Student population viewed as potential training candidates			√
Influences of hierarchy	Contributions constrained by campus limitations and state requirements			√

At HCC, one staff person explained that “of course, if it’s good for the community and the economy, then it’s good for us and we should do it.” Another individual explained that the campus’ work with the collaboration “hasn’t taken on the life of the college; it’s important, the work and we continue the work, but it doesn’t overshadow everything else that we do it’s only one partnership.” She explained that the college was involved in multiple partnerships, as a method to reach its institutional goals. Another HCEC participant described how the service to her organization from the college had manifested over time:

> The community college was the aggressor; they said “we want to be involved, we want to put the resources out there to help you achieve the goals that you have” . . . resources meaning people, time, some financial resources and equipment--the LCD projector laptops--we didn’t have any of these things. So I felt like the community college was basically adopting us, and that’s how the relationship started, and grew into all sorts of projects like the CEC.

As well, WPCC regarded the partnership as a mechanism to reach its service goals; i.e., the collaboration’s objectives represented a component of their mission and organizational culture. A training manager stated that the local workforce community was “aware of the challenges of hiring we have, because we’ve worked so closely with the college, and they’ve made it [the challenge] a priority.” One industry member of BMEC stated that, for the college staff who participate, “I know they think it’s part of their job, and it sort of is; I mean the more people they have in class, the more money they’ll eventually get from the state.” She described a positive and supportive relationship:

> They are tremendously flexible, accommodating and patient; if we do not have the support from the community college that we have, this [BMEC] would be nothing . . . I think if they were to leave, we would run a very high risk of damaging the partnership because they do so much for us; to be honest I rely on them.

A college faculty member shared one view of the collaboration's value to the campus, stating that "it's all about getting to know the different folks, what they do, what their needs are, what their strengths are . . . without an organization like this, it's very easy for Western Piedmont to live in its own little world." He continued by outlining its value from a more political perspective:

> Our mission states that we are to partner with our local manufacturers, to make sure that we are there to serve them . . . and I would say that we're proud of it [BMEC] in such a way that, if an elected official were in the room and they wanted to learn "what is Western Piedmont doing with our tax dollars," it's one of the first things we would bring up.

WPCC also influenced the partnership by bringing to the collaboration activities a network of speakers and trainers from outside the region. Campus staff were described by other group members as staunch advocates for the partnership, and their local network as a valuable resource for new participants. Membership in the group has increased, "because they can reach out; they know a lot of these folks and can reach out to them, separately and in person; call them and say 'hey would you like to be a part of this', and people will come because of that contact."

Planning in conjunction with the user. In the case of BMEC, products of the collaborative work included new and updated workforce training programs. Thus the partnership was a method by which the college ensured that curriculum met the goals of two constituent groups, the student and the potential employer. Although not a new approach for the college, one staff person explained:

> There wasn't a night and day difference, prior to this we've always had good relationships with our local industry . . . it just gave us a better mechanism to do what we wanted to do, and it's helped us continue to evolve, accelerated our relationships. I am sure we are further along today as a college, at least in this regard, than we would be without this organization.

Industry representatives positively described the cooperative environment, as one person stated that "we got together with the college and we did a huge training program, I was amazed at how much they were willing to do." Documents illustrated a jointly created curriculum in excess of 5,200 contact hours and reaching more than 390 employees. Another individual explained that the college, in part through the partnership, was responsive to corporate needs. She said, "I know they were hearing the story from other manufacturing companies in this area, about our hiring challenges . . . the college started looking at 'how can we provide for that' and now they've got a 96-hour class."

WPCC was also described as incorporating the needs of the student into the partnership programs offered. One training manager opined that "the college is good like that, to encourage [students] to complete the program. Another individual explained a new instructional method:

> They are going to try to do this new sort of thing that . . . has an open lab, so you don't have any specific classes, the lab is open from 8 to 9 . . . you can go anytime . . . I don't know how they're going to do it, apparently there is going to be an instructor . . . what it does is help those individuals have more flexibility with their schedules.

Campus as community. The staff of AB Tech viewed the campus population of students, faculty and staff as potential participants in the MEDW collaboration. Representatives communicated partnership activities and events through email, on-campus posters, and through faculty of specific courses. "Anytime we have something on campus," stated one individual, "we want to make sure everybody knows about it; those activities are part of what we [the college] do." Another person described a personal philosophy that "the next entrepreneur of the year winner could be in a classroom right now; my job is to get to him." Both individuals outlined a campus community that viewed itself as a resource and support mechanism to the efforts of specific college departments and initiatives.

At WPCC, the collaborative nature of the campus environment impacted the partnership in that support to BMEC is not limited to a specific department, or within one program. Instructors shared between areas of continuing education and curriculum were often asked to speak at plant tours or meetings, or teach one component of a training program. A faculty member described the approach of "putting the right person at the front of the classroom," and that in planning, "if I'm getting ready to teach a class, and if he's got the expertise . . . we go back and forth with our faculty as much as we can."

Industry participants within the partnership described the college student population as potential candidates for both future employment and the newly developed workforce training programs. One human resources director stated that she "goes to the job fairs they had after graduation and says, 'okay we want to interview you, give me all those resumes." While currently participating in regular job fairs, both representatives also described ongoing conversations with WPCC staff, with a goal of more aggressively marketing their companies to potential job seekers. One individual explained:

> We are looking now at the community college . . . saying, "you have people graduating, not just from these remedial type classes, but from your regular classes, can we talk to them?" And say to them "ok, you're coming out and you don't have a job; even though this is not the job you want it's the job that's available . . . and you will have a chance to learn here too."

Influences of hierarchy. Staff at WPCC described the limiting impact of state and system regulations on their organization culture, constraining innovation and response to client needs. With regard to the partnership, those limitations influenced the level at which the college participated as well as to what degree they fulfilled participants' expectations. One staff person opined that "you'll find someone in industry that's disappointed with us; we're not going to please everybody, all at the same time . . . sometimes we have to say sorry, we have our limits." He explained that "getting approval can be difficult, getting instructors, at the baseline just getting the funding" restricted what the college is able to support. Often businesses work in a condensed time frame that did not fit within the restrictions of the campus system, or an industry suggested training programs that the campus was not approved to provide. Sometimes funding is available for training that did not fit the need of local companies, yet the funds usually could not be applied to another program. One individual suggested that:

> A lot of it has to do with the constraints and the regulations at the state level, about how those [training] dollars can be used, and the lack of local autonomy at the community colleges; folks who aren't [in region] probably have a very limited reality on what is appropriate training and what is not.

Influences of non-community college public agency organizational cultures on partnerships. A diverse group of public agencies were present in the three collaborations under study, including membership-based nonprofit organizations, state and local government agencies, and CDFI entities. Within the MEDW collaboration, a majority of participating agencies fell into this category, while in HCEC this group represented half the partnership and in BMEC, only two of many participants. While the funding structures and governance of the agencies varied, participants described examples of ways the organizational cultures of their workplace impacted the efforts of the partnership in relation to two common themes: focus on service to clients, and networking and community visibility (see Table 8).

Focus on service to clients. All of the non-community college public agencies that participated in the partnerships had missions grounded in service to the community, whether through providing economic development assistance, lending or education. Thus the activities of the collaboration were a method in which the agencies helped to fulfill their mission and/or reach new audiences. Direct participation of agency staff was evidence of this influence; one individual stated that, in working for MEDW, "we have almost identical missions; my employment has always been to develop minority

Table 8

Evidence of Non-Community College Public Agency Cultural Influences on Partnerships

Culture Descriptor	Evidence of influence	MEDW	HCEC	BMEC
Focus on service to clients	Direct participation	√	√	√
	Seen as mechanism to reach goals	√	√	√
	Support through sponsorship, space	√	√	
	Conflicting expectations for some agencies	√		
Community relationships and networking	Networking external to partnership	√	√	√
	Networking amongst agency participants	√		

businesses." A program director explained that the partnership and her employer were "both working towards the common goal, to improve the resources, to improve the business climate." Several participants expressed a personal passion that illustrated the value they found in how the collaborations impact their daily work. "The work I do every day is important for the community, I truly believe that," stated a HCEC team member, "and this [partnership] is a great way to see that work happen." A MEDW participant said:

> I worked with a lot of people who were having problems, it can be so difficult . . . and when I came here I thought I had just landed in the best place, a good place with this organization, and with MEDW; seeing that people were actually going

> to be looking out for minorities and really trying to champion them, and be the gatekeepers, both of them.

Another agency director described his professional role as "trying to figure out how to assist [business owners] and help them, whether it's finding money or resources, or help them expand; I spend my time on different projects, like the partnership, and that makes the job interesting, and worthwhile."

Nearly all the public agencies incorporated their existing public programming into the collaboration efforts; some workshops and training offered by MEDW members were jointly marketed under the umbrella of partnership offerings. One non-profit director explained that this was seen as an effort "to engage members of the minority community, and of small businesses, and encourage them; give them access to what we already have to offer." Another participant stated that joint programming "is another way of reaching out to a certain sector, to help move them forward and recognize, celebrate the success of their business." HCEC participants included specific agency activities within the reporting necessary to gain and eventually maintain the certified entrepreneurial community credential; one person explained "we already do so much in this area, so it was easy to incorporate them."

Support to partnerships beyond participation was also in evidence as several agencies served as program and event sponsors, provided space and other resources. "Sometimes the money comes from my programs, sometimes from [agency's] general operating budget," stated one MEDW member, "it's usually a matter of paperwork, the funding itself is never in question, we always find it."

For one state-wide organization, the MEDW activities represented a specific type service to community that other branches of the agency were not fulfilling. For this state economic development group, their participation in the partnership was described as invaluable because it was "one of the most active [MEDW] in the state, there's just not that much going on elsewhere in North Carolina." Those who oversaw the agency's operations at a state-wide level "really appreciate what we do here, because there's just not a lot of it; they see the value in it," stated one participant.

