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Assessing organizational culture and climate dimensions in support of continuous improvement at a private, Christian university

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Definition of Terms

Accreditation – A process used to certify higher education institutions and their specific programs of study so that potential students can be assured that the institution or program meets the standards of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), a U.S. government agency focused on higher education quality (CHEA, 2006).

Climate – The "relatively enduring quality" (Tagiuri & Litwin, 1968, p. 25) of the internal environment of an organization. Climate refers to the experience of being in the organization. For purposes of this paper, the term "climate" will refer to the organizational climate, as a shared/common experience among people in the organization.

Continuous Improvement – Term used to describe process improvement efforts that are iterative and dependent upon involvement of stakeholders to set measurable goals or standards, collect data on process results, and use assessment data to improve the process.

Culture – A term used to describe the values, beliefs, principles and resulting behaviors of people in various nations and societies, as well as organizations (Schein, 2004). For purposes of this paper, the term "culture" will be used to refer to organizational culture.

Ethnographic – A qualitative research approach that involves immersion of the researcher in the environment that he or she is studying, allowing the researcher to "learn about broad culture-sharing behavior of individuals or groups" (Creswell, 2003, p. 183).

Abstract

"Culture is much like the weather, everyone talks about it (what culture is, its importance, and its elements), but unlike the weather, no one can measure it." (Lin, 2007, p. 28)

Practitioners and scholars agree that a focus on organizational culture and climate is important any time an organization attempts to undergo improvement efforts (Schein, 2004). This awareness is consistent across industries, including higher education, where a culture to support continuous improvement has become essential to survival (Lin, 2007). At the time of this study, leaders at Concordia University, a small, private, Christian university, were implementing an iterative strategic planning approach that required the engagement of all stakeholders (including employees) in developing and assessing specific improvement goals. The university leadership was interested in understanding the culture and climate at the university in order make adjustments as needed to facilitate faculty engagement in this effort.

Schein's (1984, 2004) approach for assessing culture was used, in part, to examine specific climate dimensions isolated in previous studies conducted by Koys and Decoitis (1991), Zammuto and Krakower (1991), O'Donovan (2007), and Liker and Hoseus (2008). Focus groups, semi-structured interviews, ethnographic field notes, and content analysis of cultural artifacts constituted the method of data collection and analysis. Case study protocols as defined by Yin (2009) were used to ensure trustworthiness through a rigorous peer review and documentation process.

The results of this study confirmed that the culture at Concordia is well aligned to its mission, core values, and desire for an iterative continuous improvement approach to strategic planning and vision realization. Specific deployment methods have been

suggested, based on the findings in this case, with the intent of further supporting Concordia's vision of the future and ensuring that the core values and ethos, referred to by the faculty as the *Concordia experience*, can be sustained and continue to serve the faculty who serve students for many years to come.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

There is a trend in higher education today toward increasing accountability of institutions to a variety of stakeholders. Accrediting bodies with the mission of advocating quality and accountability in higher education are leading the drive for increasingly strict measurement of everything from institutional spending to whether or not the students who graduate from the institution are getting the education that they were promised (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2005). In recent years, accreditation of universities, colleges, and programs has transitioned from encouraged self-assessment to required documentation of self-assessment and continuous improvement based on the assessment data (Millett, Payne, Dwyer, Stickler, & Alexiou, 2008). Accreditors now demand accountability on the part of their members through the provision of "consistent, reliable information about academic quality and student achievement to foster continuing public confidence and investment" (CHEA, 2006, p. 2). This approach speaks directly to the need for institutions to provide evidence of student outcomes as well as the processes used to continuously improve their programs based on that evidence.

As accreditation has become increasingly focused and rigorous in recent years, the need for institutions to develop evidence-based improvement processes has also become more acute. According to Millet, et al. (2008), "accrediting agencies almost uniformly ask for evidence of a process of internal decision making that ties institutional goal setting to data collection to budget and other decision-making processes" (p. 18). It is no longer acceptable to provide student grades as the only evidence of achievement. Thus, institutions of higher education have increased their diligence in determining how

to assess student learning, and more importantly, how to use tangible evidence of that learning to inform the institutional planning and improvement processes (Crawford & James, 2004).

Based on the literature review for this study, as well as the testimonies from leaders of a number of institutions of higher education (Bresciani, 2005; Joch, 2009; Lakos & Phipps, 2004; Ndoye & Parker, 2010; Suskie, 2009), engagement of individuals across the institution is required to make continuous improvement efforts successful. Developing a systemic and strategic approach to improvement in higher education requires engagement with stakeholders throughout the institution, including board members, staff, faculty, students, parents, and community members, and especially with faculty who are held accountable for assessing student outcomes.

The ultimate goal of outcomes assessment efforts has traditionally been to satisfy accrediting bodies and other external stakeholders. In recent years there has been an increasing trend toward a continuous improvement perspective, with more attention being paid to the value of a collaborative, university-wide effort to set and monitor improvement goals at all levels (Bresciani, 2009). Ensuring access to accurate assessment data on key improvement indicators is essential to this effort. Yet, most programs are just beginning to gather data that can support decision making at the level needed to adequately support meaningful improvement efforts. While most leaders indicate a willingness and eagerness to launch this type of university-wide assessment effort, many who have done so report that the institutional culture and climate and the college, school, and program sub-cultures and climates play a significant role in the success of these initiatives (Bresciani, 2005; Joch, 2009; Lakos & Phipps, 2004; Ndoye & Parker, 2010;

Suskie, 2009). Consequently, understanding the culture and climate of the organization is an important first step in ensuring the needed engagement (Lin, 2007).

The Research Approach

Historically, the popular approaches to cultural assessment for supporting higher education continuous improvement have looked only at such high level measures as "collective/shared values" and "mission" (Higher Learning Commission, 2003, p. 80) to assess culture and climate. These approaches have stopped short of delving deeper into what should, or even must, be valued by the culture and included in the mission for said efforts to be successful and sustainable. Thus, what has been referred to as culture in the aforementioned studies might well explain why Tilbury and Wortman (2008) assert that "many higher education institutions have managed only small and incremental steps on their journeys toward sustainability, confronted by both complexity and embedded resistance to change" (p. 5).

Purpose of the Study

This research study examined an existing culture for the presence of specific climate dimensions that have been linked to environments where continuous improvement initiatives are most likely to succeed. This study includes an assessment of those climate dimensions in order to provide guidance to Concordia to support its improvement initiatives.

The climate dimensions comprising the study's focus included: (a) cohesion, (b) trust, (c) support, (d) recognition, (e) innovation, (f) tradition, (g) scapegoating, (h) resistance to change, and (i) vocation. Each was analyzed in a single case study within a

small, private, Christian university that is faced with the aforementioned accountability pressures.

The Problem

Like many other contemporary universities, Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, (hereafter referred to as "Concordia") is faced with increasing competitive pressures and demands for accountability from a range of external constituents and accrediting bodies. Additionally, Concordia has the desire to remain grounded in its core values and traditions, including servant leadership, Lutheran identity, academic rigor, and others, while responding to a rapidly changing external environment that places demands on not only the university but also the students who study there (Concordia University, 2010a). Concordia's strategic planning process is based on an iterative process of setting measurable goals, gathering data, assessing results, and making adjustments as needed. The leaders at Concordia know that the success of this strategic planning effort relies on the engagement of its employees, and a better understanding of the culture and climate dimensions in place that might affect employee engagement in Concordia's improvement efforts (J. Driessner, personal communication, October 5, 2010).

Research Strategy

A qualitative research method was used to address the questions in this study. Rudestam and Newton (2007) recommend a qualitative approach when researchers strive to "explore phenomena in their natural environment" (p. 32). Qualitative methods are also linked to a constructivist knowledge claim, wherein "knowledge is not 'found' or 'discovered' from existing facts, but constructed" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 35). This study aimed to construct knowledge from data gathered through focus groups,

interviews, and content analysis, and then analyzed and categorized to form insights in a constructivist manner. This constructivist approach is well suited to cultural and climate analysis intended to enable members of the organization to “identify important cultural assumptions and to evaluate the degree to which those assumptions aid or hinder some changes that the organization is trying to make" (Schein, 2004, p. 337). Creswell (2003) recommends that “qualitative researchers choose from among five possibilities, including narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory” (p. 183). Further, Creswell specifies case study or grounded theory as the best choices for studies that explore “activities, processes, and events” and ethnography as a means to “learn about broad culture-sharing behavior of individuals or groups” (p. 183). Flick (2007) indicates that “ethnographies are often planned and done as case studies – a specific problem or question is studied in a specific context, which can sometimes be a culture or a country” (p. 92). Therefore, a case study approach with an ethnographic component, wherein the researcher was a member of the organization to be studied, was used for this study. While a number of approaches have been documented for case study research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Stake, 1995), Yin’s (2009) case study protocol was followed due to the highly structured nature of the protocol, which clearly addresses the risk of researcher bias with a rigorous documentation and peer review process.

Yin (2009) defined the scope of a case study as follows (p. 18):

- A case study is an empirical inquiry that
- Investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when

- The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

The problem addressed in this study was deemed to fit well within the defined scope of a case study because the phenomenon is a contemporary one that is shifting and responding to real-life pressures. Further, the boundaries between the phenomenon and its shifting context are dynamic as the organization tries new approaches to meet external challenges, demanding a response from its members that can best be studied in real-time. An ethnographic approach to the case study was employed, as the researcher also served as a member of the staff at Concordia at the time of this study.

In support of the ethnographic approach, Schein (2004) recommends a "clinical research model" as "most appropriate for cultural deciphering" (p. 206). The clinical research model "makes explicit two fundamental assumptions: (1) it is not possible to study a human system without intervening in it, and (2) one can only fully understand a human system by trying to change it" (p. 210). Therefore, it is Schein's assertion that a qualitative method, with a combination of "ethnography, participant observation, content analysis of stories, myths, rituals, symbols, other artifacts" (p. 205) as well as "semi-structured interviews and projective tests that still require the researcher's interpretation but add the data from the interaction itself to aid in that interpretation" (p. 206) is the most appropriate methodology. Furthermore, the researcher "combin[es] some of the best elements of the clinical and the participant observer" (p. 209) to conduct the research and make interpretation of the data.

Following the direction of Creswell (2003), Flick (2007), Schein (2004), and Yin (2009), this research study employed a qualitative design. Specifically, participant-observation was combined with semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and content

analysis of artifacts from the target organization. This approach was not without risks and limitations, including the risk of researcher bias and the potential for erroneous generalization from this case to other institutions or cases. The mitigation activities for managing the risks and limitations included rigorous peer review and documentation processes in alignment with best practices in case study design (Yin, 2009).

Conclusion

It is generally acknowledged in the higher education industry that successful, sustainable approaches to institutional improvement require a supportive organizational structure and a culture and climate that embrace the use of assessment data to inform improvements. This is often referred to as a culture of assessment (Ndoye & Parker, 2010; Suskie, 2009). However, while well intended, these attempts at classifying and assessing culture are really aimed at examining "patterns of characteristics rather than a uniform structure" (The Higher Learning Commission, 2003, p. 70). This approach may be adequate for assessing the elements of culture that can be observed, but appears to fall short of fully acknowledging the complexity of culture, which includes observable artifacts and behaviors as well as shared values, beliefs, and a history that is passed from one generation to the next (Schein, 2004).

Even with the aforementioned approaches to support the study of assessment efforts, there is still a need for a "better metric for measurement of culture in higher education" (Lin, 2007, p. 35). While this study did not aim to define a better metric, it was the intention of this researcher to use findings from previous studies to analyze the university culture and subsequently guide leaders at Concordia University as they implement continuous improvement initiatives. Concordia University appears to be an

organization marked by a continuous improvement environment, providing a fertile context for examining the organizational climate and culture dimension extant in such an environment.

Improvement initiatives by their very nature are reliant on the ability for organizational members to gather data on the outcomes of their efforts, reflect on the current state of performance, and decide when it is or is not adequate to reach their goals. Organizational members must learn to examine evidence of outcomes as individuals and as groups, requiring an environment of trust and willingness to change based on the results of their reflection (Liker & Hoseus, 2008). Therefore, organizational trust and readiness to change are critical to improvement initiatives, regardless of the industry, and especially essential in higher education where ". . . people may be especially resistant to assessment because it carries the prospect of bad news" (Suskie, 2009, p. 34). This study includes an assessment of a variety of climate dimensions in order to provide guidance to Concordia to support its improvement initiatives.

The remainder of this document will include a review of the theories that have informed the understanding of organizational culture, including dimensions of climate, in chapter 2, the literature review. Also included in this study is documentation of the method used in chapter 3. Finally, chapters 4 and 5 will document the findings and provide a discussion of those findings, as well as recommendations for consideration by Concordia University.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The pressures facing higher education today are increasing as oversight and accrediting bodies intensify their scrutiny of colleges and universities and as the competition for recognition becomes more and more focused on evidence of outcomes as well as inputs to the education process (Suskie, 2009). As these pressures continue to mount, many institutions are turning to continuous improvement efforts as a means to ensure that there is a clear alignment between their strategy and operational execution, that they have measurable outcomes to ensure that goals are being met, and that they can adapt quickly to a changing external environment.

This shift toward continuous improvement and assessment of outcomes represents a change from the higher education culture of years past that was based on the traditions of research and scholarship, with the assumption that academic rigor would naturally lead to student success thereby sustaining the institution. Today's higher education institution must continue to provide evidence of research and scholarship, honoring its traditional values, but must do so within the context of evidence that the institution is intentionally designing and delivering educational programs that meet the needs of students as well as satisfy a variety of external constituents. Further, these institutions must ensure that they are constantly scanning the environment and adapting to new needs as the global workplace continues to place pressures on emerging students for new skills (Martinelli, Rahschulte, & Waddell, 2010).

These pressures on the role of higher education as an industry translate to a need for change inside many institutions. As those institutions begin to design new models for

iterative strategic planning, measurement, and improvement based on evidence, a culture and climate supporting adaptive change based on evidence appears substantially different than the culture and climate that the organization may have formed and reinforced over decades, and, in some cases, centuries (Schein, 2004). Therefore, an understanding of what constitutes culture and climate and how it might be examined to isolate elements that have been linked to effective continuous improvement efforts is warranted. Although the focus for this research study is delimited to the challenges facing a single, private, Christian, institution of higher education, the literature review will look at the study of organizational culture, climate, and continuous improvement models across a broad range of fields and industries in an effort to understand the nature of the moderating affect that organizational culture and climate have on continuous improvement initiatives.

Ivancevich and Matteson (2002) referred to three elements that comprise the essence of an organization: culture, climate, and strategy. Culture consists of the artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions that are deeply embedded within an organization and define how individuals and groups behave (Schein, 2004). Climate refers to the experience of living within the organization, the essence or experience of working in the place (Burton & Obel, 2004). Strategy refers to the plans and tactics in place that create a unique competitive advantage (Porter, 2006). Taken separately, one might assume that there is an optimal design for any organization that could be applied to create a culture and climate in a way that any strategy could be optimized. However, the element that is missing in this assumption is the necessity of fit between the organization's climate and its strategy (Burton, Lauridsen, & Obel, 2004). Optimal performance can only be accomplished when the organization is tuned to acknowledge its

internal culture and climate and is able to align the performance of individuals in pursuit of its strategy.

Optimal organizational performance is achieved through an alignment between strategy, execution, and personnel that is sustained and integrated into the culture and climate of an organization (Collins, 2001; Collins & Porras, 2004; Joyce & Nohria, 2003). One of the characteristics of performance is the ability to monitor performance and determine when it is not adequate to meet individual or organizational goals, resulting in the ability for the organization and its members to learn from their improvement efforts (Dennis, 2006). The ability to assess performance through a monitoring system requires that performance measures have been developed and that evidence can be collected so that performance assessment can be conducted. Thus, this study will examine the elements of culture and climate at Concordia University that have been linked to improvement efforts in order to provide guidance to Concordia to support its strategic performance improvement initiatives.

This literature review is organized into sections. In the first section, the concepts of organizational culture and climate will be defined and operationalized. In the second section, approaches to continuous improvement will be described, with a focus on research into the specific dimensions of culture and climate that previous studies have found to support improvement initiatives. In the third section, Concordia University's strategic planning process will be introduced to provide context for the case that will be studied. The literature review will conclude with an articulation of the need for this research and a summary of the questions that emerged from the literature as relevant to the institutional setting under study.

Organizational Culture and Climate – Operationalizing the Terms

The idea of organization has existed in some form for as long as humans have been living and working together in families and communities. In their collection of the classic writings on organizational theory, Shafritz, Ott, and Jang (2005) traced the idea of organization as far back as 1491 B.C. The authors also suggested that as the challenge to assemble and support collective needs has grown increasingly complex, the study of how best to organize has emerged as a field of knowledge.

The word *culture* has many contextual meanings. It is used to describe the behaviors of people in various nations and societies, as well as organizations (Schein, 2004). While it has been suggested that the basic building blocks of culture are the same whether the cultural context is an ethnic background, geographic region, or specific corporate organization (Schein, 2004), for purposes of this literature review the focus of the term *culture* will be delimited to the examination of culture within organizations. Notable work on national culture has been done by scholars such as Hofstede (2001) and Javidan, Dorfman, DeLuque, and House (2006), but this dimension of culture will not be an area of focus for this research study.

Similar to organizational theory, the concept of culture and climate applied to organizations also has deep roots. In 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn began a comprehensive review and analysis of the broad range of scholarly attempts to define culture, noting that “it is impossible, without an enormous number of categories and great artificiality, to group definitions of culture with complete consistency” (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963, p. 77). Kroeber and Kuckhohn’s review included definitions of culture from biblical references and traced the concept as it evolved along with the development

of management and organizational thinking, crediting Tylor (1871) with the establishment of its "modern technical or anthropological meaning in English" (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963, p. 11). Among the definitions included in Kroeber and Kluckhohn's review was Tylor's (1871) descriptive definition that culture "is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor, 1871, as cited by Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963, p. 81).

Bower (1966) referred to culture as "the way we do things around here" (p. 22). Bower helped with the transition from thinking of culture as a philosophy that management assumed everyone understood, to a clear and intentionally articulated set of basic beliefs that could help to translate the company's philosophy into action. While clarifying how to translate philosophy into action through these beliefs, Bower's approach still focused primarily on a top-down delivery of the belief system to the people working in the organization (O'Donovan, 2007).

Deal and Kennedy (1982) have been linked with the next significant step in operationalizing the notion of culture, coining the term "corporate culture" (p. 59). Deal and Kennedy defined the key elements of corporate culture as (a) company values, (b) heroes, rites, rituals, and ceremonies, (c) the cultural network, and (d) the business environment. In Deal and Kennedy's model, the workforce was seen as the connecting tissue that formed the cultural network, connecting the values of the company to behaviors and stories of heroes who exemplified the values. This transition placed the focus of organizational culture on the worker versus the management alone, leading to

the development of further cultural research examining how culture is formed and sustained in a workforce throughout the life of an organization.

Schein has commonly been linked with the contemporary definition of organizational culture (Schein, 1984, as cited in Shafritz, et al., 2005), although he acknowledged the contribution of others such as Hofstede (1991), Trice and Beyer (1993), Deal and Kennedy (1995), Weick (2001), and Martin (2002). Schein (1995) also indicated that he was greatly influenced by Kurt Lewin's work, and that "few people have had as profound an impact on the theory and practice of social and organizational psychology as Kurt Lewin" (Schein, 1995, p. 1).

Schein (1984, 2004) referred to culture and climate as a coping mechanism – a pattern of assumptions and the expression of those assumptions that facilitate group members' ability to make sense of their environment and to function. While Schein primarily wrote about organizational culture, his notion of culture as a pattern of basic assumptions can also be applied to groups, teams, and even societies who have a history from which they have developed shared belief systems. Culture has been defined as follows by Schein:

> A pattern of basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 2004, p. 17)

There are several significant concepts that warrant explanation in Schein's (2004) definition. First, Schein suggested that culture is a pattern of shared assumptions that

members invent, discover, or develop among themselves. This implies that the organization has been together long enough to have a shared history. Consequently, Schein asserted that the strength of a culture is related to how long an organization has been together and how much change has occurred in its leadership (Schein, 2004).

The second piece of Schein's (2004) definition in need of examination is the notion of basic assumptions. Schein used this term in reference to firmly held beliefs on the part of an organization that cannot be seen by outsiders and that are often held unconsciously by individuals in the organization. These assumptions are embedded, taken for granted, and held much more deeply by organizational members than the espoused values and artifacts. Furthermore, these assumptions are formed based on what has happened in an organization and how members respond to what has happened. According to Schein, these assumptions have their roots in the early formation of the organization, and are often strongly informed by the values and beliefs of the originating founders of the organization (Rozin, 1998). The assumptions evolve and are reinforced throughout the organization's existence based on the ongoing responses of leaders and members to critical incidents and their collective perception of success and failure.

Next, in addition to identifying assumptions as shared and basic, Schein (2004) referred to the process used to form the assumptions and stated that these assumptions have been developed in response to two kinds of problems: problems of external adaptation and internal integration. By external adaptation, Schein referred to the influence of the environment external to the organization. These are problems that have been faced and coped with, and from which individuals in the organization have a shared perception of either success or failure. An example of an external problem that requires

adaptation in an higher education setting would be changes to accreditation requirements. Over time, Schein asserted that people form basic assumptions regarding the response to external challenges based on what has and has not worked in the past. Problems of internal integration are similar but have their genesis inside the organization. These issues surface as individuals work together and experience success or failure internally through their interaction. According to Schein's (2004) definition, the solutions found to these internal integration problems have "worked well enough to be considered valid" (p. 17) and therefore tend to persist as attempted solutions to similar problems in the future.

In addition to asserting that culture is a pattern of shared, basic assumptions arising from adaptation to both external and internal pressures, the depth of these assumptions in the identity of the group members represents the final aspect of Schein's culture definition to consider. This final piece of the definition is especially significant to understanding how culture is maintained over time and why culture can be so difficult to change:

> As assumptions come to be taken for granted they become part of the identity of the group and are taught to newcomers as the way to think, feel, and act; and, if violated, produce discomfort, anxiety, ostracism, and eventually excommunication. (Schein, 2004, p. 16)

Schein (2004) noted that these basic assumptions are used to teach new members who join the organization how to think and behave when faced with future challenges. These messages regarding acceptable behavior and values in an organization do not exist at the surface level and are not necessarily consistent with what individuals are taught in formal forums such as employee orientation. Rather, the assumptions are the unwritten

rules for how things work in the organization, what the members have come to believe, and how the organization responds to threats and opportunities.

Practitioners and organizational consultants frequently think of culture as something that is visible in the artifacts and espoused values that they can see, hear, and understand when engaged with members of an organization. Schein (2004) affirms that visible artifacts and espoused values are relevant to understanding culture. However, the visible components of culture are layered on top of the basic assumptions and provide true insight into organizational behavior only if the underlying assumptions are accurately understood.

While Schein (2004) focused on three layers of culture (i.e., assumptions, espoused values, and artifacts), other scholars have applied the notion of layers or types of culture in other ways. Marquardt and Engel (1993) used five types to differentiate between corporate, ethnic, regional, national, and global culture. Ivancevich and Matteson (2002) used the metaphor of an onion in describing the layers of culture, with symbols representing the most superficial, outer layer, and then heroes, rituals, and eventually values as the center-most component of culture. Further, Ivancevich and Matteson (2002) referred to the outermost three layers (i.e., symbols, heroes, and rituals) as the practices of a culture, with only the innermost values layer becoming visible "precisely and only in the way these practices are interpreted by the insiders" (p. 94).

Kreitner and Kinicki (2008) contended that "organizational culture is a contextual variable influencing individual, group, and organizational behavior" (p. 67). Kreitner and Kinicki's work referred to a conceptual framework for understanding organizational behavior (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2003) that included effectiveness and stress as

organizational outcomes that were influenced by a set of social processes, attitudes, and behaviors within the organization. Those social processes, attitudes, and behaviors could best be understood by examining the individual experiences of living in an organization, often referred to as climate (Burton & Obel, 2004).

