Organizational Culture Beyond Consensus and Clarity: Narratives From Elite Sport

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Abstract

In sport psychology, organisational culture is usually depicted as shared, consistent, and clear — the glue that holds people together so they can achieve success. There is, however, growing discontent in sport psychology with this idea of culture and extensive critiques in other academic domains that suggest this perspective is limited. Accordingly, we draw on narrative interviews with participants (n=7) from different areas of sport and use Martin and Meyerson's (1988, 1992) three perspective (integration, differentiation, fragmentation) approach to culture alongside thematic analysis to reconstruct three 'ideal cases' that exemplify each perspective. The findings emphasise a different pattern of meaning in each actors' narrative and suggest the need to develop a broader, more inclusive concept of culture, so as not to minimise or dismiss cultural content that is not obviously shared, clear or created by leadership; a course of action that can enhance both research and practice in the area.

Keywords: subculture, conflict, organisational culture, applied practice, interpretation

Organisational Culture Beyond Consensus and Clarity: Narratives from Elite Sport

An understanding of organisational culture (and other levels of analysis, such as team and performance department culture) is now regularly outlined as an essential component to sport psychology delivery in elite environments (e.g., Cruickshank & Collins, 2012; Cruickshank et al., 2013, 2014, 2015; Eubank, Nesti, & Cruickshank, 2014; Fletcher & Arnold, 2011; Henriksen, 2015; McDougall & Ronkainen, 2019; Nesti, 2010; Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018, 2019). The value of obtaining expertise in culture is that, firstly, it can equip sport psychologists to better understand the realities of complex organisational domains and relationships that exist within them (Nesti, 2010; McDougall et al., 2019). Secondly, it is argued that culture knowledge enables sport psychologists to work effectively in a broader organisational capacity and contribute to culture change or optimisation, so that performance excellence is achieved (Cruickshank & Collins, 2012; Eubank et al., 2014; Henriksen, 2015). In a similar vein, Wagstaff and Burton-Wylie (2018) recently argued that given a convergence of research and applied themes in sport psychology (e.g. UK Sport health checks across all Olympic teams), sport psychologists ought to be compelled to further their understanding of culture.

In spite of this recent growth of attention and debate, sport psychologists – especially in comparison to other academic disciplines – have generally elided the academic study of organisational culture (McDougall, Nesti, Richardson, & Littlewood, 2017; McDougall, Ronkainen, Richardson, Littlewood, & Nesti, 2019; Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018). Consequently, "sport psychologists have some catching up to do in terms of understanding organizational culture" (Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018, p. 49), and need to broaden their cultural horizons to research and practice more effectively in this domain of expertise (McDougall et al., 2019). For instance, interpretations of culture in sport psychology are almost exclusively constructed through the lens of integration. In this presentation of culture, key

assumptions are that consistency, group-wide consensus and clarity exemplify culture so that it is only really understood in terms of what is obviously shared among group members. Consequently, culture is framed as an integrating mechanism or social 'glue' (Champ, Nesti, Ronkainen, Tod, & Littlewood, 2018; Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018) through which all cultural members hold or come to share the same basic assumptions, values and practices (e.g., Cruickshank, et al., 2013, 2014, 2015; Henriksen, 2015). In other disciplines interested in organisational culture (e.g., organisation and management studies, sport management) this view of culture has also come to dominate the research landscape (Martin, 2002; Maitland, Hills, & Rhind, 2015). In sport management, for example, in an influential review of organisational culture literature, Maitland and colleagues (2015) reviewed 33 studies and found 23 of them used the integration perspective to understand and study culture; "viewing culture as something that is clear, not ambiguous" (Maitland et al., 2015, p. 8) or ''like a solid monolith that is seen the same way by most people, no matter from which angle they view it'' (Martin, 2002, p. 94, as cited in Maitland, et al., 2015).