In the HCEC partnership, the organizational culture of one public agency has had varying influences on the work. The entity created and implemented the project that would bring the team members together and focused on their goal. However, changes in staff and priority created some uncertainty about specific processes, materials and milestones. Other team members did not allow this ambiguity of process to negatively impact their work, as most individuals felt the project was too valuable for the community to be inhibited by obstacles. One person stated that "they were the impetus for us to go through the process, of course, but we don't need them to continue with our partnership; our partnership's going to be there whether [the agency] exists or not."

Within the MEDW partnership, some individuals described the influence of organizational culture on the collaboration in terms of conflicting expectations. Two participants spoke of a community perception that MEDW should serve as a mechanism to support people out of poverty. In other words, the work of the partnership should be a component of a pathway to raise a person's economic status. Both individuals described at length how their organizations, as economic development agencies, were focused on new and existing business development, and provided valuable resources that would be inappropriate and ineffective in addressing poverty and unemployment issues. Explained one program manager:

> When you take a business in the United States and compare it to India or Bangladesh, and the guys who make a business out of carrying rickshaws . . . they get together with peer groups and end up buying their own rickshaw, that's a different story. In other words, getting a business in those types of countries can actually be a way out of poverty, but not in the United States, not anymore . . . business takes money to buy the licensing, to do the setup, even the basics of basics.

Another director shared that "people come in here who are unemployed, and think that entrepreneurship and starting a business is going to help them; that's usually the last thing they need, usually they need a job, not the stress of starting a business." A third explained that "starting a business is not a way out of poverty; I wish it was."

Other individuals described a conflict in that some organizations had a different target audience than the partnership. For example, a chamber of commerce represented its membership, which may only slightly intersect with the partnership's audience. One person described the impact:

> If someone represents a target market of people that doesn't get a lot of publicity or press, or doesn't get lots of recognition, you're probably going to see that person even a little more adamant. If the organization that they're coming from doesn't represent a lot of minorities, you're going to hear that too.

This dichotomy of target audiences was described as impacting relatively small details such as selection of program venue. One participant stated that some members were "always pushing to have workshops closer to Cherokee, but since most of the partners, and the funders are in Asheville, it's easy to default to having everything there." Another individual stated that one role she played in the group was to "make sure we have the right programs in the right places; in the meeting, I am always wondering to myself, that's not where someone is going to go." She provided the following example:

> It's easier to plan programs at the chamber of commerce, and a whole lot harder to plan one at the local church or community center; but minorities aren't members, and they aren't going to go there, and that's something we do talk about every year.

While the conflict or tension was described as a discussion point and ongoing concern for group members, it was not seen as an obstacle to partnership work. One individual explained that the tension created an opportunity for her organization to reach out to new audiences, stating that "I'm excited to see where this goes, since we're offering more benefits, together with MED Week, for the first time, something really exciting, and it will be a win-win for both sides." Another participant described the group's reaction to the tension, indicating that "we try to keep an eye on it, keep the perspectives of everyone in mind, keep it balanced and have that ongoing conversation."

Community relationships and networking. When describing the organizational culture of their employers, nearly all participants in this category of agencies described the value placed on networking, relationship-building and community visibility. As related to the partnerships, these individuals then described the collaborations as one mechanism that agencies employed to support this community outreach. "We're always going to be active on MED Week," explained a program director, "because we're on a ton of boards in the region, and this one is on that list of what we make sure to support." Another participant explained that:

> We recognize the importance of working with other service providers; we utilize these partnerships all the time . . . when you have a large bank of experts and professionals that you can call on, it makes it a lot easier to do your job, and we find that it actually frees up our time.

Interestingly, these individuals all described the partnership network of participants as people who work on other boards, on different projects, and in other settings; conversely, none of the partnership groups of participants were described as discrete and specific to only one collaboration. "You'll see the same people doing different things, on other boards, all over the region," said one director, adding that "the conversations we have in meetings usually ended up discussing other stuff, other projects." Another MEDW individual explained that the team "would have made a great business if we weren't already a group; I always say we should run ourselves through a start-up weekend, see what would happen." And finally, one participant stated that the collaboration created the opportunity to network with her peers across the state, as she brought in facilitators from out of the region. "We always make sure to offer our government contracting counselor, who works with existing businesses," she explained, "it's a very specialized area of expertise, and we're really the only organization that has that . . . the program gives me a reason to reach out."

Beyond the networking that exists between partnership participants, the networking that the partnerships created for their target audiences was another example of organizational culture influence. One BMEC participant stated that the partnership's audience provided feedback and information "on what kinds of programming we should be offering, what they need . . . to discover where those resources may be, and make sure we include that in our programs." A program director explained that her organization was inviting MEDW award winners to their annual meeting for the first time, stating that:

> I'm going to love the exchange of social capital that is going to happen; both sides have something to offer . . . this gives us the opportunity to really spotlight those businesses, to swap ideas . . . we'll invite the bigger businesses to come and have some exchange of social capital.

Participants for both collaborations stated that one of their primary goals is to create new networks of businesses and industries. "To meet my goals, I want them to see each other as sources of information, best practices, that kind of thing," explained one program manager.

Influences of private industry organizational cultures on partnerships. The organizational cultures of the manufacturing businesses who participated in BMEC influenced the partnership primarily through three categories: commitment to the regional community, impact of growth and investment in employee development and retention (see Table 9). The impact of growth was evidence of a direct need; new investments and technologies as well as increases in plant capacities required more employee technical training, and participation in the collaboration was one mechanism to fulfill that need. "There is this whole focus and need for training that didn't exist before," stated one participant, continuing with "we knew we had to find a way to solve [training needs] so the college and the partnership just seemed like such as natural fit," illustrating the link between industry need and the goals of the partnership.

Table 9

Evidence of Private Industry Cultural Influences on Partnerships

Culture Descriptors	Evidence of Influence
Growth	New and increased training programs
Employment development and retention	Hiring graduates from partnership programs
	Working cooperatively to develop curriculum
	Using network to find and offer solutions
Commitment to community	Direct participation and leadership Supporting regional economy

Invested in employee development and retention. These companies placed a high priority on employee development and retention, which influenced the partnership. As the collaboration results in new and more sophisticated trainings, businesses demonstrate commitment to those programs. "I'm committed," stated one employee, "if I need to hire somebody, my first picks are going to be people that graduated from that program." Another explained that "we've signed a letter of commitment that says, basically, you put people [through training] and we will look at them first" for vacant positions. Even if students are not immediately hired, as one human resources manager stated, "let's just say it puts people in a better position to be considered for employment."

Industry employees were also involved in the curriculum development of new workforce training through the partnership. "I told them, I was very specific about what I wanted taught, I don't like canned training packages," stated a training manager, "you can't make one fit all, and other companies were very specific about what they were doing as well." Another manager was specific in that "we developed, we put together this list, that outlines what we would like to see in a new employee . . . make sure you come to work every day, come on time, that kind of thing." She felt that "the partnership . . . means everyone has this opportunity to make [training] better . . . I've talked to people for training like Burke Development and those types, Western Carolina industries and if the college can't provide this for you they will find someone to do it locally."

Both industry representatives talked at length about the benefits of cooperatively developing technology and leadership training, as well as the value of speaking to colleagues, gathering information and experience. A college faculty member described the networking that occurred within the partnership as actively improving employee investments. He said:

> I've got a bias, but if you have a company over here and a company over there, and they have some of the same [employee] problems and maybe someone found a solution, but they're still struggling . . . why not sure? I know for a fact, I have overheard the conversations, there are a few cases where someone said "Oh my gosh, is that how you finally figured it out?" All the boats floated up . . . even if it was small things, they're looking to better their employees.

Commitment to community. Evidence of the private corporation's commitment to the local community was found in participation in the partnership and support to its activities. A community college dean described the value of leadership demonstrated by certain company representatives:

> We are blessed that the people who have taken the lead; they are dynamic, interested; and without those core individuals, it would not be as successful as it is; in fact it wouldn't have been successful at all. Those active BMEC companies helped us gain traction with what [the partnership] had to offer.

The industry participants both suggested that working with the collaboration was an opportunity to support industry across the region, including competitive agencies. One manager explained that opening her facility for tours did not cause her organization concern for proprietary information, stating that "through the plant tours we invited in a lot of people, we don't care, we're happy to share what we can." Another business was more sensitive about access to their facilities, but "would just work around it if we knew one of our competitors was coming, just close off an area." Both individuals saw increasing the number of participants as positive, with one stating that "just last month, our meeting was held right down the street, and we had our best turnout yet . . . we are trying to get better participation, more valuable discussions and meetings, we think we are going in the right direction."

In addition to supporting industries, both representatives spoke of using the partnership as part of a strategy to reach the next generation of employees, to the benefit of community as well as themselves. Documents and press releases illustrated efforts to promote the collaboration's activities and highlight the companies themselves as potential employers. Stated one participant:

> There's a perception that you can't find good jobs in Burke County, and we want to change that. Not everyone is cut out to go to a four year school, and we have

> phenomenal community college programs and we have good jobs that can provide a good living, so we're trying to promote that.

A human resources manager described a conversation at one of the partnership meetings about the creation of a pipeline within the local K-14 structure. "We want to get to the juniors and seniors and show them that this is not old-school manufacturing technologies," she stated, explaining that by encouraging high school students to take coursework appropriate for new technologies. She explained that a group of employees "on the cutting edge, even more sophisticated in what they know" would make their employers more competitive, and serve to attract additional industry to the region.

Summary. This section explored the influences of organizational culture on the partnerships, and illustrated the participants' direct experiences as explained in their own words. Community college participants described the impact of organizational culture in the areas of service to students, including the user in planning, and the influence of hierarchy. Public agency representatives illustrated influences in the areas of service to clients and mission as well as community relationships and networking. Private industry staff described the influence of culture in terms such as their company's commitment to the community and employee growth.

Chapter Summary

This chapter first presents case descriptions of three partnerships; these descriptions include illustrations of the partnership environment as described by the participants in relation to Tierney's (1988) framework of organizational culture (see Table 3). These terms include such concepts as environment, mission, structure and communication.