Culture versus Climate

Burton and Obel (2004) noted that "although organization culture and climate are often used interchangeably, they have different roots" (p. 131). They quoted the following definitions from Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary:

> Climate: The prevailing influence or environmental conditions characterizing a group or period, atmosphere, the prevailing set of conditions.
>
> Culture: An integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behavior that depend upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations, the customary beliefs, social forms and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. (Mish, 1983, as cited by Burton & Obel, 2004, p. 132)

Burton and Obel (2004) differentiated culture as "the organization itself . . . the form, beliefs, norms, social patterns, the way things are done" and climate as "the 'ether' within which an organization exists," (p. 132). Burton and Obel also noted a climate definition by Tagiuri and Litwin (1968) that identifies climate as the "relatively enduring quality" (p. 25) of the internal environment of an organization. Accordingly, the literature suggests that climate might be the appropriate construct for examining the experience individuals have when working in a particular organization. While culture is a suitable construct for examining the organization, it may not provide adequate detail to allow

examination of individual perceptions and behaviors inside the organization. Koys and Decoitis (1991) support this conclusion. The authors differentiated psychological climate as an individual versus organizational construct, describing psychological climate as "an experiential-based, multi-dimensional, and enduring perceptual phenomenon which is widely shared by members of an organizational unit" (p. 266). Noting the work of Schneider (1975) and Schneider and Reichers (1983), Koys and Decoitis focused their research on the individual perception that influences behavior inside organizations. They narrowed their definition of climate perceptions to those that "summarize an individual's description of his or her organizational experience rather than his or her affective or evaluative reaction to what has been experienced" (p. 266).

Climate Dimensions

A number of studies have isolated the dimensions of climate. Specifically, the work from Koys and Decoitis (1991), O'Donovan (2007), Quinn and Kimberly (1984), Cameron, Kim, and Whetton (1987), and Zammuto and Krakower (1991) provides the greatest insight to the value of climate dimensions due to their synthesis of previous studies, narrowing the number of climate dimensions and providing correlations between climate dimensions and culture types. As such, each of these previous studies will be further explained in this section. Throughout this section, an attempt will be made to compare findings, leading toward a synthesis of the climate dimensions most closely aligned to a culture that supports continuous improvement efforts. This alignment and synthesis will be explained as the research studies are outlined.

Koys and Decoitis (1991) noted four dimensions of climate suggested in earlier research by Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, and Weick (1970). Those dimensions included

(a) individual autonomy, (b) structure, (c) reward orientation, and (d) consideration, warmth, and support. Koys and Decoitis positioned the work of Campbell et al., as a significant beginning in their literature review, developing a list of 80 dimensions derived from extensive review of work done in the years since Campbell et al.'s seminal study. Koys and Decoitis (1991) reduced the number of climate dimensions by applying criteria including (a) must be a measure of perception, (b) must be a measure of describing (not evaluating) activities, and (c) cannot be an aspect of organizational or task structure. Based on the filtering criteria, Koys and Decoitis (1991) reduced the 80 climate dimensions existing in the literature to eight. The authors identified the eight climate dimensions as (a) autonomy, (b) cohesion, (c) trust, (d) pressure, (e) support, (f) recognition, (g) fairness, and (h) innovation.

O'Donovan (2007) suggested that culture was best examined in the 21st century as a contemporary analysis by focusing on the climate elements of tradition and innovation, asserting that "the function of any culture is to enable a distinctive group to survive and thrive in an evolving environment" (p. 218). O'Donovan suggested that sustaining culture is reliant not only on passing on traditions to new members, but that "culture gains much of its form when each new generation questions established beliefs to put forward new ideas in an effort to make attitudes and behavior more relevant in their new world" (p. 219). O'Donovan recommended striving for a culture and climate that could blend tradition with innovation in order to provide stability as well as growth.

Zammuto and Krakower (1991) studied organizational culture and climate in 322 colleges and universities, based on the competing values model introduced by Quinn

(1988) and on Quinn and Kimberly's (1984) designation of four cultural types: group culture, developmental culture, hierarchical culture, and rational culture.

Quinn and Kimberly (1984) described group culture to contain climate elements with a focus on people, flexibility, cohesion, morale, with leadership that is concerned and supportive, and with a high value placed on affiliation, attachment, and implementation. The developmental culture, according to Quinn and Kimberly, has a stronger focus on the organization (versus people), a higher degree of adaptability, and strong values related to ideology, growth, and inventiveness. The hierarchical culture maintains an emphasis on people but within a context of control (versus flexibility) where stability, rules, security, and conservative values are highly prized. Finally, the rational culture describes an organizational focus valuing control, planning, goal-setting, efficiency, and production.

Zammuto and Krakower (1991) noted that "cultural type is related to differences in organizational climate" (p. 95). They then went on to apply Cameron et al.'s (1987) seven dimensions of climate (i.e., trust, conflict, morale, equity of rewards, resistance to change, leader credibility, and scapegoating) to derive correlations between culture and climate dimensions. Zammuto and Krakower's (1991) research findings indicated a positive correlation between Quinn and Kimberly's (1984) group and developmental culture types and Cameron et al.'s trust, morale, equity of rewards, and leader credibility dimensions. Negative correlations were found between group and developmental culture and the climate dimensions of conflict, scapegoating, and resistance to change (Zammuto & Krakower, 1991). Therefore, an organizational culture that exemplifies the climate dimensions isolated by Cameron et al. (1987) and further examined by Zammuto and

Krakower (1991) in a higher education environment might be a blend of Quinn and Kimberly's (1984) group and developmental culture types. Table 1 illustrates the alignment that Zammuto and Krakower suggested between Cameron et al.'s climate dimensions and Quinn and Kimberly's culture types.

Table 1

Alignments Between Cameron et al.'s Climate Dimensions and Quinn and Kimberly's (1984) Culture Types, According to Zammuto & Krakower (1991)

Cameron et al. (1987)	Quinn & Kimberly (1984)	
Climate Dimension	Positive alignment	Negative alignment
Trust	Group culture	
Morale	Developmental culture	
Equity of rewards	Group culture	
Leader credibility	Developmental culture	
Conflict		Group culture
Scapegoating		Group culture
Resistance to Change		Developmental culture

Zammuto and Krakower (1991) detected tensions between competing values in universities that they studied specifically for their contrasting profiles, leading to clearer distinctions between the climate variables associated with Quinn and Kimberly's (1984) competing values framework. Of significance to this study is the finding that the group culture was most clearly linked to institutions of higher education and, specifically, was the most frequently found culture in small, independent, universities (43%) as well as small, medium, and large universities that self-identified as religious (43.8%, 40.9%, and 47.1% respectively). Zammuto and Krakower (1991) noted that these findings of a group culture in small organizations were consistent with Wilkins and Ouchi's (1983) assertion that clans are more likely to emerge in small organizations funded by committed sources. It should be noted that not all of the universities in the study were found to be linked to

the group culture profile and that medium and large public universities were more strongly linked to the hierarchical cultural profile. The only group found to be linked to a rational culture was the large, independent universities.

Quinn and Kimberly's (1984) group culture also aligned well in its basic characteristics with what O'Donovan (2007) referred to as the tradition component of her tradition/innovation model, which served to "preserve the group's distinct identity and way of life" (p. 219). However, without a balancing force of innovation, O'Donovan suggested that "the ability of a given organization to solve problems and adapt to a changing environment and customer requirements is undermined" (p. 219). A culture with a balance between tradition and innovation would be more likely to demonstrate a blend of Quinn and Kimberly's group and developmental cultures, where tradition is moderated by the desire to grow and the ability to tolerate risk in the change process.

Burton and Obel (2004) compared the eight dimensions defined by Koys and Decoitis (1991) to the seven designated in Zammuto and Krakower's (1991) research, and suggested that the climate dimensions that emerged from both of these studies were "relatively similar" as demonstrated in Table 2 (p. 143):

Table 2

Burton and Obel's (2004) Comparison of Climate Dimensions

Koys & Decoitis (1991)	Zammuto & Krakower (1991)
Autonomy	Credibility
Cohesion	Conflict (negative alignment)
Trust/support	Trust
Pressure	Scapegoating
Recognition	Morale
Fairness	Equitable Rewards
Innovation	Resistance to Change (negative alignment)

While Burton and Obel (1984) did not include Quinn and Kimberly's (1984) cultural types in their alignment, the previous findings by Zammuto and Krakower (1991) linking these dimensions to their findings further reinforces the strength of the tie between credibility, cohesion, trust/support, morale, and equitable rewards to Quinn and Kimberly's group and developmental culture types. Zammuto and Krakower's findings also provide a link between innovation and the developmental culture, with a negative alignment to resistance to change.

Table 3

Alignment of Climate Dimensions and Cultural Types

Koys & Decoitis (1991)	Zammuto & Krakower (1991)	Quinn & Kimberly (1984)
Autonomy	Credibility	Group culture
Cohesion	Conflict (negative alignment)	Group culture
Trust/support	Trust	Group culture
Pressure	Scapegoating	Group culture (negative alignment)
Recognition	Morale	Developmental culture
Fairness	Equitable Rewards	Group culture
Innovation	Resistance to Change (negative alignment)	Developmental culture

The next section in this review of literature will provide background on the emergence of continuous improvement models, examining prior studies of culture and climate dimensions in organizations that appear to relate with successful improvement efforts. The review will focus on the climate dimensions that have been linked to a culture supportive of continuous improvement (Liker & Hoseus, 2008). Further, the phenomena of change resistance will be explained, strengthening the tie to Quinn and

Kimberly's (1984) group and developmental culture with the optimal blend of climate dimensions.

Continuous Improvement

The trend toward looking at organizations from a performance perspective has been well established in literature over the past few decades. Based on research into performance characteristics and the organizational behaviors that are linked to sustained success and growth, many popular business books have been circulated to reinforce the notion that a culture of continuous improvement is a goal to be sought and that there are tangible practices enabling its achievement. Collins (2001), Collins and Porras (2004), Peters (2010), and Senge (1990) are a few of the more recognizable voices in this movement toward a focus on internal organizational effectiveness as an indicator and driver of performance in the marketplace.

Success with continuous improvement methods has been linked to the ability of employees to reflect on the results of their efforts and adapt to change based on what they learn from their successes and failures (Liker & Hoseus, 2008). Organizations which accomplish this have the potential to grow and adapt in response to the external market and internal needs. They also provide opportunities for their employees to reap the benefits of their association not only through financial rewards but also through career growth and learning as well, reinforcing a sense that what is good for the organization is also good for the individual in a spirit of reciprocity (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000).

In a university setting, faculty who engage in continuous improvement efforts have the opportunity to adjust their curriculum and teaching methods in response to

student feedback and assessment of learning. This in turn helps the faculty member to ensure that his or her courses are relevant and effective, not only adding to the value of the university but also to the success of the faculty member as a professional. While the benefits to the faculty member may be less direct than in a corporate setting where goals are tied to monetary rewards, there is a trend toward emphasizing the quality of curriculum and instruction to the evaluation of faculty in recent years (Hutchings, 2010). This trend includes the use of student outcomes assessment data in the review of faculty performance, faculty development efforts aimed at improving curriculum based on student outcomes data, and universities beginning to "reframe the work of assessment as scholarship" (Hutchings, 2010, p. 15). All of the aforementioned trends affect the way that faculty performance is measured and have the potential to impact not only the success of the improvement effort, but also the potential for advancement and recognition of faculty by the university and the academic community (Bresciani, 2009).

Many organizations choose to focus on process excellence as a way to support the creation and sustainability of a culture of continuous improvement. In the late 1940's, Deming (1992) popularized an iterative approach to process improvement. This process improvement approach included a problem solving model originally introduced by Shewhart (1939). Fundamental to the application of Deming's model was the principle of the worker as a critical element in surfacing and solving problems in work processes. According to Deming, the worker was in the best position to spot problems in a process, and only by encouraging the worker to report problems and participate in solution development could the process maintain excellence over time.

Deming's (1992) principles have been applied in a wide range of industries, including such service industries as healthcare and higher education (Banta, 1992; Brown & ERIC, 1997; Redmond, Curtis, Noone, & Keenan, 2008). Addressing the need for quality in higher education, Redmond, et al. state that "the quality of the service is grounded in the responsiveness, dialogue and relationship that exist between teacher and student as well as in the appropriateness and methods used to achieve stated learning outcomes" (p. 432).

Considering the necessity of a culture and climate to support continuous improvement, it has been suggested that there are practical actions that must be taken to support organizational effectiveness within a problem-solving context (Surowiecki, 2008). The Toyota Motor Corporation has been noted for its success with problem solving methods (Liker, 2004; Liker & Hoseus, 2008; Womack, Jones, & Roos, 1991). Liker and Hoseus (2008) conducted a case study of the culture of Toyota and noted that "respect and continuous improvement (serve) as the foundation of the Toyota culture" (p. 322). They further isolated five values that are prominent in the Toyota culture: challenge, kaizen, genchi genbutsu, respect, and teamwork.

- Challenge – forming a long-term vision and meeting challenges with courage and creativity.
- Kaizen – improving the business continuously and always driving for innovation and evolution.
- Genchi Genbutsu – going and seeing; go to the source to find the facts to make decisions, build consensus, and achieve goals at the best speed.
- Respect – taking responsibility to do our best to build mutual trust.

- Teamwork – maximizing the personal and professional growth and performance of both the individual and the team. (Liker & Hoseus, 2008, p. 322)

Liker and Hoseus (2008) aligned the practices and attitudes they found in their study of Toyota with Schein's (1984, 2004) three layers of culture. The underlying assumptions they described include "leaders are teachers and coaches . . . who support those who add value" (p. 337). Within their norms and values, they found "mutually-supporting team members, clear standards, opportunities to make a difference, feeling safe physically and psychologically, two-way communication, bad news is OK, informal channels, focus on the problem not the person" (p. 337). Finally, within the category of artifacts and behavior, Liker and Hoseus listed "standard problem solving . . . early symptom intervention . . . energized leaders" (p. 337).

These assumptions, values, and behaviors can be aligned to the consistencies from the climate dimensions that emerged in Burton and Obel's (2004) comparison of Koys and Decoitis' (1991) and Zammuto and Krakower's (1991) studies, as demonstrated in Table 2, as well as the culture types suggested by Quinn and Kimberly (1984) as demonstrated in Table 3. For example, Koys and Decoitis (1991) described the climate dimension of cohesion as one where "people pitch in to help each other . . . tend to get along . . . take a personal interest in one another" (p. 282). Liker and Hoseus (2008) referred to "mutually supportive team members (with) informal channels (of communication)" (p. 337) as a necessary component of their continuous improvement culture. Trust was described by Koys and Decoitis (1991) as an environment where employees describe their boss as someone with "a lot of personal integrity (who) follows

through on his commitments (and) is not likely to give me bad advice" (p. 282). Liker and Hoseus referred to a leader who supports the workers and creates an environment of physical and psychological safety, again reinforcing the link between climate dimensions of trust and support and a culture of continuous improvement.

Scapegoating was defined by Cameron et al. (1987) as an environment where individuals were singled out when things went wrong and "blamed for the pain and uncertainty" (p. 227). This is negatively correlated with Quinn and Kimberly's (1984) group culture, O'Donovan's (2007) dimension of innovation, and describes an inverse environment from Liker and Hoseus' (2008) setting where focus was maintained on the problem, and not the people, and where bad news was okay. Liker and Hoseus noted that Toyota encouraged a culture where problems were seen as opportunities for improvement, and individuals were encouraged to point out problems as early as possible so that correction, improvement, and eventual learning from the problem could take place. Scapegoating implies an opposite environment where individuals are fearful of being blamed when problems were encountered. Liker and Hoseus (2008) affirmed blame to be one of the most likely causes for failure in continuous improvement efforts that relied on problem solving.

Continuing in the alignment of climate dimensions to Liker and Hoseus' (2008) culture of continuous improvement, the element of recognition was defined by Koys and Decoitis (1991) as one where employees reported that leadership "knows what my strengths are . . . is quick to recognize good performance . . .(and) uses me as an example of what to do" (p. 283). Liker and Hoseus (2008) described energized and positive leaders who encouraged innovation and problem solving among their employees and

employees who responded by looking for opportunities to make a difference in the workplace. Recognition, therefore, supports an environment where individuals take personal pride in improvement and feel supported and rewarded for their efforts.

Lastly, the innovation climate dimension was defined by Koys and Decoitis (1991) as a situation where employees reported they were encouraged "to develop my ideas" and where the "boss likes me to try new ways of doing my job . . . encourages me to improve (and) . . . find new ways around old problems" (p. 283). Cameron et al. (1987) described an inverse climate dimension of resistance to change that was marked by "conservativism and turf protection (that leads to) rejection of new alternatives" (p. 227). Liker and Hoseus (2008) asserted that a culture of continuous improvement relies on clear standards, problem solving methods (dependent on morale and an absence of scapegoating), where there is early intervention due to engaged employee involvement. The climate dimension of innovation described by Koys and Decoitis (1991) would support this problem solving culture and climate. However, Cameron et al.'s resistance to change dimension might easily thwart any attempt at early interventions due to excess conservativism and rejection of new ideas.

This section of the literature review has been focused on documenting the elements of a culture that Liker and Hoseus (2008) indicated were most likely to support continuous improvement initiatives. Table 4 compares and contrasts the aforementioned research studies and Liker and Hoseus' (2008) culture of continuous improvement. Note that the dimensions of autonomy and fairness from Koys and Decoitis (1991) and credibility and equitable rewards from Zammuto and Krakower (1991) are not included

in this comparison, as there were insufficient alignments between those dimensions and Liker and Hoseus' cultural elements.

Table 4

Alignment of Climate Dimensions, Culture Types, and Liker and Hoseus' (2008) Culture of Continuous Improvement

Koys & Decoitis (1991)	Zammuto & Krakower (1991) based on Cameron et al. (1987)	Quinn & Kimberly (1984) O'Donovan (2007)	Liker & Hoseus (2008)
Cohesion	Conflict (negative alignment)	Group culture Tradition	Two-way communication Informal channels Mutually supporting team members
Trust/support	Trust	Group culture Tradition	Leaders support those who add value Physical and psychological safety
Pressure (negative alignment)	Scapegoating (negative alignment)	Group culture Innovation	Focus on the problem not the person Bad news is OK
Recognition	Morale	Developmental culture	Energized leaders Opportunities to make a difference
Innovation	Resistance to Change (negative alignment)	Developmental culture Innovation	Standard problem solving Clear standards Early symptom intervention

These climate dimensions and organizational behaviors provide a set of lenses for use when examining an organization for signs of fit with a strategy of continuous improvement. Further, the alignment with Quinn and Kimberly's (1984) and O'Donovan's (2007) culture type of group culture with an emphasis on tradition further focuses the examination of the culture in a small, Christian, higher education institution,

based on Zammuto and Krakower's (1991) correlation of the group culture to small, private, religious-based institutions.

In summary, organizations that implement continuous improvement initiatives without understanding the underlying assumptions, norms, and values that form their culture are challenged to sustain improvement efforts, because the culture may be at odds with the principles necessary to support improvement. Thus, a culture of continuous improvement relies on a climate with a focus on cohesion, trust, support, recognition, and innovation and with an absence of scapegoating and resistance to change. These elements will be further described in the following sections.

Cohesion, trust, and support. One approach to creating a culture and climate to support continuous improvement is referred to as "policy deployment" (Liker, 2004, p. 219), a practice based on *hoshin kanri*, a Japanese method for deploying policy throughout an organization. Literally translated, *hoshin* means pointing or needle, implying focus; and *kanri* means control. The basic idea is that strategy is set at the top of the organization, it is communicated down to subsequent levels, and feedback loops return a response which results in adjustments to the strategy. The cultural underpinnings for this model include a focus on the social and spiritual needs of employees in a way that trust is developed and supported over time (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). Not only is policy deployment used as a way to ensure that strategy is understood throughout the organization, but it also aids in the commitment level of employees who feel engaged and participative in the process, while creating a sense of cohesion as the organization focuses on the *point of the needle* as it is refined.

Practices aimed at addressing the need for climate dimensions of trust, support, and cohesion in this type of culture are focused on creating a sense of emotional safety on the part of workers as they come together with diverse perspectives, work toward common solutions, and are asked to change. This idea is similar to the psychological contract between employers and employees recommended by Schein (1980) as a way to develop and maintain trust in the employment relationship and also responds to Lewin's (1947) advice regarding support structures for individuals who are asked to change. Leaders engage in sharing their vision and then work through their management system to translate that vision into tangible team and individual work plans and goals to which the employees can commit. By connecting the leadership focus and intent with a clear and consistent communication model, employees are assisted in the process of finding and maintaining a sense of meaning in their work, leading to a deeper sense of alignment between belief systems and reinforcing experiences in the workplace.

Change readiness. The climate dimensions related to recognition, innovation, and the absence of scapegoating and resistance to change are related to a state referred to as change readiness through the description of research into the forces at play when groups are faced with pressures to change. Though it is hard to pinpoint the genesis of the field of organizational change research, the early 1940's appear to be the timeframe when a distinct focus on change began to emerge, specifically from the work of Lewin (1947, 1951, 1958). Lewin began his research during WWII with the goal of influencing people to change their eating habits to adapt to wartime needs. He worked with a group of housewives with the intention of changing their perception regarding what types of foods were of sufficient quality to feed their families - for example, changing from only feeding

the best cuts of meat to feeding organ meats and other products that they had previously deemed unfit for humans. In the process of this effort, as well as work he had done previously with prisoners of war, Lewin came to realize that there were cognitive changes that must occur before a person could become ready to change.

Lewin (as cited in Burke, 2008) developed a change model with three steps that he referred to as *unfreezing*, *moving*, and *freezing*. Lewin referred to unfreezing as a process of disconfirmation. In this step, the change targets would be presented with information that challenged their previous assumptions. They would be facilitated through a process that included coping with the anxiety that disconfirmation caused and would eventually become ready to change of their own volition. Lewin suggested that only within an environment of psychological safety would a target of change be able to deal with the anxiety that disconfirmation caused.

Once disconfirmation (unfreezing) had been accomplished, Lewin (as cited by Schein, 2002) suggested that the focus of the change effort should be the movement from the previous frozen set of values and behaviors to the new set of values and behaviors required by the change. At this point in the process, Lewin emphasized the role of the change target in managing the change process. He asserted that only self-directed effort would result in long-lasting change (Lewin as cited in Schein, 2002). The key to this part of the process was to continue exposing the change target to disconfirming information while providing social support from peers, and by providing access to role models with whom the change target could relate. Lewin referred to examples from research in Nazi concentration camps as evidence of the power of this role-modeling phase. Lewin noted that under extreme stress and with adequate cognitive disconfirmation, individuals would

pattern behavior after others that they had previously considered their enemies in order to reach a reduced level of anxiety and move forward with a reconfirmed set of values and behaviors (Lewin as cited by Schein, 1995).

Finally, Lewin's (1947, 1951, 1958) model concluded with the third step in the change process, referred to as freezing. It should be noted that Lewin did not label this step *refreezing*, but that the refreezing term was coined later by those who followed his work (Burnes, 2009). In this final step, new behaviors would be cemented in alignment with the goals of the change. A critical component to the freezing process was to ensure that the environment where the change targets would interact would not be hostile to their changed behavior. This element of Lewin's model speaks directly to the importance of engaging the broader organization in change efforts in order to achieve successful assimilation of new behaviors.

When considering a climate to support organizational change, Burke and Schmidt (1971) suggested looking at individuals as components of an organizational system. Drawing from previous work on motivational theory (Maslow, 1943) and connecting to Lewin's (1947) work, they asserted that as long as the system is unchanged, individual change efforts would be ineffective as individuals conform to group standards that support their need for belonging to a group. Schein (2004) furthered this notion that change interventions are only effective in a climate supported by outcomes aligned to the intervention and that individuals would not change if the system supporting them remained unchanged. "Culture is hard to change because group members value stability in that it provides meaning and predictability" (Schein, 2004, p. 14). This work appears to have led the way for a transition into thinking about organizations and the individuals and

groups within them as systems that could perhaps best be understood by looking first at the behavior of organisms in nature (Capra, 1996; Foster & Kaplan, 2001; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Senge, 1990, Trist, 1993; Wheatley, 2006).

