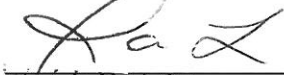



NEGOTIATING CULTURAL BOUNDARIES: HOW INDIVIDUALS TRAVERSE
THE FRAGMENTED TERRAIN OF HIGHER EDUCATION

by


Carrie Klein
A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts
Interdisciplinary Studies


Committee:




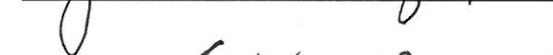


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Negotiating Cultural Boundaries: How Individuals Traverse the Fragmented Terrain of
Higher Education

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to Patrick and Kellen, who make me want to be better in everything I do.

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I would like to thank my family, friends and colleagues, whose love, support, perspectives and cheerleading helped make this project possible. Specifically, I would like to thank my adviser, Dr. Jaime Lester for guiding me through this project, for being a great mentor, colleague and friend, and for providing numerous opportunities to expand my academic horizons. A huge thank you also to colleagues and friends, Dr. Joya Crear and Dr. Olivia “Mandy” O’Neill for reading through this tome, offering advice and perspective and being supportive through the hand-wringing stages of this project. Thank you to Dr. Todd Rose, my program adviser for guidance during the past three years. Also, a big thanks to my friends and colleagues in University Life at George Mason University for your ears, shoulders and everything else. Finally, to Patrick for being an amazingly supportive partner and friend and to Kellen for being the best son ever – thank you both for your love, patience, encouragement and support. I love you more than 34,507 words could ever express!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

George Mason University..... Mason

ABSTRACT

NEGOTIATING CULTURAL BOUNDARIES: HOW INDIVIDUALS TRAVERSE THE FRAGMENTED TERRAIN OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Carrie Klein, M.A.I.S.

George Mason University, 2013

Thesis Director: Dr. Jaime Lester

This thesis describes the ways in which organizational culture and sub-cultures inform how individuals work across the fragmented terrain of higher education. Through a qualitative case study at George Mason University eighteen individuals were interviewed to explore the role of organizational culture and sub-cultures in their collaborative interactions. Among the results are that the motivations, awareness and strategies of individuals are informed by both the overarching organizational culture and sub-cultural differences. Each of these aspects of individuals reifies another. Organizational culture in the form of shared mission and goals motivates individuals to collaborate beyond sub-cultures. This motivation requires a deep awareness of others in the organization. By broadening their knowledge base, individuals are better able to construct strategies for successful collaboration. When successful, these strategies – relationship and network building, tailored communication, active listening, advocacy and adaptable approach – in

turn, provide new motivation and greater awareness. These findings are useful in that they provide insight into collaborative effectiveness that internal boundary spanners can use to bridge the loosely-coupled components of their institutions for greater organizational success.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions in the United States are facing unprecedented external forces that are impacting organizational effectiveness. Pressure in the forms of governance, accountability, economy, demographic and value shifts and the “rapid rate of change in the world both within and beyond our national borders” (Kezar & Eckel, 2002, p. 435) have caused many in higher education leadership to implement collaborative change strategies in order to mitigate those challenges (Barnett, 2011; Birnbaum, 1988; Kezar & Lester, 2009). These collaborative endeavors, in which organizational members cross boundaries to work toward mutually beneficial goals, are becoming more common, are being encouraged, and have begun to yield promising results (Amey, 2010; Amey, Eddy & Ozaki, 2007; Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Yet, to fully reap the benefits of collaboration, it is important to understand how the siloed and culturally fragmented landscapes of higher education institutions shape the approach of those who work across internal cultural boundaries to collaborate for greater organizational effectiveness. The purpose of this case study, conducted at George Mason University (Mason) is to explore the ways in which awareness of organizational cultures impact and inform the collaborative work of individuals who work across internal boundaries in higher education institutions.

Collaboration: Benefits and Challenges

How individuals collaborate across organizational sub-cultures is the crux of this study. In order to better understand the individual's role, it is necessary to be aware of the context of collaboration within the unique structures of higher education institutions and the influence of cultural difference and boundaries on collaborative endeavors.

Collaboration and Organizational Structure

Collaboration is an “interactive process (relationships that develop over time)” within which “groups develop shared rules, norms and structures” (Kezar, 2005a, p. 833-4; Hara *et al*, 2003; Wood & Gray, 1991). This interactive process is highly dependent upon relationship and network building; the cultivation of trust within the collaborative group; and a shared vision and common goals (Hara, *et al*, 2003; Kanter, 1994).

Organizations whose structures and cultures allow for successful collaboration across boundaries create a “significant competitive leg up” by creating space for new approaches and answers to organizational problems (Kanter, 1994, p. 96). Indeed, “greater efficiency, effectiveness, and increased complexity of decision-making” are connected with successful collaborative endeavors (Kezar, 2006, p. 805; Kanter, 1994; Kezar, 2005a,b; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Senge, 1990; Whetten, 1981; Wood & Gray, 1991). While organizational boundaries are necessary as the “building blocks of coordination” that help define roles and goals of organizations, collaboration can provide a “fresh approach to management” that will help solve problems and improve performance (Kettl, 2006, p. 12, 18).

Collaboration's benefits in higher education are manifold, offering institutions the opportunity for better and more complex problem solving, increased synergy of programs

and services and greater organizational impact (Barnett, 2011; Eddy, 2010; Kezar, 2005b; Kezar, 2006; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Lasker, *et al*, 2001). Furthermore, “collaboration allows organizations to work and learn across the silos that have characterized organizational structures” (Liedtka, 1996, p. 21). This is especially important for higher education institutions, which are often riddled with siloed sub-units with differing missions, end-goals and cultural values.

However, collaboration is no easy task, because working across boundaries for mutual benefit requires relationship building that is antithetical to “decades of Western economic and managerial assumptions” that have valued managerial isolation over shared partnership (Kanter, 1994, p. 100; Liedtka, 1996). Furthermore, collaboration requires sustained commitment over time, which can be impacted by fluctuating resources, competing demands and changing environments (Kanter, 1994; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Liedtka, 1996). Although much of the data on the benefits and challenges of collaboration focuses on the interactions between organizations in the corporate world, recent work focusing on collaboration in higher education and newer work on intra-organizational collaboration has yielded similar results (Amey, 2010; Eddy, 2010; Kezar, 2005a,b; Kezar, 2006; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Magolda, 2001).

Collaboration across internal boundaries in higher education institutions is complex and challenging. Over 50% of collaborations fail (Kezar, 2005a; Doz, 1996). Difficulties in collaboration are due, in part, to the highly differentiated and fragmented system of higher education (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Differentiated organizations are “composed of overlapping, nested sub-cultures that

coexist in relationships of intergroup harmony, conflict or indifference” (Martin, 2004, p. 7). The difference created in these types of organizations compounded by fragmentation, which occurs when there are multiple perspectives at play that can increase the ambiguity and inefficiency of organizational functioning (Martin, 2004). While both differentiation and fragmentation are inherent in organizational structures, the dissonance these realities create can impede collaboration, by creating sub-systems bounded by difference.

Boundaries are the borders that are constructed within and between organizations, created around functions, disciplines or lines of business (Liedtka, 1996). As boundaries emerge in loosely-coupled systems like higher education, they further contribute to fragmentation and difference by creating cultural sub-systems and varied perspectives within the overarching system. Boundary spanners are individuals whose work takes them beyond the boundary of their organization or sub-unit to interact with those from other units within and beyond the system (Bess & Dee, 2009).

Within these bounded systems are multiple forms of control, with differing hierarchies, decision and rule making, and end-goals. Organizational members of these sub-systems are knitted together in a loosely-coupled professional bureaucracy (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Birnbaum, 1988; Kezar, 2006; Kezar, 2011; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Martin, 2001; Tierney, 2001; Weick, 1976). As a professional bureaucracy with varied missions, values and rewards systems, a structure of siloed sub-systems has been created in higher education. Compounding structural issues is that higher education often suffers from a “lack of clarity about mission and goal ambiguity” as various sub-units “have different and conflicting aims” (Kezar, 2011, p. 214; Harman, 2002). The result is a

differentiated and often fragmented organizational structure of loosely-coupled sub-systems, each with distinct roles, hierarchies, perspectives and cultures, act as a constraint on collaboration (Amey, Eddy & Ozaki, 2007; Kezar, 2005b; Kezar, 2009; Kezar, 2011; Tierney, 2001).

The result of this siloing of thought and action is a workplace divided. As Clark (1963 quoted in Becher & Trowler, 2001) noted, these disciplinary divides create cultural divides, as “the work and the points of view grow more specialized [individuals] have less impulse to interact with one another and less ability to do so...the disciplines exist as separate estates, with distinct sub-cultures” (p. 275). Although collaborative members may be tied to the organization by the overarching institutional mission and culture, they are also closely connected with their individual sub-system or discipline within the organization, making agreement on priorities, process and outcomes difficult (Barnett, 2011).

These disciplines and their associated cultures create communities in which sub-cultures begin to supersede the dominant organizational culture by providing a frame of understanding within which members are socialized, learn and make sense of their environments (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983). The disparate disciplines and cultures present on college and university campuses create “rigid barriers to cross-divisional work and partnerships” (Kezar, 2005a, p. 832; Kanter, 1994; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Senge, 1990; Trowler & Becher, 2001).

The divides created by the inherent siloes in the organizational structures of higher education institutions has created a system of internal cultural differences that

often cultivate fragmentation of thought and action rather than a construct a cohesive movement toward common goals (Birnbaum, 1988; Kezar, 2005; Kezar, 2006; Weick, 1976). The sub-divided nature of higher education is not new, but has evolved over the last two centuries. As American institutions have evolved, disciplinary divides and individual work became were reinforced culturally through values, norms and rewards systems (Becher and Trowler, 2001; Kezar, 2005b; Kezar, 2006; Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Therefore, collaborative failures can also be attributed to lack of cohesive mission, strategy and cultural understanding by the individuals involved in the process (Tierney, 2001). Differing values, missions, rewards, and perceptions within bounded sub-cultures can impact overarching organizational effectiveness by creating or enhancing barriers and making it difficult for individuals to work effectively across organizational difference (Kanter, 2004; Kezar, 2005a; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kezar, 2011; Schein, 2010; Tierney, 2008). As Amey (2010) states, “partnerships are difficult and complex” (p. 22), requiring deft management of roles, resources and responsibility (Amey, 2010; Eddy, 2010; Kettl, 2006). Thus, in order to successfully collaborate across these inherent impediments, individuals must learn how to successfully negotiate internal organizational boundaries, including cultural boundaries, for mutual organizational success.

Cultural Boundaries

Culture is the “pattern of basic shared assumptions by a group” (Schein, 2010, p. 18) that guides behavior and is composed of norms, values, symbols and rewards that integrate members of the group through social learning (Schein, 2010). Culture, then,

provides the “webs of significance” within organizations (Tierney, 1988). Understanding the role of culture allows decision makers to “articulate decisions in a way that will speak to the needs of various constituencies and marshal their support” (Tierney, 2008, p. 26-27). Successful collaboration is dependent upon its participants’ cultural intelligence - their ability to both understand culture and its impact and to work effectively across the cultural boundaries within an organization.

When aptly done, the collaborative work of dedicated individuals across internal cultural boundaries can offer a salve for organizational differentiation, by connecting disparate areas across the “departmental silos and bureaucratic, hierarchical administrative structures” (Kezar, 2005b, p. 832) that have developed over the course of more than three centuries. As these individuals collaborate with each other, they engage in an “interactive process (relationship over time)... [with] shared rules, norms and structures [and] a task that become their first work together” (Kezar & Lester, 2009, p. 7). Their collaborative efforts can be both external (engaging constituents outside of the university structure) and internal (made up of cross-boundary groups within the boundary of a university system), and require crossing the cultural boundaries of the overarching institution and its sub-systems (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Movement by individuals across internal cultural boundaries can further diminish the divide between organizational sub-systems, as it provides a means for organizational members to engage in learning and sensemaking beyond their sub-system’s perspective. Sensemaking by individuals creates a lens in which they are able to “comprehend, explain and interpret events in organizational life” (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 154), and give

individuals a greater understanding and more complete picture of the overarching organization.

Furthermore, as individuals come together across difference, the convergence of perspectives, values, missions and goals from the various internally bounded sub-systems and their cultures can, when successful, foster an environment of innovative solutions and increasing productivity and efficiency (Amey, 2010; Kezar, 2005ab; Kanter, 1994; Kettl, 2006; Wood & Gray, 1991; Whetten, 1981). Indeed, Eddy (2010) argues that successful collaboration across internal boundaries creates a “win-win situation” allowing partners greater success working together than they would have had without the benefit of a collaborative approach. Consequently, both the cognitive complexity of the institution and the potential for improved effectiveness is increased, making collaboration “an imperative, because of the overwhelming evidence of its benefits,” especially in the areas of “knowledge creation and research, student learning and improved organizational functioning” (Kezar & Lester, 2009, p. 4-5).

Despite the advantages of collaborative work and the impact of culture on its success, only recently have these aspects of organizational development been investigated within higher education (Amey, 2010; Amey & Brown, 2004; Amey, Eddy & Ozaki, 2007; Eddy, 2009; Gajda & Koliba, 2007; Kezar, 2005a,b; Kezar, 2006; Kezar & Lester 2009; Magolda, 2001). These studies have underscored the importance of collaboration for improved organizational effectiveness; have illuminated factors to successful collaboration (including network and trust building and shared mission and goals); and have highlighted the challenges collaborative endeavors face.

Study Significance

While there is growing data on both the importance of collaboration across difference in higher education and how collaboration can impact the overarching institution, data is lacking on why and how the individuals in these processes approach collaborative activities. It is important to understand the role of the individual, as individuals are key to collaboration's success or failure and the potential of the overarching institution.

Little is known about how individuals collaborate across internal cultural boundaries for collective good, especially on college and university campuses. Research on individuals has been limited to primarily the corporate world and the attributes and strategies of external boundary spanners, who are engaged in partnership with entities outside of the organization (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1982; Doz, 1996; Faraj & Yan, 2009; Kanter, 1994; Kettl, 2006; Liedtka, 1996; Perrone, 2003; Russell and Flynn, 2000; Saxton, 2007; Tushman & Scanlon, 1981; Williams, 2002). Much of the work of these studies highlights the importance of relationship and trust building between individuals, focusing on how interactions can be improved. Limited attention has been paid to how individuals span the multitude of internal cultural boundaries that comprise institutions of higher education.

This study seeks to understand how individuals negotiate the various internal cultural boundaries on college campuses, in an effort to provide those engaged in collaborative efforts strategies for successful partnership. By understanding the individual and how they are impacted by and work across internal cultural boundaries,

higher education leaders and internal boundary spanners will be able to better construct, guide and participate in collaborative processes with greater success and effectiveness.

To determine how individuals function on these teams, the following research questions were considered: 1) How do cultural boundaries within organizations inform and shape internal boundary spanners' views of cross-cultural interactions; and, 2) How do individuals utilize cultural understanding to collaborate successfully across disparate sub-cultures for mutual success? Through qualitative interviews with higher education collaborators to explore these questions, this study seeks to explain how these internal boundary-spanning individuals traverse the fragmented terrain and negotiate the cultural boundaries of higher education institutions.

Study Methodology

A case study methodology was used to explore the research questions and to better understand the intersection of collaboration, culture and the individual. Using purposeful and snowball sampling of individuals who collaboratively engage with people beyond their home units, twenty-five people were invited to participate in the study in half-hour to forty-five minute interviews. Individuals with diverse backgrounds and roles at diverse levels within the institution were invited to participate. Ultimately, 18 individuals at Mason were interviewed during the fall of 2012. Interview questions focused on gleaning a better understanding of the collaborative individual's awareness of cultural differences present within the overarching structure of the university and how those differences impact their approach to collaboration across internal cultural

boundaries. Participants were also asked about their motivations and the strategies they use to collaborate across these boundaries.

In addition to the interviews with each of the participants, a review of cultural artifacts related to the individual's home unit and the overarching institution were explored. Review of the university's website, including the school's factbook and history pages, multiple unit pages, collaborative institutions and cross-disciplinary institute pages and collaborative team projects pages were reviewed. Additionally, each of the home units were visited. During these visits, general observations were made of visible cultural cues, including ways in interacting, location on campus, space allocation, general environment, artifacts, etc.

Data was collected and transcribed during the winter of 2013. A constant comparative analysis to ground the data and cull through the findings was employed during the spring of 2013. The results have been cross-checked and, to ensure accuracy, participants were given the option of reviewing their transcriptions. While every effort was made to keep biases at bay, the study is limited by the researcher's role at the university as both an employee and student. Additional limitations include the nature of this study as a snapshot in time at a specific institution. While the results provide insight into how individuals are informed by culture and sub-culture and how they use that knowledge to work across difference, they are specific to Mason and those interviewed.

Summary

As higher education institutions face greater external pressures that impact their operations, greater collaboration between the divisions that make up those institutions is

required. These collaborative endeavors can benefit organizations by bridging disparate and siloed sub-units. However, in order to be successful, those engaging in collaboration across cultural boundaries must be aware of the differences in the various cultures present on a campus and the additional barriers to collaboration that organizational sub-cultures can create. This study seeks to understand how those who successfully collaborate with others outside of their home units and cultures navigate the cultural boundaries within their own institutions. By learning more about the motivations, thought processes and strategies of these successful individuals, those engaged in projects that take them beyond their sub-cultural boundaries will be better equipped to collaborate more effectively.

The next chapter of this thesis will establish a framework of understanding of the intersection of collaboration, culture and the individual and, through a thorough review of the literature that is explored to ground the study. Chapter Three reviews the methodology that was used in this case study and is supported by information in the appendices, at the end of the work. The results of the study follow in Chapter Four, fully explicating the case of collaboration at Mason and outlining the motivations, awareness and strategies individuals use on that campus to collaborate across cultural difference. Chapter Five will discuss the results and explore what was learned in the study, how it links to current work, show new areas of insight and suggest areas for future research. The thesis concludes with a short summary of the complete study.

FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW

Framework

This project focuses on the impact of culture on the individuals who work across sub-cultural boundaries in higher education. Specifically, the study investigates the ways in which understanding of organizational culture and sub-culture informs the work of individuals who traverse internal boundaries through collaboration and how that understanding is used to successfully collaborate despite organizational difference. To ground and provide context for this study, a model of higher education collaboration with culturally embedded components is employed and coupled with literature on organizational culture to provide a theoretical frame.

This study would not be complete if collaboration and culture alone girded a frame of understanding of cross-cultural collaboration in higher education. The role of the individual, understanding their motivations, awareness and strategies is vital to this study. While there is no specific framework regarding the role of individuals in the collaborative process, the literature on external boundary spanners and limited literature on boundary spanners in higher education help to elucidate participant interviews and shape and ground the results of the data collected via this project. Collaboration, culture and the individual are all aspects of organizational life that are vital to this study and to understanding how individuals negotiate the fragmented cultural terrain of higher education.