As well, the participants involved in the three collaborations under study described the organizational cultures of their institutions using many terms found in Tierney's (1988) framework (see Table 5). In both community colleges and public agencies, mission and service to their constituents are themes found in the data, as well as networking and relationships, the impact of facilities and the value of a strong identity within the campus community. Other themes included the impact of economic pressures, and the influence of the hierarchical system under which each operates. Public agency representatives described the influence of governance, community relationships and networking between organizations. Participants from private industries described their organizational cultures in terms of hierarchy, corporate growth and investment, and employee training and retention.

Leaders of institutions participating in the partnerships influenced their organizational cultures through a variety of mechanisms (see Table 6). Leaders in community colleges and other public agencies were most often described as influencing culture through managing administrative tasks and daily organizational operations, leading strategy and bringing change based upon their previous professional experiences. The strategies leaders used to approach crises were also a significant influence. In private industries, leaders were described as the peak of a structured hierarchy whose approaches to interactions with staff defined their influences on organizational cultures.

With great consistency, no matter what type of organization he or she represented in the three collaborations under study, all of the participants described the influence of their leaders on the partnerships within four categories of support. These categories including personal participation in activities, providing organizational resources such as funding or space, including or prioritizing the partnership within institutional work plans, and allowing staff time to collaboration needs.

Partnership participants described the influences of organizational culture on their respective collaborations in terms again related to Tierney's (1988) framework of organizational culture. Community college participants described impact in the areas of service to students, including the user in planning, and the influence of hierarchy (see Table 7). Public agency representatives illustrated influences in the areas of service to clients and mission as well as community visibility and networking, which are summarized in Table 8. Private industry staff described the influence of culture in terms such as their company's commitment to the community and employee growth (see Table 9).

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This study explored the influences of organizational leaders and cultures on multi-agency, sustained partnerships in community colleges. With a deeper understanding of these dynamics and implications, leaders in college settings may better direct and nurture successful partnerships and relationships (Eddy, 2010; Kezar, 2011). Through the experiences and actions of individuals within the three partnership structures, the study examined the cultures of participating institutions, explored the culture that forms within partnerships themselves, and described leader impact on both.

This chapter begins with a conceptual discussion of findings, extending the earlier presentation of findings through a more broad exploration of the participants' experiences and through connections to previous research and literature. Similar to the previous chapter, this discussion is organized by the four research questions, with primary findings illustrated under each:

1. How are the organizational cultures of participating partnership institutions described by their members?
2. How does the leader of a participating partnership organization influence its organizational culture?
3. How does the leader of a participating partnership institution influence the partnership?
4. How does the organizational culture of a participating partnership institution influence the partnership?

The chapter continues with a section outlining implications for practice and a discussion of the strengths and limitations associated with the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with several specific recommendations for future research, and closing observations.

Conceptual Discussion of Findings

Several findings from this study are appropriate for additional discussion at a conceptual level. In most areas, exploration of those findings broadly illustrates how they either corroborate or more fully inform current research; in some areas, they suggest new contributions from this research to scholarly understandings of the subject. Connections to earlier research place the findings from this study into context within the greater base of knowledge about community college partnerships, the influence of leaders and organizational culture.

With regard to the three cases under examination, the intent of this study was to explore partnerships that were identified as successful by their members. Through review of the literature, it is possible to create a list of key factors for collaboration success drawn from the findings of previous researchers (Buettner et al., 2002; Clifford & Petrescu, 2012; Duffield et al., 2012; Kisker & Carducci, 2003; Netshandama, 2010; Ostrander & Chapin-Hogue, 2011; Russell & Flynn, 2000; Sink & Jackson, 2002; Strier, 2011). A comparison of findings against this list confirms that these partnerships are, in fact, successful when examined against these metrics (see Table 10).

Research question one: Descriptions of organizational cultures. From all types of agencies, participants illustrated their organizations in similar terms. Within the descriptions, three terms are common to nearly all participating groups: *mission*,

Table 10

Evidence of Partnership Factors for Success in Case Descriptions

Factors for partnership success	MEDW	HCEC	BMEC
Participants believe it fulfills a need and is worthwhile	√	√	√
A specific goal/shared goals between partnership and organizations	√	√	√
Provides a benefit to each partner organization	√	√	√
Evidences a balance of power between organizations	√	√	√
Strong organizational support	√	√	√
Has internal decision-making authority	√	√	√
A strong leader or shared leadership model	√	√	√
Strong relationships/network/trust between the participants	√	√	√
Accountability amongst the participants	√	√	√
Shared values amongst the participants	√	√	√
Flexibility within the group	√	√	√
Clear and appropriate communications	√	√	√

structure and *community*. Interestingly, many individuals used nearly identical language and terminology to describe both their organizations and the cultures of the partnerships in which they worked, the first suggestion that there are similarities in cultures that may relate to partnership success.

Individuals used the concepts of *mission* and *structure* to describe their cultures. This indicates participants knew both the intent of their organization's purpose and the type of governance structure under which their agency worked, i.e., state entity, nonprofit, private industry, etc. As well, these participants used the same terms to illustrate the purpose and governance of their specific partnerships; again indicating an understanding of the collaboration's mission and structure. In fact, the description of missions, both entity and partnership, were often very similar, which relates to the findings of Buettner et al., (2002). These authors propose that shared and collective goals and missions acknowledged amongst the partners are important best practices. With regard to *mission*, most of the individuals described their missions well beyond simple statements. Rather, participants often intertwined organizational values with formal mission language, which illustrates a more complex layer of commonalities between organizational and partnership values. The concept of shared meanings and values are important organizational cultural markers, as drawn from research constructs (Cameron & Ettington, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1984) and partnership case studies (Roueche et al., 1995; Sink & Jackson, 2002). Shared values between partnership and organization, then, are strongly in evidence in this study.

As well, individuals consistently used the concept of *community* to illustrate cultures. In many cases, *community* was the recipient of services or purpose for existence, and formed the basis of mission. For example, every participating nonprofit group was framed within its statement of mission, vision and/or values, which included a description of the populations served. In private industries, the regional community was a component of the culture in that both entities saw support to the local area as part of a successful business strategy. Within the community colleges, faculty and staff described their culture in terms of the campus community, which they identified as the population of students, faculty and staff. Campus representatives also framed community within a regional construct, in that the college serves the county population, not just enrolled students.

Community is also described as an important component of the three study collaborations. Partnership participants described the culture of their collaborations in terms of *community* at two levels. First, all three partnerships serve a specific community or group, such as minority business owners or local industries and their employees. Secondly, individuals described a reliance on a specific community in order to reach the partnership's goals. This community was often comprised of donors and supporters, but was also outlined in terms of the relationships built in and amongst the collaboration members. Finally, nearly every participant described culture in terms of networking and relationship management with the partnership community, suggesting that the influences of personal interactions could play a role in collaborative success.

Several individuals in participating organizations and partnerships served on multiple committees or groups with the same peers, and described the valuable personal friendships and connections that developed. The existence of these social networks is a dynamic that was illuminated but not explored by the study, as it was outside the scope of the research questions. Thus the topic offers an opportunity for future research. Amey et al. (2007) and Eddy (2010) proposed that these relationships represent the existence of social capital, defined as how many community connections an individual brings to a group, and how trustworthy and valuable peers find the person and his or her connections. Other researchers incorporated this metric into the proposed factors for partnership success (see Table 10). Studies by Strier (2011) and Duffield et al. (2012) also indicate that twin roles of activism and politics influence collaborations through the personal objectives that, knowingly or unknowingly, are brought to the collective table.

Thus these three terms of *mission*, *structure* and *community* are found common to most of the organizational culture descriptions and those of the partnerships, fitting within previous research frameworks (see Table 11). This suggests a relationship with regard to success between the culture of the organizations and that of the collaborations. For example, a nonprofit with a service-oriented mission may be successful working with collaboration with a college. However, this would suggest that for-profit industries built on profit objectives would not work well with service-oriented groups, an outcome these findings would refute. In Cameron and Ettington's (1988) four typographies of culture, researchers suggested that a relationship between similar organizations collaborating and the success of those partnerships would be feasible. In their study, they proposed that every institution incorporates all four typologies into their cultural identity to varying

Table 11

Examples of Cultural Descriptors within Tierney's (1988) Framework

Tierney's framework	Organizational type	Themes drawn organizational culture or case descriptions
Environment	Community college	Strong campus community
	Nonprofit	Service oriented, customer oriented
	For profit	Structured but supportive
	Partnership (MEDW)	Collaborative, service oriented
	Partnership (HCEC)	Collaborative, built on relationships
	Partnership (BMEC)	Inclusive, service oriented
Mission	Community college	Serving students and communities
	Nonprofit	Serving target audiences
	For profit	Goal and product oriented
	Partnership (MEDW)	Serving target audience
	Partnership (HCEC)	Goal to support regional development
	Partnership (BMEC)	Goal to support regional development

degrees. They suggest that colleges identify most strongly with the “clan” culture, and this study supports that finding. Within the partnerships however, there are organizations which are more closely linked with the “adhocracy” and “market” typologies, as certainly represented by for-profit entities and some smaller nonprofit organizations. This work then suggests that organizational culture differences do not necessarily negatively impact partnership participation. In conclusion, the first major finding of this study proposes that similarities between the cultures of agencies and partnerships may contribute to their success; however, differences in culture do not necessarily indicate a future lack of success.

One important thread appears in the cultural illustrations of collaborations that is not necessarily mirrored in those of the participating organizations. Most individuals expressed high levels of personal connections to the mission and activities of the collaborations. In fact, one participant stated her belief that it was personal commitment from each group member that most obviously propelled the partnership forward, stating simply that “you can’t hide passion.” Individuals described in detail the value they placed in the partnership work undertaken, and often spoke of actively seeking to contribute or be part of the teams. However the same person did not necessarily speak in similar terms about his or her employer. Schein (2004) introduces this idea of personal affinity in terms of creating a partnership culture, but suggests that the connection develops as the partnership matures, not that individuals necessarily bring their pre-existing commitment to mission, to the collaborative experience.