One example of the importance of this work is Capra's (1996) exploration of the alignment between organizational and organic systems. Capra suggested that systems strive for a state of equilibrium at the deepest level, with patterns of organization that remain steady as the system adapts to the environment and continually renews itself. He likened this notion of patterns of organization to the group norms and standards that form the culture and climate of an organization and furthered understanding of why individual change must be supported by organizational systems. Capra suggested that a critical element enabling change would be alignment to strategy and optimized flow of communication in terms of inputs and throughput within the organizational systems. These and other theories led to the increasing awareness that change must address culture and climate in order to be effective (Devos, Buelens, & Bouckenooghe, 2007; Godkin, 2008; Schön, 1971; and Weick, 2001).

An assessment of culture using a matrix such as that proposed by the Higher Learning Commission (2003) without a deeper understanding of the complexity of culture and specific climate dimensions that might impact improvement initiatives is limiting at best. It is the intention of this research study to leverage previous research and resulting models in order to provide further understanding of the elements of culture and climate that are necessary to support the complex and dynamic process of continuous improvement at a specific institution.

The aforementioned research studies examined culture and climate dimensions from a variety of perspectives and in a wide range of settings (Cameron et al., 1987; Koys & Decoitis, 1991; O'Donovan, 2007; Quinn & Kimberly, 1984; Zammuto & Krakower, 1991). Further, alignments and contrasts between climate dimensions and cultural types have been made by these researchers and attempted in this literature review, with the goal of suggesting specific climate dimensions that seem most likely to support Liker and Hoseus' (2008) culture of continuous improvement. Those climate dimensions have been mapped to Quinn and Kimberly's culture types, with correlations to higher education institutional profiles by Zammuto and Krakower. This analysis has been detailed in order to suggest two things: first, that culture and climate dimensions can be studied to assess fit between an organization's culture and selected strategic initiatives (such as continuous improvement); second, this analysis has been conducted to focus on the climate dimensions most worthy of study in this specific case – a small, private, Christian university, with the goal of supporting a continuous improvement initiative. The climate dimensions that will now form the basis of this study are: (a) cohesion, (b) trust, (c) support, (d) recognition, (e) innovation, (f) tradition, and (g) change readiness.

Concordia University's Approach to Strategic Planning and Continuous Improvement

A popular approach to strategic planning in a business context is to employ an iterative process that engages the organization in planning, execution, reflection, and adjustment in response to an evolving or rapidly changing environment (Dennis, 2006). This model can be applied to a higher education institution's strategic planning process in order to ensure that information from the external environment continues to inform the institution's decisions and practices (Martinez & Wolverton, 2009).

Strategic planning, with a focus on long-term vision, is not new to Concordia. In the 1990's Concordia developed a master plan, referred to as "Vision 2010" (Concordia University, 2010b, p.1). This master plan was intended to direct the efforts of the university during the two decades leading up to the year 2010, ensuring that strategic planning and execution remained focused on the institution's long-term vision. Concordia identified strategic planning as "quite simply, the means by which the institution clarifies and pursues its preferred future" (p. 1). However, in the final years leading up to 2010, the President of Concordia recognized that the 2010 vision was in need of revision and that changes in the external environment were demanding a more adaptive strategic planning process.

In 2008 the President of Concordia created an Executive Vice President position to renew the focus on strategic planning. The Executive Vice President began the strategic planning renewal process by researching strategic planning best practices in higher education and found that an iterative approach, with consistent reflection and refinement of the institution's vision informed by internal and external inputs, was a best practice in higher education as well as industry (Keller, 1983; Lerner, 1999; McLaughlin & McLaughlin, 2007). The Executive Vice President drafted Concordia's approach to strategic planning based on these best practices, and subsequently formed a strategic planning task force to begin implementing the process of refining the institution's vision. The strategic planning task force included members from a broad range of constituents, including representation from the university's board of directors, each of its colleges, and key staff members. Additionally, the Executive Vice President engaged with community

members, donors, alumni, students, and parents to ensure that the visioning process was inclusive of all stakeholders.

One of the first tasks in the visioning process was to conduct an internal and external environmental scan, intended to assess the opportunities and challenges that the university was facing and would continue to face in the coming decade. The output of this environmental scan was a set of five external trends and six internal issues that the task force found to be most significant to the development of the future vision (Concordia, 2010a). The environmental factors fell into five categories: (a) socio-religious trends, (b) student and general demographics trends, (c) higher education financing issues, (d) educational technology advances, and (e) campus-community engagement. The internal institutional factors fell into six categories: (a) clarity and operationalization of the Christian/Lutheran identity, (b) financial model and health, (c) faculty and staff profile, (d) leadership, (e) instruction, and (f) campus life. The task force synthesized their findings and, through a process of engagement and validation with internal and external constituents, settled on a set of core values as a means of guiding the university through the next decade in light of the changing external and internal environment.

As an outcome of the environmental scan, members of the strategic planning task force realized that there were changes that would need to be made in the direction Concordia was headed in order to ensure continued viability into the future (Burton & Obel, 2004). Subsequently, the strategic planning task force set out to develop a vision for the next decade that would remain grounded in Concordia's core values, while adapting to the changing external environment and internal pressures that their

environmental scan had detected. Through a process of engagement with constituents external and internal to the university, the task force developed a draft vision statement that was then validated by board members, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members.

The revised 2020 vision for Concordia University encompasses eight core vision attributes, articulated in communications to external and internal stakeholders as follows:

1. Servant Leaders. Concordia creates an environment in which individuals are transformed, becoming servant-leaders who are agents of positive change, through ethical, humble and rigorous leadership, with and for their communities and around the world.
2. Community Connected. Concordia exemplifies rich, reciprocal community relationships which infuse and energize every aspect of the campus and bring demonstrable and sustainable value to the university, the students, and the communities.
3. Student Choice. Concordia's programs and services are structured to meet the evolving demands of student choice and market direction, including the method and location of delivery.
4. Relationships. Concordia provides "the Concordia Experience" to all its students, including attention to intellectual, creative, spiritual, physical, emotional, social and ethical development delivered through nurturing and respectful relationships, rich co-curricular offerings and vibrant community engagement.

5. Rigorous. Concordia's programs prepare students for meaningful vocations through intellectually challenging academic engagement, research and global preparedness.
6. Lutheran. Concordia engages diverse perspectives in an environment of open discourse and academic freedom while bringing a distinctive voice and lens, rooted in the Christian faith, Lutheran understanding and heritage, and liberal arts tradition.
7. Anchored. Concordia is anchored by its Northeast Portland residential campus which is a spirited, vibrant community and a hub from which other relationships and offerings emanate.
8. Agile. Concordia embraces organizational learning and readily explores new opportunities and practices in light of its core values and vision, facilitating learning across the university and continuously transforming itself in ways that are responsive to student needs and changes in the environment. (Concordia University, 2010a, p. 1)

In early 2010, the strategic planning task force was transitioned into an operational strategic planning council (hereafter referred to as "SPC"), intended to implement and manage the strategic planning process in alignment with the 2020 vision. The strategic planning timeline that the SPC was charged with managing consisted of 18-month planning cycles, with an iterative mechanism for reviewing and refreshing the vision every four years, constituting a term of service for the SPC members. Between these 18-month planning cycles, the strategic plans created by the cycles would be implemented through a series of initiatives approved by the SPC. These initiatives would

be supported by outcomes measures, in order to create an evidence-based approach to planning, assessment, and continuous improvement in alignment with the model. Further, the timeline was designed to be intentional regarding re-examination of the vision in light of internal and external environmental scans. Figure 1 illustrates this timeline.

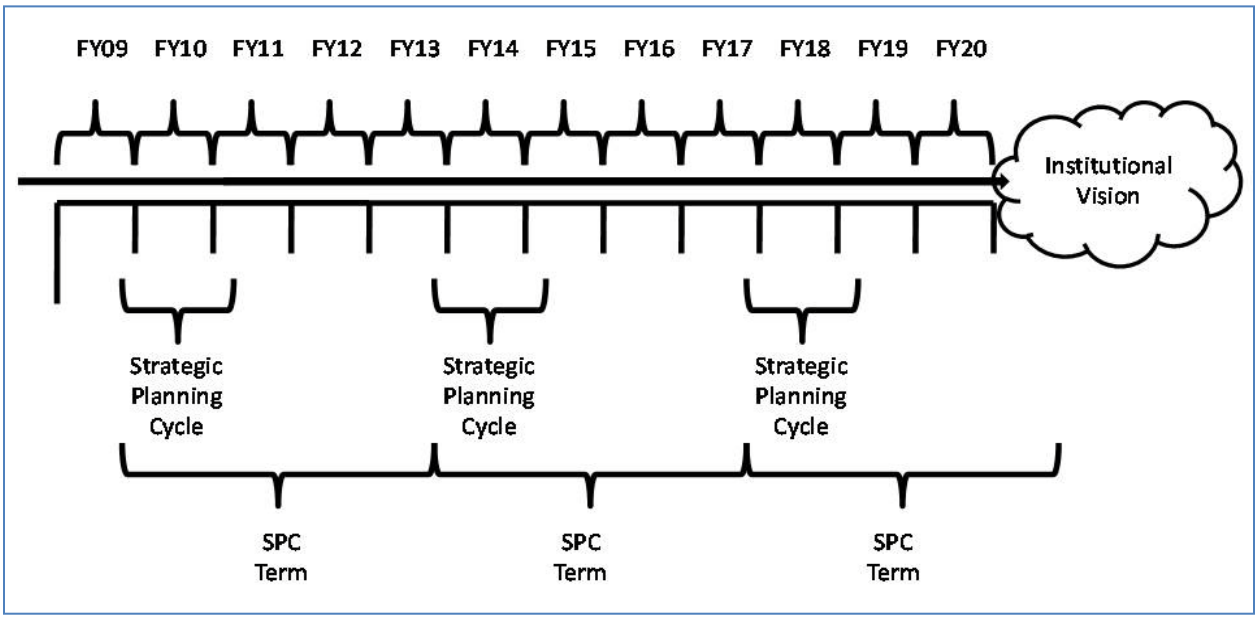

Figure 1. Concordia University Strategic Planning Timeline (Concordia University, 2010b). Used with permission.

As an outcome of the environmental scanning and subsequent visioning process, Concordia leaders made the decision to remain firmly rooted in the institution's heritage and values while continuing to evolve to support the needs of the students, faculty, alumni, and other internal and external constituents that form its stakeholder base. Further, Concordia leaders became committed to an iterative continuous improvement process to ensure that evidence of outcomes from initiatives would flow into the process to inform decision-making. Throughout the process of engagement with a broad constituent base (community members, donors, board members, alumni, students, parent, staff and faculty), Concordia leaders recognized the need to include input from all

stakeholders into its strategic planning process. Further, Concordia leaders recognized that sustaining a continuous improvement process, reliant on an openness to share data from the assessment of outcomes, would require a supportive culture and climate, with embedded trust and a willingness to change. Like other institutional leaders, specifically in the higher education industry (Lin, 2007), Concordia leaders recognized the need for a better understanding of their organizational culture and climate in order to support this effort, leading to the initiation of this study.

Conclusion

This literature review provides the background information needed to support the research study. The researcher first operationalized the concepts of organizational culture and climate and narrowed the climate dimensions to be used in this study by examining prior research. The relevance of a continuous improvement approach in higher education was noted as well. The literature review also introduced Concordia University's strategic planning process in order to provide context for the case. Concordia appears to possess a continuous improvement environment in which to explore the organizational culture and climate dimensions that contribute to creating and maintaining such an environment.

In chapter 3 the proposed method for this research study will be introduced. This method was selected based on best practices in research into organizational culture (Creswell, 2003; Flick, 2007; Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Schein, 2004). The proposed method was designed specifically to respond to the need to understand the culture and climate in place at Concordia University, a small, private, Christian university.

Chapter 3 - Method

This study was undertaken to respond to the need to understand the impact of culture and climate dimensions on a continuous improvement initiative at a small, private, Christian university. The method for this study will be described in this chapter, including a description of the problem, the research strategy, the sample, the approach to data gathering, analysis and reporting, and the risks, limitations, and significance of the study.

The Problem

Like many other contemporary universities, Concordia is faced with increasing competitive pressures and demands for accountability from a range of external constituents and accrediting bodies. Additionally, Concordia has the desire to remain grounded in its core values and traditions, while responding to a rapidly changing external environment that places demands on not only the university, but the students who study there (Concordia University, 2010a). Concordia's strategic planning process is based on an iterative process of setting measurable goals, gathering data, assessing results, and making adjustments as needed. The leadership at Concordia knows that the success of this strategic planning effort relies on the engagement of its employees, and wishes to better understand the culture and climate dimensions in place that affect employee engagement in improvement efforts.

Research Strategy

A qualitative research method was used. Rudestam and Newton (2007) recommend a qualitative approach when researchers strive to "explore phenomena in their natural environment" (p. 32). Qualitative methods are also linked to a constructivist knowledge claim, wherein "knowledge is not 'found' or 'discovered' from existing facts,

but constructed as the invention of an active, engaged mind" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 35). This constructivist approach is well suited to cultural and climate analysis intended to enable members of the organization to "identify important cultural assumptions and to evaluate the degree to which those assumptions aid or hinder some changes that the organization is trying to make" (Schein, 2004, p. 337).

Creswell (2003) recommends that "qualitative researchers choose from among five possibilities, including narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory" (p. 183). Further, Creswell specifies case study or grounded theory as the best choices for studies that explore "activities, processes, and events" and ethnography as a means to "learn about broad culture-sharing behavior of individuals or groups" (p. 183). Flick (2007) indicates that "ethnographies are often planned and done as case studies – a specific problem or question is studied in a specific context, which can sometimes be a culture or a country" (p. 92). Thus, an ethnographic case study was deemed the most adequate research strategy for addressing the research problem in this case.

Addressing the methodology supportive of an ethnographic case study, Creswell (2003) suggested that researchers "position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences" (p. 8). Schein (2004) recommended a methodology he refers to as the "clinical research model" as "most appropriate for cultural deciphering" (p. 206). The clinical research model "makes explicit two fundamental assumptions: (1) it is not possible to study a human system without intervening in it, and (2) one can only fully understand a human system by trying to change it" (p. 210). Therefore, it is Schein's

assertion that a qualitative method, with a combination of "ethnography, participant observation, content analysis of stories, myths, rituals, symbols, other artifacts" (Schein, 2004, p. 205) as well as "semistructured interviews and projective tests that still require the researcher's interpretation but add the data from the interaction itself to aid in that interpretation" (p. 206) with the researcher "combining some of the best elements of the clinical and the participant observer" (p. 209) is most appropriate. Schein further recommended that the researcher personally "analyze carefully what he or she may genuinely have to offer the organization and work toward a psychological contract in which the organization benefits in some way" (p. 209). These principles were followed throughout the implementation of this research study.

Schein (2004) offers the following conclusions related to the recommended cultural assessment approach:

- Culture can be assessed by means of various individual and group interview processes.
- Culture cannot be assessed by means of surveys or questionnaires.
- A cultural assessment is of little value unless it is tied to some organizational problem or issue.
- In any cultural assessment process one should be sensitive to the presence of subcultures and be prepared to do separate assessments of them in order to determine their relevance to what the organization is trying to do.
- Culture can be described and assessed at the artifact, espoused values, or shared tacit assumptions level. (Schein, 2004, pp. 361-362)

Following Schein's (2004) direction, the strategy for this research study included an ethnographic approach wherein the researcher is also an organizational member. Further, participant observation was combined with semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and content analysis of artifacts from the target organization, providing a triangulation of data and addressing potential problems of construct validity through multiple sources of evidence collected from the same phenomenon (Yin, 2009).

Although this approach included an ethnographic component, it is also strongly rooted in a case study design. Yin (2009) outlined five essential components of case study research design: theoretical propositions, study questions, units of analysis, the logic linking the data to the propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings. The following paragraphs detail the approach that was used to fulfill these five essential components.

Theoretical Propositions

Yin (2009) asserts that "for case studies, theory development as part of the design phase is essential, whether the ensuing case study's purpose is to develop or test theory" (p. 35). Further, he suggests that "the appropriately designed theory also is the level at which the generalization of the case study results will occur" (p. 38). Yin recommends an approach of "analytic generalization" in which "a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study" (p. 38).

In this case, Schein's (2004) approach to cultural assessment as well as a model developed from previous research by Cameron et al. (1987), Koys and Decoitis (1991), Liker and Hoseus (2008), O'Donovan (2007), Quinn and Kimberly (1984), and Zammuto and Krakower (1991) was used to inform data collection in this case. In addition to

conducting the research, the researcher was a participant in the research study, with impressions as a participant in action informing the interpretation of the data (Flick, 2002), further adding to the assumption validation process. The following assumptions were used to inform data collection and the resulting findings.

Assumption #1: Accurate assessment of the underlying assumptions and shared values within a culture and climate can provide valuable information to organizations as they attempt to implement change.

Assumption #2: Examination of artifacts and dialogue with organizational members can provide valuable data that can be analyzed to better understand an organizational culture and climate.

Assumption #3: The experiences and impressions of new-comers to an organization can yield valuable insights into the organization culture and climate that has been formed and reinforced over time.

Assumption #4: Within organizational culture and climate, it is possible for sub-culture and climates to form, with unique values and assumptions that guide their behaviors. The values, assumptions, and resultant behaviors of sub-cultures might or might not be in alignment with the primary organizational culture and climate. It is assumed that evidence of sub-cultures that are misaligned with Concordia's primarily organizational culture and climate will be present in this case.

Assumption #5: There are specific climate dimensions that define the experience of living and working within a culture and climate that can provide insight into the behaviors of its members.

Assumption #6: A climate of cohesion, trust, support, recognition, innovation, and tradition, and with an absence of scapegoating and resistance to change, is the optimal environment for supporting continuous improvement efforts.

Study Questions

Yin (2009) suggests two levels of questions for a single case study. Level 1 questions are those asked of specific interviewees. These questions are detailed in the following paragraphs, and were used in the focus group sessions and the semi-structured interviews. Level 2 questions are those that the researcher asks of the case. These questions, also detailed in the following paragraphs, were used to structure the focus group discussions. Yin asserts that "for the case study protocol, explicitly articulating the Level 2 questions is of much greater importance than any attempt to identify the Level 1 questions" (p. 87). These Level 2 questions form the underlying focus and serve to guide the inquiry. For this reason, the study will begin with a focus on the Level 2 questions in the focus group sessions, which were held before the semi-structured interviews were conducted.

Level 2 questions for this case include:

1. How do we best apply the research from previous studies related to the impact of culture and climate dimensions within the unique setting of an existing organization?
2. How do the underlying assumptions and shared values within the culture of Concordia support or constrain the university's ability to engage in continuous improvement?
3. Why do these underlying assumptions and shared values exist?

4. How do members of the Concordia University staff and faculty perceive their experience in terms of the climate dimensions under study?

Level 1 questions relate directly to the assessment of the climate dimensions of cohesion, trust, support, recognition, innovation, tradition, scapegoating, and resistance to change within the target institution. These questions were derived from the previously documented research in order to ensure validity through comparison with previous studies.

Level 1 questions for the case included two sets – those that were used in the focus groups and those that were used in the individual semi-structured interviews. All Level 1 questions were preceded by the gathering of the following information for control purposes:

Control questions:

Which College and Program are you a member of?

What is your role in the College/Program?

How long have you been an employee at Concordia University?

The following focus group questions and process are taken from Schein's (2004) ten-step cultural assessment process (pp. 340-348) and relate directly to Theoretical Assumptions 1-4 in this case.

Focus group questions and process:

(Aimed at newcomers to the group, these questions are intended to begin the discussion by brainstorming some of the artifacts present in the organization that longer-term employees may no longer notice.)

1. Can you describe your experience entering this organization? (Confine this to the first few months.)
2. What did you first notice? (Aimed at full group after the initial list is formed.) What are the visible artifacts that are present here that provide insight into the values of the group?
3. After the initial brainstorming, prompt the group for items such as dress code, physical layout of the workplace, how individuals organize and adorn their workspace, how time and space are used, what kinds of emotions a new comer might notice, what rituals or routines are evident in the daily schedule, how behaviors are rewarded and/or punished, how people succeed in the organization, etc. (Schein, 2004, p. 342).
4. All of these artifacts are captured on flip charts and arranged around the room so that participants gain a sense of "being visually surrounded by the description of their own artifacts" (Schein, 2004, p. 343).
5. Referring to the artifacts captured in steps 1-4, ask the group questions such as "what is going on here?" and "why are you doing what you are doing?" to transition from listing artifacts to examining them for espoused values (Schein, 2004, p. 343).
6. Check for consensus, and begin listing the values and beliefs to which the group agrees.
7. When the group disagrees on a particular belief or value, note any differences in sub-group and ask the group for reasons why they disagree. Note these differences for further exploration.

8. How were these values formed? Ask participants to share critical incidents in the organization's history that have helped to form these values.
9. What assumptions underlie these values?
10. How have these assumptions been reinforced over time?
11. Schein also suggests possible sub-groups to analyze specific areas that emerge from this discussion as needed, for example if there is a polarization along sub-group lines regarding any of the values or assumptions.

Semi-structured interview questions and process:

Next, the Level 1 questions were used to support Theoretical Assumptions 5 and 6, relating directly to the climate dimensions under review. These questions will be listed in order of the climate dimensions and with reference to the previous research studies from which the questions were derived. The questions have been modified from their original form because they were designed for use in quantitative studies. For this study, the questions needed to be more open-ended in order to encourage dialogue. The questions were used to structure and stimulate discussion in the semi-structured interviews. Additional probing questions emerged and were included as needed.

Questions to examine cohesion (Koys & Decoitis, 1991):

1. How much do people pitch in to help each other at Concordia?
2. How well do people tend to get along with each other?
3. In what ways do people take a personal interest in one another?
4. Do you think there is a sense of "team spirit" here? Please share examples.
5. Do you feel like you have a lot in common with the Concordia people that you know and work with? Please share examples.

Questions to examine trust and support (Koys & Decoitis, 1991):

6. In what ways does the leadership at Concordia follow through on commitments to you?
7. To what extent can you count on support from leadership when you need it?
8. In what ways do you feel you are encouraged to learn from your mistakes?

Questions to examine recognition (Koys & Decoitis, 1991):

9. To what extent do you feel that you can rely on a "pat on the back" when you perform well?
10. In what settings and circumstances is performance recognized?
11. What kinds of rewards are typically given for performance or service?
12. Do you believe the leadership at Concordia knows what your strengths are?

Questions to examine innovation and tradition (Koys & Decoitis, 1991; O'Donovan, 2007):

13. Can you share examples of when Concordia leadership has encouraged faculty to develop their ideas?
14. Can you share examples of when Concordia leadership has encouraged faculty to try new ways of doing their job?
15. In what ways does the leadership at Concordia encourage you to improve on previously established methods?
16. In what ways are you encouraged to find new ways around old problems?
17. To what extent do people at Concordia "talk up" new ways of doing things?

Questions to examine scapegoating and resistance to change (Cameron et al., 1987; Liker & Hoseus, 2008):

18. Can you share examples of resistance to change at Concordia?
19. Why do you think that this resistance is/is not in place?
20. What do you think the organization stands to lose through the changes that are being proposed?
21. Do you fear that the values and mission of Concordia are at risk through some of the changes being proposed? If so, in what ways?
22. Can you share examples where new ideas or alternatives were rejected?
23. Can you share examples where new ideas failed and there was damage to individuals or the organization as a result?

Units of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this case was Concordia University in Portland, Oregon. Specifically, focus was placed on the full-time faculty and administrative staff in each of the Colleges – the College of Education, College of Health and Human Services, College of Theology, Arts, and Sciences, and the School of Management. These sub-units made up the academic environment studied at the university and are the primary units that the university relies upon for its continuous improvement efforts.

Logic Linking the Data to the Propositions

Yin (2009) recommends maintaining a strong "chain of evidence" (p. 122) as the case study data are collected. Yin asserts that the meticulous documentation of the procedures followed in the case can be instrumental in supporting reliability of the information gathered and allow the reader to "follow the derivation of any evidence from initial researcher questions to ultimate case study conclusions" (p. 122). To ensure that

this chain of evidence is maintained, Yin recommends creating a case study database, researcher narratives, and detailed field notes. Yin also suggests developing categories for organizing the data before collection begins, and then modifying and adding to the categories as relevant data are gathered that aligns to or challenges the category structure or that supports completely new ideas, resulting in new categories. These recommendations were followed in this case study.