A Model of Collaboration

Intra-organizational collaboration in higher education institutions is rife with opportunity and challenge. Kezar and Lester (2009) provide a model for understanding the process of collaboration; the ways in which the fragmented nature of higher education institutions can constrain effective collaboration across internal boundaries, including cultural boundaries; and the work that individual “change agents” can do to mitigate those challenges. Specifically, their work provides a model for individuals wanting to establish more effective collaborative relationships in higher education institutions. The model is composed of three stages, each with specific components that support collaborative success (Figure 1, Kezar & Lester, 2009, p. 216).

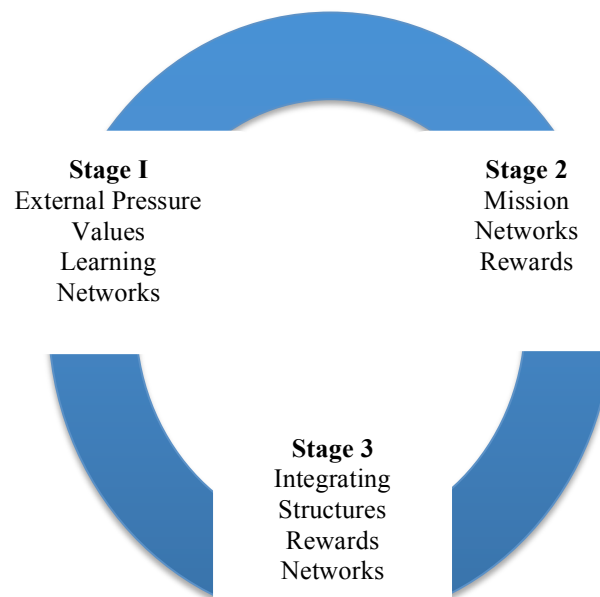


Figure 1. Kezar & Lester Model for Collaboration in Higher Education

Kezar and Lester underscore the importance of structure, networks, learning, values, rewards and shared mission to successful collaboration on university campuses. Their work encompasses aspects of culture and sub-culture within collaborative endeavors and speaks to the importance of cross-unit collaboration via specific strategies. This model, and the frame it provides, is dependent upon key elements of organizational culture, namely values, mission, rewards and sensemaking and the divides that take place within the siloed structure of higher education institutions.

To mitigate these divides on campus, Kezar and Lester's model of collaboration in higher education suggests that institutions should reorganize to enhance collaboration across boundaries. This restructuring is centered on integrating structures and networks within the organization and establishing learning opportunities, shared values, rewards and a collaborative context from which cross-boundary interactions can flourish. Through their model, Kezar and Lester refer to the importance of considering culture when reorganizing to enhance effectiveness.

It is appropriate that aspects of organizational culture play a large role in this model of understanding and promoting collaboration in higher education, as organizational culture is deeply rooted in day-to-day operations of organizations. While Kezar and Lester's model incorporates aspects of organizational culture and while they make an argument for the importance of culture components within the collaborative model they provide (through values, missions, rewards, etc.), organizational culture is not explicitly explored within their work. For this study, their model is coupled with Schein's (2010) work on organizational culture, which offers both definition of

organizational culture and descriptors of ways in which culture is manifested, is visible and permeates organizations, through artifacts, values and beliefs. This deeper delve into organizational culture within the context of Kezar and Lester's model is important, as understanding culture and its impact on collaboration is paramount for individuals working across disciplinary sub-divides. By combining the collaborative model and definitions and descriptions of the aspects and levels of organizational culture, a more dynamic framework of understanding of the intertwined and interdependent nature of collaboration and organizational culture is established to gird this study.

Literature on Culture

Culture, as used in this study, is defined as “ a pattern of shared basic assumptions” by a group (Schein, 1993), that is both composed of and evident in three levels: artifacts, values and beliefs. These levels include rituals, symbols, language, norms, sagas, values, ideologies and deeply ingrained beliefs (Pettigrew, 1979; Schein, 1993; Tierney, 1988, 2008), and are key components of the collaborative, boundary spanning process. Further, they can provide cues of understanding for those engaged in boundary spanning partnerships (Amey, 2010; Kettl, 2006; Kraus & Sultana, 2008) and create webs of significance, allowing individuals to make sense of their surroundings through cultural cues (Tierney, 1988). Thus, culture “serves as an organizing framework within which to determine rewards and punishments, what is valued and what is not, and moral imperatives” (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 163).

Yet, as powerful as culture is, it is difficult to measure, as most of culture operates on a sub-conscious level, lacking “conceptual clarity” and is continuously evolving (Kuh

& Whitt, 1988; Harman, 2002; Schein, 2010). “We are all embedded in our own cultures” (Masland, 1985, p. 147), making objective observation difficult. As Tierney (1988) notes, it is only when one has transgressed against the rules of a group (when “codes and conventions” are broken), that group members become aware of their culture and its impact (Tierney, 1988, p. 4; Kezar & Eckel, 2002). The dissonance that is created in these moments can highlight differences between groups and has the potential to create division within an organizational structure (Dill, 1982; Kuh & Whitt, 1988).

However, understanding difference can also create opportunities. By understanding organizational cultures and becoming a “cultural outsider,” individuals working across organizational sub-units bounded by sub-cultures can avoid some of the pitfalls that endanger collaborative work (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Namely, by being aware of the cultural norms, values and reward structures of others creates a “deeper and richer understanding of the change process and appears to facilitate change” (Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Kezar, 2005a). Having an outsider’s perspective to one’s own culture, as well as the culture of others also gives a deeper and richer understanding of the organization as a whole. New perspectives on organizational culture, a highly nuanced, pervasive and complex part of organizational life, are valuable as they provide opportunities for sensemaking by organizational members.

Levels of Organizational Culture

Organizational artifacts, values and beliefs are key to understanding culture (Schein, 2010). These aspects of organizational culture play a significant role in informing collaborative teams and impact members of organizations by creating

sensemaking opportunities through which individuals view their organizations, their sub-systems and the sub-systems with which they interact in collaborative work (Berquist, 1994; Kezar, & Eckel 2002; Schein, 2010; Tierney, 1988). Schein states that organizational artifacts, composed of rituals, norms language, stories and symbols, are the first layer of organizational culture (Schein, 2010).

Missions are cultural symbols that provide the context that helps create and reify organizational culture by acting as both sensemaking tool and as a rallying point for group members (Schein, 2010; Tierney, 1988, 2008; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Kezar 2006; Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Overarching organizational missions can bond disparate sub-systems by reminding group members of their affiliation to a larger whole. The importance of mission is evident in cross-cultural collaborative groups, as well. Groups that are able to come together to collaborate around common goals are often more successful than those working at odds with each other (Kezar, 2006; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Tierney, 1988, 2008).

As groups work around commonalities, often rituals evolve. Rituals are outwardly expressed opportunities specific to a group that create group socialization and the sharing of group values and beliefs (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Lee et al, 2004; Masland, 1985; Schein, 2010). Language, symbols, stories and metaphors specific to cultural groups, help reify the values and beliefs of that culture, connecting group to culture to meaning (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Schein, 2010). These connections, again, provide commonality for organizational members.

Providing a common ground through artifacts is useful in collaborative work, as is a rewards system, which symbolically prioritizes collaborative endeavors (Amey, 2010; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kraus & Sultana, 2008; Schein, 2010; Tierney, 2008). Bess and Dee (2008) state that rewards provide “tangible representation of meaning for organization members” and in turn, those rewards “underscore the values and goals to which the institution and its members attach greater or lesser importance” (p. 381). Essentially, rituals and reward systems that are supportive of collaboration provide a guide and motivation for group members, ensuring greater success for their initiatives.

According to Schein (2010), values help construct the second level of culture. Values are important factors of culture as they help group members construct meaning of their environment. Culturally distinct values are the collection of aspirational shared beliefs (conscious and identifiable) that “give meaning to social actions and establish standards for social behavior” (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 168; Lee *et al*, 2004; Schein, 2010). Kezar and Lester (2009) note that values provide a baseline understanding for those involved in collaboration, as organizational members are socialized into understanding accepted behaviors and assumptions that define their institution and its collaborative processes. Dill (1982) underscores this notion, stating that in professional bureaucracies like colleges and universities, the “authority of the enterprise rests on obedience to a set of values or ideological norms” (p. 308) and that those values and norms bind members to the organization.

Values are often aspirational in nature and work to provide a template for the group of what they *should* be, when at their best (Kuh & Whitt, 1988) and norms provide

rules that group members can use to help guide their behavior within the cultural construct. In higher education, “professionalization, autonomy, individuality, equity and equality, academic freedom and specialization of knowledge” are among the overarching values that guide institutions and their members (Kezar, 2011, p. 213; Becher & Trowler, 2001; Dill, 1982; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Masland, 1985).

Beliefs, or basic assumptions, are usually sub-conscious, not easily expressed and inform organizational culture on a third level (Schein, 2010). These deeply rooted beliefs “guide behavior as well as thoughts, feelings and reactions to events, experiences and ideas” (Lee, *et al*, 2004, p. 346; Schein 2010). Like with the other aspects of culture, beliefs continue to evolve and are influenced by the variety of roles, disciplines and structures within higher education organizations (Birnbaum, 1988; Kezar, 2011).

Artifacts, values and beliefs are core components of culture that are present at multiple levels of organizations and provide sensemaking and motivational opportunities for group members. Additionally, aspects of culture, specifically the role of mission, values and rewards, are intertwined with organizational leadership and structure of organizations. These aspects of organizational culture play a significant role in creating boundaries; shaping the sub-cultures that make-up a campus.

Cultural and Organizational Structure

Organizational structure, including leadership structure, shapes organizational culture. Institutional leadership, as a component of culture, often drives how collaborations work. Schein (2010) and Tierney (2008) argue that organizational founders and leaders are crucial in establishing mission-selection and context-creation,

thus laying the bedrock of institutional culture, specifically values, norms and rewards, through which subsequent members will operate and that will ultimately impact collaborative work. This cultural makeup, driven by leaders and institutionalized by subsequent members, provides the context that shapes partnership, as collaboration does not “exist in a vacuum” but is influenced by the “mission and structure of each involved institution” (Eddy, 2010, p. 17). Despite the importance of founders and leaders in the shaping of organizational culture, it is important to note that culture is shaped on multiple levels within the hierarchy of any system and that the evolution of culture is an iterative process, one that is reformed, reshaped and reified by each member of the organization (Dill, 1982; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983).

In addition to leadership, organizational structure is among the most vital forces for collaborators to negotiate is the variety of institutional sub-cultures in higher education, which are influenced by organizational structure and development (Birnbaum, 1988; Tierney, 2008; Wilkins & Ouchi, 1988). Masland (1985) notes that culture is impacted by organizational size, connectedness and age and that founding influences on culture have a major impact on its development (Masland, 1985; Schein, 2010).

The siloed structure of colleges and universities have created the “tribes and territories” (Becher & Trowler, 1999) in academia can act as a wedge between collaborators if not acknowledged and understood. Indeed, structure has a deep impact on both the overarching culture and the culture of its sub-systems, which can, in turn, influence organizational performance. Wilkins and Ouchi (1983) found that “local organizational culture” has a substantial impact on organizational performance (p. 468).

Furthermore, they state that because organizations are socially fragmented it is difficult to create an overarching, dominant culture; thus organizational culture takes a back seat and local culture “is the dominant form of control” (Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983, p. 469).

While overarching institutional culture provides sensemaking, or common ground, for its members, those members bring with them the culture and perspective of their own organizational sub-systems and corresponding sub-culture (Amey, 2010; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Schein, 2010; Tierney, 1998, 2008). The complexity of sub-cultures can vary by organizational type, but is particularly complex in higher education institutions, in which varying cultures at multiple levels of the organization are operating simultaneously and often independently (Dill, 1982) and where organizational members, undergo vastly different socialization, depending on their discipline and role within the organizational structure (Kuh & Whitt, 1988).

These differing cultures and varied perspectives create a dissonance and ambiguity that can hinder partnership across boundaries and can lead to a lack of trust and understanding (Alvesson, 2000; Magolda, 2011). Differences in cultures “represent[ing] distinct systems and approaches to working together [is] one of the most cited reasons for failed partnerships” (Kezar, 2011; Tsjovold & Tsao, 1988). This difference contributes to miscommunication, mistrust and misappropriation of talent (Kezar, 2011). Thus, to be successful, having and understanding of organizational culture is one of the necessary aspects of collaborative partnership that must be addressed.

How cultural differences are addressed can either promote or constrain the collaborative process (Amey, 2010; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Kezar & Lester, 2008). Individuals working across cultural boundaries must work beyond their cultural assumptions to understand the “other” in order to improve collaboration (Alvesson, 2000; Harman, 2002; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Magolda, 2001). Indeed, collaboration comes down to the individual – who they are, what drives them and how they interact with others.

Literature on Individuals

While culture, in the form of values, missions, rewards and leadership, impacts collaboration, the individual engaged in these processes play an important role in their ability to successfully negotiate cultural differences and work beyond the boundaries of their own sub-systems. It is important to understand the role of the individual in cross-cultural collaborative endeavors within institutions, as those engaged in collaboration are key to success or failure.

There is a great deal of data on externally focused boundary spanners and collaboration (Hara, *et al*, 2003; Leidtka, 1996; Kanter, 1994; Kettl, 2006; Lasker, *et al*, 2001; Russell & Flynn, 2000; Tushman & Scanlon, 1981; Whetten, 1981; Williams, 2002; Wood & Gray, 1991). However, the literature on the cultural divides that internal boundary spanners face within their organizations is sparse, especially related to higher education institutions. Despite a lack of directly applicable data, the literature on individual boundary spanning activity has helped inform this project. The following review of relevant literature represents an expansive investigation into the themes of

motivations and strategies related to individuals working across organizational boundaries.

Individual Attributes, Motivations and Strategies

As stated previously, the bulk of the research on individuals who cross organizational boundaries has been limited to the attributes and strategies of external boundary spanners and the necessary environmental conditions for collaborative success between rather than the work of those within organizations. Although most of the data focuses on external boundary spanners, it is applicable to the work of those internal boundary spanners who work across the boundaries within higher education organizations. Furthermore, while the data focuses on partnering across boundaries, very little work focuses on how organizational sub-cultures impact those partnerships, especially in higher education institutions. However, recent work (Kezar, 2005a,b; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Kezar & Lester, 2009) touches on how sub-cultures impact individual approach to collaboration and Eddy (2010) has provided insight into collaborative partnerships by individuals that is specific to work between units on university campuses. This work, paired with the data on external boundary spanners in the business realm informs this section of the literature review in the areas of individual attributes and individual strategies.

Research on externally focused, inter-organizational boundary spanners indicates that they share certain characteristics and use certain strategies that help foster and build relationships and social capital with others, aspects which are key to collaborative success (Eddy, 2010; Liedtka, 1996; Williams, 2002). The literature highlights both the

characteristics and the strategies of individuals as impacting their ability to work effectively across boundaries. Specifically, individuals deemed successful in collaboration are viewed as highly motivated, proficient, trustworthy, and socially and technically adept (Liedtka, 1996; Russell & Flynn, 2000; Tushman & Scanlon, 1981; Williams, 2002). Successful boundary spanners, in the literature on external partnerships, are also viewed as adaptable and “sensitive to social cues” (Caldwell & Reilly, 1982, p. 124). They are able to understand and even empathize with co-collaborators, to better understand and respect their values and perspectives (Williams, 2002) and to tailor transparent and honest communications to specific groups (Lasker, *et al*, 2001; Liedtka, 1996; Tushman & Scanlon, 1981). By doing this, they are better able to build a foundation of trust, pivotal to collaborative work (Lasker, *et al*, 2001; Liedtka, 1996; Russell & Flynn, 2000; Williams, 2002).

The ability to build relationships based on trust, communication and openness plays a substantial role in collaborative success by individuals. Those boundary spanners who are able to build strong networks, who possess strong communication, listening, negotiation, networking and conflict resolution skills, and who are also deemed as highly trustworthy, open and inclusive seem to be most successful at collaborating across organizational boundaries (Amey, 2010; Amey & Brown, 2004; Kanter, 1994; Kettl, 2006; Kraus & Sultana, 2008; Lasker, *et al*, 2001; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981; Whetten, 1981; Williams, 2002). Being seen as trustworthy also establishes a perceived sense of proficiency in the boundary spanner, and those considered by colleagues to be proficient in both their area of practice were deemed more successful in their collaborative efforts

(Lasker, *et al*, 2001; Liedtka, 1996; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). This proficiency helps build social capital and strengthens relationships (Eddy, 2010). Trust and capital not only construct relationships but also allow for decision making to occur with greater ease by individuals involved in collaborations. Decision-making is not only a result of trust, relationship building and social capital but also helps to create and bolster these aspects of collaboration (Whetten, 1981; Wood & Gray, 1991).

As stated previously, there is little work on the impact of culture on the individual's approach to collaboration and boundary crossing. However, Tushman and Scanlon (1981) hint at the importance of understanding cultural difference, noting that successful boundary spanners need to be able to understand "local coding schemes and languages as well as the specialized conceptual frameworks" of differing organizational cultures (Tushman & Scanlon, 1981, p. 291; Faraj & Yan, 2009). Kezar and Lester (2009) have also indicated the importance of change agents being aware of the various values, missions and rewards systems present in both the overarching culture and the sub-cultures of higher education institutions as being a key strategy for collaborative success. Actively working to understand others and the cultures they represent can give individuals a more complete view of the organization leading to better collaborations and organizational efficiency (Kezar & Eckel, 2002, Kezar & Lester, 2009; Whetten, 1981). Furthermore, understanding others allows individuals to act as ambassadors and advocates, a strategy which can further collaborative goals and individual capital (Eddy, 2010; Faraj & Yan, 2009; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981).

Yet, possession and use of attributes and strategies, alone, does not always yield positive collaborative results when working across cultural difference. Motivation also plays a key role in determining how individuals approach and work through collaborative endeavors. Motivation of boundary spanners can be impacted externally, via rewards or edicts from leadership (Amey, 2010; Eddy, 2003; Eddy, 2010); however, successful collaborators are often motivated intrinsically, via personal values that drive goal-making. This is especially true in individuals who work in higher education, who have been found to be more intrinsically rewarded and motivated by the mission and goals of the educational enterprise (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Individuals who are motivated by shared goals and mission are more likely to be successful when approaching collaborative work, because their focus is on the outcomes of the process and mutual success (Eddy, 2010; Kezar, 2006; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Liedtka, 1996). Being motivated to work across differences toward shared goals creates an opportunity for boundary spanners to strengthen their social capital and power base in collaborative efforts (Eddy, 2010).