The integration perspective has formed the foundation of organisational culture scholarship in sport psychology even if it has been subject to severe critique on ontological, epistemological, and empirical grounds across several other domains (e.g., anthropology, sociology and organisational and management studies) (cf. Alvesson, 2002; Archer, 1985; Martin, 1992, 2002; Maxwell, 1999; Meek, 1988; Ortner, 2005; Smircich & Calás, 1987). Broadly, scholars from a range of academic traditions have argued that this position represents a theoretical and methodological restriction of the culture concept, because it only includes (or at least privileges) what is shared and consistently understood[1] (cf. Alvesson, 2002; Martin, 2002; Meek, 1988; Ortner, 2005). The integration perspective discounts and discredits what is

[1] It should be noted that the integration perspective is most commonly tied to what is shared among the group, but there are some exceptions to this common treatment; that is, not all integration scholars follow the idea that culture is only really defined and understood in terms of what is shared (cf. Martin, 2002).

not shared as not cultural or of less cultural importance, thus marginalising other worldviews, value systems and cultural identities (Martin, 2002; Ortner, 2005). This tendency often results in empirical studies capturing the more obvious, less remarkable and easier to detect (shared) patterns of culture (Martin, 2002). Moreover – and in contrast to the arguments and implicit suggestions of those who either expressly or implicitly hold the integration perspective – many organisational culture scholars have asserted a lack of empirical support for any relationship between the integration culture perspective and group performance (e.g., Alvesson, 2002; Gregory, Harris, & Armenakis, & Shook, 2009; O' Reilly III, Caldwell, Chatman, & Doerr, 2014; Siehl & Martin, 1990). For Martin (2004), what the integration position actually offers is "a seductive promise of harmony and value homogeneity that is empirically unmerited and unlikely to be fulfilled" (p. 7). Similarly, in sociology, Margaret Archer described the problematic, all-pervasive 'Myth of Cultural Integration' and unflinchingly reiterated the claim that the myth is "one of the most deep-seated fallacies in all social science" (Etzioni, cited in Archer, 1985, p. 8).

There are also clear practical implications of adopting the integration position. Over-adherence to the integration perspective can mean downplaying, dismissing or misunderstanding other types and sources of sport culture content that are not shared, clear, homogenised or coherent (McDougall et al., 2019; Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018). Similarly, it has already been noted in sport management literature that without a more inclusive, multi-dimensional conceptualisation of culture, the complexity of day-to-day cultural life as experienced by coaches, managers, and athletes with marginalised identities or lower status and authority is potentially excluded (Girginov, 2006). In sum, it is clear that in order for sport psychologists to make fuller use of the concept of culture, it cannot be restricted to only to a set of shared concepts, symbols, beliefs, practices and community understandings.

How then, can culture be conceptualised, studied, and operationalised if not through the lens of integration? Recent reviews and commentary in sport management (Maitland et al., 2015) and sport psychology (McDougall et al., 2017 Nesti, Richardson, & Littlewood, 2017; McDougall et al. 2019; Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018) have suggested Martin and Meyerson's (Martin, 1992, 2002; Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Meyerson & Martin, 1987) three perspective approach to culture as an alternative. The three perspective approach, in addition to considering what is shared and integrated also includes attention to what is contested and ambiguous. At the time of writing, however, no study in sport psychology (to our knowledge) has utilised this framework in empirical research.

The aim of this study is, therefore, to use these three perspectives to explore the cultural understanding of social actors in elite sport through complementary lenses of integration (what is shared and consistent), differentiation (what is contested), and fragmentation (what is ambiguous) (Meyerson & Martin 1987; Martin, 1992; Martin, 2002). Building upon our previous critique of the integration perspective (1st author et al.), we aim to show how other conceptual lenses can help uncover different phenomena of the cultural life in sport that have important implications for sport psychologists working in sport organisations. The following research questions guided our inquiry:

(1) What patterns of meaning are held by social actors in sport contexts, and consequently, how can culture be conceptualised by sport psychologists?

(2) What are the research and applied implications of such theorisations of culture?

Martin and Meyerson's Three Perspective Approach

Organisational scholars Joanne Martin and Deborah Meyerson developed the three perspective approach over a body of work to distinguish between researcher perspectives of integration (what is shared), differentiation (what is contested), and fragmentation (what is unclear and ambiguous) (e.g., Martin, 1992, 2002; Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Meyerson & Martin, 1987).