The case study database was created before collection began, and included categories for the data that were mapped to the assumptions and Level 1 and 2 study questions. These categories were named for the climate dimensions under study: (a) cohesion, (b) trust, (c) support, (d) recognition, (e) innovation, (f) tradition, (g) scapegoating, (h) resistance to change, (i) other, and (j) irrelevant. After each focus group session and individual interview, the case study database was updated by the researcher with the detailed notes from the sessions. Initial categorization of the data was then conducted by the researcher, with the category of *other* used to label data that seemed relevant, but did not align to an initial category. The category *irrelevant* was used to label data that did not align to a category and was not deemed relevant by the researcher.

The case study database was also used to house data gleaned from the analysis of artifacts offered by participants that are representative of the culture and climate in the target organization. Examples of the artifacts included minutes from faculty business meetings and faculty forums that have been focused on the strategic planning process and core theme development. Additionally, the case study database was used to collect observations made as the researcher engaged with the case as a participant-observer. Yin (2009) suggests that the maintenance of a complete and accurate case study database

ensures that “in principle, other investigators can review the evidence directly and not be limited to the written case study report” (p. 121). A rigorous documentation process was followed in this case to accomplish the objective of replication recommended by Yin.

Yin (2009) describes the researcher narrative as “a special practice that should be used more frequently” (p. 121). He suggests that the researcher compose narratives upon completion of each phase of data collection, representing the researcher’s “attempt to integrate the available evidence and to converge upon the facts of the matter or their tentative interpretation” (p. 121). This process is intended to be an analytic one and to aid in the eventual analysis that will be conducted at the end of the case study process. The researcher in this case created narratives after each of the focus groups. These narratives were used to summarize the session and to include the researcher’s impressions as part of the data, following Schein’s (2004) suggestion to include data that “require the researcher’s interpretation but add the data from the interaction itself to aid in that interpretation” (p. 206).

Criteria for Interpreting Findings

The creation and maintenance of the case study database provided a structured alignment between assumptions, case study questions, and the data that was collected throughout the study. Further, categories were created within the database for alignment of data from the various methods deployed. The criteria for interpreting findings were derived from the alignment between the data gathered and the assumptions, study questions, and categories defined. Further categories emerged from the data, specifically

from data coded as "other" and were used to organize the emerging themes that came from focus group and interview conversations.

The Sample

This case study followed protocols for single-case design (Yin, 2009). The single case studied was Concordia University. Among other conditions, Yin suggests that a single-case design is adequate when the unit under study is "a representative or typical case" (p. 52) and that special care should be placed on defining the unit of analysis to ensure that the case is relevant to the issues and questions being addressed. Yin cautions against a focus on sampling design in favor of a design that can be replicated, stating that "the methodological differences between these two views are revealed by the different rationales underlying the replication as opposed to sampling designs" (p. 54). Sampling logic is based on the goal of taking resulting data from a sample and applying that to a broader population. Yin asserts that "any application of this sampling logic to case studies would be misplaced" (p. 56) since case studies are not the chosen method for generalization of findings to a broader population. Instead, Yin suggests that case studies emphasize "analytic generalization," wherein the researcher strives "to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory" (p. 43).

In this case, the sample was purposefully selected (Creswell, 2003) to respond to the specific problems faced by the target institution. Although there are many stakeholders that influence Concordia's potential for success with its continuous improvement initiative, this sample included only members of the fulltime faculty and academic administration on the Portland, Oregon campus. The sample did not include staff members, board members, students, parents, alumni, community members, or

donors, who have also been identified as key constituents. This decision was purposefully made in order to focus on the faculty and academic administration who were most closely tied with the external environment through the delivery and assessment of relevant programs to students.

Within the fulltime faculty and academic administration at Concordia's Portland campus, sampling was convenience-based (Yin, 2009). All members of the sample were invited to participate in the data collection. While no constraints on years of service were imposed on the sample, data was gathered on how long employees had been employed by the university. Data regarding years of service aided in the analysis of individual member experiences, since culture and climate is a phenomena that is developed over time and is often best demonstrated by how an organization socializes its members (Schein, 2004).

While a single-case approach was used (Yin, 2009), a number of sub-units were also monitored. These sub-units were the four individual colleges within the university (College of Education, College of Theology, Arts, and Sciences, College of Health and Human Services, and School of Management). Yin cautions against focusing too much on the sub-units while placing the holistic view of the organization at risk. However, because it is possible that differences in sub-culture and climate will exist at the sub-unit level (Yin, 2009), data was collected on the college to which each participant belonged, in order to monitor responses for deviation from overarching themes or specific issues that exist only at the sub-unit level.

Data Collection

Flick (2007) suggests forming focus groups that "cover the range of experiences or attitudes toward the issue" (p. 31). In this case, a broadly inclusive approach was taken

to ensure that every fulltime faculty member at Concordia had the opportunity to participate. The schedule for the focus group meetings was arranged in such a way that all of the fulltime faculty had the opportunity to join one of the sessions at a time when they were not teaching. In order to accommodate the scheduling requirements, focus groups were held during weekdays in the mornings and afternoons, as well as during regular faculty meetings that were held during early evenings. A total of 70 faculty were invited to participate in one of the sessions. A total of 22 participants responded to the invitation and were included in the data gathered through focus groups and semi-structured interviews.

Following Schein's (2004) cultural assessment design, participants were engaged in the focus group sessions as a full group. The groups were designed to include representation from each of the four sub-units (College of Health and Human Services, College of Education, College of Theology, Arts, and Sciences, and School of Management). The focus group sessions ranged in size from 3 participants to 8 participants. There were four focus group sessions conducted, each spanning multiple sessions at the request of the participants.

Following the focus groups, semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals in order to further clarify the data that were collected in the focus groups and look for individual deviation or reinforcement of the data collected. The sampling for this step of the process was emergent, allowing for the inclusion of additional participants as needed to add further detail and clarification as the data gathering process progressed (Schein, 2004). As such, the sample also followed theoretical sampling protocols in that it was refined as more detailed questions emerged from the initial focus groups and

interviews (Yin, 2009). Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide the additional data needed to clarify and validate information gathered from the focus groups. It had been anticipated that more semi-structured interviews would be needed for clarification, as well as to mitigate the issue of busy schedules on the part of faculty at the end of Spring term. However, at the conclusion of each focus group session, as the notes were summarized and further questions emerged, each of the groups agreed to set up a second group session to finish the work, rather than meeting with the researcher individually. This consistent desire on the part of the participants to work together as groups (even though it was difficult to find common meeting times) speaks to the strength of the cohesive climate in place, which will be further described in the chapter 4, results. Therefore, the semi-structured interviews were primarily used to draw in additional faculty members who were not able to join a group session.

In addition to the focus groups and semi-structured interviews, ethnographic field notes were collected by the researcher during the data collection phase. These field notes were subjected to a rigorous documentation and peer review process as suggested by Yin (2009) in order to avoid the potential for researcher bias. The documentation and peer review process is addressed in the risks and limitations section. During the data collection phase, a number of artifacts were made available to support the observations, recollections, and experiences of the participants in the study. These artifacts included minutes from faculty business meetings and faculty forums that had been focused on the strategic planning process and core theme development. These artifacts were analyzed using content analysis protocols described in a subsequent data analysis and reporting

portion of this section. The data gleaned from this analysis was also subjected to a rigorous documentation and peer review process as suggested by Yin (2009).

Data Analysis and Reporting

The data from this study were analyzed and reported using systematic protocols of case study method as outlined by Yin (2009). Yin recommends one of five analytic protocols, including a derivative of pattern building that is referred to as "explanation building" (p. 141). This is especially appropriate for cases where a phenomena or series of events will be explained through narrative, as in this case. A key element to successful explanation building is to create strong theoretical propositions so that causal links can be created between the data and the proposed theories.

The purpose of content analysis is to "describe the content of respondent comments systematically and classify the various meanings expressed in the material" (Adams, Khan, Raeside, & White, 2007, p. 161). The content analysis process for this case was iterative, as described above for an explanation building case. Within the analysis process, specific steps included identifying the unit(s) of analysis, choosing a set of categories, coding, tabulating, illustrating the material, and drawing conclusions (Adams, et al., 2007, pp. 163-164).

Coding and categorizing of data is singled out by Flick (2007) as "the most prominent" method for analyzing qualitative data (p. 101). Flick recommends searching for relevant pieces of data, comparing them to other data, and then naming and categorizing them as the data are analyzed. Following Yin's (2009) advice to develop the categories before beginning data collection, the case study database for this case included tentative categories that were refined as data was collected and analyzed. To aid in the

development of these tentative categories, the study began with a pilot phase wherein data was gathered from an initial focus group and then categorized by the researcher and a peer reviewer. The initial categories used were: (a) cohesion, (b) trust, (c) support, (d) recognition, (e) innovation, (f) tradition, (g) scapegoating, (h) resistance to change, (i) other, and (j) irrelevant. These categories were used to align to the climate dimensions chosen for analysis in this study. The *other* category was used to allow the researcher and peer reviewers to flag data that was considered relevant, but that did not fit into any of the other categories.

The data collection and analysis process was iterative, with a re-examination of the categories as themes began to emerge from the data. For example, after the initial pilot data gathering and categorization phase, a new category labeled *vocation* was created, based on the data gathered in the first focus group. Flick (2007) suggests that through this type of process "structure is developed in the data as a step toward a comprehensive understanding of the issue, the field, and last but not least the data themselves" (p. 101).

Significance of the Study

This study has the potential to assist Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, with shaping its strategic planning efforts, supporting a key mission for the organization. Further, while generalization of the findings from this case study is not appropriate, the approach employed by this study has the potential to add to the body of best practices related to the assessment of culture and climate in support of continuous improvement efforts.

Risks and Limitations

The researcher in this study needed to be mindful of a variety of risks and limitations. First, this study was delimited to a single institution of higher education, categorized as a small, private, Christian university. While there is no intent to generalize the findings from this case to other organizations, or even other universities, care was taken to limit the focus of this research on informing the target organization by providing insight into the culture and climate dimensions studied.

This study also faces a number of potential risks, namely researcher bias, which Yin (2009) indicates is the most fundamental risk to case study research. By design, the researcher needed to become somewhat assimilated into the culture in order to experience and observe it accurately (Yin, 2009). The researcher in this case was a member of the organization, and therefore needed to be mindful of remaining in the consultant role throughout the process of data collection, analysis, and documentation of findings. Further, during the focus groups and interviews, the researcher needed to avoid leading the discussions or questions based on previous experience. The risk of researcher bias was somewhat mitigated by the relatively short tenure that the researcher had with the organization (less than one year). Also, this risk was mitigated by the training and prior experience that the researcher had with case study method, which is considered essential to effective execution of the complexity of case study research (Yin, 2009). The researcher had conducted two previous studies that were published in academic journals, one of which was based on an environment where the researcher had previously been an employee, and one that examined a professional practice in which the researcher was engaged.

To further ensure that researcher bias does not adversely affect the study, a peer review process engaging two peer reviewers was used. One of the peer reviewers held a doctorate in organizational effectiveness and more than 10 years of experience in corporate management. This individual also had more than 5 years experience in higher education leadership. The second peer reviewer had ABD status in a management doctoral program and over 20 years experience in organizational management and five years experience as a university faculty member. These two peer reviewers were selected for their experience and education in organizational management and higher education. The peer reviews engaged in actual categorization of the focus group data. The peer reviewers were provided with the verbatim notes from the focus groups (imported into the case study database) and copies of the researcher narratives. The case study database included the initial and emerging categories, as well as the *other* and *irrelevant* categories. The researcher's own categorization of the data was suppressed in this file, so that neither reviewer knew how the researcher and the other peer reviewer had categorized the data. Each peer reviewer conducted his/her own analysis of the data in the database and provided a copy back to the researcher. The researcher then added the peer reviewers' categories as an additional column to the case study database and conducted a matching exercise to highlight each piece of data that had a category match from at least two of the three categorization processes (the researcher's category choice plus each peer reviewer's category choice). Those matches are illustrated with highlighting in the case study database, demonstrated in Appendix B.

Mitigation strategies were also employed to avoid research and researcher errors. Three primary errors related to qualitative research were addressed (Kirk & Miller, 1986):

Type I errors where a researcher sees relations that do not exist;

Type II errors where a researcher rejects a relation that does exist;

Type III errors where the wrong questions are asked.

The peer review process was helpful in mitigating all three of the primary researcher errors. Additionally, the clearly documented research process, including detailed field notes, development of the case study database, and narrative summaries at critical points in the collection and analysis process, helped to mitigate the risk of error. Yin (2009) states that "the objective is to be sure that, if a later investigator followed the same procedure as described by an earlier investigator and conducted the same case study all over again, the later investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusions" (p. 43). Therefore, the focus on replicability and validity of the research process, by means of detailed documentation and rigorous peer review, was a major mitigating factor to the risk of error in this case. Further, the case study database was designed so that any interested reader would be able to examine the data, the connections between data, questions, and assumptions, and see for him or herself how the research progressed in order to reach the findings that the study presents.

A final set of risks associated with qualitative research and especially research that includes fieldwork and contact with human subjects is that of ethics. Specific ethical issues that required attention included: (a) informed consent of participants, (b) avoiding any deception of participants, (c) ensuring participant privacy, (d) maintaining accurate

data, and (e) ensuring respect for all participants (Flick, 2007). It was essential to keep these ethical concerns at the forefront during the preparation and execution of the case study process. The initial proposal for this study was submitted to the Human Subjects Review Committee at George Fox University to ensure that the case study design, including assumptions, case study questions, sampling strategy, and data collection, analysis, and reporting process followed acceptable standards. Further, all participants in the study were informed of the nature of the study as well as its specific goals and intended outputs and audience. A copy of the Informed Consent form used in this study is included in Appendix C.

Deception of participants was avoided through clear communication about the intent of the questions and the internal and external audience for the study results. Further, specific participant identities were not disclosed in the data and findings (including quotes from participants) were validated by participants before they were included in the case study database. This validation process is demonstrated with sample emails in Appendix A. Finally, ethical practices were ensured through the peer review process that examined the data and alignment to the aforementioned categories before any data or findings were shared with internal or external audiences beyond the participants.

Timing and Budget

Both Yin (2009) and Schein (2004) recommend a prolonged engagement when undertaking case study research, especially when it is focused on cultural assessment, and when ethnography is involved. Because the researcher was an employee of the target organization, assimilation into the organization had already begun. Therefore, because

the researcher did not need time early in the case for the assimilation process, the process of data collection and organization was confined to a four-month period. This time period had been set as a goal to ensure that data was gathered from faculty before they left campus for the summer. The following two months were allocated for the analysis and reporting of the data, with the result of completing the full study within a six-month timeframe.

There were no budgetary requirements for the case other than the researcher's and participants' time. All of the participants worked at the main Concordia University campus, which facilitated the gathering of data without travel between locations. The tools that were be used for collecting, categorizing, and storing the data were already available and did not require further expense.

Measuring Success of the Case Study Method

Quality in any qualitative research study is "closely linked to standardization and control of the research situation" and to "soundness of the research as a whole" (Flick, 2007). Specific to case study research, Yin (2009) recommends following a case study protocol that focuses the design of the case from the problem under study, to the assumptions, to the study questions, and documenting all of this in a way that data gathered throughout the case (regardless of method) can be aligned to their position in the protocol. In addition to providing a structured and repeatable process for conducting the case, Yin asserts that this can help the researcher avoid asking the wrong questions, which Yin contends is "actually the source of most validity errors" (Yin, 2009, p. 30) and noted as an example of Type III error by Kirk and Miller (1986).

Kirk and Miller (1986) suggest “we can never be sure that we understand all the idiosyncratic cultural implications of anything, but the sensitive, intelligent fieldworker with a good theoretical orientation and good rapport over a long period of time is the best check we can make” (p. 32). Following this advice, a structured case study protocol with documented assumptions and study questions was followed, supported by a sufficient amount of time for a well prepared researcher to gather data that could be used to support the needs of this study.

Validity was addressed through specific quality steps to include “multiple measures of the same phenomenon” (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, pp. 116-117). This was facilitated by the use of a variety of methods of data collection, including focus groups, semi-structured interviews, ethnographic field notes, and content analysis. This “diversity of method” (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 30) served to facilitate triangulation of the data from multiple sources as well as methods, addressing potential problems with construct validity (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Validity was also supported through feedback from peer reviewers and validation and verification of the data and its interpretation by participants (Flick, 2007). Further, validity was reinforced in this case by clear links from previous theory and research, with questions and collection models derived from previously documented studies. External validity was not addressed through any attempt at generalizing the findings to a broader population or even another similar university. Rather, analytical generalizability was used as a way to relate “a particular set of results to some broader theory” (Yin, 2009, p. 43). In this way, generalizability becomes “the task of the reader rather than the author of qualitative studies” (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 113).

Kirk and Miller (1986) assert that “reliability concerns the replication of the study under similar circumstances” (p. 113). Reliability of the case study protocol was optimized through the thorough design of the study and the disciplined process of documentation that was maintained throughout the data collection, interpretation, analysis, and summarization process. Yin’s (2009) advice to create a case study database that has the potential to “markedly increase the reliability of the entire case study” (p. 121) was followed. This database was the repository for everything from the design to the data and artifacts collected in the study, with the goal of allowing any reader to “follow the evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions” (Yin, 2009, p. 122).

To ensure quality in the design and execution of this study, case study protocols were designed and closely followed. Further, in the data collection, interpretation, analysis, and summarizing/reporting process, detailed documentation of all process steps and alignment of data and artifacts was maintained in the case study database. These disciplines were followed with the goal of producing a holistic case study that could be examined for its content and process as well as for the conclusions that it suggests.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research method in detail. A qualitative approach, using case study design protocols (Yin, 2009) was used in this study. Best practices in data collection, analysis, and reporting were followed in order to ensure quality and strengthen the findings of this case study.

Chapter 4 – Results

This research study examined the role of organizational culture and climate in supporting the engagement needed for successful continuous improvement efforts in a single organization. Specifically, the study focused on the organizational climate dimensions that have been linked to a culture where continuous improvement initiatives are most likely to succeed. The climate dimensions comprising the study's focus included: (a) cohesion, (b) trust, (c) support, (d) recognition, (e) innovation, (f) tradition, (g) scapegoating, (h) vocation, (i) resistance to change, (j) other, and (k) irrelevant. Each was analyzed in a single case study within a small, private, Christian university. Note that the *vocation* dimension was not on the original list, but emerged from the data, as described in the following section.

Iterative Research Process

This research study was conducted in an iterative fashion, in order to support alignment to pre-set theoretical assumptions, study questions, and data categories while still allowing for emergence of data and adjustment to the process as recommended by Yin (2009). The initiation of this study involved a proposed method that was tested through a pilot process, which included a single focus group and set of semi-structured interviews within the target organization. The pilot provided information about what worked and did not work in this specific research setting and allowed for embedding what was learned into the design of the following phases of focus group and interview sessions. For example, the original invitation to participate in the study was sent out to all eligible participants using a standard email list. This resulted in very few responses, so the invitations for the remaining focus groups pursuant to the pilot were more focused and personal, resulting in a higher response and participation rates. Both invitations are

included in Appendix A. Additionally, the intention at the conclusion of the pilot focus group was to schedule individual meetings with each participant to complete the process and answer any unanswered questions. The pilot group was firm in their preference for continuing work as a group (and not as individuals), so the option to complete the process as a group was provided to the remaining focus groups as well. This resulted in a majority of the data being collected through the focus groups, and limited the need for semi-structured interviews to only those participants who had to miss a group session or leave early.

The full study involved four focus groups, eight semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and content analysis. The diagram in Figure 2 illustrates the method that was used throughout the study.

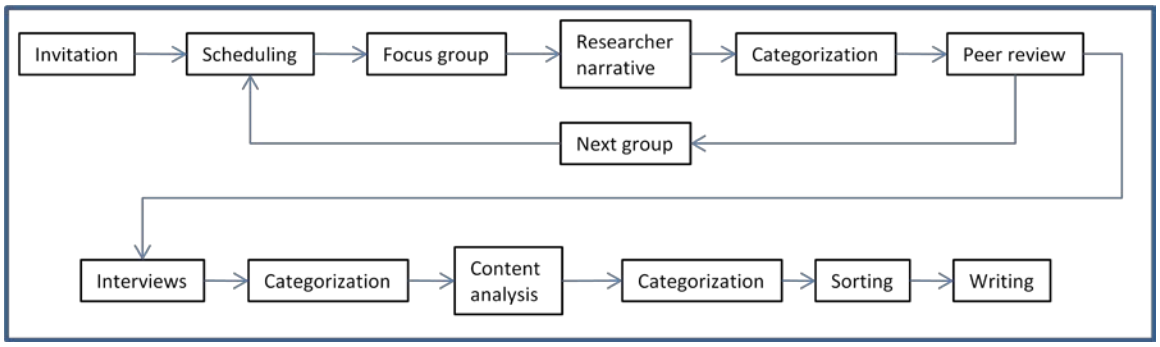

Figure 2. Iterative research process.

First, an announcement was emailed to all eligible participants, inviting them to participate in the study. This was followed by further correspondence to the pilot and subsequent focus groups. This step is represented in the box *Invitation* in Figure 2. Samples of the correspondence used in this phase of the process are included in Appendix A. The original invitation introduced the research project and invited all faculty to participate in focus group sessions. After the original invitation was sent, specific

meeting invitations were sent to groups. As the invitation process proceeded, the desired mix of demographics in the sample was managed in order to ensure good representation from each college, and to include newcomers in each group. This process is referred to as *Scheduling* in Figure 2. There were some adjustments to focus groups during this process, aimed at ensuring that good representation across colleges and years of service was maintained.

After the scheduling phase, each session was conducted. This is represented in Figure 2 by the *Focus Group* box. After each session, the notes were compiled in a document and sent back via email to the participants for their validation in the form of a *Researcher Narrative* demonstrated in Figure 2. An example of participant validation via email is included in Appendix A. This "structured layering technique" (Flick, 2002, p. 82) allowed each interviewee to assess the content from the meeting and fostered "communicative validation of the statements" by the interviewees (Flick, 2002, p. 83). Once each researcher narrative was validated, individual comments from the session were entered into the case study database. Supporting Yin's (2009) recommendation for initiating the data collection process with an initial set of categories, the categories for alignment had been pre-loaded into the database template, including open-ended categories such as "other" and "irrelevant" in order to allow for new categories to emerge throughout the process. This step is represented in Figure 2 as *Categorization*. Excerpts from the case study database that illustrate this categorization process are included in Appendix B.

Once the researcher had completed categorization, the full set of notes and researcher narratives were reviewers (for focus groups 1 and 2). This step is indicated in Figure 2 as *Peer review*. Future focus groups followed the same process of scheduling,

focus group, researcher narrative, and categorization. Only focus groups 1 and 2 included peer reviews, in order to ensure that the process was yielding data while mitigating any researcher bias.

Figure 2 demonstrates the interview process that was conducted with individuals as well. This was not a linear process, but was conducted during the same timeframe as the focus groups, based on scheduling needs. After each interview, notes were typed and shared with the interviewee, and then categorized in the case study database under the *Interview Notes* tab. This process is demonstrated on Figure 2 as *Interviews* and *Categorization*. Additionally, content from other meetings relevant to the research study was captured, added to the case study database, and analyzed for relevance to this study. This step was included in order to facilitate the addition of the researcher's observations as a participant observer in the study. Those content items and their categorization notes are included in the case study database, on the tab labeled *Content Analysis*.

The data were next sorted by category, depicted in Figure 2 as the *Sorting* process. This process involved comparing each of the three categories chosen for each data item by the researcher, peer reviewer #1, and peer reviewer #2. Each item with at least two matches was included in the content to be analyzed. Items with no matches were moved to the bottom of the content list and labeled as such. This process was conducted for the first two focus groups, with the data categorized solely by the researcher for the remaining focus groups and interviews. An excerpt from the case study database is included in Appendix B to provide a visual example of the categorization and sorting processes.