Furthermore, this sensitivity speaks to an awareness of the process and outcomes of collaboration, its components and the importance of using specific strategies in order to overcome difference. Liedtka (1996) notes three critical elements for collaborative success that revolve around the individual having an awareness of the process, itself – a partnering mindset, a partnering skill set and a supportive context that process commitment, processes and resources to facilitate collaboration” (p. 24). Indeed, individuals who are aware of the process of collaboration, itself, seem to be more

successful at reaching desired outcomes (Kanter, 1994; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Lasker, *et al*, 2001; Liedtka, 1996; Whetten, 1981).

Summary

Using a framework that focuses on the process of collaboration and the role of culture in organizations, the literature presented serves to ground the study and provide a basis from which to understand the data gathered in this study. Kezar and Lester's (2009) Model for Collaboration in Higher Education, highlights the importance of values, learning, networks, mission and rewards and is used in conjunction with Schein's (2010) definition and descriptions of organizational culture. This pairing provides multiple levels of understanding of organizational culture and a means in which to gain a greater understanding of cultural nuances at play within the collaborative context.

Collaboration is not only an imperative and beneficial to higher education institutions, but it is also an extremely complex endeavor, which requires attention to the external pressures and cultural context in which it takes place. Meanwhile, organizational culture is at work on a myriad of levels, especially in siloed higher education institutions. Organizational culture and sub-cultures are informed, shaped and evolve via the mission, goals, values and rewards of the individuals who make up the various sub-units on a university campus. The differences that emerge require strong trust, relationship and social capital building skills; shared mission, vision and goals; and an understanding of the process of collaboration, itself, in order to effectively work across internal boundaries.

METHODOLOGY

To illuminate how individuals in the field of higher education work across internal cultural boundaries for mutual success, a qualitative research design was employed. Using an instrumental case study design allowed for extensive data collection and examination of cross-cultural interactions in the higher education environment (Creswell, 2012). Case study methodology is commonly used when investigating complex organizational phenomena such as collaboration, culture and individual perspective, as it allows for the collection and analysis of associated data that would not be as easily culled through other investigative means (Merriam, 1998). The following research questions were considered: 1) How do cultural boundaries within organizations inform and shape internal boundary spanners' views of cross-cultural interactions; and, 2) How do individuals utilize cultural understanding to collaborate successfully across disparate sub-cultures for mutual success? Analysis was at the individual level, but took place within the context of the overarching institution.

Participants

The study took place at George Mason University (Mason) in the fall of 2012. Participants engaged in collaborative practice at the university were interviewed and asked about the ways in which they negotiate internal cultural boundaries at Mason. Given the nature of the study and in order to glean information regarding the individual's

interaction in collaborative efforts, a purposeful sampling method was used to identify participants. Purposeful sampling is used to identify sample participants based on commonalities that can help elicit a greater understanding of emergent themes in the data (Merriam, 1998). In this study, participants were identified based on their roles as internal collaborators (boundary spanners) within the institution. Specifically, individuals, whose work regularly required them to collaborate with others from different organizational sub-cultures, whether as a part of collaborative teams, unique partnerships or via day-to-day collaborative interactions, were chosen to participate in this study.

This method maximized the opportunity to connect with individuals engaged in collaboration with others beyond their organizational sub-system and sub-culture. Participants were selected via review of collaborative work teams and campus initiatives at the university. As an employee at Mason, I am familiar with working groups, initiatives and day-to-day work that requires or is dependent upon interaction across sub-cultures. Using this knowledge, I approached members of these endeavors, as well as those individuals whose jobs regularly take them beyond the boundaries of their home units. Additional individuals were identified via the institution's website and by targeting individuals working on cross-unit teams, and through consultation with senior staff in various campus divisions, including academic units, student affairs units, senior administration, facilities, campus safety, and parking and transportation. Individuals, who met the base criteria (*i.e.* those who participated in work that crosses campus sub-boundaries and/or those whose work requires substantial interaction with others outside of their institutional sub-unit), were asked to participate.

After the initial participants were identified, a snowball sampling method was employed to draw in participants beyond the researcher's initial knowledge base, by asking initial participants to identify other internal campus collaborators. Twenty-five people were invited to participate. Ultimately, 18 participants took part in the study. Given the sensitive nature of the subject matter and to ensure consent, privacy and ethical treatment, participants signed a informed consent form (Appendix A) and were assigned masking identifiers (Bernard, 2002).

While the pool of participants were associated with Mason, an effort was made to gather a diverse group of participants from varying divisions and organizational sub-cultures, and with varying backgrounds, positions and experiences, by targeting participants of diverse collaborative groups and varying university initiatives. Twelve females and six males participated. Primary roles included faculty (2); senior administrator (5); faculty administrator (7); and staff (4). Faculty were identified as those whose primarily role was teaching or research. Examples of these roles are full professor and associate professor. Senior administrators were identified as those holding non-teaching and research roles in the executive level of university administration. Examples of these roles are vice presidents of divisions or executive level members of the provost or presidential office staffs. Faculty administrator roles are those held by individuals who are administrators first, but may also be involved in teaching or research secondarily. Examples of these roles are provost senior staff, student affairs senior professionals, parking and transportation leaders and facilities managers. Staff are those who are hired primarily in administrative support roles, including case managers, project managers and

executive assistants. It is important to note that members of faculty from academic departments were not included at the same levels in this study as other population groups. This is in part due to their limited participation in collaborative endeavors on campus and because of those faculties queried to be a part of this study, only two responded and were interviewed.

Individuals were invited to participate in the study via email communication. Appendix B is an example of the communication that was sent to individuals inviting them to participate in the study. The email highlights the purpose of the study, HSRB consent and participant commitment. Most participants responded to email invitations. A small number were initially approached in person or via telephone, using a script identical to the email invitation, but augmented for telephonic or in-person communication. Human Subject Review Board (HSRB) approval was granted during the summer of 2012 and the interviews took place in the fall of the same year. No incentives were provided to participants.

Once invitations were accepted, interview appointments were established in the home units of each participant to allow for observation of office space and artifacts related to the participant's home unit cultures. Only four of the eighteen interviews took place outside of participant's home settings, due to either participant scheduling or of confidentiality issues related the spaces they occupied within the setting of their home units. Home units that were not observable during the interviews, were visited and observed at later dates during the data collection period. The units not toured were faculty and staff senate. Interviews were conducted with participants who were members

of the leadership team of both of those organizations, but whose home units exist in other offices on campus. To remedy this deficiency, the staff and faculty senates websites were reviewed and a meeting of group was observed.

Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

The bulk of the data for this project was culled via semi-structured interviews with each participant, but additional data was gathered via review of websites and other artifacts associated with the organizational sub-units from which the participants hail (Bernard, 2002; Creswell, 2012; Masland, 1985; Spradley, 1980). Again, participants were identified based on their collaborative work across organizational sub-cultures and chosen from various sub-units and at various levels within the organizational structure. Each of the 18 participants engaged in a half-hour to hour-long interview. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix C. Interview questions were constructed to probe participants' perspectives, motivations, values, strategies and thought processes related to collaboration across internal organizational cultural boundaries.

In order to better understand the role of the individual and the impact of culture on collaboration, the questions asked focused on the shared aspects of collaboration and culture, namely values, mission, networks, rewards, motivation and organizational structure. The questions also focused on eliciting whether or not participants were aware of cultural differences and their impact and culling more information from them on the motivations and strategies they use to work across those differences.

Specifically, participants were asked about their perceptions of the overarching culture of Mason, the culture of their home unit and the units with which they most

frequently collaborated. They were also asked how those differences in culture impacted the work they do when collaborating with individuals or groups outside of their home unit. This line of questioning was asked in order to gain an understanding of the participants' awareness of culture and its impact on their work. Participants were also asked about what motivated them to collaborate across cultural boundaries and what strategies they used to do that work. Asking this question gave specific insight into why and how individuals collaborate across organizational boundaries. Finally, participants were asked about their general thoughts on collaboration's efficacy and for what advice they would give to those engaged in the collaborative process. This line of questioning helped garner an understanding of their awareness of the process and outcomes of collaboration. To ensure accuracy, sessions were recorded with participant consent and review of interview transcripts for accuracy was made available (Bernard, 2002).

In addition to the interview sessions with participants and in order to gain a fuller understanding of the role of the individual in cross-cultural collaboration, general observations about the study participants and the cultural differences of their sub-units were noted through review of related artifacts, including websites, environments and communications (Bernard, 2002; Spradley, 1980). To get a more objective and comprehensive understanding of the various sub-cultures present at Mason, websites and communications of each of the sub-units represented in this study were reviewed in order to glean areas of difference and similarity between sub-units. The main university website's (www.gmu.edu) was visited, as were pages related to Mason's history, factbook, president's, vision and strategic planning, and organization chart. The web

pages of the participant's home units were also reviewed, including the provost, student affairs, facilities, campus safety, academic units, staff senate, faculty senate, parking and transportation, and equity sites. Finally, the sites of cross-disciplinary organizations, initiatives and spaces on campus who's work regularly involved collaborating across boundaries were reviewed, including the Center for Teaching and Faculty Excellence, MasonLeads, New Century College, Interdisciplinary Center for Economic Sciences and Student Centers. As sites were reviewed, notes were taken that considered artifacts related to culture, including symbols, language, mission statements, etc. Statements or documents on sites that considered cultural values or hinted at culturally held beliefs were also noted.

To gain an additional understanding of culture and sub-culture, visits were made to each of the participants' offices, to better understand the cultural context from which these individuals were working and viewed the world. Site visits were conducted in the following offices at Mason: Facilities, Provost, President, Student Affairs Executive Office, Student Conduct, Communications Department, Center for Teaching and Faculty Excellence, Campus Safety, Equity and Diversity Services, Parking and Transportation, Enrollment and Admissions. During these site visits and the interviews with these individuals, general observation of the office space, inter-personal reactions and artifacts within the spaces were noted in field notes. Again, observations considered artifacts related to culture, including symbols, language, mission statements, etc. Visual indicators of cultural values or beliefs were also noted. Space allocation was also noted

and the ways in which spaces were decorated and situated were also observed in order to glean cultural context of the various home-units.

Initially, the study protocol also included observation of participants during an active collaborative team meeting, but the timing and constraints of the study made this impossible. An observation protocol can be found in Appendix D (Creswell, 2012). Using Stokes' method for analyzing media and cultural texts, both content and narrative analyses of documents were used (Stokes, 2003; Masland, 1985).

Data Analysis

Data was recorded, transcribed, collected and stored on a secure, password-protected computer. As data was collected, ongoing analysis and cross-checking was employed to continuously cross-edify the methodology, category saturation and theory emergence (Creswell, 2012). Once transcribed, the interview data was reviewed and an initial analysis was used in order to refine and develop emergent themes. Field notes and observations were also reviewed for emergent themes. A constant comparative analysis was then used to ground the data and to cull through the findings in order for connections between the data categories to emerge (Creswell, 2012).

Data was hand-coded with open codes to develop the categories and themes that emerged from the interviews, field notes and artifacts and included items such as colloquialisms, high-use words, gestures (both verbal and non-verbal), tone of voice, inter-personal exchanges, and various values, motivations, rewards, etc. Codes were constructed from indicators in the data and then grouped into broad categories or themes and validated via discriminant sampling. Dominant codes included the following:

relationship building, network connections, role identity/intelligence, trust, communication, shared goals/big picture perspective, collaboration, sensemaking, strategic thinking.

As axial codes and broader themes emerged, they were continuously compared with one another in order to reduce redundancy until layered categories emerged from the findings from which a theory was generated (Creswell, 2012; Glaser, 1992). In the end, three major themes, each with a number of sub-themes (minor themes) connected to the study emerged. These themes with corresponding minor themes are motivation, supported by belief in collaboration and belief in organizational mission; awareness, supported by sense of self, other perspectives and the collaborative process; and strategies, including relationship, network and trust building, tailored communication, skilled listening, advocacy and adaptability. Table 1 in the Results section of this thesis, Chapter 4, page 43, outlines the themes and subthemes that emerged.

Trustworthiness and Limitations

To validate the study and to help ensure trustworthiness of the data and analysis, triangulation of the participants and the data, member checking of interview transcripts was offered to each participant during and after the interview process. Additionally, transcribed interviews were compared to initial interview recordings to ensure accurate transcription by the researcher. External review by the researcher's thesis chair was also employed. As indicated previously, information was gathered from variety of sources, including interviews, observations, field notes and artifact review and cross-checked for accuracy. Furthermore, to ensure a more complete perspective of the role of culture and

the individual in collaborative work, interviews were conducted with a number of individuals, each from different levels or from different sub-cultures of the organization.

This study is limited in that it is a snapshot of a specific institution during a specific moment in time. Also, the study is dependent upon the perceptions, memories and biases of individuals within that context. Furthermore, as both an employee and student of the institution, I bring my own bias and cultural perspective to this study. While every effort was made to view each of the participants without bias and from a balanced perspective, my home-unit and its culture informs my point-of-view. Finally, because this study focuses on one institution, the results may be unique to Mason.

Summary

A case study methodology was used to study how organizational culture informs the ways in which individuals collaborate across internal organizational boundaries at George Mason University (Mason). Over the fall of 2012, 18 participants were identified via purposeful and random sampling and were interviewed to glean a greater understanding of how organizational sub-cultures impact the strategies and motivations used to work with those outside of their home units and cultures. Data was collected via these interview and supplemented with field notes and observations on organizational culture, sub-culture and collaborative endeavors present at Mason. Data was analyzed in the winter of 2013, using a cross comparative analysis and efforts were used to ensure trustworthiness and accuracy of the thematic results that emerged through the process.

RESULTS

Introduction and Background

The purpose of this study is to explore how organizational sub-cultures inform the ways in which individuals work across internal organizational boundaries within higher education institutions. In this chapter, a description of the case study is presented and used to provide context for understanding the findings from the study that follow it. A general description of Mason as a collaborative university is presented. Following the case study description are the findings of the study, which are organized within the three major themes – motivation, awareness and strategies – each of which emerged from participant interviews and review of campus history, artifacts and websites.

The three themes, motivation, awareness and strategies, and their components are intertwined. Internal boundary spanners are motivated to uphold the overarching organization's mission and desired outcomes. This motivation drives individuals to broaden their awareness of the organization and its components. By using this broader knowledge base, participants are able to employ strategies to cross the organizational sub-cultures present in collaborative work at Mason. Successful strategies are used, in turn, to bolster both awareness and motivation of boundary spanners. Consequently, collaboration across cultural boundaries within organizations is enhanced, by increasing the cognitive complexity of both the collaborative endeavor and those involved in process.

Case Study Description: George Mason University

A case study methodology was used to elicit and frame responses from eighteen individuals engaged in internal cross-boundary work at George Mason University (Mason). Mason was chosen because it is regarded as a collaborative university and because its history and current environmental factors have made collaboration between siloed units on campus a necessity. Mason is a relatively young institution, established in 1957 as a branch campus for the University of Virginia (UVA). In 1972, Mason separated from UVA and thanks to its location, innovative programming and a lucky 2006 Men's NCAA Basketball Final Four win, the school has grown from a small commuter campus to the largest public university in Virginia, with four campuses (one in Korea) and more than 30,000 students (Mason, about, n.d.). This growth is due in part to Mason's location near Washington, D.C., but can also be attributed to the university's roots as a commuter school, which has allowed students from a variety of backgrounds to attend and graduate. Indeed, Mason is among the most diverse campuses in the nation, with large numbers of first-generation, minority, international and adult learners (Mason, recognition, n.d.). Furthermore, Mason boasts a diversity of programming, initiatives, institutes and centers that are rooted in an ethos of inter-disciplinarity (Mason NCC, n.d.; Mason CCT, n.d.; Mason ICES, n.d.). The evolution, location and composition of the university has created a culture of innovation that is present in many aspects of campus life and celebrated in the school's tagline, *where innovation is tradition* (Mason, n.d.).

Mason's innovative approach to higher education has also created a spirit of collaboration on its campus. This has been in part due to necessity – the campus has

expanded rapidly in the last decade with the student population size nearly doubling and has changed the campus' Carnegie classification from a commuter school to a major residential teaching and research institution (Mason IRR, n.d.). All of these changes, along with lack of funding, have created a resource strain that faculty and staff have had to tackle together through collaborative work. However, collaboration at Mason is not just a necessity, it is a way of being that is deeply connected to institutional identity and culture. Indeed being innovative and collaborative have been used as a way for the school to differentiate itself from its competitors. Mason has branded itself as a collaborative teaching institution with innovative inter-disciplinary research initiatives (Mason NCC, n.d.; Mason CCT, n.d.; Mason ICES, n.d.).

Collaboration is a key component of organizational culture at Mason. Collaboration is celebrated in the organization's mission statement and collateral materials (Mason, about, n.d.). As a cornerstone to the overarching culture at Mason, collaboration has thus become a valued component of organizational life. Partnerships that bridge siloed divisions within the university structure are commonplace and encouraged and it is not uncommon to have faculty, staff and students actively working together on large projects with campus-wide impact (Mason Vision, n.d.; MasonLeads, n.d.).

Indeed, collaboration is so valued at Mason that New Century College was created with collaboration as a core value (Mason NCC, n.d.). Furthermore, Mason has also created innovative physical spaces on campus in which collaboration can more naturally occur. The Johnson Center was built a decade ago and was a first of its kind,

combining traditional student union spaces (dining and social space) with the campus bookstore, classrooms, library space, art galleries, convention space and admissions, faculty and staff offices. All of the new residence halls on campus are constructed with classrooms and resident faculty space incorporated and future plans call for a global residence hall that connects domestic and international students who live there with social, meeting, classroom and faculty and staff support resource spaces within their building (Mason, facilities, n.d.).

Collaboration is a dominant part of the overarching culture at Mason and is thus appreciated at multiple levels of the university and by many of the individuals working beyond their own organizational sub-units. This study sought out those on campus who participated in the many collaborative endeavors on campus and who were deemed “good” at collaboration. The goal of the study was to understand what motivated individuals to work across cultural sub-divides and what strategies they used to make that work possible.

Findings

The results of participant interviews stem from the cultural context present at Mason. Collaboration at Mason is viewed as integral to the work people do and, thus, has become part of the overarching culture of the institution. Because collaboration is intertwined with culture at Mason, it informs the perspective of the study’s participants. As expected, the participants reinforced the importance of collaboration at Mason and in their sub-unit. They acknowledged this importance despite the inherent challenges of working with those from differing organizational cultures. In addition to reaffirming the

contextual influences of collaboration across institutional cultures, themes related to motivation, awareness and strategies for collaboration emerged, explicating the ways in which individuals negotiate cultural boundaries through collaboration. Table I illustrates the connections between motivation, awareness and strategies for collaboration.