In addition to the integration perspective already discussed, they suggested that in the differentiation perspective, rather than being a source of order and integration, culture is characterised by a lack of consensus (Martin, 1992, 2002). Studies from this perspective "focus on cultural manifestations that have inconsistent interpretations" (Martin, 2002, p. 101). In comparison to the integration view, less influence is attributed to leaders and their assessment of what the culture *is* (Martin, 2002, 2004). Instead, differentiation researchers often privilege and report subcultural conflicts, issues of power, and differences between stated attitudes and actual behaviours (Martin, 2002; Smerek, 2010). It therefore naturally challenges the premise that culture is singular (i.e., there is only one culture per group) and monolithic (i.e., it looks the same no matter the angle) and alternatively offers a more pluralistic view of culture (Martin, 2002; McDougall & Ronkainen, 2019; Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018). For differentiation researchers, culture, more accurately, is a collection, or nexus of overlapping subcultures. These may be formed on the basis of any number of factors related to occupation, role or hierarchy; demographics such as those relating to race, class, age, ethnicity, gender; or even based on the amount of personal contact, friendships or beliefs about leadership actions and decision-making (Martin, 2002; McDougall, et al., 2015).

The fragmentation perspective differs from both the integration and differentiation orientations with regard to the way ambiguity is treated. Integration and differentiation perspectives both minimise the experience of ambiguity, which in this sense includes "multiple, contradictory meanings" and "paradoxes, ironies, and irreconcilable tensions" (Martin, 2002, p.110). From a fragmentation perspective, both integration and differentiation perspectives are oversimplifications that fail to capture the complexity of contemporary organisational or group life (Martin, 2002). Fragmentation scholars, therefore, adopt what they feel is a more realistic stance: proposing that culture is neither clearly consistent nor inconsistent, placing ambiguity rather than clarity or conflict at the cultural core (Martin, 2002). With ambiguity centralised as

the defining feature of culture, organisational life is often described as unpredictable and in constant flux as individuals bounce from experience to experience and are influenced by specific areas of decision-making, governance, and day-to-day happenings and events (Parker, 2000). Researchers from this orientation focus particularly on what is unclear, confusing and contradictory, and acknowledge that because meaning is created and re-created in the flow of social life, creation and the meaning people ascribe are fluid and may change over time (Martin, 2002).

Martin (1992, 2002) described the boundaries of the three perspectives as permeable and has clarified that all cultures contain elements of integration, differentiation and fragmentation. According to Martin, there is no such thing as an 'integrated culture' or a 'fragmented culture'; there are only cultures that are viewed through these perspectives by researchers or participants (Martin, 2002)[2], or by extension – applied practitioners. In Martin's view, rather than providing a way to categorise culture, each perspective is more like a lens or ''worldview'' (Martin, 2002, p. 108) that selectively emphasises or accentuates certain features of cultural complexity. Most accounts of culture feature all three perspectives but typically stress one approach to a lesser or greater degree (Smerek, 2010). Martin termed this "a home perspective" (2002, p. 121) that people habitually adopt or hold, in order to understand and describe the culture(s) they are a part of or are investigating.

Methodology

Theoretical Positioning

The study is informed by the interpretivist paradigm and its traditions and uses within anthropology and organisation, where 'meaning' is fundamental to the concept of culture (e.g., Alvesson. 2002; Geertz, 1973; Ortner, 2005; Smircich, 1983). From this view, culture is not an

[2] In spite of this effort to separate the perspectives from the reality they depict (i.e., the researcher constitutes the object, and there are no a priori essences contained within a culture that are reflected by the perspectives) this view is challengeable and something we problematise and return to later as we outline our own positioning).

external force or entity that can be studied through the means of gathering 'objective' facts, but refers more to cultural symbolic phenomena that people interpret and ascribe meaning to (Alvesson, 2002; Geertz, 1973; Maxwell, 2012). Culture is thus a way to think about, interpret and understand certain aspects of the social world (Geertz, 1973; Yanow & Ybema, 2009) and as a network of meaning, 'non-mechanically' guides thinking, feeling and acting (Alvesson, 2002).