In fact, this personal affinity component runs counter with much literature on the subject. Much literature assumes that participants are often assigned to projects and groups, or are mandated to undertake partnerships to fulfill organizational needs (Amey, 2010; Beere, 2009; Duffield et al., 2012; Holland, 2005; Lundquist & Nixon, 1998). These researchers often suggest leaders implement strategies to build trust amongst team members, or carefully frame the rationale for individual participation (Duffield, et al., 2012; Wegner, 2005). This literature suggests that bringing individuals to a point of personal connection is a task of partnership management. This study found that an affinity to the collaboration mission often was already in existence before individuals joined the group. Participants here clearly brought their predetermined personal investment to the collaboration's goals or purpose; thus this study suggests that a pre-existing affinity for the work amongst participants may be linked to partnership success. This also suggests that certain individuals may be pre-disposed to contribute to collaboration success through personality, work style, or other personal characteristics, again a finding the study illuminates but does not explored as it is outside the scope of the research questions..

Research question two: Influences of leaders on cultures. Participants from all types of partnership entities illustrated the influences of leaders on their organizational cultures through specific examples of leader actions. These included such concepts as bringing organizational change, coordinating daily administrative tasks, supporting professional development and staff management, making decisions and leading strategy efforts. These described impacts on culture can be organized within the construct of Schein's (2004) and Yukl's (2002) proposed mechanisms of leader influence. A comparison of a combined list of the two researchers' proposed levers with the participants' descriptions, grouped by partnership is represented in Table 12. This table indicates that leaders within the partnerships use similar mechanisms to influence culture as organizational leaders. The instances in which collaboration leaders do not use a specific lever are less related to leadership actions than the boundaries of the partnership goals and mission. For example, no partnership was involved with any type of facility design or physical space, thus no leadership influence is found in that category.

Table 12

Leader Mechanisms of Influence (Schein, 2004; Yukl, 2002) Evident in Partnerships

Mechanisms	MEDW entities	Within MEDW	HCEC entities	Within HCEC	BMEC entities	Within BMEC
			Primary			
Reactions to crises and critical incidents	√	√	√	√		
Deliberate role modeling, coaching	√	√	√	√	√	√
Allocation of resources	√	√	√		√	√
Allocation of rewards and status	√	√	√			
Staff management, including recruitment, selection, promotion, dismissal	√	√	√	√	√	√
			Secondary			
Organizational systems and procedures	√	√	√	√	√	
Rites and rituals	√	√			√	√
Design and use of physical space	√		√		√	
Stories about important people and events		√	√	√		
Formal statements	√	√	√	√	√	√

The examples described in the literature are striking similar to those provided by study participants in several cases. In an example of a response to crises, Yukl (2002) describes a scenario in which a company responded to a lack of sales by reducing hours company-wide rather than instituting layoffs, communicating that employees are valued. An industry partner in BMEC recently responded to a like situation in a similar manner, with the same positive impact on culture and morale. As well, within community colleges in particular, leaders' thoughtful and value-based responses to budgetary pressures is found both within this research and in examples provided by Roueche et al. (1995), Shera (2008) and Tierney (1988).

Other primary mechanisms, as outlined in Table 12, were made obvious through the participants' descriptions. Many leaders and supervisors were described as mentors or role models by their staff, no matter the agency type or collaboration. Leaders within the partnership structures were also described as important role models, often personally mentoring new members. Several individuals spoke of a supervisor's direct support to program planning and staff management in specific examples of organizational culture. In one instance, a college participant described how his introduction of a new department organizational structure resulted in a new staff hire.

Evidence of secondary mechanisms appears in the study as well. At several agencies, participants described an organizational culture that supported collaborative decision-making strategies; Kezar and Eckel (2002) found that in such circumstances, collaborative authority will survive only if it is the established and consistent norm. Thus, the study demonstrates that these agency leaders did in fact promote shared decision-making, in that the organizations did not default to a more hierarchical structure.

This shared authority was also present in all three partnerships; even within the formal MEDW board structure, individuals described a cooperative decision-making process. And certainly, leaders in all organizations and partnerships demonstrated impact through policies, procedures, statements and formal documents.

With regard to the secondary mechanisms listed in Table 12, there are two concepts that were only somewhat evidenced in the study. The first, influence through physical space, was present in agencies, but logically, not in these discrete partnerships. Leader influence through storytelling is also lightly represented. Schein (2004) states that leaders influence culture through storytelling about important people and events. Evidence of such an influence would most likely come from speaking directly with the leader, or observing the leader, actions which were only included in this study's methodology when the leader was also the partnership participant. Thus the mechanism may well be used by leaders in the other partnership, but this research study did not include their perspectives.

This study's findings suggest another component of leader influence, the concept of leadership succession, whether at an agency or partnership level. Several partnership participants described the impact of a change at a leader level on their organization's culture. Some suggested a negative influence on the perceived health of the entity, while others offered a more positive perception. However, it was clear that the change itself had an impact on culture. There is much literature that discusses the leader as change agent, and/or suggests how leaders may use change as a lever of cultural influence (Butcher, et al., 2011; Cloud, 2010; Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005); they assume the leader is in a proactive role. In addition, some researchers suggest that continuity at the leader level can a positive influence on organizational culture, assuming the leader is described as successful (Neumann, 1995; Shera, 2008). Thus, leadership succession is a concept that was evidenced in these findings as appropriate for future research.

Research question three: Influences of leaders on partnerships. In addressing this subject, every participant used nearly the exact language and strikingly similar examples to outline leader support and commitment, in the most consistent finding found in the study. This confirms the assertion by several researchers that leader support is a key element in the success of a partnership (Amey, 2010; Eddy, 2010; Fulton-Calkins, 2005; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Russell & Flynn, 2000). Conversely, no individual described a lack of support from their leader or immediate supervisor. Russell and Flynn (2002) consider this support to be one of five invaluable measures of advice given to any college leader embarking on a new partnership. "Adequate administrative support" (p. 202) is equally important as clarity in goal-setting, and the previously mentioned shared-decision-making process.

Unlike the previous studies, however, participants provided examples of specific actions undertaken by leaders with regard to working collaborations. These actions include providing time away from regular duties to attend partnership activities, offering resources such as classroom space and member benefits, prioritizing collaboration goals into institutional work plans, and personally participating in activities. These four actions can be categorized within the work of Armistead et al. (2007) and their "taxonomy of leadership strategies" (p. 223). This taxonomy is structured as:

- First-person, in which the traits and actions of the leader directly influence the partnership;

- Second-person, in which the inter-relationships within each organization, as influenced and directed by the leader, impact the collaboration; and
- Third-person, representing the most indirect influence, in which leader-supported polices and processes act upon the partnership.

Within the study, examples of first-person strategy include participation in activities, prioritizing work within work planning and direct application of resources. This strategy is present most often when the leader of the agency is also the partnership participant, and there is a suggested relationship between autonomy in the person's position and the ability to directly influence the partnership. Simply stated, a participant who has the latitude in his or her professional role to support the partnership demonstrably does so, through these four actions.

In the study, examples of the second-person strategy are more numerous and most often attributed to leaders in mid-sized organizations and the three colleges; they include administrative support such as permission to spend time away, allowing use of resources and prioritizing the collaboration with regard to work planning. Another recurring example at this level was described by individuals as autonomy in decision-making supported by interpersonal relationships and a strong measure of trust. This corresponds with the findings of Huxham and Vangen (2005) that those leaders which support successful collaborations most often employ a shared leadership model, cutting across a traditional hierarchy. To support partnerships, individuals with traditional or structural leadership authority create an environment in which leadership activities are not bound by title. Rather, within the collaboration participants are free and, in fact, encouraged to enact leadership activities with the understood support of their hierarchical leaders

(Huxham & Vangen, 2005). This is evidenced by participants stating confidence in their authority and decisions, often describing a mutually beneficial level of trust between themselves and their supervisors. Cloud (2010) affirms this concept in stating that a leader's responsibility is to "maintain cooperative, mutually beneficial and ethical relationships" (p. 77) within an organization's staff.

Examples of the third-person strategy, while present in the study, were the least influential on the partnerships. One potential explanation, drawn from the work by Armistead et al., (2007) is that this influence is the most abstract, and thus least identifiable to individuals. This suggests that participants have an awareness and sensitivity to obvious impacts but less understanding of more complex, tangential relationships. However, the researchers also suggest, as this study affirms, that leaders who rely primarily on third-person strategies to influence partnerships will have little positive impact. In fact, a collaboration affected only by third-person strategies will likely not succeed. In this study, leaders past and present clearly employed first and second-person support mechanisms.

Interestingly, no previous study was found that explored the variations that can develop in partnerships when organizational leaders change, as occurred in several instances in this study. In two community colleges and three economic development entities, there was transition in the office of the president or executive director within the last five years. In only one case, a negative impact was described by other team members. In this instance, the transition created a sense of insecurity around the agency's commitment, priority and available resources and required the partnership participants to develop a coping strategy. In the remaining instances, the influences of the remaining leaders as well as the strength and stability of the partnership itself reportedly mitigated any negative impact.

Another relatively unexplored area is the significant positive influence on faculty and staff reported when leaders personally participated in activities and events. In three cases, individuals described their supervisors' impact within a second-person framework, providing support through somewhat indirect methods of providing access and approval. But each person also spoke of a significantly strengthened inter-personal relationship when that individual showed support more aptly attributed to a first-person strategy, through direct participation in partnership activities. In all three examples, this direct participation appeared to reverse the relationship between staff member and supervisor, as the partnership participant gained authority and expertise compared to the leader, within the collaboration's goals. Cloud (2012) describes this ability to relinquish authority as an indicator of leadership development; the study participants provided many examples of such successful leader influence and strategy.