Table 1. Major Themes with Description, Interaction and Components

Theme	Description & Interaction	Components (sub-themes)
Motivation	The internal or external drivers that individuals described as reasons to work across cultural divides within the organization. Motivation encourages the acquisition of awareness or knowledge in order to create strategy.	Belief in collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as a cultural imperative • as a means to mitigate resource constraint • as improving effectiveness and outcomes Belief in organizational mission and shared goals of organizational sub-units
Awareness	Possessing knowledge related to self, others and process of collaboration. Often driven by the motives of those involved in collaboration because it enhances understanding through sensemaking and helps craft targeted strategies.	Self-Awareness (humbleness, confidence and openness) Awareness of multiple perspectives (understanding difference in individuals, sub-units and sub-cultures) Awareness of the collaborative process (components and power dynamics)
Strategies	Methods or plans for obtaining desired outcomes. Strategies are catalyzed by motivations and shaped by the awareness and knowledge base of individuals. Successful strategies in turn inform awareness and reinforce motivation.	Network and relationship building Trust building Advocacy Tailored Communication Active Listening Adaptable Interactions

Note that each of these themes supports, informs and reifies the other. Individuals at Mason are motivated by the mission and shared goals of the institution and value collaboration as both an effective means to reach those goals and as a cultural requirement. The motivation these participants exhibit is due in part to an awareness they have related to themselves, other organizational sub-cultures and perspectives and the collaborative process, generally. This awareness and motivation are then used to create strategies for crossing organizational boundaries that are divided by sub-cultural difference.

Motivation

Nearly all of the participants described Mason as a collaborative place to work and that collaboration was an imperative in order to get work done effectively. Participants also acknowledged the challenges of working with individuals from different parts of the organization, namely the cultural differences that are caused by different structures, rewards and duties that define each sub-unit. Yet, despite the challenges participants described, they stated repeatedly that they are motivated to collaborate and that this motivation exists on a number of different levels. Specifically, they noted that they are motivated by 1) a belief in collaboration, as being culturally important, as a being a means to mitigate resource constraint and as improving efficacy and outcomes, and 2) a belief in the overarching mission of the organization and the shared goals of the institution's sub-cultures.

Belief in Collaboration

Study participants agree that George Mason University is a highly collaborative university and that the connections between organizational units are vital to overall organizational efficacy. This sense that collaboration is important at Mason is felt throughout the organizational structure - “generally top down, it’s been very collaborative.” A senior level administrative assistant continues to note that there is “...a hardy spirit of cooperation and of wanting to - of wanting to make the university a better place.” This sense of working together for the common good was noted more than once: “There’s a lot of collaboration and a lot of cooperation ... I would say there’s kind of a collective responsibility.” Time and again participants noted Mason as a collaborative university and a place where relationship and consensus building is key to getting work done.

The importance of collaboration was believed by many participants to have evolved from the lack of resources available at Mason. One senior-level administrator explains:

This is likely the poorest source campus that I've worked on. So in order to accomplish anything in some ways we can't walk away with little slivers of pie and perform anything noteworthy. It may have something to do with having to work together with collected resource in order to accomplish a task. Right. Yes. If I were going to attribute it to anything I would attribute it to that. That we have to work together because of the financial constraints and physical constraints.

Mason, being the largest and among the most poorly funded universities in Virginia, is impacted by environmental pressures and collaboration has helped reduce that impact (IRR, n.d.). Indeed, numerous interviewees noted that at Mason, people often “do more with less.” The need to collaborate to mitigate resource constraints has shaped participants views of collaboration as not just a necessity but as key to success and improved effectiveness. Collaboration is viewed as “the ultimate way of getting things done,” and the advantages of collaboration are not just that it is a means to get things done, but as a senior administrator in the provost office explains, collaboration is a essential element to getting *good* work done:

There are huge benefits [to collaboration]...there is basically nothing I can do as an individual to be effective in my job today. Pretty much nothing. I mean, I can run a good meeting, but that is not in itself an outcome. So if we want to build graduate housing, or if we want to shift the way we fund education, it takes a team of people from across disciplines to figure out how to do it.

This sense of collaboration as cornerstone to effective work pervaded the interview results. Participants realized that in order to have a richer, more complete end product, collaboration with others, specifically those beyond their particular unit and sub-cultures is a requirement. This understanding drives them to collaborate.

Participants in this study also recognize that collaboration helps inform the work they do by connecting their unit with other units in the organization, thus enriching

performance and outcomes. This recognition has created a distinct appreciation for collaboration and a belief in its efficacy. A mid-level technology manager explains:

There's very rarely anything that we do within the organization that doesn't touch someone... [collaboration] helps you to be better at how you perform your job because you're not doing your job in a vacuum. Though you may know a direction that you're heading the conversation is always enriched, the project is always made better by involving people in the conversation.

The appreciation for and belief in collaboration gives it relevance at Mason. In turn, this collaborative relevance acts as a motivator for those involved in collaboration across organizational sub-cultures. Furthermore, it gives these internal boundary spanners common ground from which to work. A belief in collaboration, when paired with a belief in organizational mission and shared goals creates an environment in which collaboration not only can take hold but can be effective and even flourish.

Belief in Mission and Shared Goals

While good collaborators at Mason have an appreciation and belief in collaboration, they are also highly motivated by the overarching mission of the institution, namely educating new generations of students. Given Mason's history and demographics, many of the participants noted a keen interest in helping first generation students or students from marginalized backgrounds succeed in higher education. Indeed, a few of the participants noted that Mason student stories were much like their own. Their stories and the stories of the students who attend Mason helped keep them

focused on the overarching mission as it relates to both the organization's and their own values, allowing for a greater ease in collaborating with others.

This focus on mission, shared goals and outcomes are inherent aspects of successful collaboration at Mason. Many of the participants underscored the importance of focusing on shared goals and mission when collaborating with others from different organizational sub-cultures. The ability to set aside personal gain for the advancement of overall goals was seen as integral to successful collaborative work. As a faculty member notes:

So part of it is establishing a sense that you've got shared goals. Because, in fact, that's true. I mean, there's not – there are individual people who probably don't, but there's not a unit at this campus [that] doesn't care about student success and student learning. I mean, that's why we're all here.

Establishment of shared goals is important as it not only sets the stage for collaboration, but allows for individuals to work more seamlessly across cultural divides. This is done by keeping the focus of work on an organizational level, where shared values and mission reside.

By working at a institutional level work can be more easily depersonalized and separated from unit-level cultural ties. This minimizes the impact of the various organizational cultures that are present in any given collaborative endeavor, allowing work to move forward more effectively. A campus safety professional explains that,

...understanding what everybody brings to the table... and then sometimes the solution that comes out - it may not be everyone's best solution.

Everybody would say well for me, it ideally would be X. But fortunately, I think that people probably see the bigger picture and understand that the ultimate solution is really - although it's not everything they need, it's ultimately for the greater good.

A member of the provost senior staff concurs, stating that,

I think the thing that probably helps me the most is a focus on how you get win-win solutions. In other words, not always thinking that there is their way or your way, but finding solutions that incorporate multiple interests.

A focus on organizational mission helps create a process in which participants are able to work for effectively and build stronger professional relationships with those outside of their units, by moving beyond cultural divides. Further, the solutions that are created are often more complex, benefitting the campus in a way that better supports a variety of interest and supports the overarching mission.

Beyond acting as a catalyst for collaborative work, having a sense of mission focus also allows collaborators an "out" or a way to work around difficult situations or decisions. As a student affairs staff member explains:

I just feel like if we've done our job effectively I'm not too worried about whether or not people love us, as long as they're willing to come to us when they need us and work with us when we need them. So that idea of

staying focused on sort of the mission and the overall goal rather than getting bogged down.

Thus, in difficult collaborations or collaborations with a multitude of voices and perspectives, overarching institutional mission trumps the divides created by organizational sub-units and their cultures. But that work is not easy, as a senior administrator in the provost office explains, finding answers across sub-units and their corresponding cultures take,

... this exceptional level of University-mindedness. When people are often in the position of advocating for something that helps them or their units, feeling protective versus being able to participate in an effective, University-level decision making process and sometimes you need to advocate and sometimes you need to step out of your role and really work for your institution, and that is hard.

Although difficult, understanding the importance of the big picture and focusing on the outcomes can act as an anchor for participants. A member of the academic affairs counseling staff underscores this point: "...the fact that it is all for a good cause. You know what I mean? It is all for—I mean, the students, first and foremost..." Staying focused on mission was noted again and again as a means of establishing a sense of shared purpose and building a sense of capital with others in order to get work done. Capital is important because it can be used strategically, as individuals get to know their collaborative partners. By establishing themselves as working for the good of all, rather

than the good of a few, the reputation of the individual is enhanced, allowing them to work more seamlessly across organizational boundaries.

This idea of building capital through mission focus is illustrated by a dean in the student affairs division about the work she is doing with faculty from various departments:

What comes to mind immediately is the course we're teaching...which are four different professionals: Three full-time faculty - psychology, higher ed, and criminology, law and society - and then me from University Life, and we're all co-teaching this class, doing this project together. And we're doing a project that we all see as beneficial to our respective areas, and I think is unique from the perspective that you have four people who have their own, you know - their own ideas about what should be in the study and how the class should be run. And I think from the outside, most people would say like it should be really challenging, and it really hasn't been. And I think part of it is because we have the class as kind of the unifying tie, but the students are at the forefront. The curriculum is at the forefront. It's not about we want to talk about criminology or we want to talk about psychology; that it's really about, okay, we can really figure out a bigger piece that - to collaborate around, which is research and getting students involved in that research. And so it took some of the - I don't know, the minutia that sometimes gets in the way and kind of said you know what? That's not as important as what can we all do, putting

everything together? And we have not had an intentional conversation about what might get in the way; it just hasn't.

Again, the focus on overarching mission allows individuals to work beyond the cultural differences that have emerged in higher education. By working together from a place of commonality, individuals are able to work toward more effective outcomes.

Yet, appreciating the mission of higher education and understanding the outcomes of collaborative endeavors is not always enough to overcome cultural divides. There is a multiplicity of perspectives on organizational mission and outcomes present on campuses like Mason, that when not aligned can create dissonance within collaborative partnerships. This diversity of viewpoints is present because of the varied organizational sub-cultures that have emerged in the various sub-units at Mason. Each of these sub-units has a mission, reward and value system that, while sharing aspects of the overarching organizational culture, has shaped distinct sub-cultures and views of the university and its goals. A senior executive assistant explains: "...everybody's got their own perceptions of Mason's culture. And I think a lot of it kind of depends on where you sit, where you're at in the university." The presence of multiple and varied perspectives creates difficulties and impacts how individuals approach the collaborative process, as they work across organizational sub-cultures.

A senior manager in the facilities department talks about how the fragmented nature of the institution affects work and collaboration:

I think one of the largest challenges here... is this whole idea that there's little centralized thinking in terms of what the mission and vision is.

Because I think when you have so many people doing so many things on so many different tracks, and it's not coordinated, I just think you run a lot of risk of inefficiencies and redundancies. I think you lose schedule that way in terms of getting things done on time because you're constantly trying to go back and coordinate.

Siloed higher education institutions create redundancies, like those referenced by the facilities manager. These redundancies are compounded by the cultural differences present in varied units within higher education organizations. The presence of redundancies in cultural siloes is problematic because it further divides the university campus and begins to fray the often tenuous connections that connect a fragmented campus. This disconnect makes collaboration difficult as divided sub-units have less contact with each other, reducing a greater sense of awareness of individuals about the organization in which they work.

Each of the participants is aware of the different cultural norms and assumptions about others that emerge between their home units and the culture of other units on campus and the challenges that these differences present. Perceptions around faculty versus non-faculty units were evident, as was educational versus non-educational units (e.g. student and academic affairs versus facilities and campus safety). In particular, participants noted the ways in which faculty differed from their home unit, honing in on the differences in values and reward structures. From a senior-level student affairs professional:

And so when working with faculty... like we don't speak the same lingo.

We're not headed towards the same goals. We don't need each other.

There's not an interconnectivity that's even perceived. There's just a lot of different ways I think people kind of say 'You're not a researcher. I don't understand you, don't need you.'

A classified staff employee in the student affairs division notes the challenges in working across cultural sub-divides when collaborating with the campus police unit:

In working with the police department it is an interesting meeting of the minds. Because we have very different – we are tasked with very different things...So sometimes it's a little bit harder for me to realize kind of the basics of University Life culture until I sort of step outside of it.

Each of the interview participants noted differences in language, approach, values, rewards systems, ways of being, etc., between their home units and those with which they collaborate. These differences further alienate groups from each other, making it difficult to find and exploit shared goals and mission in collaborative work.

Despite the divided nature of higher education and the challenges of collaboration, all participants still noted its relevance and importance and underscored its importance, even when not all aspects of the structure of higher education institutions support collaboration. A dean in the student affairs division explains how, while collaboration is valued by individuals and deemed important for work, the reward structure, for faculty in particular, does not reward collaborative endeavors:

I think the values of different units in different colleges also play a role into it. I think some of the hard sciences, you know, where are you going to get credibility is not necessarily coming to University Life...And what we can offer I think in terms of their professional development, from what I'm hearing from folks, is not credible. Like when we give them awards for, like, collaboration and great projects, that their - it doesn't rank in terms of tenure. They don't get any credit for it. So while, you know, there's the intrinsic value to it, that, as an institution, we don't necessarily value that holistically."

Differences in the values and reward structures that have evolved in the various cultures of organizational sub-units can create barriers to collaborative endeavors. These barriers require that participants both understand that there is an inherent difference in units that have created varying cultures and ways of being.

Often, participants noted that, despite the challenges, there were committed to making collaboration work and that making collaboration work requires intentional effort. A senior student affairs administrator explains:

So I know that strong collaborations among units and individuals who are working well together actually does take the edge off the work, actually does reduce some of the burden that would be on any one person or any one unit. I also know that there's a lot of effort that has to go into building strong, positive, effective collaborations, and a lot of times people hesitate to make the effort necessary. And so if you just—if you don't do that kind

of prep work, but you move strongly towards collaboration, I actually think it can be more burdensome than if you're working on your own or if you're working as a single unit.

Approaching collaboration with an awareness of its benefits and challenges can make those motivated to work across disparate institutional sub-cultures more successful. Furthermore, those involved in collaborative endeavors must have an awareness of themselves, others and the process of collaboration, itself.

Awareness

The mission, resources and overarching culture of Mason play a large role in motivating individuals to engage in collaborative endeavors. Their motivation to collaborate across organizational sub-cultures is girded by a distinct awareness of the contribution of themselves and others in the collaborative process. Awareness is the knowledge that participants possess. Acquisition and cultivation of knowledge can reinforce the motivations of internal boundary spanners by giving them a greater understanding of those they work with and new insight into shared goals. Furthermore, enhanced awareness can help collaborators use their knowledge to craft more effective strategies for working across cultural difference. Participants in this case study exhibited specific awareness rooted primarily in a sense of self, in the perspectives of others and of the roles present within the construct and cultures of their units and the overarching organization. Also, they were keenly aware of collaboration as a process, understanding that collaborative endeavors require cultivation and attention to issues of equity and power in order to thrive.

Awareness of Self

Collaborative relationships are dependent upon the perspectives of the individuals involved in the process. Having a strong sense of self was viewed by study participants as a critical way to approach collaboration. This self-awareness is informed by both their personal experiences as well as by their roles within the organization and its sub-cultures. Being humble (understanding their strengths and limitations), having a sense of confidence, and possessing an active interest in learning more about themselves and others in the organization emerged as key sub-components to self-awareness.

Being Humble

Multiple participants noted the importance of being humble as helping to support their collaborative interactions by being aware of their strengths and their division's value, while at the same time being aware of their limitations. As a student affairs professional notes: "So I think it's really important to sort of remain humble and realize that you don't know what everyone else knows and keep an open mind." This notion of being humble and open to new information was echoed by a senior vice president in administration, who noted that, "...being humble helps you in the fact that you don't know everything...everybody can't know everything..." By being humble, participants noted that they were able to more effectively engage in the collaborative process, because they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and are open to learning from those beyond their sub-cultures.

A technology manager noted that she and others in her unit think about their strengths and weaknesses when approaching collaborative endeavors:

It's just you don't want to play against your strengths and you don't want to try to force yourself into doing something that you're not good at. So I have a director who's wonderful at collaboration and she couldn't write her way out of a paper bag. And I would say that actually you could go and take that tape right down to her and she would agree. But she's great in that one-on-one communication and other forms of communication, so she doesn't try to write. She does it in different ways like picks up the phone or meets somebody in the hallway. Just figuring out those strengths that you have that align with collaboration or align with communication and funneling to them to that effort is good.

When a sense of humbleness and strong awareness of strengths and weaknesses can be channeled in collaborative work, participants are able to be more open to new information and different ways of approaching work, both of which create a more interactive and flexible approach to collaboration.

Being humble and having a solid sense of self allows for a certain level of freedom when interacting with others. An academic affairs manager believes that the freedom that comes with knowing herself allows her to approach work from a perspective of what is best for the end-goal, rather than getting embroiled in the challenge of collaborative work:

Like I really have no plan about rising up. I never did. I am just kind of happy to do my job and so I think that frees me up a little bit from feeling so politically tied... I just like to look at the situation and see what makes

the most sense and really, I think, it is—and I hope, I think it is not a selfish agenda. I think it is more for the good of my staff or the students or whatever. So that allows me a little bit to maybe make some comments or some things that I wouldn't otherwise do if I were too concerned about that.

Having a sense of self can help move individuals beyond their own views in order to be more collaboratively-minded. However, that sense of self is dependent upon a sense of confidence, another key component for cross-cultural collaboration.

Being Confident

The self-knowledge participants noted as key to successful collaboration is also connected to a sense of confidence that many of the participants said contributed to their ability to work across boundaries with others with greater ease. Displaying confidence in self and the work you do was seen by many of the participants as important in establishing legitimacy with those outside of their home units. A student affairs staff member noted that she does not,

...have any insecurities when it comes to my knowledge in how our office works, what our process is, and sort of what we can and can't do in a situation, right. So part of it I think is, is that when people see that and they know that they're asking me questions that I can effectively answer all those questions, especially people with their hypothetical situations that they kind of throw up, I think that a lot of times that tends to be helpful. I think they just sort of need to know that you know what you're doing.

Self-confidence in their work and their approach made it easier for participants to engage with those beyond their organizational sub-cultures as it gave them the clout and capital to interact more effectively on an even playing field.

Sense of self and self-confidence in approach was also used by a senior administrator in the provost office, who feels that knowing himself, his style and his work has created a confidence that allows people to “see me consistently, hopefully, working in a consistent manner.” The consistency of confident work accomplished by confident individuals, helps build professional capital. This capital helps legitimize the role and work of those engaged in collaboration. Collaboration is enhanced by individuals who exude confidence in themselves and in the value of their work. A senior-level executive assistant noted that collaborative projects are improved when people come to the table confidently and open to possibilities outside their areas of expertise:

So I think there’s an ability, too, to have enough self-confidence in yourself that you can bring an idea to the table, but it’s never going to be a diamond or a gem unless you get other people to participate in the process as well. You know, it might be nice, but it’s not probably going to shine like it could if you had other people’s input.