The final step in the process was the *Writing* phases, also denoted on Figure 2 as named. The writing phase involved review of the original researcher narratives to ensure that all of the key points from the data were included. This involved another analysis of the data (now sorted by category) to ensure that no relevant comments or themes were missed in the narratives.

Kvale (2007) indicates that in iterative processes such as this one, a saturation point is reached when the researcher begins hearing the same stories repeatedly, to the point where no significant new data is being collected. Saturation occurred in this case after the second focus group session. The third and fourth sessions served to reinforce and further clarify the key data that was emerging from the study, but did not serve to introduce any new ideas. Thus, the peer review process was only conducted for the first two focus groups and served to ensure that the data were being analyzed with a minimum of researcher bias so that the other focus group sessions and interviews could proceed using the model that the researcher had developed.

The Sample

There were three sampling strategies employed for this study. First, the sample for this study was purposefully selected (Creswell, 2003) to respond to the specific problems faced by the target institution. Although there are many stakeholders that influence Concordia's potential for success with its continuous improvement initiative, this sample included only members of the fulltime faculty and academic administration on the Portland, Oregon campus. The sample did not include staff members, board members, students, parents, alumni, community members, or donors, who have also been identified as key constituents. This decision was purposefully made in order to focus on the faculty

and academic administration most closely tied with the external environment through the delivery and assessment of relevant programs to students.

Second, within the fulltime faculty at Concordia's Portland campus, sampling was convenience-based (Yin, 2009). All members of the sample were invited to participate in the data collection. While no constraints on years of service were imposed on the sample, data was gathered on how long employees had been employed by the university. Data regarding years of service aided in the analysis of individual member experiences, since culture and climate are phenomena that are developed over time and are often best demonstrated by how an organization socializes its members (Schein, 2004). The participants ranged in years of service between 1 and 40, with a mean of 16 years. There were an equal number of male and female participants in the study.

Third, theoretical sampling was used as the need emerged to organize a specific focus group in response to the outcomes of the study. In one of the focus groups, it became clear to the participants that there was a need for validation of some of the historical data emerging from the discussion. Participants suggested specific names for inclusion in a future focus group to address this need. With specific names being provided, this created the condition for the third sampling technique, theoretical sampling (Patton, 2002).

While a single-case approach was used (Yin, 2009), a number of sub-units were also monitored. These sub-units were the four individual colleges within the university (College of Education, College of Theology, Arts, and Sciences, College of Health and Human Services, and School of Management). Each college was represented, with three participants from the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS), four from the

School of Management (SOM), five from the College of Education (COE), and ten from the College of Theology, Arts, and Science (CTAS). This distribution is considered appropriate due to its match of the overall distribution of faculty in the college sub-units, as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5

Participation by College

College	Total membership	Participated in study	% Participating
CHHS	8	3	38%
SOM	15	4	27%
COE	18	5	28%
CTAS	29	10	34%

Data Collection

Following Schein's (2004) cultural assessment design, participants were engaged in the focus group sessions as a full group. The groups were designed to include representation from each of the four sub-units (College of Health and Human Services, College of Education, College of Theology, Arts, and Sciences, and School of Management). The focus group sessions ranged in size from three participants to eight participants. There were four focus group sessions conducted, each spanning multiple sessions at the request of the participants.

The first focus group served as the pilot for the focus group process. Schein's (2004) cultural assessment approach was followed, as detailed in chapter 3. The session was opened with an overview of the concepts of organizational culture and climate. The participants were introduced to the three components of culture as defined by Schein,

including artifacts, values, and underlying assumptions. Participants were asked to consider artifacts as those things that they could see, hear, and/or feel that were informative regarding the culture of the institution. Notes were taken on flip charts in full view of the participants during this discussion. Next, participants were asked to brainstorm regarding the meaning of these artifacts, and how they might be interpreted in relation to what the organization values.

The focus group discussion was not linear in nature but was allowed to follow the thread of conversation that emerged between participants in response to the researcher's initial questions. As such, participants alternated between describing artifacts, discussing their meaning, and telling stories about the organization that illustrated their points. The stories told by the participants were informative to the summary of critical incidents that is included in this chapter. Further, the participants suggested that the researcher form a focus group to study the history of the institution, and to ensure that the history was accurately demonstrated through a series of critical incidents that longtime faculty would be able to remember. Specific names of faculty that would be helpful in this process were shared, which resulted in the formation of the second focus group and the decision to focus that group on critical incidents.

When the time allotted for the first focus group had been used, several participants indicated that they had other meetings or classes to attend. One participant had to leave early, indicating that she had students waiting, and initiating a flurry of discussion regarding the importance of students and the focus on teaching as not only a *job* but a *calling* to which the faculty have responded. Thus, there was overwhelming support for this participant to leave the session early. This anecdote was noted as a

process observation that lent further support to the categorization that emerged as the data were analyzed, resulting in the addition of the *vocation* category to the data model.

As the participants prepared to leave the focus group session, the researcher asked if she might schedule individual interviews with each participant to further clarify the data gathered in the session. The participants unanimously agreed that they would rather schedule a follow-up group session, as they valued the interaction and dialogue in the session and wanted to finish the process together. This desire for group work over individual work was also noted as a process observation that informed the design of the focus groups to follow, and was repeated in each of the three following focus groups, with participants preferring to schedule repeat sessions as needed so that they could work together. Not only did this desire for group work inform the design of the study, but it also reinforced the strength of cohesion as a cultural value, which was evident in the later analysis of the notes collected during focus group and interview sessions.

At the conclusion of the first focus group, the process as well as the categorization of data was reviewed, and adjustments made for future focus groups. Specifically, the *vocation* category was added to the list of categories in the case study database based on the insistence by participants that their faculty role was a *calling* and not a *job*. Additionally, follow-up group sessions were added, and the attendee list and topic for the second focus group was designed in order to obtain a clear and detailed account of the history of critical incidents that had informed the development of culture at the institution.

The remaining three focus groups were conducted in similar fashion. The second group focused on critical incidents, and provided a rich accounting of the history of the

institution. This group also provided insight into the perceptions of the critical incidents, beginning to paint a picture of the attitudes toward their leadership, as reinforced by how the leaders have responded to those events (Schein, 2004). As mentioned previously, each focus group opted for additional sessions to finish their work, rather than scheduling individual interviews. After the second group was concluded, the same process of researcher narrative, categorization, and peer review was conducted.

The third and fourth focus groups covered similar topics, with the third group following the same process of naming artifacts, brainstorming values, and sharing critical incidents that was used for the first focus group. The fourth focus group was additionally asked to describe the experience of working at the institution, with the intent of further focusing on the climate dimensions that had been used to form the categories for coding the data from the study.

While the focus groups all opted for further group work instead of individual interviews, semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals who were not able to join a group, or were not able to join follow up sessions with their group. This allowed the researcher to further clarify the data that were collected in the focus groups and look for individual deviation or reinforcement of the data collected. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide the additional data needed to clarify and validate information gathered from the focus groups. It had been anticipated that more semi-structured interviews would be needed for clarification, as well as to mitigate the issue of busy schedules on the part of faculty at the end of the school year. However, due to the desire of participants to conduct most of this process in groups, the semi-structured

interviews were primarily used to draw in additional faculty members who were not able to join or complete a group session.

In addition to the focus groups and semi-structured interviews, ethnographic field notes were collected by the researcher during the data collection phase. These notes are organized in the case study database under the tab labeled *Observations* and include observations that the researcher made during and after focus groups and interviews, as well as general observations made by the researcher during the process of assimilating into the culture.

During the data collection phase, a number of artifacts were also made available to support the observations, recollections, and experiences of the participants in the study. These artifacts included minutes from faculty meetings and faculty forums that had been focused on the strategic planning process and core theme development. These artifacts were analyzed and the notes organized in the case study database under the tab labeled *Content Analysis*.

Data Analysis

The data collected through focus groups, semi-structured interviews, observation, and content analysis were documented in the case study database in the following labeled tabs: (a) focus group notes, (b) interview notes, (c) observations, (d) content analysis, (e) categories, and (f) demographics. Throughout the data collection process, this case study database was updated. The database was also used as a source of the notes sent to peer reviewers, and for capture of the categorization returned by peer reviewers as well as the categorization performed by the researcher. Excerpts from the case study database are included in Appendix B to illustrate the categorization and sorting processes.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the data collection process was iterative, with the results of focus groups informing the direction of future conversations. Further, peer reviewers were used to help mitigate the risk of researcher bias by examining the verbatim notes from the focus groups, as well as the researcher narratives. As a means of analyzing the notes, each peer reviewer was asked to pick from a list of categories that best described each note in the database at the end of the first two focus groups. The peer reviewers were encouraged to use the *other* category for anything that they did not feel had a good match. The categories they were asked to use were: (a) cohesion, (b) trust, (c) support, (d) recognition, (e) innovation, (f) tradition, (g) scapegoating, (h) vocation, (i) resistance to change, (j) other, and (k) irrelevant. As a result of this researcher and peer reviewer matching process, 119 of 133 comments collected from the first two focus groups were matched with the same category by at least one reviewer selecting the same category as the researcher. In some cases (55 of the 133 comments), both peer reviewers and the researcher selected the same category for focus group comments. As a result of the matching process, only comments with matches by at least the researcher and one peer reviewer were used in the final data analysis. In order to ensure a minimum amount of researcher bias, any comment that was not categorized the same by at least one reviewer was eliminated from the data. An excerpt from the case study database illustrating the sorting process is included in Appendix B.

The intent of this rigorous data capture, documentation, and review process was to maintain a complete and accurate record of the study to ensure that “in principle, other investigators can review the evidence directly and not be limited to the written case study

report" (Yin, 2009, p. 121). A rigorous documentation and analysis process was followed in this case to accomplish this objective of replication recommended by Yin.

Findings

As a member of the organization that was being studied, the researcher entered this process with a number of expectations. Specifically, the researcher expected to find a fairly cohesive organization, with members who were highly supportive of each other, but with the potential for some resistance to change. This expectation had been formed based on the months the researcher had spent in meetings with the administration, and through interaction with faculty in meetings and retreats in the months leading up to the beginning of the study.

Two of the four critical incidents outlined in the paragraphs to follow were already familiar to the researcher. Through previous interactions with administration and faculty, the researcher had developed the expectation that the reason that both of these incidents had raised concerns was that the incidents involved using technology to deliver learning experiences to students. This, along with comments that had been made in meetings (by the administration) regarding resistance to technology, had led this researcher to expect to encounter resistance and maybe even fear of technology use in the data collected in the focus groups and interviews. However, the interpretation of these incidents uncovered information that was completely new. As the data were analyzed and categorized, a fresh picture of the situation began to emerge that was richer and more grounded in the institution's history than the researcher expected, reinforcing the definition of organizational ethnography as providing a thick description of organizational life (Geertz, 1973). Instead of fulfilling the researcher's expectations, the

findings from this study provided a deeper description and context to the incidents described, allowing for meaning to emerge from the organizational members who experienced these incidents, as well as those who had been influenced by these incidents as the stories were told and retold in the process of becoming part of the organizational memory.

The following pages will outline the findings of this study. Yin (2009) suggests a number of general strategies and specific analytic techniques for use in "laying the groundwork for high-quality case studies" (p. 162). "The first and most preferred strategy (for analyzing case study data) is to follow the theoretical propositions that led to your case study" (Yin, 2009, p. 130). Following Yin's model, the findings that are relevant to the theoretical assumptions formed as a framework for the study will first be shared. Second, the critical incidents that emerged from the study will be detailed. Third, the climate dimensions that were found to be most prominent in the data (and most descriptive of the culture) will be summarized. Following these findings, chapter 5 will include a discussion of the findings, including strengths and opportunities for the university as it continues to evolve its strategic planning and assessment process.

Theoretical Assumptions

Assumption #1: *Accurate assessment of the underlying assumptions and shared values within a culture and climate can provide valuable information to organizations as they attempt to implement change.* This assumption was supported in this study. The focus groups were able to detail artifacts and values that were informative to the understanding of the culture and climate in place. For example, participants described an environment with "neighbors playing with dogs on the green," "library used as a

gathering place for students as well as community members," "collegiality among faculty," and where "culture descends on students," all aligned to a highly cohesive culture. Further, chapter 5 will include the strengths and weaknesses identified by this study as informative to the implementation of change efforts, including the strategic planning and assessment process that drove the initiation of the study.

Assumption #2: *Examination of artifacts and dialogue with organizational members can provide valuable data that can be analyzed to better understand an organizational culture and climate.* This assumption was also supported. By beginning this process with an initial set of categories and a prescribed process as suggested by Schein (2004), the collection and analysis of artifacts and dialogue was made possible. Further, the value of dialogue and working in a group setting to examine issues of culture was reinforced by the insistence of the groups in this study to continue working together, and the resistance to split off into individual interviews at several points in the process.

Assumption #3: *The experiences and impressions of new-comers to an organization can yield valuable insights into the organization culture and climate that has been formed and reinforced over time.* This assumption was supported. New-comers to the organization were asked to share their experiences in dialogue with other, more seasoned members of the focus groups. For example, after one new-comer described her first weeks on the job with comments such as "low structure – there isn't any" and with a "buy it yourself mentality," other focus group member recalled that the sense of autonomy and lack of barriers, boundaries, procedures and structures that they have come to take for granted, reinforcing the shared sense that there are "no (documented) processes but an attitude that we'll figure it out." The new-comers were instrumental in

providing fresh recollections of the experience of assimilating into the culture. This perspective aided in stimulating dialogue inside the focus groups such that the more seasoned members were encouraged to examine the artifacts and experiences that they had come to take for granted over time.

Assumption #4: *Within organizations it is possible for sub-cultures and climates to form, with unique values and assumptions that guide their behaviors. The values, assumptions, and resultant behaviors of sub-cultures might or might not be in alignment with the primary organizational culture and climate. It was assumed that evidence of sub-cultures that were misaligned with Concordia's primarily organizational culture and climate would be present in this case.* This assumption was not supported. There was no significant deviation within the data based on sub-culture, but instead there were comments made that imply that sub-cultures are subjugated to the overarching culture, such as "we are of the flock," "self-serving ideas don't meet mission – must serve everyone," "committees got me in with other colleges," and "on a daily basis we work with other groups across campus." Additionally, a story was shared in one focus group of a new building being keyed with matching keys for all faculty in order to simulate the experience the faculty had in a previous, older building where keys were shared by faculty members, across different colleges. While it is still possible that sub-cultures exist, this study cannot provide evidence of sub-cultures that have the potential to influence this organization's objectives.

Assumption #5: *There are specific climate dimensions that define the experience of living and working within a culture that can provide insight into the behaviors of its members.* This assumption was supported. There were three climate dimensions that were

strongly supported in the data (cohesion, support, and trust) with comments such as "we're in a relationship," "more family than business feel," "I came back to Concordia from (another university) because of the 'family feel' of the place," and "people are encouraged at the same time as challenged intellectually" with the "understanding that we are all fragile, flawed, and still okay." Further, there was one climate dimension that was not pre-defined but emerged strongly in the data (vocation) with comments such as "everyone (is) dedicated to the cause," "the default answer here is yes," "we're all Christians," "I can share my faith here – it's an opportunity and an obligation," and "freer to be who I am here." Other climate dimensions were less pronounced, but consistently used to categorize data by the researcher and peer reviewers (recognition, tradition, innovation, resistance to change), and one climate dimension that was nearly absent from the data (scapegoating) with comments such as "haven't seen any blatant conflict or turf battles between colleges," "people don't lose jobs for making mistakes," "not okay to blame," and "utter forgiveness."

Assumption #6: *A climate of cohesion, leadership trust, support, recognition, and innovation, and with an absence of resistance to change and scapegoating is the optimal environment for supporting continuous improvement efforts.* This assumption was partially supported by the data collected and analyzed in this study, with data indicating that cohesion, support, an absence of resistance to change and an absence of scapegoating are present in this culture. There was low evidence of the presence of recognition and innovation as significant climate dimensions in this organization, and also evidence that there is a low degree of leadership trust. The assumption that these climate dimensions are relevant to a culture of continuous improvement is based on the literature review in

chapter 2, which includes an alignment of these climate dimensions with a culture of continuous improvement through previous research studies (Collins, 2001; Collins & Porras, 2004; Liker & Hoseus, 2008; Peters, 2010; Senge, 1990).

Critical Incidents

Yin (2009, p. 130) indicates that "all empirical studies . . . have a story to tell" and that "a descriptive approach may help to identify the appropriate causal links to be analyzed" (Yin, 2009, p. 131). The following sections will draw from the data gathered and summarized in the researcher narratives in this case. The stories will be introduced as a series of critical incidents that emerged from the data.

Schein (2004) refers to critical incidents as experiences in the history of an organization that are informative to the development of the organization's culture. The importance of these incidents lies in the reaction to the incidents by the members of the organization, and leads to reinforcement of assumptions regarding how future incidents will be responded to, based on the history observed and shared over time. It is important to note that the narratives captured from focus groups and interviews for this study do not represent a factual account of these incidents, but rather they represent a perception of how these incidents occurred, their underlying meaning, and questions and concerns about the organization's future based on the expectation of similar reactions to future incidents.

This study uncovered four critical incidents. Three of the four incidents were described in all four of the focus groups and five of the eight semi-structured interviews. One of the four incidents was described in three of the four focus groups and one of the semi-structured interviews. The critical incidents were not suggested to the participants,

but emerged through discussion of the artifacts, values, and incidents that had informed the culture. The three incidents mentioned in all four focus groups and five interviews were: (a) the reduction in force, (b) the launch of a specific online program with an external partner, and (c) the approval of a new program. The fourth incident that was mentioned in three of the four focus groups and one interview was the relocation of the chapel.

Reduction in force. Without prompting by the facilitator, three of four focus groups described this incident as one of the most critical in the formation of the current culture at Concordia. The reduction in force that was conducted in 2003 was described as "so disarming," and as leaving the faculty "still injured, bearing scars." One participant added, "thank God we're not having another RIF," indicating that maybe the drive to increase enrollments and bring in more money was good if it was avoiding a repeat of that experience. In one of the semi-structured interviews, a participant added "there have been some trust violations and perceived injustices" with the reduction in force described as a time of "hand wringing" regarding "how it was done" with "some hard feelings" still remaining. In the second focus group, participants explained that Concordia had missed enrollment targets in the term coinciding with the reduction (Fall term), but that the decision to cut positions was not made until just three days before the beginning of Fall term. They described a phone call to each of the Deans telling each that he would have to cut someone. Twenty four employees were terminated during this time, representing an 8% reduction in the fulltime workforce. One participant in this group said he knew what had happened, and that the enrollment dip was due to an administrative error. However, he said that there was no blame and no admission of this error publicly. He used the

phrase “utter forgiveness” to describe what happens when someone makes a big mistake at Concordia. Other participants agreed that “people don’t lose jobs for making mistakes.” It is worth noting that these comments regarding the lack of scapegoating and the description of the culture as one where “people don’t lose jobs for making mistakes” were embedded within a story of downsizing where 24 people did lose their jobs. Even though the downsizing resulted in job loss, that job loss was not attributed to any mistake or error on the part of those losing their jobs. There was no evidence in the focus group or interview sessions that any participant felt fearful of retribution or blame for making a mistake, even though job loss has been a real and significant part of the cultural story as evidenced in the description of this incident.

Other focus groups and interview participants also mentioned the reduction in force, describing a situation before the reduction where faculty had committed to service at Concordia and considered themselves “part of a family.” One participant noted that this incident served as the first realization on the part of the faculty that Concordia was a business, expressing the recollection of a “shared sense of family/community transitioned to ‘this is business’ – it was shocking, a jolt, I had not thought of our relationship here as a business before.” Participants went on to describe this as a transition point when their leadership emphasized that decisions would be made for “bottom line” reasons as well as in service to the institution’s mission.

While participants understood the rationality of this transition, they also expressed a sense of fear that this type of response would be used in future times of financial difficulty and a discomfort with how the process was managed by their leadership. Participants agreed that they can now (in retrospect) see why the reduction was

necessary, adding that it wasn't so much "why it was done" but "how it was done" that continues to bother them and that this incident causes many to be concerned about the reaction to future downturns and the overreliance on new programs and partnerships for revenue in the future.

Launch of a specific online program with an external partner. A third party partnership put in place to launch a specific online program was the second example used to describe critical incidents. This launch was described as "happening very fast" and being a decision that was questioned due to concerns that the program and partnership are not in synch with the "Concordia ethos." Participants suggested that they weren't concerned so much about the program being delivered online, as there were other successful online programs in Concordia's history. The concern was more about the partnership and a fear of loss of control and less about technology use in the online setting. The feeling that we "can't always control" the program or the effect it might have on Concordia's brand image was expressed.

In general terms, the group mentioned that some of the new initiatives have been driven by the need to make money or increase enrollments and that this is understood. The speed with which some of the new initiatives have been implemented was concerning. The faculty shared other experiences with decisions that "happened fast" and raised concerns. The group mentioned a sense that that they don't always know enough about new initiatives to understand them or feel comfortable due to communication mechanisms not being in place or not being used well, with one participant stating "this is a closed corporation – a family-run business feel" with a number of "people (who) don't understand politics" and with an administration that "practices safe distance." Fear that

new programs might change the organization's identity and/or negatively impact the brand image was also expressed with comments such as "we're afraid of becoming a . . . diploma mill," "some pushback if a new idea questions our identity," and with questions such as "can we 'be Concordia' and have such a high percentage of adjuncts?" and "how do we ensure they (students) are getting our core value online?"

Another focus group explained that the faculty at Concordia is responsible for governance and decision-making, but that more and more often, decisions are made by the administration with which they do not agree. One participant indicated that "sometimes the administration just does things (without consulting faculty)" – suggesting that the decisions made are not always done through agreed upon channels. This partnership and program launch was cited as an example of one of those decisions. The group indicated that the program was submitted for review but that the faculty did not fully approve the final program, and that the courses have been changed since the review was conducted. They felt that faculty should have "put the stamp" on the program (meaning stamp of approval). When asked why they did not approve of the program, they listed concerns with the pedagogy and rigor of the program and also concerns with the student recruiting and adjunct hiring process that is managed by an external partner.

Approval of a new program. The second incident involved another online program that has recently been approved by the Board. This is a brand new program curriculum that has not been offered by Concordia in the past. One focus group participant stated that there were questions asked by faculty in the approval process and then the program "went straight to the Board" and was approved without those questions being answered. They had the same concerns about pedagogy and instructor

qualifications in this program and even greater concerns regarding the fit of the program with the university's stated mission. "We are a peace place" stated one participant in the process of discussing this program's approval and why she felt it was an unsuitable fit for Concordia (the program deals with content being marketed to Homeland Security and other military and public safety agencies).

Similar to the launch of the online program with an external partner, this incident is significant not so much due to its substance as because of the underlying concerns amongst the faculty. The faculty expressed concern with what they perceive as a disconnect between the mission of the university and the audience and purpose for this program, with comments such as "resistance (to program) on fit," and "controversy on fit with mission" in contrast to a culture where "new programs in the past had grounding." Further, the faculty referred to this as "another drifting away example" – adding to the perception that the university is drifting away from its core mission. Additionally, the faculty expressed deep concern with the approval process and the feeling of being cut out of the decision making process by their administration with one participant indicating that during the approval process "(the) committee deadlocked and then it was approved by Board" and that the program approval was "pulled from (the) faculty agenda." In contrast, a member of the faculty administration indicated that "the faculty couldn't make up their mind so the Board made it up for them." As mentioned previously, this is significant not as a factual accounting of what happened in this incident, but because of the narrative describing what is perceived by the faculty and the gap between the perceptions on the part of the faculty and the administration.

Relocation of the chapel. Participants in the first focus group described a sense that "devotional time in the secular day" is highly valued at Concordia. The group mentioned tension here, with the original chapel being converted to classrooms and the new chapel service in St. Michaels Church not being well attended.