These two under-examined areas underscore the concept that leadership influence is variable and dynamic. While this study, as most studies on this subject, represents a snapshot of individual's experiences, the finding is clear that the influence of leaders can and will evolve. This finding suggests that administrators can build an awareness and understanding of their influence as many researchers propose (Amey, 2010; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Russell & Flynn, 2000). Spangler (2002) suggests that college leaders must adapt to more data-driven, business model concepts in order to reach a variety of constituents, both directly and in partnerships; in the study are multiple examples of college administrators following this advice.

Summarizing the previous two sections, the findings demonstrate that leaders influence both organizational culture and partnership culture, often through similar actions. These actions can then be viewed through the lenses of different research frameworks (see Table 13 for a comparison of current findings and previous research constructs). However, the study leaves several questions unexplored.

For example, to what degree are leaders aware of the impact of their actions on both their organizational culture and on the partnerships? Are the leaders of the agencies represented making a conscious choice to support the partnerships; how complex is that decision-making process? Amey (2012) and Eddy (2012) both propose that leaders

Table 13

Classification of Leader Action within Prior Research Framework

Leader action	Relationship to leadership support strategy (drawn from Armistead et al., 2007)	Relationship to organizational culture influence mechanism (drawn from Schein, 2004; Yukl, 2002)
Allowing time away from job responsibilities	Second-person strategy	Primary mechanism
Use of organizational resources such as funding, space	First or second-person strategy	Primary mechanism
Prioritizing collaboration activities within organizational goals	Second or third-person strategy	Secondary mechanism
Personal participation in partnership activities and events	First person strategy	Primary mechanism

should actively recognize the value and impact of their influences on partnerships, and thoughtfully construct and implement a support strategy. It is unclear if the leaders found in this study have taken this approach, or if their actions are more related to leadership style or personal interest.

Research question four: Influences of cultures on partnerships. The primary finding for this research question is related to the findings addressed in the section under research question one. There are many similarities between the organizational cultures of the participating agencies and those of the partnerships themselves. In some ways this finding counters previous research by Kezar (2011), Kezar and Lester (2009), Kisker and Tater (2012), Lewis et al., (2003), and Schein (2004). These researchers suggest that in order for a partnership to succeed, collaboration participants must acknowledge cultural differences, create and adapt coping strategies, actively strive to ensure clear communication and manage conflicts. In fact, Kezar (2011) states that "most partnerships are plagued with cultural differences, a few were successful and found ways to navigate differences" in a study of eight college-nonprofit partnerships (p. 229). However, the current study found only two instances of negative organizational cultural influences. Rather, participants described cultural traits that primarily supported partnership work.

The first example of negative influence can be found in the tension created between the community college and its peer entities in the BMEC partnership. Participants describe the campus culture in some terms that resonate with the concept of a professional bureaucracy as defined by Mintzberg (as cited by Kezar, 2011). As Mintzberg suggested, organizational culture is defined in part by the structure, rules and regulations imposed by the nature of the community college system and state government. However, this cultural classification does not hold true, in that there are other expected elements of a professional bureaucracy that are not present. For example, the college staff are not distanced from the partnership's issues and goals, nor do the faculty and staff focus on organizational elements of role and hierarchy, both hallmarks of the professional bureaucracy model. Rather, the college faculty and staff who work with the partnership actively communicate the restrictions with other organizations and strive to ameliorate the impact of the influence, often crossing traditional college boundaries and garnering new community resources to do so. Here the findings suggest that both the individuals and the organization value the goals of the partnership to a degree that supersedes the negative impact of structure.

In the study, the second negative cultural influence is found in the MEDW partnership, when individuals describe a tension between the goals of the group and that of their organizations. The findings propose that strengths found within the collaborative structure, also as identified as factors for success, assist these participants in crafting a coping strategy. Participants clearly illustrated the value of open communication, respect and relationship-building, and flexibility when working towards a compromise. From an organizational culture perspective, this success in overcoming the tension suggests that the benefits of partnership participation outweigh the negative influences; it is noteworthy that no organization has reduced their commitment or left the partnership due to this issue.

In both cases, participants described how leaders in the organization supported cultures that help mitigate negative influences. In the first, college administrators supported student-focused, community-based approaches to problem-solving that encouraged the participants to find solutions to hierarchically imposed challenges. As suggested by Kezar and Eckel (2002), the culture of the college, as supported by senior staff, encourages individuals work around hierarchical barriers without concern for negative consequences. In the second, various leaders maintain a highly community-focused mission that allows the participants to place the partnership benefits of service above a strict adherence to target audience. This flexibility in prioritization and movement towards shared goals echoes Tierney's (1988) examples of leader use of cultural knowledge.

The balance of the conceptual findings surrounding this research question indicates a positive and synergistic relationship between the agencies and the partnerships. For example, nearly all the partnering groups have a mission based in service to students, region or clients; as well, the participants described the purpose of their collaborations as providing a service to the community. Synergy of mission is a common finding, as many individuals illustrated how the partnerships in fact assisted the organizations in enacting their missions and goals. Another commonality is the concept of community, as most of the participants described their organizational cultures through an environment of community, family and network.

Thus the findings illustrate a consistent lack of conflict between organizational culture and the cultures of the partnerships. Rather, the organizational cultures regularly supported the work of the collaborations. It is noteworthy that the topic of positive cultural impacts on partnerships is lacking in the literature. As cultural conflict is obviously a potentially significant constraint, perhaps a research focus on overcoming differences is expected. While not stated outright, it is possible that several of the positive key factors for success each of the partnerships represents is linked to the organizational cultures of the member groups. Thus successful collaborations are less likely to be negatively impacted by culture. In short, there is a lack of conflict when the cultures of the partnerships have commonalities with those of the agencies, even if there are culture differences as suggested by earlier discussions in this chapter.

Another implication of the study is a link between the typology of the partnership, using an organizational culture construct, and the typologies of the agencies involved. For example, normative organizations could more smoothly and successfully enter into normative collaborations. This is defined as a typology in which the individual is motivated to contribute his or her commitment due to a match between personal and organizational goals (Etzioni as cited in Schein, 2004). An understanding of such elements would allow a leader to better predict the potential conflicts a new partnership endeavor might pose.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

In order to illustrate the value this research study provides in expanding the literature on the study subject, it is necessary to describe both its strengths and limitations. Highlighted strengths of the research include:

1. The study targeted a gap in the literature by exploring the stories of individuals currently working in successful collaborations, thus providing specific examples and findings grounded in actual experiences. The use of a qualitative research design allowed for many participant voices to be heard, and the use of multiple cases increases the transferability of the conceptual

findings. Rather than a checklist of resources needed for positive partnership development, this study illustrates what factors those individuals in successful groups described when discussing and celebrating their collaborations.

2. The sampling methodology allowed for participation from colleges throughout the 58-campus community college system of North Carolina, without regard for size or location. The partnerships under study have a diverse set of organizational members, including several non-profit and government agencies and for-profit industries. As well, per the study goal, the included partnerships are considered successful as described by participants and when compared to key factors for success drawn from the literature (see Table 10).
3. Throughout the research design and implementation, sound methodological decisions were made that were based upon best practices for qualitative research; this supports quality and accuracy in findings, transparency and trustworthiness. These best practices included attention to informed consent for participants, development and use of a tested interview protocol, use of multiple sources of data for each collaboration under study, successful interview techniques that facilitated thoughtful dialogue, and data analysis procedures and findings grounded in both literature and individuals' experiences.
4. While the study addressed the experience of a limited number of individuals involved in three collaborative efforts; a thorough exploration of background data establishes the study context and detailed descriptions of the partnership

allow comparisons to be made to similar settings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate this supports potential transferability.

5. To counter the potential of previous personal experiences with partnerships impacting the study, the extensive use of researcher journal created an ongoing platform to record thoughts, impressions, expectations and surprises. This mechanism allowed for a continuous examination of researcher bias to mitigate its impact on the findings and analysis.

Understanding the limitations of research studies help inform and illustrate the potential transferability of results and recommendations for future research. Specific limitations of this study include:

1. During the initial recruitment period with community college leaders, a technical issue developed with the online survey software, and some individuals reported that they could not access the preliminary recruitment survey. With the assistance of the software company, the issue was addressed, and a second, updated invitation to participate was delivered to the entire recruitment population. However, concern or frustration with the malfunction may have resulted in some potential study participants remaining unidentified.
2. Data was collected during a 6-month period between May and October of 2013. It represents the remembered and shared recent experiences of the participants, and data grounded in activities and meetings that occurred during this time frame. Thus, this study does not incorporate the stories of group members who have not worked recently within the collaborations; some

individuals who are not part of this study may report different experiences in past partnership iterations.

3. These findings assume honest and thorough responses from participants. As the interviewer would be unaware of this scenario and thus unable to mitigate its specific impact, incomplete responses or withholding information could have contributed to inaccuracies in findings. However, several steps were taken to promote honest and thoughtful conversation throughout the research process; these included providing individuals regular opportunities to withdraw from the study, clarifying the use and purpose of their contributions during the interview, use of probing questions, reiterating certain points, and member checking. As well, triangulation of data through use of multiple data sources guards against such undue influence.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this study suggest several implications for practice for community college leaders, such as presidents and chief academic officers, which may improve the success of their staff's and faculty's experiences working in multi-agency partnerships. Such efforts will likely result in positive partnership outcomes, extending the mission and reach of college mission and scope. Certainly work toward successful collaborations helps avoid the costs of partnership failure, including loss of resources and negative impact on relationships.

1. As made obvious in the study and through the literature, campus leaders have a significant impact on their organization cultures, through their actions, priorities, leadership styles and management approaches. Current and future leaders should

develop an understanding of their college's culture, so that they may conceptualize how the college works on a daily basis and what implications may occur through future decisions and actions.