By exhibiting a quiet confidence, individuals engaged in collaboration have a grounded sense of their abilities and the abilities of their sub-unit. Thus, they are able to be more open to the ideas and values that others bring to the table. This openness creates an environment in which multiple perspectives are included and valued as integral to the collaboration process, itself.

Being Open

Keeping an open mind in order to learn from others was seen as integral to working across organizational sub-cultures, especially at Mason. In fact, having an active interest in being open to and learning from others was noted by almost all participants as enriching the collaborative work they do. In fact, most of those interviewed described themselves as learners or as someone who valued learning – no great surprise for employees of a higher education institution. A student affairs dean explains the importance of being open to new information in order to facilitate cross-cultural, inter-unit collaboration: “You do not know everything... and I think particularly being in higher ed... you know, we’re constantly expanding in services, technology. Everything grows every day, and so if you’re not in tune with that or even curious about it, you’re going to...limit your own success.” Remaining curious can improve individual, unit-level and organizational-level success by adding to the knowledge base and capital of those involved in collaborative endeavors. Furthermore, by being interested in learning from others, an individual’s own knowledge base is not just increased, but enhanced.

An academic affairs manager agrees, noting that learning from others has created opportunities for new ideas, positively impacting the richness of her work: “I love ideas, I love the generation of [ideas]... I do think that every conversation I have with someone kind of generates—sparks some new thing and some new way of doing something and something I had never even considered.” Participants who are open to the new ideas and new perspectives of those beyond their organizational sub-cultures bring to collaborative projects find that they are able to develop more cognitively complex answers to their

work, which can lead to greater organizational effectiveness, as a greater picture of the whole is illustrated when individuals learn about those beyond their units. Furthermore, active interest in learning about others creates connections and shared knowledge between disparate groups.

Being open to the ideas and information that others can offer not only makes collaborative work better by creating a richness of thought and action, but also creates reciprocity between those collaborating. A technology manager explains the importance of being actively interested in others and others' reaction to that interest:

I like to learn. So applying my desire to like to learn, to learn about other people and their organizations and their cultures is not something likely that I did at first, but that I learned that the more I approach things that way the better it was for me; for my organization. I mean I think people would come to that in different ways because I think you really can learn some of the practices of doing these things [collaboratively].

Again, being open to learning from others creates a stronger base of organizational and capital from which collaborative participants can draw. This capital allows individuals to participate with greater ease in collaborative projects and creates a “symbiotic learning process” as a senior level administrator in the student affairs division noted. This symbiotic approach creates a method in which multiple perspectives can be heard and appreciated for mutual success.

Additionally, learning from each other creates opportunities for individuals to move beyond the boundaries of their sub-cultures becoming more strongly connected to

the roles and cultures of units beyond their own groups. However, for this symbiotic learning to take place, awareness cannot be limited to the self. Successful collaboration requires an awareness of the other individuals involved in the process.

Awareness of Multiple Perspectives

The relationships at work in collaborative settings require individuals to have a strong sense of self. However, they also require a strong sense of others and recognition of difference. Study participants noted throughout their interviews that they made attempts not just to connect effectively with those outside their units, but also tried to understand the perspectives of those with whom they regularly interact. As a classified staff member explains, understanding individuals is important to working collaboratively:

I think understanding people, both personally and in their roles, is a first step in making sure that collaborating is successful. Finding out in your first discussions what the priorities are, what the goals are, what we stand to gain out of working in a collaborative way... You need to understand that personal self because that gives you a totally different perspective of who they are and how to proceed in discussion.

Participants who understood those on the other side of the table from a personal and professional perspective are able to collaborate with greater ease. Furthermore, understanding the difference of each sub-unit and its associated culture as well as the roles of those engaged in collaboration led to a greater sense of collaborative efficacy.

Indeed, having an awareness of those with whom they collaborate (and understanding the importance of personal connections) drove participants to have a better understanding of the culture, structure and roles of other sub-units and their representatives and how those differed from the culture, structure and role of their own units. All of the participants interviewed understood that there is an inherent cultural difference between their home units and the units of others. They also understood that this difference often impacts the ways collaboration occurs between units and individuals.

Difference in unit missions, rewards systems, work styles, languages were noted throughout the study. For examples, a senior student affairs administrator notes the difference between her unit and faculty:

I do think we work out of two different kind of cultural systems, and I think faculty are much more comfortable working independently, working with one kind of co-writer. I mean, you're in the classroom, you're teaching, you're in charge. You're writing articles, you're doing publications. Those are like lone activities. Student Affairs - people it's the exact opposite. So I think one of the reasons why there's often a clash, or at least a misunderstanding, between faculty and student life, is I do believe people are speaking two different languages.

This sense of difference was also noted by a senior manager in the facilities division:

There's huge differences and I think some of it is just the difference in ...a whole different way of dealing with how they work through getting to an

answer. From business unit to business unit, there's a difference in almost all of them. I meant the academic units are really difficult to work with partly because, like I was saying earlier, it's not their day-to-day business. They're here to teach or they're here to do research... When you get to faculty, it's all about individual need.

While both of these examples highlight the differences between faculty and non-academic units, these differences are evident in all aspects of the university. If collaborators are not cognizant of these operational differences, it can create a sense of misunderstanding and impede the collaborative process.

When individuals enter collaboration understanding differences and when they have learned from others about those differences, they are more easily able to work across boundaries. A mid-level technology manager notes the fundamental cultural and structural differences in the way both the facilities and budgeting offices work and how different and often competing interests exist within collaborative work:

And [Facilities] have very different ways of looking at things. So when they talk about little bits of money they're talking in millions of dollars. So they say oh we have this peanut project that we're taking to the state for capital approval. It's only \$3 million and, of course, everyone in the classroom advisory part is like '\$3 million... what do you mean?' And so you have to learn to adjust to their fiscal view of the world. So that's a piece of it. And they think in terms of project timelines, which are not necessarily on the academic calendar or year calendar. They're thinking in

terms of fiscal space. They're not necessarily thinking about impact of... They'll think in terms of technology in terms of the ground plan that they have to move out of the way or design into a building but they're not necessarily thinking about... Online as an extension of how people establish community. Community is physically based. So that's an example. Budget office they want to see everything in terms of numbers. And you have to learn to speak effectively to terms that make sense for their culture. So if you're going to be effective know the difference between one time and recurring funds, know the difference between salary savings and a reserve account, and what is ETF, and what are the constraints on all of those things. So learning that language [is key].

Being aware of the differences between sub-units and understanding that those differences are present on multiple levels on university campuses gives both a greater understanding of the roles, strengths and constraints of others and their units. In turn, this knowledge creates sensemaking opportunities for individuals of the cultures beyond their home units, allowing them to understand the university as a whole and from a variety of perspectives.

Understanding others' perspectives can make collaborative work easier by creating greater capacity for holistic and cognitively complex problem solving. As an academic affairs counselor explains: "I guess that is the other piece is that I can see things from multiple perspectives and that is innate. That is my default and...for collaboration, it has been really helpful." By having a sense of the roles of others – their mission,

values, rewards, etc., that create the cultures in which they work – participants gain a more complete view of the work of the organization, one beyond their own point of view.

A parking and transportation administrator explains:

I think part of it is understanding how others, what the role and expectation of others are that I can't just blindly go in and say, well I don't care about, you know, because facilities is being evaluated on, you know the timeliness of getting their project done and the budget they spent. So when I go and say, well I need you guys to provide x, y, and z and it's not in the project cost, you know it's a discussion to be had, but I have to be fully cognizant of where someone else is financially and also how they're being evaluated on by, you know? So it's not just parking and transportation ruling the world. But I have to be understanding of what the constraints of others are.

Being able to understand the constraints faced by representatives of units was seen a vital for collaborative endeavors, because it moves people beyond the needs and interests of their sub-units, and again focuses work on the overarching mission of the university.

By understanding different perspectives, participants, again, are able to gain a greater sense of the whole, which helps inform collaborative work and creates a more complete final work product. A senior member of the provost administration talked about diverse perspectives informing her work (even within her own unit) in a way that gives a more holistic view of the organization, one she could not achieve on her own:

One person that works for me right now...he really has a different way of looking at things...we are always coming at issues the other – differently. What I learned is to utilize both my way and his way to see a bigger picture and that people do see things [differently]. People can interpret the very same actions really, really, really different.

She continued, stating that for collaborative work it is important, "... to accept that your reality isn't the only reality and to ask a lot of question about - try to understand where other people are coming from." By listening to, understanding and incorporating a variety of perspectives from others, participants noted that their approach to collaboration and their work was improved.

However, while understanding different perspectives is important, it is not easy. Indeed, as a manger in the facilities division notes, seeing others' perspectives takes continued attention:

To me, I really believe it's about trying to see it from the other person's perspective and taking the personal part of it away and ... considering it from the other person's perspective...I think people bring different perspectives and they're important perspectives, and it would make a difference for people...but it's hard...there is always work do to.

Understanding different perspectives takes both attention and the intentional creation of space for hearing those perspectives to occur. This is difficult, yet important, in order for individuals to be able to span cultural boundaries in organizations, as is an understanding of the collaborative process, itself.

Awareness of the Collaborative Process

Collaboration is a highly nuanced, often difficult, process that can lead to great outcomes. Participants in this study noted that understanding that collaboration was, indeed, a process and required time, attention and cultivation in order to be successful. This awareness of collaboration as a process was stated repeatedly in interviews and is viewed in this study as a vital characteristic of a good collaborator.

Participants stated that while a focus on the big-picture outcomes often motivated them to work with others, the focus of collaboration could not just be on outcomes – it must also be about the process. As a senior administrator in the provost office of Mason notes, there is “importance of thinking about process, not just outcome.” By both establishing and understanding the role of process and those participating in that process, participants were able to keep the work on collaborative teams moving forward. A senior student affairs administrator pointedly explains why process, generally, is important:

You gotta have a fuckin’ process. So if you’re—you know, if you’re trying to come up with a true effective collaboration... it can’t just be, you know, six people, ten people sitting around a table and again you make magic out of it. You have to have a process. And the process has to take into consideration I think making sure that all voices are heard, making sure that you’re doing everything you can to level the power dynamics so that people can share their ideas, making sure that there’s not some implicit environment of critique. So kind of modeling a more ‘open to the possibilities’ tone.

Clearly defining a process for collaborative endeavors can help move that work forward. Clear processes can also keep individuals working on an even playing field toward equitable outcomes.

However, for collaboration to work, the process has to be allowed. A faculty member and senior member of the provost office explains the importance of process without any preconceived outcomes:

Collaboration as a process You know, if you really want this to be a collaborative process you have to allow it to be a process. Which means you can't have a dog in the fight. You have to frame what it is that your goals are and where you hope to get to, and assure everybody that you can't get there if everybody's not playing together, if everybody doesn't contribute the best they can. And you can't have a preconceived notion about where you're going, specifically. I mean, you can generally know the kinds of things that you want to have happen, but— So part of the thing about the collaboration is you have to trust the process, but the other thing is, people will suss out if they're just being used to rubber stamp something, that a decision has already been made. And so you have to be authentic in the collaboration. It has to really be the collaboration.

Allowing for true collaboration to take place, in which all participants are engaged, requires an understanding and supporting of the process by participants. Furthermore, it takes an understanding of how decisions are made and the group dynamics that can impact collaboration.

Decision Making and Power Dynamics

Part of understanding and defining the process for collaborative endeavors, also requires that individuals acknowledge the challenges that face these collective efforts and create a means to address them. Specific challenges of collaboration noted by participants in this study were decision-making and power dynamics as connected to process. A regional campus manager noted that understanding how to problem solve helped move collaborative work along:

So I think that problem solving gets very confusing. And some things need new processes and new approaches, and some things just need a solution at that moment. Right. So you need someone to be the decider essentially. Right. And some things don't—some things that should be a higher level issue get solved at a churning level.

Deciders are important as they keep work moving and on track. Yet, in collaboration, there are often no clear leaders and a multitude of perspectives, which can make decision-making difficult.

Without decision-makers, collaborative groups become frustrated. As an emergency response professional states: “Sometimes I wish people would just step up and be like hey, I’m going to do X. Thank you for exercising a decision and leadership in this scenario.” A university vice president concurs with this sense of frustration when decisions are not being made:

Everybody feeling like they have a piece or a stake in whatever the outcome. It can be a great thing, but also it can be a detriment, because a decision has to be made, and who's going to be the decision maker, who's

going to be responsible, who's going to take accountability for that. And it's one thing if the outcome is positive. If it's not positive, who wants to be the fall person? ...Everybody wants to be heard... and that's a great thing, but at some point we have to make a decision and we have to go forward. And the more people, the more - you know, you hear the old saying, the more cooks you have in the kitchen the longer it's going to take for something to be finished. So I mean it's the same thing as well. So in some respects it's good to have collaboration, it's good to have inclusiveness, but it can't be at the detriment of efficiency.”

When participants don't understand the importance of the process of decision making on collaboration, it can delay and, even worse, derail the outcomes they are working toward. Alternatively, even when participants understand the importance of decision-making, they can sometimes be wary of taking on the responsibility of decision making. They may view being the decision maker as commandeering the collaborative process, especially when they come from different or marginalized units within the collaborative process.

This sense of marginalization can happen when individuals with similar levels of power and authority, but from units that are separated from one another culturally and by roles, are brought together to work collaboratively. Often, group members are hesitant to make a decision, especially if the process of how decisions are going to be made has not been determined or is determined unilaterally or if there are unspoken power dynamics at

play. A senior student affairs administrator explains the impact of power and decision-making on the collaborative process:

You know, this is a large institution; people want credit for what they do. People I think don't want their work to be dismissed. So in a collaboration there has to be unspoken rules about power, there has to be unspoken rules about equity. And my experience is that collaborations don't work when one person in one unit or a set of units feel like they're in service to another. That's working for, that's not in collaboration with. But that if it's a true collaboration, where you have equal partners sitting around a table figuring out the best solution to whatever the problem is, whatever the question is that's being posed, I think something beautiful can happen. But people will only come to the table fully engaged, and basically fully putting all their cards on the table, if they feel like their contributions are not going to be stolen, or dismissed, or re-conceptualized without their input.

In order for collaboration across cultural difference to work, issues of power must be addressed and all of the players involved must feel that they play an equitable role in the process. Those engaged in the collaboration process must be aware of and acknowledge issues of power and decision-making when approaching collaborative endeavors.

Good collaborators are consistently aware of the power dynamics of collaborating with others and use that awareness to mitigate the negative forces associated with those

dynamics. In order to address issues of power, the same senior student affairs administrator likes to lead by example and believes that:

From a leadership perspective, senior leadership have an awesome opportunity to set the tone and create the environment. And for me that's one of the ways power gets used in a really effective way. So if I'm not—if I'm saying that my position is to be open to the possibilities of what the outcomes of a collaboration might bring, then others kind of follow suit with that who I'm working with.

Setting the tone, especially as it pertains to decision-making, can make a difference on how collaborative work moves forward. Specifically, it allows those engaged in the collaborative process to role model positive collaborative behavior and create an environment in which participants play equitable roles.

A senior member of the provost staff and faculty member explains why it is important to create an environment where difference can be heard and respected, so that issues of power can be kept in check:

It's really important to hear how others are framing this. Because if you're trying to take a direction and you want everybody to buy in, it doesn't do any good to shut out the person who has the idea that doesn't agree with the direction you want to go, because you're going to have to deal with it. Because they represent a whole other group of people who are going to feel the same way. So I've always, you know, creating a space where you can really do that open debate.

Being open to different perspectives and creating an environment in which those perspectives are heard can help create a larger and more complete picture and a more complex and satisfying answer to the collaborative work at hand. This complex perspective benefits individual's work on collaborative projects because it enhances both the cognitive complexity of the work and the knowledge base of the individual engaged in that work.

This enhanced knowledge base creates a more holistic perspective, thus strengthening the cognitive complexity and problem solving of the group. However, a holistic approach to collaboration requires that individuals intentionally include people from outside of their organizational sub-cultures. The facility manager work to get "the broadest base of constituents involved in something in order to get the best" because, when "...done correctly, getting a wide group of people together gives you the potential to hear things that you wouldn't have heard" otherwise. A faculty member concurs, stating that,

Because we move so fast and we don't always look around to see what each other is doing. That's not unique to Mason, I think that's just part of the way that higher ed works. But if we stopped to look around and sort of inventory who else might be part of the team, and we were more intentional about that, we might be able to strengthen the things, I think that we start without having so many different ways into it.

Inventorying and including people from various groups is important because it can strengthen the end product, but, as the faculty member states, it can also create new and

previously unconsidered ways to begin work. Although inclusion is important because it brings a complexity to the beginning, middle and end of collaborative work, inclusion alone is not enough. Others cannot just be invited to sit at the table, they must also have an equitable voice, which requires an intentionality to including others.

A senior member of the provost team actively tries to allow for equitable representation and problem solving in her collaborative meetings:

Whenever I know that I am going to be in a difficult meeting, I do try to think out ahead of time how to-about the social dynamics of the meeting, about how to make people feel comfortable enough and at ease enough to really get to the heart and be willing to – be willing to solve-be willing to take a role in problem solving.

Making people comfortable enough to actively engage in the collaborative process is often about role modeling in order to set the tone, and that is true, not just for leaders of collaborative groups, but for all members. A senior student affairs member explains how she approaches collaborative work with people from outside her organizational sub-culture:

I think that individuals have a huge impact on the personality of a group and of a collaboration based on kind of their own participation. So there's the how you influence others, but then there's the example that you set in your own style and your own way that you interact with people, which is treating people with respect, which is welcoming all points of view, which is not diminishing people in any way. Which is, again, looking for the best

possible solution. So it's not just about, you know, if the leader isn't about good collaborations you're gonna have sucky collaboration. I think there's more to it than that.

The role of a good collaborator is to model a sense of university-mindedness, of shared mission and of respect for difference in the collaborative process. By role modeling and being aware of one's own personal impact in the collaboration process, participants are able to help move collaborative work forward, beyond its inherent challenges.

The role of the individual and their awareness of themselves, others and the collaborative process can help move collaborative work forward. By having an active awareness individuals are able to bring an understanding of differences within the organization and spurs learning between sub-units and their individuals. This learning, or sensemaking of disparate organizational sub-cultures, creates greater cognitive complexity both between group members and within the individual, themselves. This newfound and enhanced knowledge creates a base of understanding from which those adept at collaboration form strategies for collaborative success.