The second focus group went into more detail regarding the relocation of the chapel, listing it as the first artifact for discussion. This group indicated that chapel is held every day at the Lutheran Church across the street from Concordia. Participants explained that there used to be an actual sanctuary in one of the buildings that was called "Chapel of the upper rooms" and was used for daily chapel service as well as other services, including weddings. One of the faculty members in this session was married in the old chapel, which was described as a "worship area" that was "quaint" and had "many weddings held" in it. As the session progressed, the group explained that the chapel was turned into classrooms in 2002-03 because of a need for the space, resulting in the "chapel no longer (being) intricately tied to the university." They also said that the leadership made this decision because daily chapel service was not well attended. They mentioned that this was not a popular decision and that it was especially unpopular with alumni, many of whom had been married in the old chapel, with comments such as "no faculty/alumni input," and "created a rift with alumni." Participants also mentioned the irony that when chapel service was moved to the church, attendance further declined (so that the few that still attend now could easily fit in the old chapel). Relocation of the chapel was mentioned in one other focus group and semi-structured interview as well, reinforcing the sense that chapel as a key artifact and experience at Concordia that is no longer as sacred as the faculty would like for it to be.

In summary, the critical incidents derived from the focus group and interview sessions focused on four incidents: (a) the reduction in force, (b) the launch of a specific online program with an external partner, (c) the approval of a new program, and (d) the relocation of the chapel. What is noteworthy in the dialogue about these incidents is not the specific details, but the underlying assumptions. The responses to these incidents, and the participants' perceptions about how future incidents may be responded to, form a narrative regarding how the organization reacts to problems of external adaptation and internal integration (Schein, 2004). There was a perception shared by participants that the reaction to these problems was to scale back on practices that were core to the spirit and ethos of what it means to be Concordia, and to focus instead on practical realities such as increasing revenues and enrollments. While this was understood by the participants, there was discomfort expressed in how the decisions were made and what has become perceived as a change in the process of engagement and decision making between administration and faculty.

Climate Dimensions

A number of studies have isolated the dimensions of climate. Specifically, the work from Koys and Decoitis (1991), O'Donovan (2007), Quinn and Kimberly (1984), Cameron et al. (1987), and Zammuto and Krakower (1991) provides the greatest insight to the value of climate dimensions due to their synthesis of previous studies, narrowing the number of climate dimensions and providing correlations between climate dimensions and culture types. The process for selecting the climate dimensions for initial focus in this study is detailed in chapter 2, the literature review. The process of categorizing data in alignment with these dimensions was emergent throughout the study. The initial climate

dimensions included: (a) cohesion, (b) trust, (c) support, (d) recognition, (e) innovation, (f) tradition, (g) scapegoating, (h) resistance to change, (i) other, and (j) irrelevant. A category labeled *vocation* was added as data began to emerge to describe the climate that had been experienced by the participants of the study. The following sections represent comments and stories from multiple focus groups, interviews, observations, and analysis of content. Where possible, causal links are included to help make sense of the information that has been categorized in the sections to follow.

Cohesion. Cohesion has been defined as the sense that a group is *one team* with similar values, common practices, and appreciation for others in the group (Koys & Decoitis, 1991). A high degree of cohesion is typical in a high-context culture where everyone knows how things work and is expected to understand the embedded context in everyday situations (Hofstede, 1991). Cohesion is closely aligned with a group culture (Quinn & Kimberly, 1984) and a culture with an emphasis on tradition (O'Donovan, 2007).

Cohesion in the culture at Concordia was described with words such as "inclusive," "accepting," "informal," "authentic," "intimate," and by describing an environment with "more family than business feel." Faculty also described physical artifacts, experiences, and incidents that reinforced a sense of oneness in the faculty community. For example, a number of faculty told stories about the history of one of the buildings on campus that was originally a boys' dorm (and is now a faculty office building), down to the detail level of being able to tell the researcher who had been in the researcher's office when it was a dorm room. Because the building was designed as a dorm (and not office space) there are some idiosyncrasies in design that were remarked

on as well. For example, the offices are interconnected, necessitating the passage of traffic through multiple offices in order to reach an exit door in some cases. Faculty described this environment as one with “no barriers” and with a “shared space assumption.” This phenomena was also noted by the researcher in the researcher’s own observation as a participant observer. Upon moving into the building, the researcher noticed that there were a number of old file cabinets that had been stored in the office over the years. Faculty in the surrounding offices were eager to help find a new home for these file cabinets in order to welcome the researcher into the building and the faculty community. However, no one was sure who the files belonged to. The researcher observed repeated gatherings in the office with faculty members debating the contents, where they should go, and reminiscing about the people and programs that had previously used the space. At one point, a faculty member suggested that the cabinets be stored in the bathroom because “that’s where everything excess is stored.” This was met by nods and chuckles, as the other faculty members in the room knew of the space constraints and the spirit of service and sacrifice that had persisted over the years of history in this particular building.

The researcher also observed that all of the offices in the building were keyed with the same key. This seemed odd at first, but upon inquiry it was found that this also had roots in the building’s history, when the building was a dorm room. Since then, the locks had not been changed because this commonality facilitated the sense of shared space and service in the faculty community. For example, if a faculty member locked him or herself out of an office, it was easy to find another faculty member to open the door. It was also noted in one of the focus groups that this norm was extended to the new library

building when office space was populated in 2009. One faculty member who had an office in the new building told of the early days of moving into the building and discovering that all of the office doors were keyed uniquely. Because the faculty group wanted to be able to open each other's doors when needed, they requested that the doors in the new building be rekeyed to share keys, just as the old building had always been.

Another area of focus that aligns with the cohesive climate was the repeated mention of a "sense of community" at Concordia. Faculty mentioned pride in the new library, which was built to service Concordia students, staff, and faculty, as well as the surrounding neighborhood. They noted that community members were invited to come to the library and given library cards to check out materials, even if they were not students, staff, or faculty members at Concordia. It was also noted that the library was intentionally designed with two major entrances – one facing the campus green, and one facing outward toward the NE Portland community. Faculty mentioned seeing community members on campus playing with dogs on the green and attending Concordia events. Internal community interactions were also noted, such as students and faculty meeting at the coffee shop in the new library and in frequent service and co-curricular events.

A sense of cohesion was also noted in descriptions of processes in place in the daily work experience. Most notable were the experiences of new-comers, who indicated being somewhat surprised by the fact that titles were not emphasized (i.e., degrees and credentials), there were no titles, departments, or locations listed in the email and phone list, and that there was a lack of published directories of any kind. Faculty with more years of service indicated that this was because there is still a belief that everyone knows everyone else here, and that when new people start at Concordia, they are taken care of.

Specifically, the statement was made by one faculty member that "when our new person started, we all watched after her."

Faculty repeatedly referred to their experience as a member of Concordia as one that felt "more like family than business." This was reinforced through stories of crisis in individual lives and how faculty had come together to help. It was also noted that there is very little information broadcast across campus (i.e., campus-wide email), but when there is a broadcast, it is often a prayer request or some announcement of good news in the life of a faculty member. There appeared to be little interest in increased internal communication regarding logistical items such as staff meeting minutes and project updates, but a high level of interest in communication that was supportive and caring in nature.

Leadership Trust. Trust is identified by Koys and Decoitis (1991) and Cameron et al. (1987) as the degree to which individuals in the group trust their immediate manager and higher levels of leadership within the organization. (Note, previous studies by Koys and Decoitis and Cameron et al. labeled this dimension as *trust – leadership trust* was used in this study as a more appropriate descriptor for this dimension due to the focus on leadership.) Like cohesion and support, leadership trust is aligned to a group culture (Quinn & Kimberly, 1984) and a culture with an emphasis on tradition (O'Donovan, 2007).

While faculty members indicated a strong sense of trust and cohesion among the faculty and with their immediate managers (the Deans), they also made comments and told stories that aligned negatively with trust toward the administrative leadership of Concordia in recent years. These comments and stories were shared in relationship to the

critical events that were most frequently described: (a) the reduction in force, (b) the launch of a specific online program with an external partner, (c) the approval of a new program, and (d) the relocation of the chapel.

Faculty used phrases such as “sometimes the administration just *does* things” and “we don’t see the processes where decisions are made” to indicate that they perceive a disconnect between the espoused values and actions of the administration in many cases. In response to probing questions regarding the intent of the administration, faculty indicated that they “trust leadership motivation but not actions.” The faculty indicated that there has been a shift in power from the plenary faculty to the administration in recent years and that the faculty know that they need to take a stronger role in governance. In fact, the faculty has developed a new governance model that they “hold out hope for” in the coming years. This model brings the faculty into more frequent interaction with the administration throughout the academic year, and involves more faculty in committee work and decision making than in the past.

During the focus group and interview sessions, a tension was detected between the need for the university to be competitive and viable financially, and the desire for the university to maintain the *Concordia experience* that is so highly valued by the faculty. Specifically, faculty expressed concerns regarding some of the new, online programs. While the faculty did not appear resistant to the use of technology to support teaching or even expansion, they did worry about whether they could maintain the values of a Lutheran university dedicated to service, while expanding outside of the core NE Portland campus. This concern was expressed in relationship to the ability to extend

service learning opportunities, to maintain academic rigor in programs, and to maintain a high level of quality while increasing the ratio of adjunct faculty as instructors.

The faculty also expressed concern with programs that they did not believe were well aligned to Concordia's mission. One of the critical events shared by faculty was the approval of a program that has the potential to generate strong enrollments and revenues, but which the faculty does not believe supports the values of the institution. This incident reinforced the sense that "sometimes the administration just *does* things" in that the program was approved by the Board even though it had not been approved first by the faculty.

One other critical incident described consistently by faculty was the reduction in force that was conducted in 2003. The faculty perception of this incident was that it was poorly planned and "came as a shock." Faculty described a sense of mourning and grieving for the Concordia members who had lost their jobs, indicating that they were "still injured" and "bearing scars" today and stating that the incident "created some fear" that persists even now. In one of the focus groups, faculty contrasted this incident with their sense of Concordia as a "family" and "community" place, indicating that this event marked a significant transition in their relationship with their leadership and that they "had not thought of our relationship here as a business before."

The final critical incident that faculty related to changes in their trust relationship with leadership was the movement of the chapel. The first artifact mentioned in two of the focus groups was chapel, both as a physical place and as a tradition in the daily life at Concordia. The relocation of the chapel was attributed to a practical rationale of needing classroom space more than a worship sanctuary, which the faculty found "disappointing,"

furthering their fears that Concordia is becoming distanced from its heritage and spiritual purpose, even though Lutheran identity rooted in the Christian faith is promoted in the 2020 vision (Concordia University, 2010a). This represents a disconnect between espoused values in the vision of Concordia, as articulated by its leadership, and what faculty perceive to be the actions of the leadership. This disconnect leads the researcher to posit that there is a need for improvement in how the leadership communicates with the faculty so that values are aligned with actions in not only the communications that faculty receive, but in their day to day experiences at the university.

Support. Support is expressed as the degree to which individuals in the group feel like they can rely on their peer group when they have a need (Koys & Decoitis, 1991). This may be related to the sharing of workload, support of ideas, and even help with personal issues. Support is also closely aligned with a group culture (Quinn & Kimberly, 1984) and a culture with an emphasis on tradition (O'Donovan, 2007). Similar to the comments that were attributed to a climate of cohesion were artifacts, stories, and experiences that indicate a strong sense that faculty feel supported by their colleagues at Concordia. As mentioned previously, the information that flows most freely and intentionally at Concordia, especially via emails to the full faculty, is primarily related to celebrations and requests for support and prayer. One participant referred to a lack of frequent communication but indicated that "bad news flows," referring to bad news that someone in the Concordia community was suffering. Participants also referred to concern for their fellow faculty working too hard with comments like "you're here too much." There was no mention in focus groups or interviews of people not pulling their weight or doing their share of the work.

The level of care that the faculty demonstrate for each other is further reinforced by the open door policy (with the doors all keyed alike), the level of engagement with students and the surrounding community, and the "family feel" of the place. Faculty also expressed the feeling that they are "encouraged at the same time as challenged intellectually" and that they feel "less pressure for scholarship than at some schools." Even with the reduced pressure to publish, the faculty comes together once each year for a forum where they share their research projects and celebrate each other's successes.

When specifically asked how faculty feel about assessment, the researcher was told that "it is not so much that faculty have a problem with the idea of assessment, but it is just 'one more thing' (to do) when faculty are already overloaded." In probing the history of assessment projects, the researcher found that faculty has always been willing to help out with projects and in the case of assessing prior learning projects, the coordinator indicated she had "never had anyone say no, they won't do it." The issue often comes down to weight load for extra work, with faculty campaigning the administration for reduced credit weight load so that they can make time for work on assessment and committees. One recent incident brought this issue to light when the faculty asked for reduced weight load to participate in the new faculty governance committee labeled ECF (Executive Committee of Faculty). The administration denied the request, but instead offered the faculty the option of using their committee hours in place of hours that they were required to do service. This created a dilemma, as individuals in the faculty highly prize the service that they perform for students and the community, outside of their teaching responsibilities.

Recognition. Recognition is defined as the degree to which individuals feel that they are recognized for their accomplishments and work (Koys & Decoitis, 1991). Recognition is most closely aligned with a developmental culture (Quinn & Kimberly, 1984) in which development of people is emphasized over other values such as cohesion and support. The recognition climate dimension was not prominent in the culture at Concordia. In focus groups and interviews, there was mention of a "you're important feeling" and a sense that excellence and service is respected. However, other than recognition for years of service, and personal kudos from peers for specific accomplishments, faculty did not indicate that recognition was a big part of their experience, or that it needed to be. Overall, participants indicated positive relationships with their immediate manager and a sense that they were appreciated.

Innovation. Innovation is one of the cultural types described by O'Donovan (2007) as prominent in organizations where individuals express a desire to create new knowledge, ideas, and ways of doing things. Innovation also relates to how well new knowledge and ideas are embraced by the organization. There was insufficient data to support a pervasive culture of innovation in this case.

While innovation is not seen in broad application across disciplines, and technology innovation on the part of faculty was almost non-existent, there was one case of innovation observed by the researcher. This was the creation of a new model of faculty governance, named the ECF for Executive Committee of Faculty. The previous faculty governance model consisted of several committees and monthly plenary sessions that were not well attended. Faculty indicated that the old model was "broken" because it did not facilitate enough communication between faculty and the administration, and that

there were gaps in the decision make process, specifically with decisions that were made during the summer months when the faculty did not meet. In the new model, the ECF would meet more frequently with administration represented, including in the summer months, but would delegate the committee work to a group of subcommittees, each led by an ECF member. Focus group participants indicated that this represents a "whole new configuration" of faculty governance, and that they "hold out some hope for the new model" and its ability to facilitate a better connection between faculty and the administration.

Tradition. Tradition is one of the cultural types described by O'Donovan (2007) as a place where there is an alignment with a deeply rooted set of practices, such as those in a particular religion or academic/professional field. In this case, the focus group and interview sessions were generally opened with a discussion of artifacts that can be seen, felt, heard and experienced at Concordia (Schein, 2004). In most cases, participants began by describing artifacts that define Concordia's history and tradition as a Lutheran school – first a high school for boys, and eventually the university that it is today. Artifacts mentioned frequently included the chapel, the bell tower, crosses and other Christian symbols, and some of the nuances of the older buildings that were referred to as "quaint" and "charming." Conversations eventually transitioned to newer artifacts, such as the new library that was finished in 2009, and the new common green that joins the library to the older side of campus. Participants described a sense of change and a tension between the old and new campus, with almost unanimous agreement that the changes have been positive and good for the university as well as the surrounding community.

Participants also shared stories of the history of events at Concordia, describing formal rituals where faculty wore regalia, as well as informal gatherings and fellowship with students. While these events are still conducted, participants expressed some sadness over some of the events that are no longer held, and a feeling that there is less of a "family feel" now than there was in years past, with comments that this "has to change" and is "sad to see." There seemed to be a sense that, with growth and success, there would necessarily be a certain amount of loss and change, and this was generally accepted.

Resistance to change. An environment that is *resistant to change* is described by Cameron et al. (1987) as one in which members of a culture have historically avoided adapting to new situations. In this case, there was no significant evidence of a general avoidance of adaptation. However, there was an expressed fear of losing something precious on which participants have staked their personal and professional lives. While there were some anecdotal accounts of resistance to technology, such as the comment that "there are still faculty around here who are mad because we took away their chalk and replaced it with those stinky whiteboard markers," these comments were made in a playful tone and were not supported by observations made by the researcher. When the researcher introduced technology to support assessment, it was accepted as long as faculty were shown that the steps to perform assessment were simple, and would not detract from the time faculty spend with students. The only resistance detected in this study was resistance to initiatives that had the potential to distract faculty from their purpose and keep them from fulfilling their personal vocation and what they perceive to be the mission of the institution. For example, the critical incident involving a new

program in the security/public safety industry met resistance due to the fear that this would distract the institution from its service learning mission. Also, online programs that have the potential to become impersonal and cause faculty to worry about "keeping the connection (with students)" are met with some skepticism.

Scapegoating. The term *scapegoating* is defined by Cameron et al. (1987) as the sense that there must be someone to blame when things go wrong. This is negatively aligned to Quinn and Kimberly's (1984) developmental culture and O'Donovan's (2007) cultural type of innovation. It is asserted by Cameron et al. as well as Quinn and Kimberly that a culture where blame is quickly placed is a culture that will stifle innovation. There was little to no evidence of scapegoating in the culture at Concordia, and some evidence that this is specifically discouraged by the culture. For example, comments such as "people don't lose jobs for making mistakes," it is "not okay to blame," and the description of the culture as one of "utter forgiveness" indicate that there is little to no scapegoating behavior perceived in this culture.

Vocation. Vocation is a new climate dimension that emerged from this study. Vocation is defined by Palmer (2000) as "something I cannot *not* do, for reasons I'm unable to explain to anyone else and don't fully understand myself but that are nonetheless compelling" (p. 25). In this case, participants referred to their work at Concordia as a *calling* and not a *job* – and this distinction was made often enough to be noted by the researcher as a significant new category of focus in the data.

Faculty told stories of service to students as their core reason for coming to Concordia and for staying over the years with comments such as, "everyone (is) dedicated to the cause," "people take on extra work willingly," and "hard to say 'no' here

since we have such a sense of work as volunteerism." Faculty also related this sense of work as vocation to their Christian roots with stories of times that they had supported students, and students had supported them. One faculty member told of an incident in her class where a student had a serious illness in her family. The faculty member told the student she would pray for her. The student responded that she had never had a teacher pray for her, even though she had gone to private, Christian schools her entire life. This story stimulated nods of agreement in the focus group, and additional stories of being called to serve the students. Faculty indicated that they felt "freer to be who I am here" compared to other universities and that there was a sense that they were all "seeking truth" at Concordia.

In one of the focus groups sessions, a faculty member made a point of telling the researcher that she had to leave early because she had an appointment with a student. Other faculty members supported this, indicating that everyone supports faculty who leave meetings early or miss meetings because of commitments to students and that the comment "I have to leave to go teach" was commonly heard as the only valid reason to leave a committee meeting. Faculty stated that being available to students is seen as more important than "just being seen at your desk" and agreed that Concordia was an environment where faculty were very focused on student success.

While this strong sense of vocation and dedication to service is a consistent feature of the culture at Concordia, and serves to further provide cohesion among its members, it also creates tension. For example, the faculty expressed a sense of often being overwhelmed by the work and not able to say no (due to their strong sense of duty). One participant suggested that "the university has expanded on the backs of people" and

another described the work ethic at Concordia as one where “suffering servants” were consistently relied on to get all of the work done. The researcher observed an instance when faculty were given the option to cut back on service hours in order to spend time on committees, which caused a dilemma on the part of the faculty who felt committed to the service projects they were involved in. Thus, the tendency is to take on more and more work, and to prioritize commitments that align with each individual’s sense of calling and vocation, leading to the possibility that administrative work that is less clearly aligned may take a lower priority.

In another focus group, a history of the university was shared, beginning with a time 30 years ago when three of the faculty members were undergraduate students themselves at Concordia. During the discussion, the researcher transcribed comments from the group onto the whiteboard in a left-to-right chronological order. Focus group members described a very low student to faculty ratio when they were students, and a sense that faculty were watching out for them, even to the extent of acting as proxies for the students’ parents. Throughout the session, the faculty shared stories that described changes in the university since they were students. For the most part, they described growth and an increasing challenge in maintaining the faculty/student relationship and intimacy that they had experienced. At the end of this focus group, one of the faculty members pointed to the far left of the whiteboard chronology and said “I came back here to do that” – indicating that he came to Concordia as a faculty member in order to be the kind of professor that he had been so influenced by as an undergraduate student.

Climate and Culture Summary

The process for selecting the climate dimensions for initial focus in this study is detailed in chapter 2, the literature review. The process of categorizing data in alignment with these dimensions was emergent throughout the study. The initial climate dimensions included: (a) cohesion, (b) trust, (c) support, (d) recognition, (e) innovation, (f) tradition, (g) scapegoating, (h) resistance to change, (i) other, and (j) irrelevant. A category labeled *vocation* was added as data began to emerge to describe the climate that had been experienced by the participants of the study. Finally, *trust* was modified to *leadership trust* due to the focus that emerged from discussions of trust in the data collection process.

The preceding section included observations, content analysis, and the synthesis of comments from focus groups and semi-structured interviews, in an attempt to design a narrative that would be explanatory of the culture that has evolved at Concordia. The most prominent features of this culture, based on the analysis of data which led to this narrative, is the cohesiveness of the faculty, the amount of peer support, the strong sense of tradition, and the dedication of the faculty to the continuation of their vocation in alignment with Concordia's mission. The faculty will innovate and resist change if they need to do so in order to support their vocational mission. Recognition is nice but not necessary. Faculty participating in this study noted that they are in their jobs because they feel "called" to serve the students at Concordia.

Conclusion

"In most case studies, explanation building has occurred in narrative form. Because such narratives cannot be precise, the better case studies are the ones in which the explanations have reflected some theoretically significant propositions" (Yin, 2009, p. 141). For this reason, this chapter included a summary of the theoretical propositions that provided the initiating framework for this study, and an accounting for how those propositions were and were not supported through this study. Next, specific incidents that were described by participants were summarized and an attempt made to link those incidents to the underlying assumptions that are serving to reinforce the expectations of the participants in this case. Finally, the data gathered through focus groups, interviews, observations, and content analysis were shared in alignment with the categories used to focus the culture and climate analysis.

What is important in cultural assessment research is not so much what happens, as what people think about what happens, since culture is reinforced by the responses to incidents over the lifetime of an organization (Schein, 2004). The incidents and experiences relayed in this case provide a narrative that informs the reader regarding the perceptions and expectations of the faculty at Concordia. Those perceptions and expectations are valuable in attempting to align the organization to strategic initiatives, such as in the case of Concordia's strategic planning process.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

This research study examined the role of organizational culture and climate in supporting the engagement needed for successful continuous improvement efforts in a single, private, Christian university. Specifically, the study focused on the organizational culture and climate dimensions that have been linked to a culture where continuous improvement initiatives are most likely to succeed. The method and findings described in chapters 3 and 4 have led the researcher to suggest the following strengths and opportunities that might aid Concordia in reaching its vision and strategic goals.

Strengths

Mission Alignment

Concordia defines itself as "a Christian liberal arts university preparing leaders for the transformation of society" (Concordia, 2010a, p. 1). As described in chapter 2, the 2020 vision for Concordia encompasses eight core vision attributes, intended to ensure that the organization continues to fulfill its mission as it grows over the next several years. The vision attributes that are intended to provide direction to the organization include (a) servant leaders, (b) community connected, (c) student choice, (d) relationships, (e) rigorous, (f) Lutheran, (g) anchored, and (h) agile (p. 1).

One of the strengths of Concordia's culture is the alignment to its mission and core values. Faculty described a cohesive culture where they feel strong connections with the internal and external community and where they feel empowered to work in alignment with their vocational calling to serve students. The relationships among faculty members and between faculty members and students were repeatedly emphasized as foundational to the culture. The strength of this mission alignment and the dedication of the faculty to its realization led to concerns expressed by faculty with the institution's

ability to remain anchored to its mission and true to its history while growing and adapting to external competitive pressures. This concern is further evidence of the commitment to the mission and the dedication of faculty to seeing it sustained into the future. The degree of alignment to mission and core values is a strength that can be leveraged by Concordia as it plans for the implementation of the strategic planning process.