2. An understanding of college culture and its typology assists leaders in conceptualizing the impact of potential partnership opportunities. For example, a campus with a strong "clan" identity, as defined by Cameron and Ettington (1988), may have more in common with other "clan" entities than initially expected; conversely, a partnership with another type of organization may present more cultural challenges. Such sensitivity would allow leaders to thoughtfully pursue appropriate collaborative projects with a greater understanding of potential conflicts. Analysis tools such as identifying typology, organizational strengths and weaknesses, and related strategic planning can assist leaders in identifying the most appropriate partnerships in which to invest valuable resources. Leaders should also build an awareness of the accurate rationale for partnership work and a protocol for initiating such work. As described in the literature (Lundquist & Nixon, 1998; Spangler, 2002), the existence of a funding opportunity in advance of understanding whether the project is an appropriate campus priority is rarely a positive experience. Rather, careful planning should direct partnership strategy, including the pursuit of funding.

3. Leaders should also consider the intersection of their campus' organizational culture and the key factors for partnership success, to identify areas which may require additional consideration. For example, if a partnership will not have strong organizational support or is not seen as worthwhile by participants, a leader

would need to overcome those perceptions before embarking on collaboration, or reconsider the opportunity altogether. The study also suggests that congruence between the partnership goals and the organization's goals are an important factor in success, thus care should be taken when approaching a partnership with entities with divergent goals. In such scenarios, leaders should take opportunity to prepare staff and faculty to create bridges and mechanisms that could help ameliorate any tension or conflict, in an example of creating Schein's cultural island (2004).

4. Leaders embarking on complex partnerships must prepare those direct participants for the partnership experience, through appropriate training, analysis and ongoing communication. As illustrated by this study, individuals who have a clear understanding of the partnerships goals for the organization as well as the institutional context of the work may be more likely to find success. Leaders should also consider individuals for partnership work outside the hierarchical framework, allowing participants who are already interested in a collaboration's objectives to self-select into participation.
5. College leaders should also develop an awareness of the broader social networks in which staff and faculty reside, and support those networks as appropriate. Leader support of the creation of this extended network specific to collaborations could potentially increase the success level of the partnership itself. Individuals who are already involved in networks and related organizations may easily serve as the link between the campus and a new collaboration that extends community outreach and mission scope. For example, at one college represented in the study,

a faculty member's involvement in a local arts group is helping to lead the school to a more formal entrepreneurship certificate program specific to arts and crafts.

6. Campus administrators should understand that their actions consistently influence collaborations, whether to a positive, neutral or negative effect. This study clearly indicates that first-person and second-person strategies are linked to collaborative success. Those leaders who directly provide support to partnerships through resources and personal participation will contribute to a positive experience for participants. Partnerships that are influenced only by the most indirect strategies, and lack that direct support, are less likely to be successful. Simply, leaders have an obligation to recognize these impacts, and this study suggests that leaders develop and implement a thoughtful strategy of support when entering into partnership. Campus administrators should ask such questions as "how does the campus support this, and where might support be improved?" and "what resources are needed, and how can I help remove barriers to that need?"
7. When entering into partnerships, leaders must recognize that campus and organizational changes will influence future collaborative work. Leadership transition, strategic planning, new priorities and new partners will impact partnership structure, goals, funding and culture. By creating clear communication pathways, regular evaluation strategies and supporting shared decision-making, campus leaders can assist participants in adjusting to partnership changes, and accepting when a collaboration should come to an appropriate end. Such flexibility and clear communications are as well listed in the partnership key factors for success (see Table 10).

The findings suggest implications for practice for college leadership training programs as well, certainly drawn from the above list of leader implications. The study confirms that community colleges have identifiable organizational cultures, and that leaders influence this culture through their actions, opinions, work approaches, and espoused values. Thus college leadership training programs should incorporate these concepts into their curriculum, and assist future leaders in understanding not just that culture exists, but that there is opportunity to influence this culture towards improvement and specific goals.

This study also confirms that partnerships are valuable approaches to extending college outreach, improving services and garnering community support. By including successful partnership strategy development and implementation in discussion, leadership training programs can assist administrators in fostering positive partnership experiences for their staff, a leadership trait mentioned by study participants as an indispensable skill. Training programs can also sensitize future leaders to their personal impact, and the influence of their campus' culture, on collaborative success. As resources continue to diminish and needs increase in higher education, future leaders must be equipped with not only the skills but the perspective that partnerships are a positive, valuable, worthwhile endeavor.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study was conducted to in part address a gap in the literature, the data collection and analysis process also highlighted additional concepts appropriate for further research efforts.

1. The study explored the experiences of individuals working within collaborations they identified as successful. Addressing the experiences of participants involved in a collaboration that was not ultimately successful would provide a balancing perspective. As well, a multi-case study based upon the experiences of similar types of partnerships would provide insight. For example, a team such as the MEDW Committee has peer groups in North Carolina and throughout the country; an exploration of their partnership traits could provide insight into success factors and work strategies.
2. Found throughout the case descriptions, the relationship between partnership successes and the personal affinity and commitment participants have for the collaboration's goals and values would be appropriate for future research.
3. As well, this study clearly indicates that personal relationships and social networks may influence partnership success. Additional study in this area would increase understandings of how such networks might be supported and used by college leaders to extend campus outreach into new communities. Projects examining the influence of negative personal relationships would, as well, define areas of potential conflict with regard to future collaborations.
4. Within the area of leader influence on partnerships, this study proposes that the leadership succession is itself a discrete influence. Certainly with the aging of the first generation of community college pioneers supporting an industry-wide period of transition at the presidential level, a greater exploration of this factor is timely.

5. This study examined the influences of leaders most often from the perspectives of their staff, employees or faculty. This may suggest a false concept that influence is limited to one direction, from leader to follower. However, staff and employees may certainly influence how a hierarchical leader develops and implements a management style. Future research could examine this bi-directional concept of influence; such studies could assist partnership participants in understanding how they might influence leaders to be better supporters of and contributors to collaboration work.
6. The case study descriptions created through this research process suggest that frameworks of organizational culture are appropriate constructs in which to examine partnership elements; thus outlining potential research in areas such as partnership process efficiency, effectiveness of collaborative approach to reach certain goals, etc. As well, future research could expand the criteria by which organizational culture metrics are reasonably applied to partnerships.
7. The findings illustrate a lack of conflict between organizational cultures working within the partnership; this agreement is not currently explored in the literature, which is more focused on overcoming obstacles than the implications of a lack thereof.
8. Assuming a partnership is examined through typographies of organizational types, the findings suggest a potential corollary relationship between partnership type and the organization type. Future research could explore the relative success between like as well as dissimilar organizations and collaborations.

Conclusions

Multi-agency partnerships can be a key element in sustaining growth and outreach in higher education, and the literature clearly indicates the increasing number and diversity of collaborative structures occurring on today's college campuses. However, partnership construction is a complex endeavor and attempts often fail for many reasons, including lack of support, unclear communication, cultural misunderstandings, and misalignment of goals and expectations. The purpose of this study was to explore the influences of organizational leaders and cultures on the work of sustained, multi-agency collaborations in which community colleges were one partner. In more fully understanding these two influences, higher education leaders may better nurture environments for successful collaborations.

The study was grounded in a conceptual framework based upon current literature in educational partnership development and implementation, and organizational culture and leader impact. The study was then guided by four research questions that addressed the influences of institutional leaders on partnerships and on cultures, and the influence of cultures on collaborations. Cases for the study were identified through a state-wide nomination process, and three diverse, multi-agency partnerships were chosen to examine. A qualitative approach informed and directed data collection, which included individual interviews with 15 participants, five meeting and event observations, and document and artifact analysis. Data analysis was an iterative, ongoing process using a series of coding activities that combined all data sources. A collective case study methodology was used to allow emergent themes to appear from the coding, with regard to more than one partnership and contextual environment. Throughout analysis, the themes arose from data, reformed and clarified until a layered structure of findings became clear.

The study proposes several findings of significance. One finding states that similarities between the cultures of the organizations and the partnerships may contribute to success; however, differences between organizational cultures does not equate to a lack of success. Another indicates that a participant's affinity to partnership mission and values may be linked to collaboration success. A third finding draws a link, both directly and indirectly, between specific leader actions in support of partnership work and success. The study supports the work of several previous researchers in partnership function and organizational culture, including Amey, Eddy, Kezar, Schein and Tierney. As well, it suggests several areas appropriate for additional research, including the interplay between key factors for partnership success, the influence of participant affinity for the collaboration's goals on its eventual success, and a suggested relationship between organizational and partnership type.

In summary, community college leaders can positively influence multi-agency collaborations, both through direct action and through organizational culture. Thus it is possible for administrators to thoughtfully enact a support strategy to nurture successful partnership experiences for faculty and staff.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A-1

Email Invitation to Survey to Senior-Level College Administrators

Subject Line: Help identify community college partnerships for upcoming research study

Does your college participate in complex partnerships with other organizations in order to fulfill portions of its mission?

My name is Julie Vidotto, and I am a doctoral candidate at Western Carolina University. My dissertation research focuses on the influences of leadership and organizational culture on successful partnerships in community colleges; it intends to provide information to help college administrators cultivate a positive environment in which faculty and staff may effectively participate in diverse collaborations.

I am writing today to ask your assistance in identifying potential partnerships to include in the study. As senior level administrators in North Carolina community colleges, you have the most accurate knowledge of working, efficient collaborations more than two years old. The partnership you suggest may not be on your campus; all suggestions are greatly appreciated. **Please complete a brief six question survey at: {link to www.surveymonkey.com}**

This survey should take no more than 10 minutes to finish, and by completing it you do not make any commitment to the project itself. Potential partnership participants will be contacted within ten days of the survey close with an invitation to participate. The survey will close in one week, June 21 at 6 p.m.

Thank you very much for your consideration, and please contact me directly by email (javidotto1@xxxxxx.xxx) or telephone (xxx-xxx-xxxx) with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Julie Vidotto

Appendix A-2

Online Survey

Survey Title: NC Community College Multi-Agency Partnership Survey

Introduction:

Thank you for completing this brief survey about existing partnerships within the North Carolina Community College system.

Please note that for this study, the definition of "multi-agency partnership" is an ongoing collaboration which includes a community college as well as at least two other non-college entities, such as non-profit organizations, government agencies, or for-profit businesses.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me by email (javidotto1@xxxxxx.xxx) or telephone (xxx-xxx-xxxx).