Strategies

Illustrated in this study are collaborators who successfully negotiate cultural boundaries within Mason. Motivated by mission, resource constraints and the positive outcomes that collaboration can provide and exhibiting a keen awareness of others involved in collaboration, the participants noted specific strategies for crossing the various sub-cultures present at Mason. Strategies are the methods or plans that are implemented in order to obtain desired outcomes. Strategies are catalyzed by

motivations and shaped by the awareness and knowledge base of individuals. In turn, successful strategies inform awareness and reinforce motivation. Among the strategies most commonly used by participants in this study in order to engage others in the collaborative process are network and relationship building, trust building, advocacy, tailored communication, active listening and adaptable interactions with others.

Relationship Building

Each of the participants indicated the importance of establishing strong relationships as a means to get work done across organizational sub-boundaries, that “everything is dependent upon the relational” and that Mason, in particular, was a “relationship desirous campus.” In fact, the need for relationships was deemed not only as a part of Mason’s overarching organizational culture, but also as something seen as needed by the organization’s members, “It is a Mason's culture. It truly is. I mean this is the fourth institution that I've worked at, and I mean wow. The need to have a relationship is really high here.” While the need for relationships was noted as high at Mason, in particular, as an institution of higher education it is reasonable to assume that the need for relationship building is important at other institutions whose members are engaged in collaboration, as well. As a senior student affairs administrator notes, when collaborating with people from other units: “It’s about relationship building, it’s about team building, it’s about building trust.”

A mid-level administrator in the technology division noted that relationship building was core to collaborating across the cultural boundaries at Mason, as it is a

means to building both social capital and trust (two key components of relationship building) among groups:

...in order to be effective at your job, you also have to develop excellent relationships and the better the networking, the better the relationships that you've developed in these cross institutional groups the more likely you are to develop trust to not have misunderstandings and to address whatever issues that may come up more quickly than you could if you were very silent. So there's enormous value to developing these relationships yourself or making sure that organizationally multiple people in your organization are developing those relationships.

The value of relationship building was held by all of the participants in the study, who confirmed that the relationships that are cultivated are a vital component to the successful internal boundary crossing of individuals.

How do individuals foster relationships?

The importance of relationship building both within and beyond organizational sub-cultures is clearly deemed important at Mason in order to successfully engage in collaborative work across cultural boundaries. Relationships are seen as vital as participants acknowledged that in order to meet their goals, they needed others. Each participant had their own unique way of building networks and connecting outside of collaborative endeavors to build relationships.

Constructing Networks

Study participants acknowledged the importance of creating and cultivating connections within a network that spans the internal boundaries of the university. A faculty member explains:

Frankly, we all need each other to thrive. We can survive without each other, but to thrive, we all need each other. And so the goal is always to – I call it a master network. You know, I need to know what’s going on in all these different places...so there’s a lot of bridge building.

Establishing a network allows both connections to be built, which in turn allows workload to be shared and made stronger by the involvement of many. Furthermore, it establishes individuals as key to the work of others, building capital, as well as connections.

In addition to building a network to help get work and establish connections, participants underscored the importance of establishing those connections before they are needed, prior to collaborative work, in order to make the collaborative process run more smoothly and efficiently. This need for networking was deemed important at all levels of the organization. One classified staff employee commented on the importance networking early on: “So, part of what’s been really helpful, I think, is just open relationships with the police department and establishing working relationships before we hit these difficult conversations so that people know that, you know [that] there really is a collaborative spirit on our end.” Creating networks can make difficult work easier and can help build stronger work relationships between individuals in different sub-units.

This perspective was also held by a senior administrator in the provost office, noting that building connections before they are needed is key:

I try to build relationships before [I] need them. In other words, to understand the networks that I need to work within and build them so that we have a strong relationship so when a hard decision gets made, you have enough trust in each other to sit own and say ‘this is really hard, but we have to sit down and figure this one out.’ And I think that has been very helpful.

Participants felt that having relationships early on and creating strong relationships makes it easier for them to understand the perspectives of those outside of their home unit and come to solutions that might not be possible if those prior relationships did not exist.

One of Mason’s vice presidents noted the importance not just of building relationships early on in order to efficiently solve problems, but also of building network connections beyond individuals with whom you normally work:

The first thing is to go out and talk with them first before they need to talk to you. Try to develop relationships that this office hasn't had in the past. People will appreciate you later on if you have bad news if they have a relationship with you ahead of time. You know, people will kind of look at you kind of funny if every time you come to them and it's with bad news. So start relationships early. The other thing is to get involved in other areas, and I kind of spoke about that in the beginning, that we haven't gotten involved with before; I think that's really key. To get up there and

meet people that normally I wouldn't necessarily meet or people in this office wouldn't necessarily meet.

Building connections early and beyond a core group of individuals is vital, as it helps build social and organizational capital for the individual, allowing them to work more fluidly with those with whom they collaborate. Furthermore, it creates a diverse network that can build more holistic and cognitively complex approaches to collaborative work.

Creating a diverse network as an important way to effectively build relationships that assist in collaborative endeavors was thought of as important by a majority of the participants. This perspective was echoed by another senior level administrator, advising that individuals need,

to build a strategic network that goes beyond the immediate group that you work with every day because you never know what you are going to need or where you are going to be or how you are going to get there. And to make sure your network includes not only people that you are close friends with, but people that you are less close with but who really add a level of diversity, broadly speaking to who you know and interact with.

Again, diverse networks aid in collaboration beyond sub-cultures because it broadens the organization capital of the individual and creates new avenues for creative outcomes.

Yet, this network cannot be merely prescriptive in nature; it cannot be only about the collaborative project or work, generally. Good relationships are established when participants connect with individuals beyond the work and get to know them on a personal level. As a mid-level administrator in the academic affairs division noted:

...I think getting to know somebody, if you can, personally [is important].

Like stepping outside of what the particular collaborative issue is... just connecting with them in some way and finding out what is important to them and seeing where those commonalities lie.”

By establishing personal relationships with a variety of individuals in both formal and informal settings, participants felt they were able to work more directly and efficiently to get work done.

When relationships are not established and cultivated, it can be difficult to get work accomplished smoothly, especially when working across the different cultural boundaries on a college campus. A student affairs staff member illustrates this difficulty, noting that if she

...were to call someone say, ‘I work for the Dean of Students office, I’m asking you to do this. I can’t tell you why, but it needs to be done in a couple of days,’ I’m not going to get anything done. There might be a few people that will eventually do it, but I have not effectively created any kind of relationship with that person and I probably won’t have much luck working with them.

Collaborative work is more effective when people actively engage with others on a regular basis. Regular interaction and engagement builds a sense of capital between individuals, so that when there is work to be done, it can be accomplished with greater efficacy.

Participants noted the importance of actively identifying potential networks and relationships early on. A mid-level technology administrator acknowledges that as you settle into a position or collaborative endeavor,

...you begin to learn the constituencies that are important to you as a technology organization... and then when you're at the institution and get to know the key people that you need to be connecting with and those key people might be leaders of those organizations that you know that you need to connect with. So you begin to know those people who have influence, and can help your job.

Actively seeking out connections with those who can help your work is important to those involved in collaboration. Good collaborators understand the importance of seeking out others to make their work better and also understand that these connections cannot be one-time interactions or only take place within the collaborative event. Strong relationships are established when individuals actively seek connections with members of their networks outside of formal collaborative endeavors.

Coffees, Committees and Casual Interactions

Once networks are identified, participants found they needed to be cultivated outside of collaborative group work. Among the two most popular approaches were the use of coffee dates and active committee participation. These strategies worked, because participants acknowledged that they were a means to know individuals outside of their traditional work settings. A classified staff member in the student affairs division noted that building relationships across cultural boundaries is as being “as simple as, you know,

going downstairs and have a cup of coffee with them and sort of inquiring as to how they're doing.” A mid-level administrator from the academic counseling unit also uses coffee dates frequently to learn more about the people with whom she collaborates:

Yes, I mean—I said coffee up front, kiddingly, but I think developing individual relationships with people is really at the base of my—I know for me personally, that is the base of developing successful relationships and being able to cross those boundaries. And that is just purely kind of getting to know people and asking what they do and—I guess that is my approach with a lot of things is finding out what they are concerned about and what are your students—what are you seeing your students needing or missing and those things and where can we help? Where can we fit in?

The informal setting of a coffee date, outside of the more formal work meeting, allowed for participants to get to know others on an individual level. These informal interactions build social capital and a way for people to connect more intentionally when there is formal work to be done.

Indeed, coffee was mentioned more than once as the key to relationship building at all levels of the organization, as was another popular strategy - serving on employment search committees. By serving on search committees, participants can learn more about the people with whom they collaborate, but also about the culture of those units, the language, the customs and what those units deem as important or useful. Committee work is a popular relationship building technique, as a senior student affairs administrator explains:

Usually, I'm on a search committee. And it can be a lot of work, but search committees are pushed to be very diverse; disciplines, ideology, how your office will interface with this position. And so you also get to meet people that you may not otherwise run into by being on a search committee for another college. Sometimes you might be the only person from your unit - your division on a committee, which is a challenge in and of itself, because you feel like everybody's having a conversation and you're not there, but you also get to learn the lingo...and so otherwise I'd never be in those conversations.

Furthermore, working on committees helps show members of other organizational units that the participant is invested in their success, in turn engendering a sense of connectedness, as a classified staff member from the student affairs division notes:

I mean, I think part of it is making yourself available to people outside of a crisis. I think part of it as well is sort of getting yourself out there and participating in committees or activities or groups that aren't necessarily attached to your job that you may have been asked to participate in... You know, I think sometimes you just sort of have to show that you have that spirit of cooperation, that you sort of care about what's happening in their office.

The use of connections through coffees and committees allows for participants to understand the language, perspectives, values and priorities of the individuals with whom they are interacting. More formal interactions, via collaborative projects and meetings

often don't allow the time needed for these relationships to happen. Therefore, participants often rely on informal connections to get to build networks on campus.

Beyond coffees and committees, participants often use even more informal connections to further their relationships, whether dropping by to say hello or using third parties to reference a connection. A dean of student affairs noted that she often worked on,

...maintaining those relationships outside of projects... going by their office, [and saying] 'I just wanted to say hi.' You know, 'was just walking through. I've got a meeting with so-and-so, but I have a couple of minutes.' Just to kind of keep - you know, have some face time without having a project, a meeting, or something where they're not really paying attention to you. Kind of keep yourself and recent developments in their mind.

Playing off common connections, particularly students and the mission to help students, was also deemed effective. The same student affairs dean said that her connections with faculty becomes stronger when she uses her students as a connection point with other colleagues outside of her home unit:

I know the other thing is to use students for networking. So sometimes I'll ask a student if they're talking about a professor or somebody in the registrar that was particularly helpful...And so when I called [that person], I'd say, 'Well, I know a student named so-and-so. They said you were

particularly helpful.’ Sometimes it helps, sometimes it doesn’t, but at least you have that direct connection.

Informal relationship building is important because it helps individuals get formal work done across organizational boundaries with greater ease. A senior faculty member notes that relationships built outside of the normal course of work (through lunch meetings with industry leaders, sitting in on faculty senate, and, of course, via the ubiquitous coffee dates with campus leaders), allows her to skip the formality of a meeting or of negotiating the cultural boundaries present in institutions: “I can pick up the phone at any point and say ... hey whoever it is this issue came up.” A mid-level academic affairs counselor agrees:

I like to go hang out with people just because I like to talk to people, but that, honestly, has served me probably so well. It is those kinds of things when I can just pick up the phone and call somebody—and I am trying with [my direct reports], too, like to help just introduce them to people so that—not only for that reason, but so when you do need something you just ask.

Being able to call someone directly can often only happen effectively if a relationship is present, and by encouraging informal relationship building within their own units, participants are building larger networks of connections, ultimately helping the participant to collaborate with greater ease.

A senior IT administrator noted that collaborating is not just encouraged, but required, in her unit:

Another element of this is not necessarily being the only person [collaborating]. For instance, both [my colleague] and I have put in the performance evaluations of our directors the responsibility of meeting with the directors and the other parts of the organization. So they have to get together, they have to meet with each other, they're going to be assessed, and they're going to be evaluated on partially their capacity to communicate with the organizations that they are served by or that they serve. So I don't think that you can break down silos unless you're doing in multiple areas of the organization and really holding relationship building as a high priority of the organization.

By requiring her staff to build relationships in other sub-units, she is building a greater overall connect, which, in turn, makes her work more effective and efficient by allowing better communication across organizational sub-cultures. Building networks through effective communication is important because by building strong relationships outside of prescribed work duties, bonds of trust begin to form. Trust is vital to crossing organizational boundaries and collaborative work.

Trust

Participants generally stated that building relationships is dependent upon being viewed as trustworthy. Trust was seen as vital to collaborative endeavors that span organizational sub-cultures, “because if they [others] don't trust you there's a wall. If they do trust you there's not.” Participants noted that in their minds, the ability to cultivate

trust is dependent upon the honesty, respect, and professional demeanor that they and others display when working collaboratively.

Honesty, in the form of transparency, was seen as integral to relationship building by a senior member of the provost's office:

I think it is important to be transparent and straightforward and so I think most people are. But there is always a level of politics in any organization, and whether that stems from people wanting more than they have or people feeling nervous about things or anxious for a whole set of reasons, I think not everybody operates transparently, so I think that one of the challenges in knowing, both building good relationships, but knowing who you can trust.

A mid-level manager in the facilities division concurs on the issue of transparency as an important component of honesty and trust:

The other thing is to give people more information than they thought they were going to get, but not necessarily anything that compromises the integrity of the process or confidentiality. So the more transparent you can be I think helps build a better trust that people talk about. That is necessary to function on campus.

Transparency was seen as integral to building trustful relationships. Being transparent and establishing trust builds capital from which individuals are more easily able to negotiate barriers they face when collaborating across cultures. Transparency is connected to integrity, another key element in collaboration.

Participants noted that integrity and follow-through helped build a sense of trust between individuals working from different cultural perspectives. A vice president in an administrative unit of the university notes that:

People have to have trust in your unit and trust that you're going to do the right things. And when you develop relationships with other groups, they understand - in terms of relationships, professional relationships with people, they understand that, no matter what, they can trust you to do the right thing and make the right decisions based on whatever facts come out.

Like having an awareness of the roles of others, trust building via responsibility and follow through creates capital within the individual them more easily able to cross organizational sub-cultures through collaboration.

Follow-through is key to trust and relationship building, as a classified staff member from the student affairs division notes:

I think trust is really important. I think you have to—if you say you're going to do something for someone, especially in our office, it's really important that you do that. And so I try really hard to not make a commitment within my job unless I'm actually sure that I can do it. And if I can't, I'm looking for alternatives to offer that person. You know, so I think sometimes it's just showing that you have that sort of like follow through.

The professionalism that is shown when participants follow through helps create a sense of reciprocity in the relationship with others. The same classified staff members continues:

...And especially when working with stakeholders or offices that we work with all the time, I think it creates like a level of trust, right. If they know that if they call us with a problem that we're going to follow through. And I think it also sort of helps create a commitment on their end to us as well. So you have to sort of create a sense of, if you come to our office, or if you come to me, you're going to get a timely response and it's going to be consistent with the past practice of the office, and that's really—to me that's a big part of sort of instilling trust in people and sort of creating those relationships. Because in the end if you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing it's going to be difficult to expect other people to do what they're saying.

When trust is established is solidifies relationships between both individuals and the units they represent, because it underscores a sense of honesty and respect. Yet, trust building takes time.

A mid-level technology manager sums up the importance of building trust over time as it pertains to relationship building:

...I would guess saying being very honest about what you can do and what you can't do is important. But that honesty has to come in a context of respectfulness and professionalism. You can't establish those boundaries if

you've treated people disrespectfully through the entire meeting. You develop that trust over time, and you develop that reputation across the institution as someone who can be trusted, or who does their work, or is a team player. Then you can make some progress. I mean just coming to the table, going to work, willing to listen, willing to figure out how you solve the problem is, I think, the most important thing.

Trust, based on respect, honesty and transparency, engenders stronger relationships. By fostering trust within collaborative networks, individuals are more able to bridge the cultural divides present in higher education through those relationships. Furthermore, as these relationships are strengthened and trust is established, participants noted they often became advocates for those outside of their organizational sub-unit.

Advocacy

Advocacy, or actively working on the behalf of or in the interest of others, is important because it builds stronger connections between siloed organizational sub-cultures. In order to advocate effectively participants noted the importance of understanding the roles of others. For those collaborators with a high level of awareness, advocacy was seen as a natural means of building relationships in order to effectively collaborate with those outside of their home units. As individuals get to know and understand the roles of others and the units they represent, they are able to advocate for them in collaborative endeavors, to ensure that their perspectives are included. This inclusion can enrich the outcomes of collaborative work by, again, contributing to the

complexity of problem solving and creative thinking. A facilities manager sees advocacy as cornerstone to collaborative work:

You know, I think one of the roles in working across cultures is advocating for all the players in that culture. So that when I'm with some facilities people, and they're like, 'Man, we're trying to design all these collaborative classrooms and faculty keep moving these tables and chairs into lecture style And our faculty are just not sure they know' I try to represent, 'That's not true of all faculty. We have a lot of faculty who are doing great things around the student learning. And...if somebody said something about University Life people, I would represent the University Life interests back to that person. So it think part of it is like being a team player beyond your own team.

By actively advocating for others to others, stronger relationships are built and stronger collaboration can occur. These connections are strengthened beyond the advocate and the person for whom they are advocating. As a senior member of the provost office notes, her advocacy helps spark an understanding in others:

Because, I think as soon as people start being able to see it from the other person's position, or at least hear it and be exposed to understanding the complexities that that person dealing with it, that this person has never even thought about, that at least there starts to be this shared understanding of 'oh well, maybe that's why parking is like that or maybe that is why X

is like that” and then, I think, they can also start to, at some level at least cross-represent when they’re in other meetings.

Advocacy can build bridges of understanding, but it is not always easy. It requires that individuals think beyond their own needs and the needs of their unit. As with so many other aspects of successful collaboration, advocacy requires holistic thinking.

A faculty member and member of the provost office explains why a universal perspective is important for advocacy and collaboration and the importance, generally, of advocating for others:

So I think you really have to think beyond yourself, and beyond your unit.

It’s a very global perspective. I think it’s hard to do that. And I guess because I do have to work with all the different academic units, and Facilities, and Planning, and the architects, and University Life, and Learning Support Services, and the library, and the cross-curricular initiatives, I’m at this sort of juncture with all these folks. I have the opportunity to do that, and not everybody does because they just don’t have any interaction or any contact them. And so I think that makes it even more important for those of us who can play that role to play that role.

Advocating for self and others can strengthen the collaborative process by creating those networks that can strengthen collaborative work. By understanding the importance of roles and how roles fit into the collaborative work on a college campus, those working across organizational sub-cultures can better engage with each other and advocate for

their partners in collaboration. This engagement can lead to stronger relationships and better collaborative experiences that move organizations forward and give them the holistic perspective needed to find answers to the complex problems they are facing. That is, as long as the participants involved are able to clearly and effectively engage and communicate with each other across differences in approach to collaboration.