Cohesion, Trust, and Support

Another strength in the culture at Concordia rests in the cohesiveness of the culture, evidenced by the data captured and analyzed in this case. Liker and Hoseus (2008) describe cohesiveness as an environment where communication is conducted through informal channels and with mutually supporting team members, which was evidenced repeatedly through the stories shared in this case as well as through the researcher's own observations. A strong sense of trust and support among faculty, as well as between faculty and their immediate leadership, was also described in this case. The only area where cohesion, trust and support was not strongly indicated was in the relationship between faculty and the administration of the university, which will be addressed as an opportunity in the following section labeled *Opportunities*.

While the cohesiveness, peer support, and sense of trust amongst the faculty is noted here as a strength in Concordia's culture, it is also important to note that this strength across the peer group is essential to the accomplishment of Concordia's goals, especially as they relate to change. Schein (2004) notes that "some sense of threat, crisis, or dissatisfaction must be present before enough motivation is present to start the process of unlearning and relearning" that is essential to accomplish organizational change (p.

324). Citing Lewin's (1947) work on change, Schein (2004) emphasizes the importance of psychological safety during this process of unlearning and relearning, suggesting that strong peer networks and role models within the organization (including in the organization's leadership) are critical to establishing the climate to support change. Specific suggestions for how to leverage this support structure at Concordia follow in the section labeled *Model for change* in this chapter, including this emphasis on cohesion, trust, and support in the form of a psychological safety net, as suggested by Schein.

Strength of Commitment

As described in chapter 4, this study began with a set of theoretical propositions, study questions, and categories that were derived from previous studies into the climate dimensions most closely aligned with a culture of continuous improvement. As the data analysis process began after the first and second focus groups, it became clear that a new category needed to be added to the case study database to isolate data related to *vocation*. Referring to the work of a faculty member at Concordia as a *job* or *position* seemed inadequate in light of the commitment and sense of calling expressed by faculty members, some of whom had returned to Concordia to teach decades after gaining their undergraduate degrees there. Others expressed a commitment to service, specifically as it related to students, and a willingness to make sacrifices in order to remain focused on their vocational calling.

The strength of commitment among the faculty to their role at Concordia, their dedication to their role as a vocational calling, and their ability to align that vocation with the mission and core values articulated for the institution are strengths that, if well leveraged, have the potential to support the organization as it strives toward its vision for

the future, while remaining grounded in its purpose to prepare leaders for the transformation of society (Concordia, 2010a).

Opportunities

As detailed in chapter 2, literature review, there is support for a specific matrix of climate dimensions undergirding a continuous improvement environment. Evidence of strength in a number of climate dimensions was found in this study, and discussed in the preceding pages. However, opportunities also exist where the presence of these specific climate dimensions is unclear or not as desired. Opportunities for improvement in specific climate dimensions related to leadership communication will be discussed in the following pages, with recommendations for leading the organization through change.

Leadership Communication

Concordia's strategic planning process includes an iterative mechanism for reviewing and refreshing the institutional vision every four years, with 18-month cycles of improvement to be implemented through a series of initiatives approved by the Strategic Planning Council (Concordia, 2010a). That council includes representatives from across the university, including a faculty representative. The intent is that initiatives be supported by goals that are then aligned to outcomes measures, in order to create an evidence-based approach to planning, assessment, and continuous improvement.

As an outcome of the environmental scanning and subsequent visioning process described in chapter 2, Concordia leaders made the decision to remain firmly rooted in the institution's heritage and values while continuing to evolve to support the needs of the students, faculty, alumni, and other internal and external constituents that form its stakeholder base. Further, Concordia leaders became committed to an iterative

continuous improvement process to ensure that evidence of outcomes from initiatives would flow into the process to inform decision making. Concordia leaders recognized the need to include input from all stakeholders (including faculty) into its strategic planning process. Further, Concordia leaders recognized that sustaining a continuous improvement process, reliant on an openness to share data from the assessment of outcomes, would require a supportive culture and climate, with embedded trust and a willingness to change.

What has not been specifically addressed in the strategic planning process at Concordia to date is how change would be implemented in a way that engages faculty not only as recipients of cascading goals that are communicated down through the organization, but as participants in the creation of the goals at the individual as well as departmental and college level. It was clear in the analysis of data from this study that faculty see this engagement as not only their right, but their responsibility. The faculty has taken steps to develop a revised governance system for themselves that they hope will help reinforce the ties between the faculty and administration, while strengthening their own position as decision makers on behalf of the students that they serve. Engaging the faculty in a two-way communication loop to ensure that initiatives are firmly linked to goals at the college, department, and individual level, and that those goals are created as a result of a dialogue between faculty and the administration is a potential next step in this process.

One approach to creating this engagement is referred to as “policy deployment” (Liker, 2004, p. 219), described in chapter 2 as a practice wherein the strategy is set at the top of the organization and then cascaded down to sub-units in the organization with

adjustments made to the strategy based on feedback. The cultural underpinnings for this model include a focus on the social and spiritual needs of all participants in a way that trust is developed and supported over time (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). Thus, not only is policy deployment used as a way to ensure that strategy is understood and implemented in a cohesive way throughout the organization, but it also aids in the commitment level of employees who feel engaged and participative in the process.

The practice of creating feedback loops to connect cascading levels of the organization in communication and adjustment of policy is referred to as *catchball* (Dennis, 2006), implying that a metaphorical ball is thrown from one level of the organization to the next, and then returned as the policy is adjusted through feedback and engagement. The *catchball* process entails "frank, reality-based discussions between and within management levels" (Dennis, 2006, p. 112), resulting in an iterative goal setting process that is based on clear connections at all levels throughout the organization and enhanced employee engagement.

Figure 3 illustrates how this *catchball* concept might be implemented at Concordia. The process begins with university goals that are created as a result of the 18-month cycle of the strategic planning process. Those goals are cascaded down to the college level. Then, before the colleges create their own goals, they provide feedback to the university level, thus tossing the ball back up the organization in an effort to engage in a dialogue that has the potential to create adaptations to the university goals before they are assimilated at the college level. Once the university goals are negotiated and agreed to, each college creates its own goals and cascades them down to individual departments and programs. Once again, the departments and programs provide feedback

to the college (and potentially on up through the organization to the university level) until agreement on the college goals is reached. This continues down through the organization, with departments, programs, and individual goal setting processes that are reinforced through iterative dialogue, agreement, and thus a higher degree of commitment at each level.

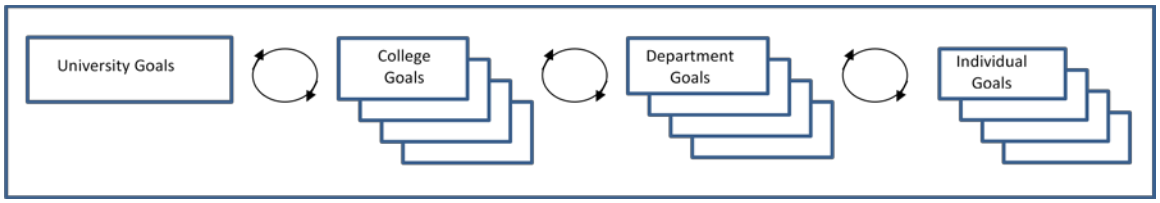

Figure 3. Catchball model.

At each level in this process, goals are accompanied by outcome standards, so that there is agreement not only regarding what is to be achieved, but how success will be measured. Assessment is then based on agreed upon goals and measurements, enhancing engagement in the deployment of initiatives and the assessment of results. While Figure 3 refers to organizational entities engaged in this *catchball* process, this can also be extended to include the goals that faculty set for their students in the form of outcome standards and measurements. A model such as this one is needed to close the gap between the creation of departmental goals and the assessment of outcomes at all levels throughout the organization. The inclusion of the *catchball* concept is intended to close that gap, while also enhancing the engagement level of faculty and reinforcing the trust between faculty and leadership at all levels of the organization.

Model for Leading Change

Another process that has not been specifically articulated in the strategic planning process is how change will be managed. The vision that Concordia has for its future

represents significant growth that will require change in processes and mental models in order to be realized. Recognizing this, and noting the concerns faculty have already expressed over critical incidents related to change in the past, leads the researcher to suggest that a new model for managing change might also be needed in order for Concordia to realize its vision.

Readiness to change is addressed in chapter 2 with reference to the work of Kurt Lewin, who developed a change model with three steps that he referred to as *unfreezing*, *moving*, and *freezing* (Lewin as cited in Burke, 2008). Contemporary models such as the one introduced by Bridges (1987) have been widely deployed in industry in recent decades, as they emphasize managing psychological transitions as a key component of change. The trend in the application of transition models such as Bridges' seems to be the assumption that change can be controlled if organizations will develop comprehensive models that address the human need for closure and new beginnings, which are key components of Bridges' model.

The component that is potentially missing in Bridges' (1987) model for managing transitions is what Lewin referred to as *unfreezing* (Lewin as cited in Burke, 2008). Lewin asserted that the first step in the change process was disconfirmation of the current state, and that in this disconfirmation step, the change target would be presented with information that challenged his or her previous assumptions. The targets of change (according to Lewin) would then need to be facilitated through a process that included coping with the anxiety that disconfirmation caused and would eventually become ready to change of their own volition. Lewin suggested that only within an environment of

psychological safety would a target of change be able to deal with the anxiety that disconfirmation caused.

Once disconfirmation (unfreezing) had been accomplished, Lewin (as cited by Schein, 2002) suggested that the focus of the change effort should be the movement from the previous frozen set of values and behaviors to the new set of values and behaviors required by the change. At this point in the process, Lewin emphasized the role of the change target in managing the change process. He asserted that only self-directed effort would result in long-lasting change (Lewin as cited in Schein, 2002). The key to this part of the process is to continue exposing the change target to disconfirming information while providing social support from peers.

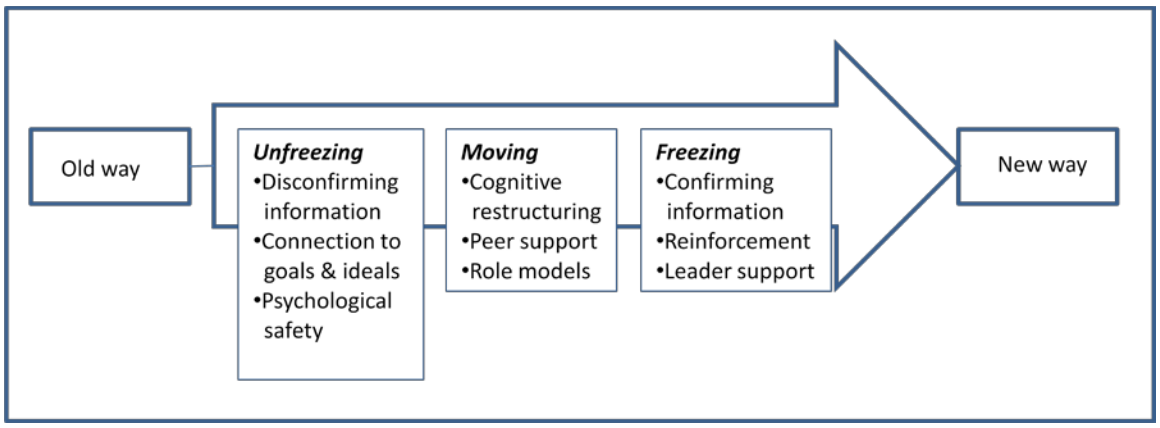

Figure 4. Model for managing change (based on Schein, 2004)

The model for managing change illustrated in Figure 4 aligns well with the culture at Concordia, where there is a strong sense of cohesion and strong support between faculty members and their immediate management. Without the disconfirmation in the unfreezing phase, changes initiated by Concordia's leadership run the risk of resistance any time that faculty detect a threat to their firmly held vocational values. Repeatedly faculty in this study indicated that they did not distrust leadership intentions,

nor did they disagree with the vision of the future, but they did express concern with how changes were being made, leading the researcher to theorize that adequate disconfirmation of "the way things have always been" may not be in place in the current change process. Thus, instead of managing change by emphasizing benefits and with a singular focus on vision, Concordia might benefit from a model that connects change to goals and ideals, while also addressing why the old way of being is no longer adequate.

Embedding psychological safety at all phases of this process, through reinforcement of peer and leader support, is also critical to the success of change efforts. The *catchball* process illustrated in Figure 3 can be used to reinforce this support structure, while engaging faculty in goal setting and assessment. Maintaining an active and engaged role in decisions that affect the university was called out as an important element of the vocational sense of responsibility by faculty. By embedding the confirming information that faculty are engaged, are being heard, and are part of developing the future of the institution, the changes co-developed by faculty and the administration can be implemented while the cohesion, trust, and support structures already in place are leveraged and strengthened.

Significance of Study

This study was intended to assist Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, with shaping its strategic planning efforts, supporting a key mission for the organization. The results offered in this chapter can be used to take the next step in the strategic planning process, articulating specifically how change will be managed through a highly participative goal setting and assessment process. Concordia's focus over the past two years has been on the strategic planning process, with the emphasis on forming the

process and selecting strategies for the organization. A necessary next step in this process is to focus on deployment of strategy, ensuring that the strategy is realized throughout the 18-month cycle of planning, with specific, measureable goals set throughout the organization. The recommendations outlined in this chapter are intended to support the deployment process that is a next step in the strategic planning process. These recommendations have the added potential to provide cultural emphasis based on the study findings, thereby increasing relevance to the faculty and strengthening the engagement model through faculty inclusion.

Further, while generalization of the findings from this case study is not appropriate, the approach employed by this study has the potential to add to the body of best practices related to the assessment of culture and climate in support of continuous improvement efforts.

Risks and Limitations

The researcher in this study needed to be mindful of a variety of risks and limitations. First, this study was delimited to a single institution of higher education, categorized as a small, private, Christian university. While there is no intent to generalize the findings from this case to other organizations, or even other universities, care was taken to maintain the focus of this research on informing the target organization by providing insight into the culture and climate dimensions studied.

Sampling is always a potential risk in research. As such, this study was limited due to the criterion and theoretical sampling processes used. This limitation risks accuracy of findings due to vague sample criteria or collecting data from participants not meeting the criteria. The control variable questions used during the semi-structured interviews and working with the research sponsor to define the criteria served to mitigate this risk.

As detailed in chapter 3, the researcher in this case was a member of the target organization, thus increasing the risk of researcher bias. Mitigation strategies were employed to avoid research and researcher errors. Three primary errors related to qualitative research were addressed (Kirk & Miller, 1986):

Type I errors where a researcher sees relations that do not exist;

Type II errors where a researcher rejects a relation that does exist;

Type III errors where the wrong questions are asked.

The peer review process was helpful in mitigating all three of the primary researcher errors. Additionally, the clearly documented research process, including detailed field notes, development of the case study database, and narrative summaries at critical points in the collection and analysis process, helped to mitigate the risk of error.

Validity was addressed through specific quality steps to include “multiple measures of the same phenomenon” (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 116-117). This was facilitated by the use of a variety of methods of data collection, including focus groups, semi-structured interviews, ethnographic field notes, and content analysis. This “diversity of method” (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 30) served to facilitate triangulation of the data from multiple sources as well as methods, addressing potential problems with construct validity (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Validity was also supported through feedback from peer reviewers and validation and verification of the data and its interpretation by participants (Flick, 2007). Further, validity was reinforced in this case by clear links from previous theory and research, with questions and collection models derived from previously documented studies.

In summary, the study followed Yin's (2009) highly structured protocols for case study research, including a rigorous data collection, categorization, and analysis process that engaged peer reviewers to ensure that "in principle, other investigators can review the evidence directly and not be limited to the written case study report" (Yin, 2009, p. 121).

Conclusion

Practitioners and scholars agree that a focus on organizational culture and climate is important any time an organization attempts to undergo improvement efforts (Schein, 2004). This awareness is consistent across industries, including higher education, where a culture to support continuous improvement has become essential to survival (Lin, 2007). The current study aimed to provide insight into the organizational culture and climate at Concordia University as it implements its strategic planning process built on a continuous improvement approach. Leaders at Concordia were sensitive to the importance of culture as a critical element of success in reaching the vision for the future, and also were dedicated to ensuring that all stakeholders remained engaged throughout the vision realization process. Thus, this study was launched to provide insight and input to the leadership at Concordia in order to inform the next steps in the strategic planning process.

A qualitative approach, utilizing a case study method, was chosen in order to ensure that a full and comprehensive picture of the culture and climate at Concordia could be constructed. Findings and methods from previous research into culture and climate studies was leveraged, focusing the approach on a set of theoretical propositions, study questions, and categories that were used to form the initial basis for data collection and categorization. The study was initiated with a pilot group that helped to solidify the

process and further expand the categories for data collection, which remained emergent throughout the study.

The results of this study confirmed that the culture at Concordia is well aligned to its mission, core values, and desire for an iterative continuous improvement approach to strategic planning and vision realization. Specific models and methods have been suggested, based on the findings in this case, with the intent of further supporting Concordia's vision of the future and ensuring that the core values and ethos, referred to by the faculty as the *Concordia experience* can be sustained and continue to serve the faculty who serve students for many years to come.

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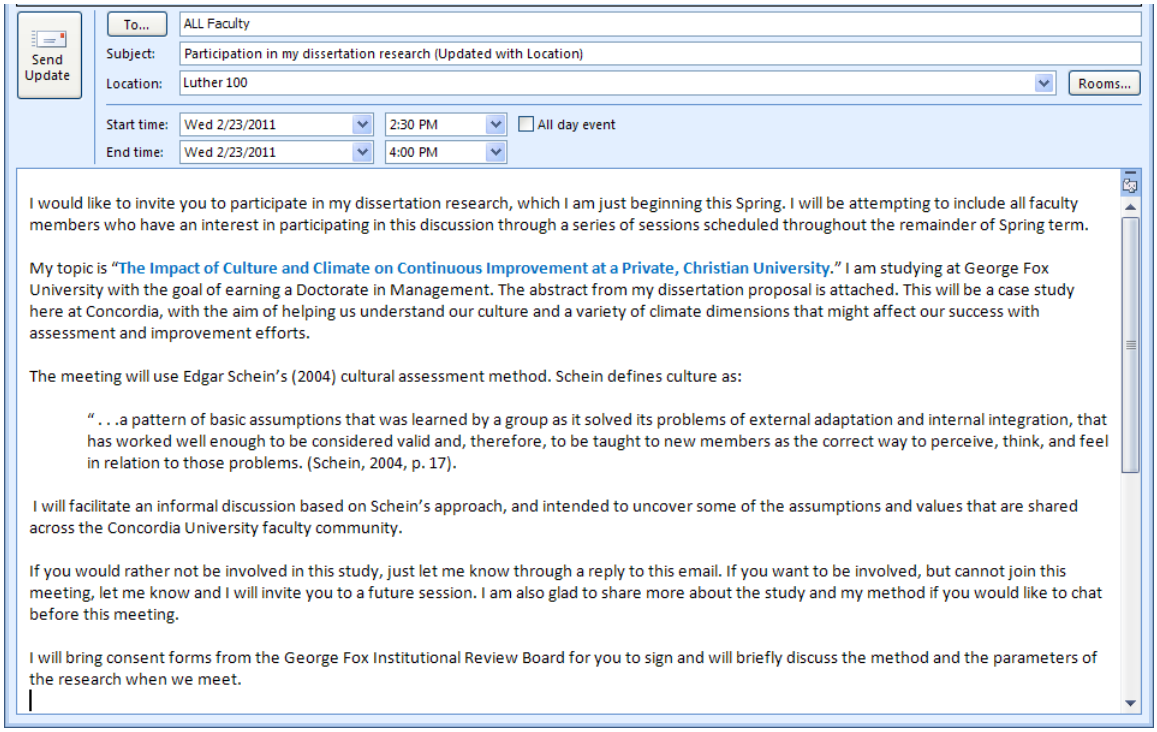
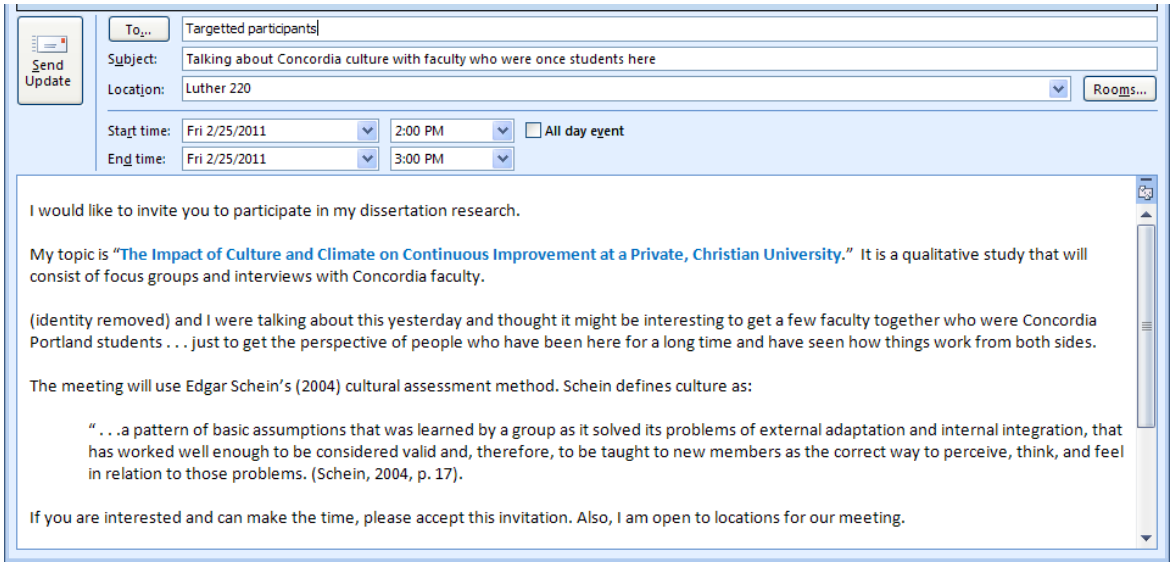
Appendix A: Participant Correspondence
Original Email Invitation

The first correspondence example is the original email invitation that was sent out to all faculty, using an email list. This resulted in a low number of responses. After this approach, a more targeted and personal approach to the invitation process was used.



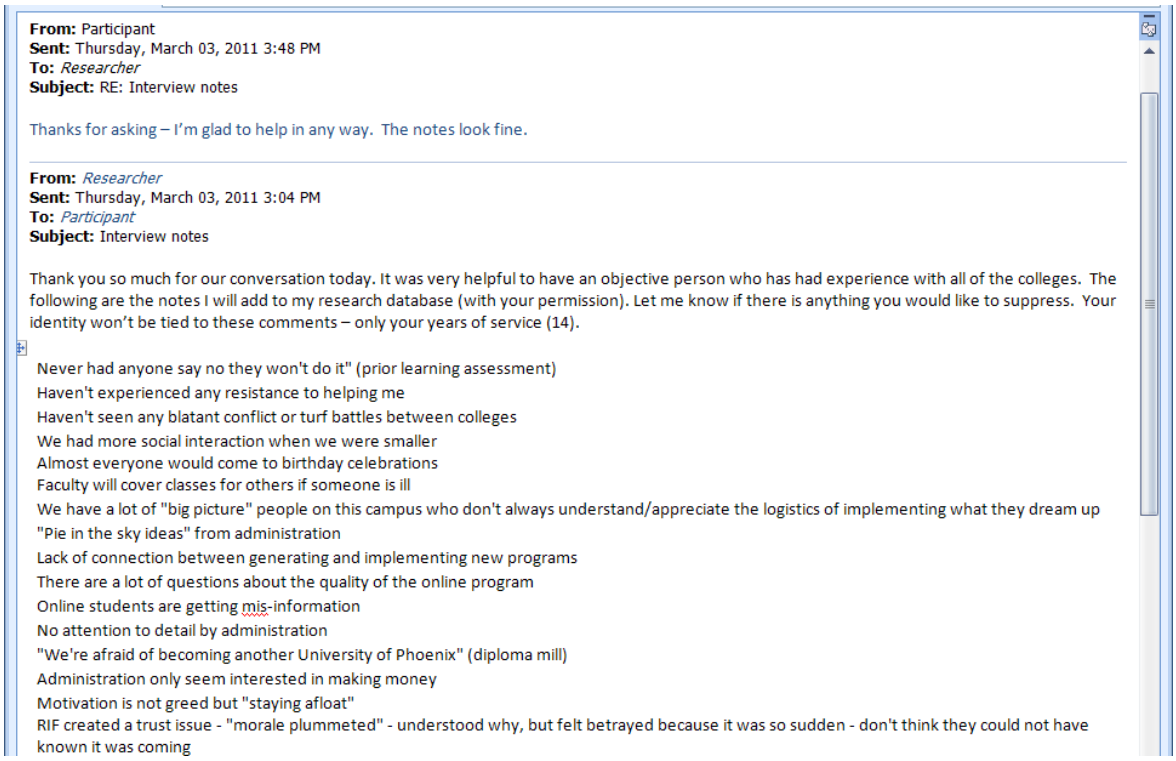
Targeted Email Invitation

The next example is of an email that was sent to a small, targeted group. The invitation email was shorter, with more informal and personal language used, including the name of one of the pilot focus group participants (identity removed) who recommended that these participants be invited. This invitation was met with acceptance by all invited participants to the second focus group.