Please consider ONE partnership as defined above when answering the following questions.

1. *Does this partnership have a specific name? If so, please provide.*
   (Open ended response through text box)
   ____
   ____

2. *Please list the organizations that participate in this partnership, including the community college.*
   (Open ended response through text box)
   ____
   ____
   ____

3. *What is the goal of this particular partnership?*
   (Open ended response through text box)
   ____
   ____
   ____

4. *To your knowledge, how long has this partnership been in existence?*
   a. Less than two years
   b. Between two and four years
   c. Between four and seven years
   d. More than seven years

The next two questions will ask your opinion regarding your impression of the partnership.

5. *The project defines the term "stable" as steady, enduring, able to weather unexpected changes and/or resistant to deterioration. In your opinion and understanding, how stable would you consider this partnership?*
   a. Stable
   b. Unstable
   c. Not sure

   Tell me more about your response. (Open ended response through text box)

   ____
   ____

6. *How successful is this partnership in reaching its goals?*
   a. Successful
   b. Unsuccessful
   c. Not sure

   Tell me more about your response. (Open ended response through text box)

   ____
   ____

Thank you for your participation in this survey;
I am grateful for your time and consideration!

Appendix B

Partnership Selection Matrix Example

Each partnership identified by a discreet set of responses was assigned an ID number in chronological order of receipt, and was ranked using the following scale. Matrix is tied directly to survey questions.

Survey question number		102	103	104	105	106	107
2	Number of discrete agencies involved	3	2	5	4	7	15
2	Number of discrete agency types involved	1	2	5	1	4	3
4	Length of time in existence 1= <2 2=2-4 3=4-7 4=>7	1	1	3	2	4	3
5	Stable=3 Unstable=0	3	3	3	0	3	3
6	Successful=3 Unsuccessful=0	3	3	3	3	3	3
	TOTAL POINTS	11	11	19	10	21	27
3	Partnership goals as reported by survey participants	Training	Fulfill grant obligations	Achieving statewide certification economic development	Integrated training program for students	Recognition of specific business community	Networking training economic development
	Notes						

Appendix C-1

Invitation to Participate to College Administrator or Staff

Dear (administrator or staff),

My name is Julie Vidotto, and I am a doctoral candidate at Western Carolina University. My dissertation research focuses on the influences of leadership and organizational culture on successful partnerships in community colleges; it intends to provide information to help college administrators cultivate a positive environment in which faculty and staff may effectively participate in diverse collaborations.

Recently, you or a staff person from your campus or within the NCCCS system completed a brief survey describing a mature, sustained partnership at (college name). The partnership was described to me as

{descriptive text from the survey}

I am writing today to invite you and (college name) to participate in this upcoming research study. The characteristics of this collaboration have qualified it for inclusion, and the unique experiences of the partnership participants will be invaluable to exploring the study's intent.

If you agree to be part of this study, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview lasting no more than 60 minutes. As well, you may be asked to participate in a focus group interview lasting no more than 60 minutes. I anticipate no more than 2.5 hours, over the course of several months, would be required of your time. Should the partnership agencies decline to participate, this partnership will be removed from the study with full notification to you.

In addition, I will be reviewing documents related to the partnership work, observing activities, and attending meetings as appropriate to the study; however this should not impact on you or other partnership participants.

I understand and greatly appreciate the demands placed on community college faculty and staff. I will work with you to schedule the individual interview and potential focus group discussion at your convenience.

Please indicate your willingness to participate with a short email to javidotto1@xxxxxx.xxx or call to xxx-xxx-xxxx. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns. I have attached the informed consent document you will be asked to sign, for your review.

Thank you for taking the time to consider support to this project. I am extremely grateful for your attention, and wish you the greatest success in this summer season!

Sincerely,

Julie Vidotto

Appendix C-2

Invitation to Participate to Partnership Agency Staff

Dear (partnership agency representative),

My name is Julie Vidotto, and I am a doctoral candidate at Western Carolina University. My dissertation research focuses on the influences of leadership and organizational culture on successful partnerships in community colleges; it intends to provide information to help college administrators cultivate a positive environment in which faculty and staff may effectively participate in diverse collaborations.

Recently, I was in communication with (college staff person) about your mutual partnership, which has been described to me as

{descriptive text from the survey}

(college staff person) has very kindly agreed to participate in this research study. I am writing today to invite you and (agency name) to participate in this upcoming research study as well. The characteristics of this collaboration have qualified it for inclusive, and the unique experiences of the partnership participants will be invaluable to exploring the study's intent.

If you agree to be part of this study, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview lasting no more than 60 minutes. As well, you may be asked to participate in a focus group discussion lasting 60 additional minutes. I anticipate no more than 2.5 hours, over the course of several months, would be required of your time. Should any of the partnership agencies decline to participate, this collaboration will be removed from the study with full notification to you.

In addition, I may be reviewing documents related to the partnership work, observing activities, and attending meetings if appropriate to the study; however this should not impact on you or your co-workers.

I understand and greatly appreciate the demands placed on your organization. I will work with you to schedule the individual interview and potential focus group discussion at your convenience.

Please indicate your willingness to participate with a short email to javidotto1@xxxxxx.xxx or call to xxx-xxx-xxxx. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns. I have attached the informed consent document you will be asked to sign, for your review.

Thank you for taking the time to consider support to this project. I am extremely grateful for your consideration, and wish you the greatest success in this summer season!

Sincerely,

Julie Vidotto

Appendix D-1

Informed Consent to Participants

This doctoral dissertation research explores the experiences of individuals who actively participate in sustained, multi-agency partnerships in conjunction with North Carolina community colleges. An exploration of these experiences, as well as the influences of leadership and organizational culture upon the partnership participants, will provide information to help college administrators cultivate a positive environment in which faculty and staff may effectively participate in diverse collaborations.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may choose to end it at any time. As a participant, you will individually complete one primary interview designed to gather in-depth information about your experiences regarding the partnership. This interview will be conducted at a date, time and location of your convenience in order to minimize any disruption or cause any concern. This interview is expected to last for one hour, and will be recorded to ensure accuracy in the data collection process. You may decline to answer any question, and the audio recording may be temporarily suspended at any time should information arise you do not wish recorded.

In addition and as a participant, you MAY be part of a group interview with one representative of each of the agencies represented in the partnership. This focus group will be scheduled at a time, date and location convenient to the majority of the participants; your participation is completely voluntary. The focus group is expected to last one hour, and will be recorded to ensure accuracy in the data collection process. You are asked to contribute to the group interview only as appropriate; you do not have to participate in each conversation. Refreshments will be provided during the discussion.

While there are no known risks to your participation, I am committed to ensuring your comfort and confidence in the interview processes. No unnecessary use of this information will occur. Audio recordings, transcripts and field notes will be maintained securely and destroyed three years after the dissertation process is complete. The dissertation will be presented to the doctoral faculty at Western Carolina University. The dissertation and its derivatives may be published or presented in professional or academic settings. As small token of my appreciation for your time and consideration, one study participate will be chosen at random to receive a $50 cash donation to the non-profit charity of his or her choice.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss any aspect of the study in more detail. I can be reached at javidotto1@xxxxxx.xxx and xxx-xxx-xxxx at your convenience. You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Meagan Karvonen, at 828-xxx-xxxx and xxxxxxx@wcu.edu. Finally, you may direct questions or concerns to the Western Carolina University Institutional Review Board at 828-227-7212.

To confirm your participation in this study, please complete the following:

1. The researcher may ____ or may not____ create an audio recording of my interview responses for the purpose of this study.
2. I would_____ or would not _____ like to receive a synopsis of the study's findings.

Name	Signature	Date

Appendix D-2

Partnership Agreement to Participate

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the members of the {**Name of Partnership Group**}, we agree to participate in the research activity proposed by Western Carolina University doctoral student Julie Vidotto in support of the dissertation project titled "Influences of Leadership and Organizational Culture in Sustained Community College Partnerships."

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

{Partnership Lead}

{Professional Title, Company}
{Position in Partnership}
{Name of Partnership Group}

Appendix E

Individual Interview Protocol

Session Information

Date and time ____

Location____

Interviewee name and title____

Interviewee organization ____

Partnership associated with interviewee ________________________________

Interviewer Julie Vidotto

Introduction

Again, thank you very much for taking the time to meet with me today, and talk about your experiences working with your organization and within the partnership structure. I greatly appreciate your sharing your thoughts and times with me today.
As you know, my dissertation research focuses on the influences of leadership and organizational culture on multi-agency partnerships with North Carolina community colleges. Your experiences will provide insight to help college administrators cultivate a positive environment in which faculty and staff may effectively participate in diverse collaborations. Before we begin, do you have any questions for me, either about the study or my research interests?

Informed Consent

So, before we begin the actual interview, I want to make sure you have had the opportunity to read and consider the informed consent document I sent along previously. Your comfort with the process and understanding of what your participation involves is of paramount importance to me. Do you have any questions about this?

Interviewer collected signed consent form if not previously received from participant.

Guiding Questions

These first few questions address the culture of (agency or college name).

About your organization. (research questions 1, 2)

1. If this were my first day working at (the organization) what are the most important things you think I should know?

2. Think of a project you've been involved in recently that a period of planning as well as of implementation. Tell me a bit about it.

    a. Who was involved in the planning? Where the same people involved in implementation? Who was in charge?
    b. How were decisions made about the project?
    c. How did you get the resources you needed?
    d. What obstacles did you encounter, and how did you solve them?
    e. How did conflicts about the project get resolved?

3. What has been the most challenging event that has happened in your organization in the last two years?

    a. What were the conditions surrounding it? Why do you think it happened?
    b. Who was involved in its solution?
    c. How did your coworkers react? How do they feel about (the event) now?
    d. What were the consequences of the event?

4. What activity or event has (the organization) been very proud of, recently? Tell me about that.

    a. Who is most proud?
    b. What are the key things that happened to make this possible?

These next few questions address your experiences working with the partnership.