Tailored Communication

As stated throughout this study, one of the greatest challenges of collaborative endeavors on college campuses is bringing individuals together from different units and sub-cultures on campus, with different perspectives, roles, structures, rewards, values and languages. The inherent differences between the work of these individuals and their approach to that work creates a dissonance between group members that is difficult to overcome. Beyond relationship building, trust and advocacy, participants in this study noted the importance of tailoring their communication styles across sub-cultures.

Most of the participants interviewed underscored the importance of good communication that was both targeted to those with whom they were collaborating and allowed for multiple perspectives to be heard and appreciated. In particular, participants noted that effectively communicating across boundaries required not just the ability to clearly convey their perspective, but to listen to the needs and perspective of others involved in the collaborative process in a language that was understood by all. Furthermore, by communicating through the cultural difference and dissonance at play, participants were able to ensure a greater sense of equity in the collaborative process and more successful outcomes.

In order for relationships to thrive and work to benefit from those relationships, participants must have ability to clearly communicate the needs and goals of their home units and be open to the needs and goals of others:

[It's important] to be able to articulate what you can offer, and have questions about what you want back that are really clear. Because I think when things are ambiguous, then people are more likely to, you know, be hesitant or reticent like "Oh, what do they want? You know, what are they not telling me?" As opposed to "Here's what I do now. Here's what I was thinking. What do you think about that?"

Indeed, participants noted the importance of communicating clearly, in order to avoid misunderstanding or misdirection. A member of the emergency planning team at Mason explains why clear communication is important: "Yeah communication, but it's that I'm engaging you in something and it's not ambiguous. I'm engaging you in something and here is the start, the middle, the end, and this is why you're important to that process, and so that people understand that." Thus, it is important that internal boundary spanners not just sharing information, but communicate clearly about process and goals.

The importance of communication and its clarity is noticed when it is not present, as explained by a member of the campus facilities team:

The whole communication piece is what gets us in trouble in facilities, because I think that the way the project works through our system there, there's this upfront planning piece that we want to totally understand exactly how you do your job in order for us to understand how we can do

the best project for you. But when it moves into sort of more pure execution, their focus is on delivering a job on the schedule and budget to meet whatever the requirements were that were initially established on the project. And so that whole inclusive conversation that is happening in the beginning starts right and then sort of cuts off and then all of the sudden it's well that's not on the drawing and so if it's not on the drawing that's not part of the job I need to do, and if that delays me a week I can't do that. And then all the sudden there's this shift in how this person feels like they're being treated on the project. And it's not intentional because the project manager is responsible for managing the scope, schedule and budget, but they're not the best at the whole part of communication about and problem solving once it gets into that part of the project.

In addition to clearly communicating with others, successful internal boundary spanners also target their communications to the individuals with whom they collaborate:

...every summer...my director of communication and planning and I go and talk with the deans...to see what it is they're doing, to see how we think we might be able to serve them, to hear any concerns that they might have about the organization. And there is no dean that is the same at this institution. I mean I don't really know how you can have that many people who are 180 degrees apart from each other, but it's here. They're a different group and their disciplines have very different needs. So what I talk about one is different from what I talk about with [others] because

they want very different things. So having a little bit more targeted communication is important... So communication is a big piece of it.

By targeting communications to the needs of specific individuals and their communities, participants are able to build their social capital with those individuals and groups while learning more about the organization as a whole and the differing needs of its stakeholders.

A manager in the facilities division has utilized targeted communication and established repetitive contact lines by assigning individuals to communicate with others. To bolster targeted communications the facilities department has assigned people to work repetitively with different groups, so that relationships are not just established, but cultivated through repeat interaction. "The other thing we've done is we try to have people work with repetitive people...so there's sort of a consistency in who our client out there is seeing on their project...so at least there's some familiarity." Establishing routinized and repetitive communication allows individuals get to know the needs, over time, of the units the people with whom they work. This creates a higher level of understanding within and between those in collaboration and sets the stage for more cognitively complex and rewarding collaborative endeavors. However, for cross-cultural communication to be successful, participants acknowledged that they had to hone their listening skills and their understanding of language difference between their unit and the units from which their fellow collaborators hail.

Active Listening

The languages present within the sub-units of organizations evolve and are often as distinct as the organizational sub-cultures and structures from which they arise. In order to understand the differences in language and effectively communicate beyond those differences, study participants noted the importance of listening to others, in order to gain greater awareness of their unit's views, needs and goals. By actively listening, participants learned from others and were able to approach collaboration from a more informed, equitable and holistic perspective and, again, build capital within the collaborative endeavor.

A senior vice president at Mason notes the importance of listening at Mason: "You have to listen, and that's in most organizations. Because here you have to listen and you have to hear people, and they have to really, you know, feel that; that you are listening to them." A mid-level staff member concurs: "I think really, just stepping into somebody else's shoes and listening with a capital 'L,' and not jumping to—not assuming and not jumping to conclusions too quickly." Like collaboration itself, listening is valued at Mason as a part of the collaborative process, partly because it allows people to feel heard, but also because it creates an environment in which duplication can be avoided, effectiveness increased and it sets the stage for future work. The same staff member from an academic unit explains:

... if you don't communicate at all, you don't know those things. We recently, on Staff Senate, just got involved with Student Government and realized that they've been working on smoking, which is apparently a big issue. And Staff Senate has been working on that over and over again for

years. So it's good to know where everybody stands. But I think just opening the lines of communication, listening to what people have to say, and then providing your take on whether it be culture or whether it be a certain issue kind of opens the door for where do we go next.

By listening, participants noted that they are more easily able to understand the perspectives and needs of the other units on campus and of the organization as a whole.

Taking the time to listen and to be aware of the wants, needs and goals of others is important as it sets a tone of equity in collaborative endeavors. As a mid-level technology manager notes, "It's important to listen. So even though you may be an expert in the room, it's first important to listen." The willingness to listen, even if you think you already know the answer or course of action is important, because it allows others to feel included and heard, both important aspects of relationship building and of keeping issues of power inequity in check. As a student affairs staff member notes, people need to be heard in order for collaboration to work:

I think people need to feel like their opinion is important, especially when they're the ones that are going to be processing that request or that intervention on the other end. And it's helpful to us, because they always have ideas that we would not have necessarily thought of, just because they're handling a very specific type of case for us.

Being open and listening to alternate perspectives builds relationships but, as the speaker notes, it also contributes to the cognitive complexity, the creative answers, that moves collaborative work forward. By listening to alternate, non-expert and even more

marginalized voices, work product collaborative projects benefit. Having different voices involved in collaborative processes was valued by a majority of the participants. Beyond setting a tone of respect and equity, participants noted that they needed a certain level of adaptability to engage those from varying organizational sub-cultures.

Listening attentively is important, as participants often run into language differences when working across cultural boundaries. Understanding that difference in language exists via the cultures that have emerged on campus can, when addressed, make crossing those boundaries and understanding differences less difficult. A mid-level technology manager explains:

You know [a dean I work with] talks about this - that I, in fact, while I don't speak Spanish, and Mandarin, and English, I speak architecture, and business, and technology because of my learned background and I use different areas and that's like speaking different languages. So being an interpreter across those cultural groups is an important function when you're trying to break through those silos.

Understanding how professional languages differ in various sub-units on a college campus is important because, as a regional campus administrator notes: “that’s where all communications break-down, is that people are speaking in different, really, different professional dialects.” Participants noted that while their approach to people from other groups didn’t change, often their communication style does. A senior member of the facilities team explains:

You know, when you're talking to faculty, it's a very different language than if you're talking to student groups. In terms of faculty, making sure you understand what their day-to-day responsibilities are, and what their end goals are, and trying to make sure that you help them achieve that. And, you know, whether that's their research faculty, or instructional faculty, or even adjuncts, and I worked with them, speaking their sort of language so you can get that sort of buy-in that you need from those particular groups. And the students as well; you have to talk to them in a very different language than you do some of the faculty members or staff members. Their goals are different. Their needs are different. And being able to talk about some of those things in a way that's, you know, helpful for them.

By being able to speak the language of different units and by listening to understand their needs and goals, participants are able to break through the siloes that are present on campus. This barrier-breaking encourages relationships between organizational cultures, which can strengthen collaborative work.

Breaking through silos by both understanding the language barriers and being able to work effectively beyond them, is also useful, as a student affairs staff member highlights:

So sometimes I think it's just a matter of like understanding that not everybody speaks higher ed, and just trying to sort of find a way to make those connections and sort of explain those ideas and make them

understandable to the police. So I think that's part of it. And then with the Registrar, for me it's also learning their language... So a lot of times it's sort of me having to adopt someone else's sort of lingo just because I—you know, we have a very specific language that we use in our office and not everyone's going to get that.

Being able to learn the distinct languages of sub-units well serves those who collaborate across organizational sub-cultures. The ability to shift language and tailor communication depending upon the cultures at play is dependent upon the ability to listen, understand and incorporate the perspectives of others. This ability to shift communication styles when engaging others also underscores the importance of adaptability as a strategic action in collaborative events.

Adaptable Interactions

Adaptability of approach was viewed by many of the participants as key to engaging those beyond their units when collaborating. However, it should be noted that this technique was most often used by non-faculty when approaching faculty. Rarely did faculty members note an adaptability in how they approached members from other groups. This may be due in large part to the nature of faculty work versus non-faculty work and the effect of faculty governance and the faculty reward structure on the ways in which non-faculty try to engage faculty in their work.

Regardless, deferential behavior, credentialing (providing evidence of expertise or authority in a specific area) and maintaining positivity were popular activities used by non-faculty participants to work across cultural boundaries. An academic affairs

counselor explains the use of deference coupled with credentialing to get work done, especially when working with faculty members:

It is being a little deferential. I mean, we know the importance of what we do, but I think giving to them the fact that what they are doing is important, too. And recognize—well, yes—understanding—and I guess that is why I say developing the relationships. Understanding what is important to them.

Participants deemed educating others on their roles and the roles of their units useful. This education is particularly effective when the other with whom the participant is working understands how the participant's role and/or role of their unit can positively impact them.

The same academic affairs counselor explains how she often approaches collaborative groups by stating what she can bring to the table for those outside of her unit, particularly faculty:

I think it is important to, when you are crossing those boundaries, to have the big picture in mind, but also what I learned long ago was that, and I am generalizing, but for the most part, faculty have no clue the world that we live in. I remember when way back in the day when we had Mason Topics and there was a faculty member in charge of that who didn't know how to do a purchase order and didn't know how to get food for an event. Like saying, "Okay, here is where we can help you. We are not going to teach your students X, Y or Z, but we can make it happen for you." So just

finding where you can help and support them and make their job easier so that the things they want to do happen easily and quickly.

Interestingly, the need to show ways of assistance and deference were often noted by non-faculty in their approaches to faculty.

Faculty members (whether full-time faculty or administrators) interviewed for this study rarely noted deference as a strategic means for engaging others. Indeed, the only time in which deference was mentioned was when the faculty member believed the other person involved in collaboration to be the expert. As a faculty member explains:

I think a lot of it is I listen, as opposed to saying what you need to have happen. You know, “here’s a problem and here’s a challenge that we’ve been thinking about in this group. You are the experts around this particular issue. Help us think about those challenges. There’s a way into this. What kind of language should we be using.

When a level of expertise in the other is established, faculty are more easily able to defer in order to engage those individuals. Yet, expertise must be established and is often established by non-faculty participants credentialing the work they do in order to solidify their role as expert.

Credentialing is used by participants to help legitimize their work and to establish their own importance within collaborative groups. As with deference, credentialing was only seen as important by non-faculty participants in this study. None of the faculty or administrators with faculty backgrounds associated credentialing as an important part of engaging others. Again, this is likely connected to the faculty governance structure and

the culture of faculty as being an expert-based group of professionals. However, for those who worked in traditions outside of faculty, credentialing is common practice and used, especially, when engaging faculty members. A student affairs staff member explains the questions around expertise that she often gets when working with faculty: “This happens a lot when we do presentations to faculty, to an academic unit. We sort of get—not always, but we often meet a lot of criticism, or even questions around, well, you know, what makes you qualified to handle this situation?” Her approach to these questions is to establish the credibility gained through her experiences on the job and role of her office in supporting the work faculty do.

Although often used with faculty, non-faculty interactions are often made stronger when participants use their credentials to approach others. A technology manager uses architecture degree when credentialing herself in conversations with facilities staff: “One of the things that really assisted me with facilities is that my master degree is in architecture. So coming with that credential automatically gained me some kind of credibility in my conversations with facilities. [Although] I have never practiced as an architect.” Having the degree and experience helped credential this participant with those outside of her sub-unit. Credentialing makes a difference because it builds capital by establishing expertise. However, it requires that individuals have an awareness of the cultural values, language, rewards and missions of others.

A senior member of the student affairs administration team explains how she approaches faculty through credentialing that is specific to the language faculty use:

Because I think with faculty you have to lead with kind of credentialing yourself. So if I'm doing a faculty workshop, I start by talking about what classes I've taught on campus. And I start by acknowledging the increasing research demands that faculty have. And then I move into what University Life does. But I lead with the research, I lead with higher education research on, you know, more successful students are more highly engaged, and I kind of appeal to that part of who they are. And then I talk about all the ways that we can support their work. You know, whether it's through programming. And then I talk about all the ways that we can support their work with individual students in crisis. So it's—for me, I start—like it's all—the focus is all on them, and then on how we can make their life easier. And yeah, that's a way different approach than if I'm with a group of University Life people.

By focusing on what faculty culture values (data) and by using that as a language to establish expertise, she is able to credential herself and in-turn engage the other in the collaborative process more directly. This requires a high degree of awareness of the values, rewards, language of faculty - a deep understanding of cultural difference in order to engage with others beyond that difference. Yet, cultural difference, as noted previously, is not relegated between faculty and staff and is alive in many forms in all parts of the university.

Cultural differences can create challenges to engaging others and ultimately undermine collaboration and thus require a high degree of adaptability – of language and

of approach. It also requires finding a way to stay positive in order to work beyond the inherent difficulties of bridging many roles and differences. A classified staff member notes that,

...I can make things either really positive or really negative. I choose to just keep it positive because that's just who I am most days. But in those departmental interactions, I mean, it really can be the difference between having a negative opinion of somebody or positive opinion. And people tend to blame the person. I mean it's not the blaming Fiscal Services, which is what I typically do. I say they are too rigid, generally. You know it's not some person from Purchasing's fault. It's the system. And I try to realize that, but I don't think all people make that broad view connection. And I think by dint of being on Staff Senate and seeing the broader university, that's really important. I think when people are too closed off into their own world and they're boxed off, they don't see that big picture.

By staying positive, by assuming that everyone is working toward a common goal, participants were able to better work across organizational differences inherent in siloed cultures and roles.

That sense of positivity and figuring out ways of working with people in different roles and from different organizational cultures can absolutely be an intentional approach, not just a Pollyanna point-of-view, and can also be self-serving. A senior student affairs administrator explains how and why she does this:

It's important for me to figure out how I can connect with someone. So if it's someone who's got really a sour reputation, or who is seen as not really working well with others, like I spend more time searching for what it is about them that I can... appreciate actually... What drives that is that, you know, I spend more time with people at my workplace than I do with most everybody else in my life, just when you look at the number of hours, the number of waking hours, and I don't want to come to work and have a horrible experience. And I don't want there to be work, and then I go home and that's where I live the rest of my life and it's fun. I feel like that's basically crossing off half of my life and I'm acting like I don't have any control over it. So it's really important for me to like the people that I work with. And if I have to sit in a meeting with [someone] every other week for the next three months, like I'm going to figure out how to like you. And it's genuine. And it's genuine. Because I don't want to not look forward to meeting with you every other week. You know? Because it's my life, too.

The intentional work to understand how to work with others, especially those beyond your unit can help make the collaborative process better, more positive, and in turn, can impact the outcome of collaborative work. Furthermore, as participants are able to learn more about those with whom they engage, they are better able to advocate for those individuals.

Participants in this study who collaborated successfully were able to build relationships and trust, communicate effectively across language and cultural difference and listen, learn and adapt in order to better engage with others. The strategies they use improve their collaborations, moving their organizations forward by giving its members the holistic and multi-faceted perspective needed in order to find answers to the complex problems they are facing.

Summary

At Mason, good collaborators are spurred to work across organizational sub-cultures in order to meet the needs of the overarching organizational mission, which is facing increasing external pressures and resource constraint, by bridging varied goals of institutional sub-units. This motivation is embedded in a belief in the efficacy of collaboration to move the organization forward, despite the challenges of collaboration with those in different organizational sub-cultures. Each of the participants interviewed possess an awareness of self, others and the collaborative process that gave them greater insight into the roles, structures and cultures of those with whom they collaborate on a regular basis. Their motivation to uphold the overarching organization's mission and desired outcomes coupled with a keen awareness informs the strategies that these good collaborators employ to cross the organizational sub-cultures present in collaborative work at Mason.

Creating networks of trust and advocacy, engaging others via tailored communication, active listening and adaptable interactions, while staying positively focused on positive incomes - all of it creates good collaboration. When collaboration is

good, when individuals are able to work together successfully by being motivated toward the big picture, by being aware of themselves, others and the process and by engaging practices and strategies that build organizational and social capital, then they are able to bridge the disconnected, disparate and fragmented sub-units inherent in the university structure.

Furthermore, by bridging multiple areas of the university, individuals begin to create not just multi-faceted perspectives of their organization, but a multi-faceted identity of their own. They evolve into not just a member of their siloed home unit and culture, but also as a friend and advocate (and sometimes pseudo-member) of the units and cultures with whom they interact. While they may never achieve full member status within another unit on campus, what they can learn through collaborating intentionally with others can help create an environment in which multiple perspectives can be integrated into collaborative endeavors that create outcomes that holistically benefit the university community and its objectives.

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to better understand how organizational cultures and their sub-cultures impact the work of internal boundary spanners in higher education institutions. Two research questions were asked: 1) how cultural boundaries within organizations inform and shape internal boundary spanners' views of cross-cultural interactions; and, 2) How do individuals utilize cultural understanding to collaborate successfully across disparate sub-cultures for mutual success. The findings that emerged in this study point to the ways in which culture informs the motivations, awareness and strategies of those collaborating across cultural divides.

Among the findings in this study are that culture, at both the organizational and unit level, informs approaches to collaboration and that collaboration is deemed as a necessary component of organizational life. Individuals involved in this study were aware of cultural differences on campus. Furthermore, their belief in the overarching mission and shared goals of the institution and in the culturally-held value of collaboration as a salve for resource constraint and improving outcomes motivated them to work across those differences. However, motivation is not enough and those who are able to collaborate well across difference understand the importance of building an awareness of the dynamics involved in the collaborative process. This knowledge base, constructed from perspectives on the self, others and collaboration creates sensemaking opportunities from the webs of significance that cultural cues provide. Successful

collaborators actively seek to learn more about themselves and others, which ultimately helps inform the strategies that they use to cross the culturally bounded sub-units at Mason. Specific strategies in this study revolved around relationship building through networks and trust, advocacy, communication, active listening and adaptable interactions.