Interview Validation Email

This is an example of the notes that were sent out to a semi-structured interview participant after our interview. The email thread begins with the participant's approval of the notes.



From: Participant
Sent: Thursday, March 03, 2011 3:48 PM
To: *Researcher*
Subject: RE: Interview notes

Thanks for asking – I'm glad to help in any way. The notes look fine.

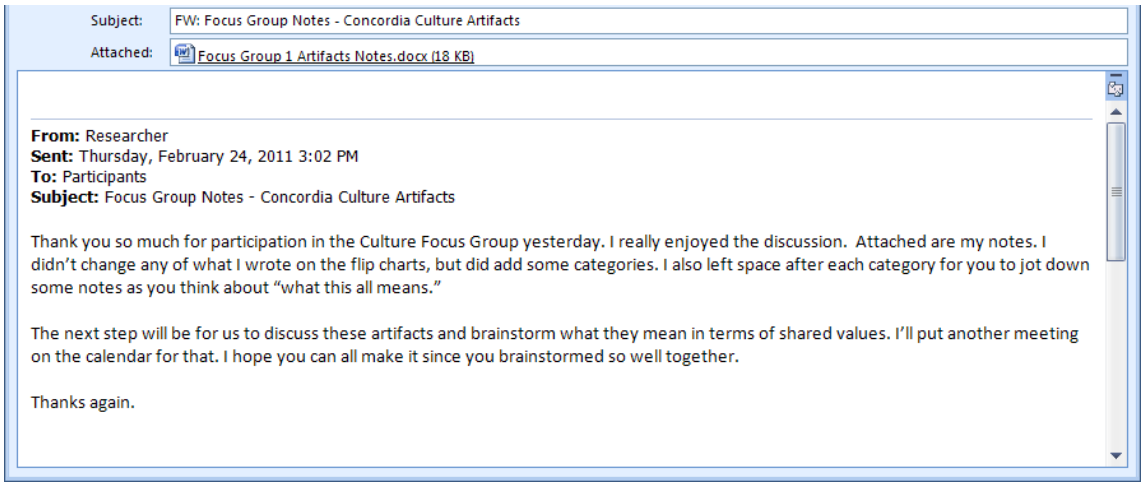
From: *Researcher*
Sent: Thursday, March 03, 2011 3:04 PM
To: *Participant*
Subject: Interview notes

Thank you so much for our conversation today. It was very helpful to have an objective person who has had experience with all of the colleges. The following are the notes I will add to my research database (with your permission). Let me know if there is anything you would like to suppress. Your identity won't be tied to these comments – only your years of service (14).

Never had anyone say no they won't do it" (prior learning assessment)
Haven't experienced any resistance to helping me
Haven't seen any blatant conflict or turf battles between colleges
We had more social interaction when we were smaller
Almost everyone would come to birthday celebrations
Faculty will cover classes for others if someone is ill
We have a lot of "big picture" people on this campus who don't always understand/appreciate the logistics of implementing what they dream up
"Pie in the sky ideas" from administration
Lack of connection between generating and implementing new programs
There are a lot of questions about the quality of the online program
Online students are getting mis-information
No attention to detail by administration
"We're afraid of becoming another University of Phoenix" (diploma mill)
Administration only seem interested in making money
Motivation is not greed but "staying afloat"
RIF created a trust issue - "morale plummeted" - understood why, but felt betrayed because it was so sudden - don't think they could not have known it was coming

Focus Group Validation Email

This is an example of the email that was sent to the pilot focus group to validate the notes taken in the focus group session.



Subject: FW: Focus Group Notes - Concordia Culture Artifacts

Attached: Focus Group 1 Artifacts Notes.docx (18 KB)

From: Researcher
Sent: Thursday, February 24, 2011 3:02 PM
To: Participants
Subject: Focus Group Notes - Concordia Culture Artifacts

Thank you so much for participation in the Culture Focus Group yesterday. I really enjoyed the discussion. Attached are my notes. I didn't change any of what I wrote on the flip charts, but did add some categories. I also left space after each category for you to jot down some notes as you think about "what this all means."

The next step will be for us to discuss these artifacts and brainstorm what they mean in terms of shared values. I'll put another meeting on the calendar for that. I hope you can all make it since you brainstormed so well together.

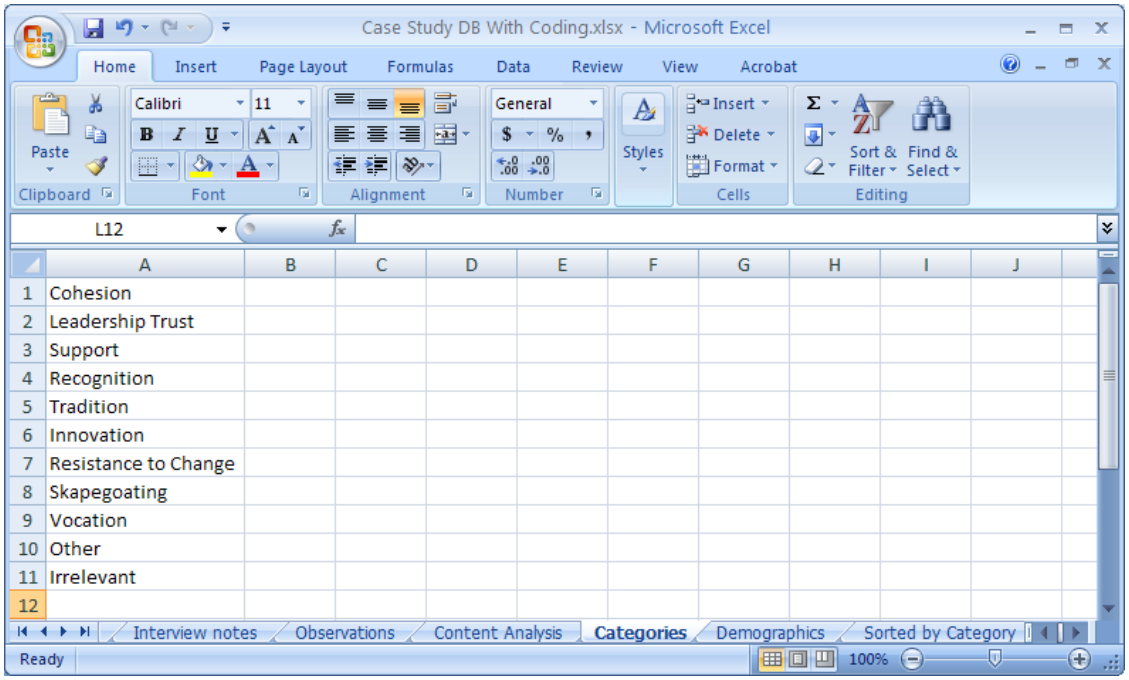
Thanks again.

Appendix B: Case Study Database

The following are excerpts from the case study database that was created to support the analysis, categorization, and sorting of the study data.

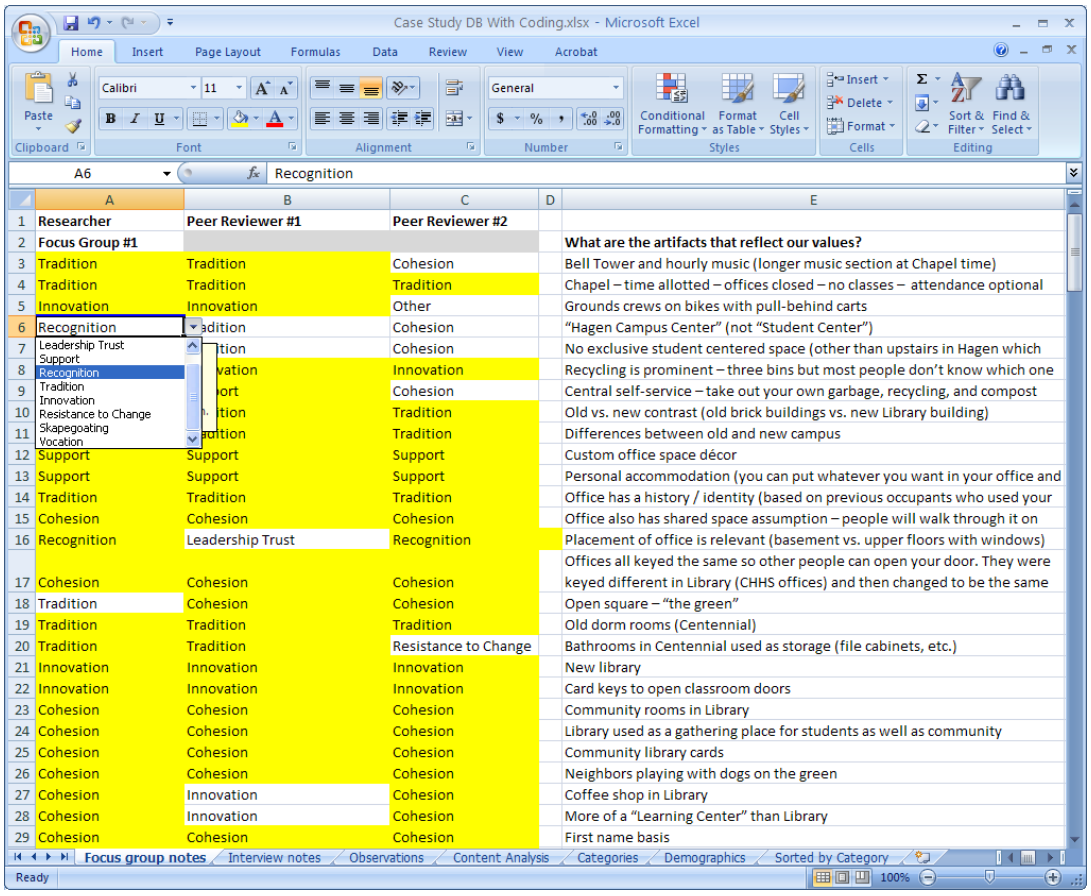
Categories

This first image is from the tab labeled Categories. This was used as an index in the spreadsheet in order to suggest potential categories for the researcher and peer reviewers to use in the categorization process. The database was designed to read from this list of categories each time a reviewer clicked on the category drop down list (pictured in the next image).



Categorization Process

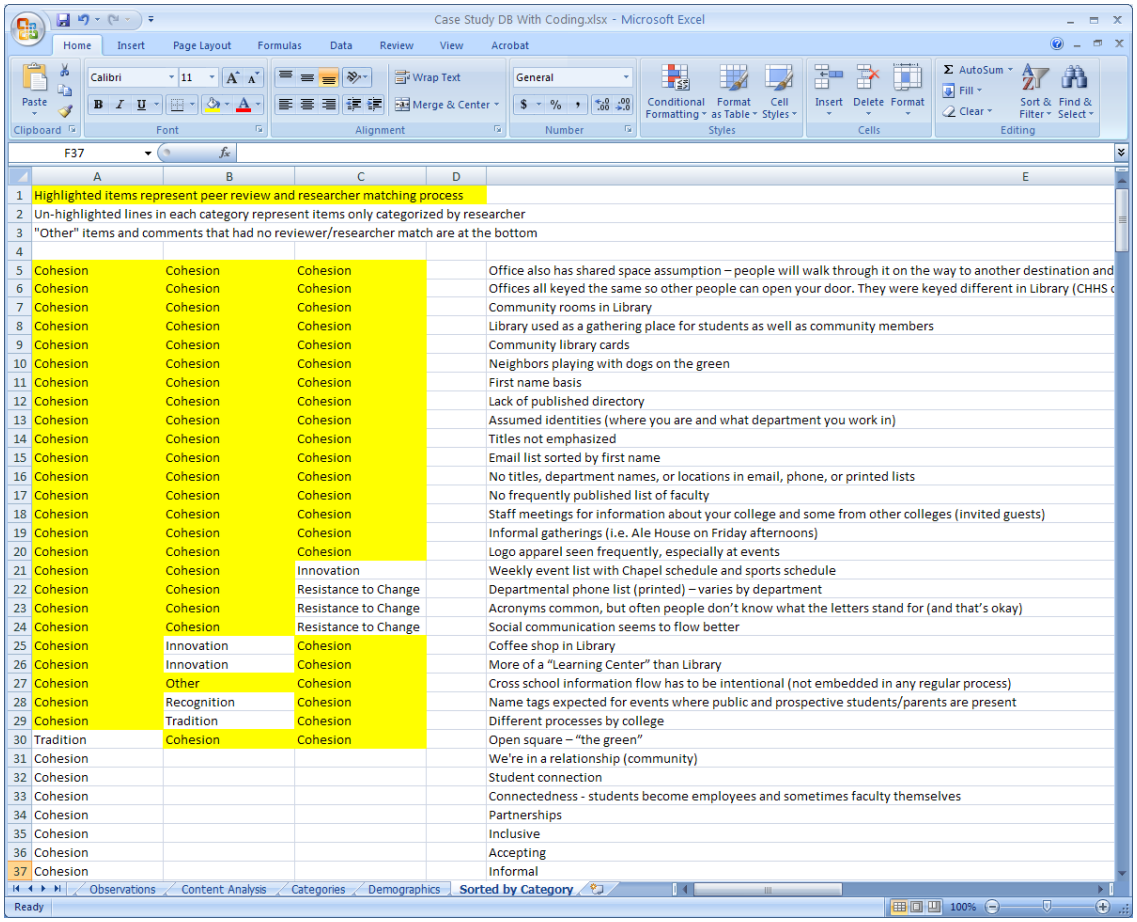
This image shows the process that was used for categorizing the data. In this example, the researcher is selecting a category for the data item on row 6. When the researcher clicked in the category column, the suggested list of categories from the *Categories* tab was made available. This allowed the categorization process to be structured, and yet dynamic (Yin, 2009). For example, when the vocation category was added to the database, a line was added in the category database to include vocation in the dropdown list.



	A	B	C	D	E
1	**Researcher**	**Peer Reviewer #1**	**Peer Reviewer #2**		
2	**Focus Group #1**				**What are the artifacts that reflect our values?**
3	Tradition	Tradition	Cohesion		Bell Tower and hourly music (longer music section at Chapel time)
4	Tradition	Tradition	Tradition		Chapel – time allotted – offices closed – no classes – attendance optional
5	Innovation	Innovation	Other		Grounds crews on bikes with pull-behind carts
6	Recognition	adition	Cohesion		"Hagen Campus Center" (not "Student Center")
7		tion	Cohesion		No exclusive student centered space (other than upstairs in Hagen which
8		vation	Innovation		Recycling is prominent – three bins but most people don't know which one
9		ort	Cohesion		Central self-service – take out your own garbage, recycling, and compost
10		tion	Tradition		Old vs. new contrast (old brick buildings vs. new Library building)
11		dition	Tradition		Differences between old and new campus
12	Support	Support	Support		Custom office space décor
13	Support	Support	Support		Personal accommodation (you can put whatever you want in your office and
14	Tradition	Tradition	Tradition		Office has a history / identity (based on previous occupants who used your
15	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Office also has shared space assumption – people will walk through it on
16	Recognition	Leadership Trust	Recognition		Placement of office is relevant (basement vs. upper floors with windows)
17	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Offices all keyed the same so other people can open your door. They were keyed different in Library (CHHS offices) and then changed to be the same
18	Tradition	Cohesion	Cohesion		Open square – "the green"
19	Tradition	Tradition	Tradition		Old dorm rooms (Centennial)
20	Tradition	Tradition	Resistance to Change		Bathrooms in Centennial used as storage (file cabinets, etc.)
21	Innovation	Innovation	Innovation		New library
22	Innovation	Innovation	Innovation		Card keys to open classroom doors
23	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Community rooms in Library
24	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Library used as a gathering place for students as well as community
25	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Community library cards
26	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Neighbors playing with dogs on the green
27	Cohesion	Innovation	Cohesion		Coffee shop in Library
28	Cohesion	Innovation	Cohesion		More of a "Learning Center" than Library
29	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		First name basis

Sorting Process

This image shows an excerpt of the data after it has been categorized and sorted. The highlighting illustrates the matches between the researcher and at least one reviewer in this excerpt. At this point in the process, the data has been sorted and any rows that did not meet the standard of at least one reviewer matching the researcher's categorization has been moved to the bottom of the database so that only the matches are used for analysis.



Case Study DB With Coding.xlsx - Microsoft Excel

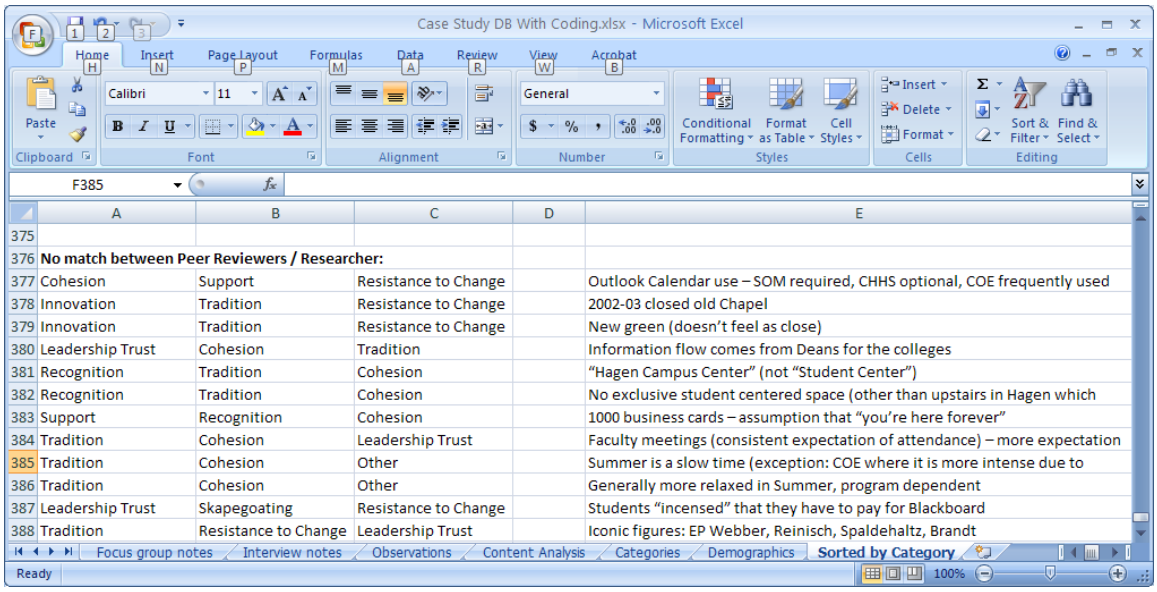
	A	B	C	D	E
1	Highlighted items represent peer review and researcher matching process				
2	Un-highlighted lines in each category represent items only categorized by researcher				
3	"Other" items and comments that had no reviewer/researcher match are at the bottom				
4					
5	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Office also has shared space assumption – people will walk through it on the way to another destination and
6	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Offices all keyed the same so other people can open your door. They were keyed different in Library (CHHS
7	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Community rooms in Library
8	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Library used as a gathering place for students as well as community members
9	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Community library cards
10	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Neighbors playing with dogs on the green
11	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		First name basis
12	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Lack of published directory
13	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Assumed identities (where you are and what department you work in)
14	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Titles not emphasized
15	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Email list sorted by first name
16	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		No titles, department names, or locations in email, phone, or printed lists
17	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		No frequently published list of faculty
18	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Staff meetings for information about your college and some from other colleges (invited guests)
19	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Informal gatherings (i.e. Ale House on Friday afternoons)
20	Cohesion	Cohesion	Cohesion		Logo apparel seen frequently, especially at events
21	Cohesion	Cohesion	Innovation		Weekly event list with Chapel schedule and sports schedule
22	Cohesion	Cohesion	Resistance to Change		Departmental phone list (printed) – varies by department
23	Cohesion	Cohesion	Resistance to Change		Acronyms common, but often people don't know what the letters stand for (and that's okay)
24	Cohesion	Cohesion	Resistance to Change		Social communication seems to flow better
25	Cohesion	Innovation	Cohesion		Coffee shop in Library
26	Cohesion	Innovation	Cohesion		More of a "Learning Center" than Library
27	Cohesion	Other	Cohesion		Cross school information flow has to be intentional (not embedded in any regular process)
28	Cohesion	Recognition	Cohesion		Name tags expected for events where public and prospective students/parents are present
29	Cohesion	Tradition	Cohesion		Different processes by college
30	Tradition	Cohesion	Cohesion		Open square – "the green"
31	Cohesion				We're in a relationship (community)
32	Cohesion				Student connection
33	Cohesion				Connectedness - students become employees and sometimes faculty themselves
34	Cohesion				Partnerships
35	Cohesion				Inclusive
36	Cohesion				Accepting
37	Cohesion				Informal

Observations | Content Analysis | Categories | Demographics | Sorted by Category

Ready

Non-matching Data

Finally, this image shows an excerpt of the data at the bottom of the database that did not meet the standard for researcher and peer review match in the first two rounds of data collection. This data was not used in the final analysis.



Case Study DB With Coding.xlsx - Microsoft Excel

	A	B	C	D	E
375					
376	**No match between Peer Reviewers / Researcher:**				
377	Cohesion	Support	Resistance to Change		Outlook Calendar use – SOM required, CHHS optional, COE frequently used
378	Innovation	Tradition	Resistance to Change		2002-03 closed old Chapel
379	Innovation	Tradition	Resistance to Change		New green (doesn't feel as close)
380	Leadership Trust	Cohesion	Tradition		Information flow comes from Deans for the colleges
381	Recognition	Tradition	Cohesion		"Hagen Campus Center" (not "Student Center")
382	Recognition	Tradition	Cohesion		No exclusive student centered space (other than upstairs in Hagen which
383	Support	Recognition	Cohesion		1000 business cards – assumption that "you're here forever"
384	Tradition	Cohesion	Leadership Trust		Faculty meetings (consistent expectation of attendance) – more expectation
385	Tradition	Cohesion	Other		Summer is a slow time (exception: COE where it is more intense due to
386	Tradition	Cohesion	Other		Generally more relaxed in Summer, program dependent
387	Leadership Trust	Skapegoating	Resistance to Change		Students "incensed" that they have to pay for Blackboard
388	Tradition	Resistance to Change	Leadership Trust		Iconic figures: EP Webber, Reinisch, Spaldehaltz, Brandt

Focus group notes | Interview notes | Observations | Content Analysis | Categories | Demographics | Sorted by Category

Ready

Appendix C: Informed Consent for Qualitative Research Project

Title of Study:	The Impact of Organizational Culture and Climate on Continuous Improvement at a Private, Christian University
Researcher:	Kathy Milhauser
Institute:	George Fox University
Purpose of study:	To provide insight into the culture and climate at Concordia University in order to optimize engagement of faculty in continuous improvement and assessment projects.
Procedures:	Focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis of artifacts
Possible risks :	Identification of comments made by individuals will be managed two ways. First, all notes from each focus group and interview will be provided for review and approval by all participants. Any comments that participants are not comfortable with will be removed from the notes. Second, individual identities of participants and links to their comments will not be included in the case study database or the final findings.
Confidentiality:	Confidentiality of your original comments in the focus group sessions cannot be assured due to the nature of oral dialogue. However, the data compiled from each focus group and individual interview will have identities removed and will be provided for your review and approval before it is added to the case study database.

AUTHORIZATION:

I have read and understand this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw or to suppress my comments from the case study database and final research findings.

_____ _____

Participant Name Participant Signature & date