About your experiences with the partnership. (research questions 3, 4)

1. Why is your organization involved in the partnership?

    a. If you know, what was the thought process in becoming involved?
    b. Were the people involved at the beginning of the partnership the same as those who participate today? Why or why not?

c. What does your boss seem to think of the partnership?

d. What do your coworkers think of the partnership?

2. Think of a particular project that the partnership addressed in the last year. Tell me a bit about it.

    a. As a group, how did you approach the project?

    b. Who was involved in tackling the project?

    c. How did you get the resources you needed?

    d. How did you get the information you needed?

    e. How did you handle conflicts within the partnership?

    f. How did decisions get made?

3. Has there ever been an instance when the goals or activities of the partnership were in conflict with those of your organization? (If yes, would you describe the instance to me?)

    a. If yes, what are the circumstances that created the conflict?

    b. If yes, how did your resolve the tension between the two?

    c. If no, why do you think that is the case?

4. Think of a time when those of you working with the partnership were under a great deal of pressure. Tell me a bit about it.

    a. What circumstances created the pressure?

    b. How did the group cope with the pressure?

    c. What were the "lessons learned" about this event?

5. What is the partnership group most proud of? Tell me why.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix F

Observation Guide

Event date and time: ____

Event location and title: ____

Partnership: ____________________ Number of attendees: ________________

Event goal, internal:

____

Event goal, external:

____

Activities:____

____

____

Who attended:

____

____

Why are they attending:

____

____

Environment:

Topics of discussion:

Evidence of participating groups:

Rituals:

Myths and stories told:

Evidence of agreement:

Evidence of conflict:

General observations:

Appendix G

Researcher Statement

In twenty years of experience with informal learning organizations, I have worked within a number of partnership structures. I have collaborated with staff from diverse organizations that included PreK-12 education entities, state and Federal government agencies, community colleges and universities, economic development groups, private industry, civic organizations and non-profit agencies representing a myriad of missions and audiences. In some cases I was part of an organically created group, usually a handful of individuals who came together to solve a problem and grew into something more formal and structured. In many cases I was brought in by my director or supervisor to serve as the organization's liaison; often this occurred when, in a highly political collaboration, well-placed constituents launched a project, but brought in others to actually implement the idea once media attention had passed.

And my experiences are similar to what is described in the literature; most of these endeavors did not succeed. The factors responsible for the collaboration's demise ranged from a lack of funding to infighting and confusion amongst the participants on the team's mission and purpose. Early in my career, I took this lack of success somewhat personally; was there something I could or should have done to make the difference? Experience has taught me that, in most cases, the factors that influenced the group were well out of my and other participants', control. But I did become jaded as each negative experience eroded my enthusiasm for taking part in the next partnership opportunity arose.

However, those partnerships that did succeed remain some of my most valued learning experiences. Upon reflection on their commonalities, my experiences again mirror the best practices found in the literature. Those groups which succeeded tended to have a clear understanding of their purpose and boundaries, a stable internal communication structure, buy-in and support from their senior administrators, and funding. They also developed what I would call a "shared vocabulary"; language and communication processes that allowed individuals from different types of organizations to clearly share ideas and negotiate conflict. I began to see that this culture the partnership individuals built between them, more sophisticated than group norms, was an important key to continued success.

Through my background I have served in nearly every role possible at the partnership table, and to guard against bias in this study, have kept a detailed journal to record my personal reflections. I have taken notes of my expectations before each interview as well as after, taking careful notice of any preconceptions that appeared or surprises that I found in the discussion.

Fundamentally I believe that partnerships for higher education organizations are valuable ways to reach new audiences, extend services and garner public support; this belief may lead to bias in that I may hear and see what I want to in order to validate my own perspective. I also believe that organizational culture does impact on partnerships, as evidenced through my professional life. Continuous self-reflection through field memos and the journal assisted me in exploring my own subjectivity.

Appendix H

Example of Interview Transcripts with Coding

Tell me about that, how you make decisions:

We discuss it. We bring a topic, we follow an agenda, we PC - DECISION MAKING
bring a topic, we get together and we discuss it and
sometimes we'll battle things back and forth. But there's a
mutual respect around the table -- there's a respect for each PC - RESPECT, RELATIONSHIP
other's position, because we have worked together so long
there's a comfort level; and a comfort level and respect so PC - RESPECT
we reached decisions and consensus pretty quickly. It is PC DECISION MAKING
doesn't mean we always agree on everything, but we have
a comfort level to agree to disagree and then move on, So PC - RESPECT
but we all, it goes back to we're all around the table for the
same reason. I think we all have that shared value and trust PC SHARED VALUES
of why we're there, and that's really to celebrate the
businesses, to really . . . there's a sincere desire and need,
we feel like there's a need and a commitment to see these PC - PERSONAL COMMITMENT?
businesses move forward, and to, to raise the level where it
is in the whole community, the bigger community for them, PC COMMUNITY
the larger community. To recognize what the small
businesses are doing . . . maybe allow for, I hate this word
but as I overuse it, but I love the exchange of social capital
that happens in these bigger businesses and the small
business, that helps both sides. They both have something
to offer that they don't . . . I think it, MED week gives you
an opportunity to spotlight these businesses, to swap ideas.
We invite these bigger businesses to come in and have
some exchange of social capital, because that was really PC - COMMUNITY
going to help move the community forward, greater good,
bigger picture, it's important to be part of something larger
than yourself.

Has there ever been a time you felt like what MED week was doing was in conflict with your role, your professional role?

No I never thought it was in conflict. I actually found myself looking at other MED week communities for what they were doing and learning best practices and how we could make this make this MED week better, and this coming year we actually are . . . the economic development group I work with as part of the chamber and the chamber's offering more things because of our involvement, and they had not been involved before, so they see success, how it's grown – because we created this arm of entrepreneurship and economic development now, out of the chamber. I've really been involved with MED week and in the past couple of years, the chambers coming on board and offering some scholarship type, they are calling it a scholarship but it's more of chamber memberships. They are going to be recognizing an important business at our board meeting, in a whole board meeting. So we do other things, we do start up weekends, they will be get startup weekends free registration for that weekend and some other things that we do. So I think it its growing in a positive way and I think raising that community – the minority community-- and giving them chances to interact with the rest of our community will only help strengthen the whole community, the small business community.

PG BEST PRACTICES

PG NETWORKING

PG SUCCESS

OC - CHAMBER, SUCCESS
CUSTOMER SERVICE

CIOP - SERVICE, COMMUNITY

CIOP - PROVIDING BENEFITS

CIOP - SERVICE, COMMUNITY

Appendix I

Example of Meta-Memo Created during Data Analysis

RESEARCHER MEMO 9.17.13

PARTICIPANT: K

PARTNERSHIP: MSDW

DATA SOURCES: TRANSCRIPT, NOTES, JOURNAL

PARTNERSHIP: STRUCTURE AS 501C3, STRONG LEADERSHIP (BOARD HEADS) STRONG NETWORK, RESPECT AND RELATIONSHIPS, SPECIFIC PURPOSE AND MISSION - WALK LINE BETWEEN ADVOCACY AND ORG ADVANCE CONFLICT, DEALT WITH IN PARTN. - LOTS OF PROCESSING

RQ1: ENTITY WITH WELL STRUCTURE AND USSBA. RESTRICTED BY LAYERS AND DISTANCE. LACK OF AUTHORITY. CLOSE HIERARCHY CONCERN OVER FUNDING. DSR DM NETWORKING

RQ2: CLOSE HIERARCHY - SUPPORTIVE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEADERS → COMMITTEE. LEADERS ALLOW FOR DISCUSSION. DAY TO DAY ADMIN POLICIES PD

RQ3: ALLOW TIME, PREVIOUSLY SERVED ON COMMITTEES, GIVE $ AND SPACE. ASSUMPTION OF IMPORTANCE TO REGION. "JUST SOMETHING WE DO" (4 AREAS OF SUPPORT)

RQ4: SIMILAR ADVISEE - SUBSET. WAY TO REACH MISSION. CREATION OF NETWORKING - EXPANSION OF LEADERS USING PARTN TO REACH MISSION GOALS. GOALS COMMUNITY NETWORKING

Appendix J

Master Code Sheet

Concept	**Action**		**Upon**	**Type**		**Code**
Culture	Description	Of	Partnership		ABOUT	
					Structure	
					Mission, purpose	
					Socialization	
					New work	
					Relationships, respect	
					Decision-making	
					Conflict	
					Leadership	
					Mission alignment	
					Driven to success	
		Of	Organization		ABOUT	
				College	Strategy	
				College	Service, students	
				College	Hierarchy	
				College,	Service, community	
				College	Facilities	
				College	Campus community	
				College	Integrated model	
				Public	Economic pressure	
				Public	Customer service	
				Public	Structure and governance	
				Public	Community visibility, networking	
				Public	Strategy planning	
				Private	Growth and transition	
				Private	Structure	
				Private	Employee retention	
				Private	Community	
	Influence	On	Partnership		THROUGH	
				College	Service, community	
				College	Planning with user	
				College	Service, students	
				College	Campus as community	
				College	Hierarchy, structure	
				Public	Service, clients	
				Public	Networking, community	

				Public	Service, community	
				Public	Visibility, community	
				Private	Growth, transition	
				Private	Employee training	
				Private	Employee retention	
				Private	Relationship, community	
Leader	Influence	On	Culture		THROUGH	
				College	Change	
				College	Admin tasks	
				College	Staff development	
				College	Strategy	
				Public	Reaction to crisis	
				Public	Daily operations	
				Public	Staff development	
				Public	Community support	
				Public	Board support	
				Public	Succession planning	
				Private	Decisions	
				Private	Authority	
				Private	Staff interaction	
		On	Partnership		THROUGH	
				College	Time away	
				College	Resources	
				College	Importance, value	
				College	Participation	
				Public	Time away	
				Public	Resources	
				Public	Importance, value	
				Public	Participation	
				Private	Time away	
				Private	Importance, value	
				Private	Resources	
				Private	Participation	