Discussion

The findings clearly support that organizational culture and its components play a significant role in both collaborative processes at Mason and in the ways in which individuals are impacted by cultural difference. The impact of organizational culture is present at both macro and micro levels within the institution. It was not surprising to find that Mason, like other higher education institutions, is composed of loosely-coupled sub-units each with their own distinct cultures. These cultures are composed of missions, values, rewards and goals that are often not in alignment with the cultures of other sub-units on campus. This difference impacts the ways in which individuals work when collaborating across the boundaries of these units. However, interestingly, the overarching organizational culture can help mitigate these differences when used intentionally in collaborative work.

Previous studies have noted the importance of shared mission and goals in organizational life and collaborative work (Eddy, 2010; Kezar 2006; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Liedtka, 1996; Schein, 2010; Tierney, 2008) and the importance of intrinsic motivation in those who work in higher education (Kezar & Lester, 2009), but new in this study was the idea that those shared points of reference can be used intentionally to set the tone and guide the course of collaborative

work by providing an anchor for participants sub-units whose sub-cultures are not in alignment. Individuals in this study felt that Mason's culture of collaboration and the mission and shared goals of the institution made collaboration an imperative to the work they do. Because collaboration is valued as important and because there is a belief in the mission of the institution, it gives participants a means in which to work through difficult or contentious collaborations and to work across culturally bounded sub-units with greater ease. Thus, mission and shared goals motivated them to collaborate across difference.

Among expected findings related to work on the characteristics and strategies of external boundary spanners is the role of relationship building, networks, trust and communication. These strategies are hallmarks of "good" collaboration and, time and again in research have been found as key techniques for connected more effectively with those beyond internal boundaries (Amey, 2010; Amey & Brown, 2004; Kanter, 1994; Kettle, 2006; Kraus & Sultana, 2008; Liedtka, 1996; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981; Williams, 2002). What is unique to this study is the role of awareness in collaborating across difference, not just for creating a knowledge base of self and others, but using that knowledge to craft specific strategies for collaborative success. This study highlights the importance of being open to the idea of learning more about one's own strengths and weaknesses and of the roles and challenges of others. As with shared mission and goals, there is an intentionality of knowledge acquisition and which is used to create connections and overcome organizational difference. Participants in this study noted their inherent love of learning as a driver to better understanding themselves and others.

However, they also noted that what they learn they actively incorporate into their interactions with those others – that this knowledge helps shape the strategies they use.

Among the strategies that require a strong awareness are the abilities to advocate and to adapt. Although Caldwell and Reilly (1982) have explored the importance of adaptability in external boundary spanners, advocacy and adaptability have not been researched in depth and data is certainly not present related to these aspects on internal boundary spanners within higher education. Yet, each is a powerful tool in the arsenal of internal boundary spanners working across cultural difference. The ability to advocate for others is dependent upon motivation toward common goals and a deep understanding of those for whom you are advocating. Furthermore, when individuals advocate for their collaborative compatriots, they are building their capital not only with those they are representing, but also within the broader construct of the university.

Competent advocacy in collaboration also requires that individuals be adaptable. A sense of flexibility and an ability to shift communication style, demeanor and approach is key to adaptability, allowing for individuals to more seamlessly work across cultural boundaries. However, in order to be adaptable, internal boundary spanners must actively work to understand those with whom they collaborate, so that they can approach them with an appropriate understanding of the language, strengths and constraints facing organizational sub-units. As boundary spanners employ these strategies successfully, they re-inform their motivations and their awareness of the organization in which they work, making collaboration easier and more effective.

Perhaps the most important finding in this study is that successful collaborators seem to have developed an understanding of the importance of the collaborative process, itself. This finding is supported by previous work of Liedtka (1996) that underscores the importance of individuals having a “partnering mindset, a partnering skill set and a supportive context that process commitment, processes and resources to facilitate collaboration,” (p. 24). It was clear in this study that individuals who intentionally engage in collaborative efforts by thinking about group, power and decision-making dynamics were successful in keeping collaborative work from stalling or being derailed from a lack of informed, diverse perspectives.

Furthermore, an awareness of process – its components and impacts - hints at a level of emotional intelligence possessed by individuals who successfully collaborate across cultural boundaries. While not investigated further in this study, there seems to be a high level of emotional intelligence at play in the individuals interviewed. They were highly aware of their own motivations, their strengths and weaknesses, the roles of others and the role of organizational structure and culture on their work. Awareness of self and others is a key theme in studies related to emotional intelligence and would be an interesting area for future research (George, 2000; Zeidner, *et al*, 2004). Regardless of the reasons awareness of the collaborative process exists in individuals, the divides organizational culture creates seems to play a role by giving participants the reasons, or motivations, to understand the process. This understanding of process is again connected to the awareness that individuals have of the organizational milieu.

Organizational culture is always changing and those changes speak to the limitations present in this study. This case study is a snapshot in time of specific players at a specific institution. Because this study focuses on one institution, the results may be unique to Mason. However, while the findings and their implications cannot be directly applied to other schools or organizations, given the unique historical, structural and cultural make-up of Mason, it is reasonable to glean general themes of understanding from those who were interviewed and the data provided. The study is also dependent upon the perceptions, memories and biases of individuals who were chosen based on a perceived ability to successfully collaborate across boundaries, which creates a selection bias that may impact the appreciation and understanding of collaboration and cultural difference. As stated previously, as both an employee and student of the institution, I bring my own bias and cultural perspective to this study. While every effort was made to view each of the participants without bias and from a balanced perspective, my home-unit and its culture informs my point-of-view. Despite the limitations of this study, there are lessons to be learned that can inform the work of individuals at every level of the organization as they work across internal cultural boundaries for collaborative good.

Recommendations

This study highlights important implications in the areas of organizational relationships, structure, capital, sub-cultures and the collaborative process. The following recommendations have emerged from this study and can be used by individuals at all levels of a higher education institution to more effectively work across internal cultural boundaries for mutual success.

First, those working across cultural difference within organizations should actively seek out connections and build relationships with a diverse network of individuals from varying organizational sub-cultures. Relationships should be cultivated via formal and informal means and be built on trust, communication and the willingness to learn from others. Seeking out diverse networks early and before they are needed and actively participating on committees, getting to know the roles of individuals and their units (via formal and informal methods) and acting as an advocate for both their home unit and others can help establish strong relationships.

Second, internal collaborators should work to understand the institution and its components via the mission, values and goals of the overarching institution, their home unit and the units of those with whom they collaborate in order to find shared goals. This common ground has the potential to knit culturally diverse groups more closely together, making collaboration more effective. In addition to talking with and building relationships with members of other units, internal boundary spanners should actively work to learn about other units through review of their websites, office visits and by actively listening in order to better understand others' cultural language and priorities.

Third, those who collaborate across difference must build organizational capital with others by constructing a knowledge base comprised of awareness of their role, their home unit's culture and the role and culture of other units. This awareness and capital can then be used to advocate for the interests and concerns of both the individuals unit and the units with which they are collaborating. The more individuals advocate for others, the more capital they build with them, resulting in stronger and more effective

relationships. Capital can be established and flourished if individuals consistently work to exhibit a sense of professionalism, engage in reputation sustaining activities (e.g. trust building, transparency and follow through) and actively work in the interest of all involved by being focused on overarching mission and shared goals.

Fourth, individuals should actively work to become cultural outsiders. Kezar and Eckel (2002) note the importance of working to understand the culture of an organization from an outsider's perspective in order to gain a greater overall understanding of the organization. This lesson can be applied to internal organizational sub-cultures and those who cross internal boundaries, as well. Seeing one's own unit through the eyes of others can help play a significant role in an individual better understanding the totality of the organization in which they work by giving them new insight into their home unit. This insight can then be translated to understanding the ways in which other units exist within the organization. This new understanding helps individuals make sense of the overarching organization in order to work with more effectiveness across difference and to construct more cognitively complex answers to pressing issues related to collaborative work. Individuals can begin to culturally audit their units and others by paying attention to values, priorities, language, mission, challenges and constraints and using this knowledge to inform their collaborative work.

Finally, it is important to individuals to understand the importance of collaboration as a process – one in which they play a pivotal role in setting a tone of equity, inclusion and decision-making that can move collaborative work toward more effective ends. Before collaboration begins, individuals should consider the power

dynamics that might come into play by thinking about the other people in the process. Specifically, they should craft a plan for helping to create equitable participation by considering the home units, roles, and titles of those involved; by taking into account any historical information that could help inform their approach; and by intentionally working with others in the group to establish a set of ground rules or processes in the beginning of the collaboration that can help guide the group as it moves through working together.

In addition to the lessons geared toward individuals participating in collaboration, this study highlights the importance of the role of the overarching organizational culture. As stated previously, Mason has an organizational culture that is steeped in an appreciation for the benefits of collaboration, according to those who participated in this study. Thus, collaboration is a fact of organizational life at Mason. For leaders of organizations looking for ways to address the environmental pressures facing their campuses, collaboration is proven method. However, collaboration, like culture, cannot be forced (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Rather, collaboration must be encouraged on campus through rewards, incentives and structures that allow it to flourish and to eventually become culturally accepted and celebrated, as it is at Mason.

Areas for Future Study

The impact of organizational culture on individuals and the collaborative process is ripe for further study, specifically in the areas of emotional intelligence, capital building, power and marginalization and adaptability. Each of these areas were explored to varying degrees in this study. However, by delving further into these issues, a better

understanding of the role and impact of the individual in collaborative processes could be gleaned.

As stated previously, issues of emotional intelligence connected with one's ability to work with difference should be explored in greater depth. All participants noted that to successfully work across cultural difference deft management of interactions between self and others is required. George (2000) speaks to the impact of emotional intelligence on successful leadership and noted that it requires that leaders focus on "five essential elements of leadership effectiveness," namely: "development of collective goals and objectives; instilling in others an appreciation of the importance of work activities; generating and maintaining enthusiasm, confidence, optimism, cooperation and trust; encouraging flexibility in decision making and change; and establishing and maintaining a meaningful identity for an organization," (p. 1027). There are clearly overlapping themes in the work on emotional intelligence and leadership and in the results in this study, and it would be interesting to explore the connection of emotional intelligence in individuals who work with those across organizational cultural difference.

Another area of interest that emerged in this study and would be interesting to explore further is the issue of capital building. Capital building as a by-product of collaborative strategies was noted repeatedly in this study and has been explored as a by-product of higher education partnerships in the work of Eddy (2010). Often, capital building was not expressed as an explicit objective of individual strategy to work with those from different organizational sub-units. However, participants did acknowledge that the more they employed the strategies noted in this study, the stronger the

collaborative outcome. They also indicated that this positive correlation improved their relationships and reputations on campus. It would be interesting to see how individuals use capital to collaborate and negotiate internal boundaries in higher education.

Understanding intentional capital building and how it can be used strategically, would be useful to further understanding relationship building, a core component of collaborative work.

Closely connected to issues of capital building in collaborative processes are the influence of power and marginalization. The importance of setting a tone of equity within group collaboration (awareness of inequity, power dynamics and tone setting, again being connected with emotional intelligence) was also noted in this study and deserves further attention in a future project. Group dynamics often impact the effectiveness and efficiency of collaborative work. Further research into issues of power and marginalization could help those involved in collaborative work better understand the importance of establishing process rules with others in order to move projects forward more holistically and effectively.

Finally, the differences between faculty and non-faculty in the ways in which they approach each other were particularly interesting. In this study, those with faculty backgrounds felt no need to credential themselves (perhaps because they consider the PhD or tenure to be their credential) or adapt their approach when working outside of their home units or areas of expertise. However, non-faculty, even those with established expertise and credentials of their own, often used credentialing and adaptability with working with others, especially with faculty members. This difference in approach hints

at a significant difference between approach and mindset of faculty and non-faculty and has implications for collaborative work between members of these groups. Further delving into the differences between these groups, their identities and their approaches to work, collaboration, others and the organization would make for a fascinating research paper.

Conclusion

In conclusion, culture and the individual matter in collaborative efforts in higher education organizations. These institutions are rich cultural entities with a variety of components that work together to support the overarching mission. Organizational culture and sub-cultures shape the ways in which individuals approach collaborative work on their campuses. Overarching organizational cultures provides cues through mission and shared values and goals to its members, allowing them to understand the importance of collaboration to the organization and to focus on common ground in order to work effectively beyond their own sub-cultures. This commonality can act as a motivator, encouraging work across cultural difference, and can provide the impetus for individuals to become more aware of themselves, others and the collaborative process. The increased knowledge base that awareness brings gives a greater understanding of the process of collaboration, and, in turn, informs the strategies individuals use to bridge organizational divides. By employing strategies that are based on an understanding of cultural difference, internal boundary spanners are able to build relationships and networks, tailor communication, encourage active listening and learning, advocate for

others and create adaptable approaches, collaboration in higher education is more likely to succeed.

The motivations, awareness and strategies that individuals employ are key to moving collaborative work forward. The more successful individuals are in understanding the role of organizational culture, the more sense they can make of their organization and its components. By understanding the impact of organizational cultures, individuals are able to more effectively negotiate the fragmented terrain of their institutions, leading to a more holistic picture of the organization; easier integration of information and initiatives; and more cognitively complex answers to the environmental pressures currently facing higher education.

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form for Negotiating Cultural Traffic Study

Note: The following will be given to each participant. Once signed, a copy will be given to participants:

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to examine how individuals collaborate across the various cultural boundaries within institutions of higher education. If you agree to participate, you will be asked meet with the researcher over the course of two interviews (30-45 minutes, depending on your availability) to answer questions related to this topic, be observed during one cross-divisional meeting (where your communication style and strategy will be observed) and share work-related artifacts related to the team meeting (e.g. agendas, notes, action items, websites, minutes, etc.).

RISKS

There is no more than minimal risk associated with this study.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in higher education and organizational theory.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. Your name will not be included on the interview notes, observation notes and data. Instead of your name, a numeric code will be placed on the collected data. Through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your answers to your identity, and only the researcher will have access to the identification key.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

AUDIO TAPING

If you agree, the researcher will record both interviews. The sole purpose is so that the researcher can go back to the tape to retrieve quotations and other portions of the conversation that might not be captured through note-taking. The files will be kept in a locked location in the researcher's home, and the only identification on the files will be numeric codes. Only the researcher will have access to these files and at the completion of the study the electronic files will be erased and any hard copies of transcripts will be shredded.

CONTACT

Carrie Klein at George Mason University is conducting this research. She may be reached at 703-993-XXXX for questions or to report a research-related problem. You may also contact faculty member and Chair of this thesis project, Dr. Jaime Lester, at 703-993-XXXX. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-XXXX if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

Name:

Date:

Please let the researcher know whether or not you agree to be audio taped.

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Script

Note: This general text will be used when asking participants via email, telephone or in person to participate in the research study.

Dear XX,

I am contacting you to ask for your participation in a study I am conducting for my master thesis at George Mason University. The case study, housed here at Mason, focuses on the strategies individuals use to collaborate across the various and multiple cultural sub-boundaries in higher education institutions.

I believe that your experience and perspective could provide valuable insight for my research. I am asking potential participants to meet with me for two short interviews. Also, if possible and appropriate, sitting in on a cross-divisional meeting in which you actively participate and/or reviewing work-related artifacts from collaborative team on which you participate would be immensely beneficial.

At your convenience, please let me know if you are available to participate. Should you have any questions, you may reach me at 703.993.XXXX or XXXXXXXX@gmu.edu. Thank you for your time, and I hope to talk with you soon.

Best,
Carrie Klein

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol & Questions

Note: During the course of the interview, participants may make statements that will require the researcher to probe for more information and/or ask questions that are not included in this script.

Project: Negotiating Cultural Traffic

Date, Time & Location of Interview:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Purpose of Interview: This study is looking at the role of the individuals in internal, cross-cultural boundary collaboration projects in higher education to understand how their attributes, motivations and strategies are used to negotiate the bounded cultures of organizational sub-units. Fifteen to twenty participants engaged in collaborative teams are being interviewed. Each participant will be given a masking identifier to safeguard their privacy and before the interview begins, the researcher will ask participants to sign consent forms, consistent with HSRB guidelines. The interview should take approximately 30-45 minutes and will be recorded. After the recording has been transcribed, you will be given a copy of the transcript to review for accuracy.

Questions:

1. How long have you worked in higher education and in what capacity? What is your title? What are your responsibilities within your division or unit?
2. How would you describe the culture of Mason? Of your “home” division and/unit? Of the units with which you collaborate?
3. Describe the other cultures present on campus. Do you work with any of those other sub-cultures?
4. What role do institutional culture and sub-cultures play in collaborative work? Examples: assumptions, values, rewards. Your own and the institutions?
5. What are the benefits of collaborative work that crosses the cultural boundaries of the campus? Please cite examples from work you do.

6. What are the challenges of collaborative work that crosses the cultural boundaries of the campus? Please cite examples from work you do.
7. What strategies do you use for collaborating across cultural boundaries?
6. How did you come to use those strategies? Did you see success in others? Read about them? Pick up through training? Are they innate?
7. Do you feel like you are "good" at collaborating with those from different divisions, backgrounds, etc., or does it take effort and attention?
8. What motivates you to collaborate across cultural boundaries?
9. What does successful cross-cultural collaboration look like - from a collective and individual perspective? Does that change depending on your 'home' culture? Do you have examples of individuals, beside your self, who successfully negotiates the various cultures in higher education? How are they successful?
10. What advice do you have for others working on collaborative projects that cross the sub-cultural boundaries on campus?
11. Does cross-cultural collaboration yield results? How does it impact you? How does it impact the organization?

APPENDIX D

Meeting Observation Protocol

Note: this protocol will be used to observe the participant, only, as they participate in collaborative team meetings. Language, strategies, and behaviors of the participant will be recorded.

Project: Negotiating Cultural Traffic

Setting Date, Time & Location:

Observer:

Description of Object/Observation:

Field Notes:

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BIOGRAPHY

Carrie Klein graduated *magna cum laude* from The University of Arizona in 1997 with a dual degree in Classics and Anthropology, where she wrote an honors thesis on the structural remains of an excavation site in Chianciano Terme, Italy. She began Master-level work at George Mason University in 2010 and since then has co-authored a chapter in *Workplace Bullying in Higher Education* with Dr. Jaime Lester and is writing a forthcoming chapter on the role of experiential learning in community college student transfer in a book to be published in the fall of 2013, also with Dr. Lester. Her research interests include intersections of organizational structures, cultures, roles and individual identity, as well as both the perception and impact of student affairs work in student retention, engagement and completion.