While interpretivism is usually equated with a relativist ontology (reality is multiple, created and mind-dependent) and epistemological constructionism (knowledge is constructed and subjective) (e.g., Smith & Sparkes, 2008), Packard (2017) pointed out that this common portrayal is inaccurate since most interpretivists do not subscribe to a relativist ontology and the view that "reality is merely in the eye of the beholder" (p. 540). Rather, interpretivists wrestle with difficult issues of subject-object, celebrate the permanence of the real world, and try to access it by centralising first-person experience and subjectivity (Schwandt, 1994). This suggests the usefulness of obtaining accounts (interpretations) of culture from individuals in culture research and that the aggregation of multiple points of view (cf. Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018) (a practice that conceivably prejudices the researcher towards consensus anyway) is not the only means of analysing or representing culture(s). Indeed, the use (often selectively) of 'insider' informants who can comment on the social life and constructed meanings of a particular group has long been standard practice in anthropology (cf. Geertz, 1973; Wright, as cited in Schein et al., 2015). We are cognisant then, that while culture is a group process and phenomenon, it is also experienced and understood personally. Moreover, the position outlined here also maintains realist undertones, in that we assume that participant narratives are not simply constructions of the mind but have the capacity to reflect the realities of their personal experiences and that "there is a congruent relationship between talking about life . . . and actually living that life" (Crossley, 2000, p. 155). Although agreeing with Martin that there is

no such thing as an "integrated culture" or a "fragmented culture" (2002, p. 156) per se, and all cultures have features of each perspective, this realist view challenges Martin's well-documented assertion that the three perspectives outlined are *only* a means for the researcher to view culture without any significant ontological implications.[3]

This study also draws extensively from narrative theory and methods as a way to explore the meaning(s) of organisational experience (Rhodes & Brown, 2005). From a narrative perspective, people *are* storied beings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and because they can never be separated from the cultures and cultural influences that surround them (Geertz, 1973), culture is inevitably interwoven into the fabric of the narratives that people and groups create for themselves. Consequently, the "stories individuals tell of their lives offer insights into the cultural settings in which they are immersed" (Carless & Douglas, 2013, p. 701). In line with such rationales and building on the premise that stories have ontological significance within organisations (Smircich & Morgan, 1982), storied approaches have often been used as a means to explore organisational experience (Rhodes & Brown, 2005). Because stories contain and demonstrate subjective meaning-making, while at the same time claiming to represent reality, they are far more than just mere chronologies or fictions (Gabriel, 2004). Stories therefore uniquely illuminate organisational life from the point of view of thinking, feeling, agentic social actors and allow for the experiential study of phenomena that together constitute organisational life, including culture (cf. Gabriel, 1998; Rhodes & Brown, 2005). Like other symbolic cultural forms, however, stories can mean different things to different people. They require interpretation and deciphering, in part, because they convey deep and layered meaning, and not only the mundane, the everyday and the obvious (Gabriel, 2000). For instance, and importantly, for this study ─ which deals in culture beyond consensus and

[3] Interested readership may find Taylor, Irvine, and Wieland (2006) helpful for considering some ontological issues and challenges attached to the three perspective approach, while Ronkainen and Wiltshire (2019) is useful for a more focused and thorough framing of realist positioning in relation to sport psychology research.

harmony – it has been argued that stories have an ability to reveal hidden aspects of culture, such as the other side of rules, norms, and values that might be particularly valuable in cultural research (Soin & Scheytt, 2006). Hence, the stories that are told by organisational members are a vital means of exploring the complexity of sport organisational life. Stories can also challenge, rather than perpetuate, the sometimes stale and privileged position that tales of cultural consensus currently occupy in the performance enhancement literature of sport psychology.

Participants and procedure

Following institutional ethical approval, the first author used personal-professional connections to facilitate and conduct interviews with a range of sport personnel (e.g., strategic leaders, coaches, athletes, support staff, administrators) from different areas of sport (n=7) (see Table 1 below).

[Insert Table 1 here]

For this study, the main selection criterion was that participants were currently operating (or had recently, within the last 2 years) in elite sport. While there is no precise agreement on what constitutes *elite* in sport psychology research (Hanton, Fletcher, & Coughlan, 2005), we followed guidance in previous research (Hanton et al., 2005; McDougall et al., 2015) and defined elite sport environments as those that contain athletes who are current national squad members and/or perform at the highest level in their sport.

All participants provided written informed consent prior to the interviews, which took place over a 1-1 ½ year period. The interviews were low-structured (i.e., with some loose ideas, themes and questions in mind) and focused on eliciting stories. After the opening questions, which invited the participants to tell their stories and how they came to be in their current role, I (the first author) asked participants to reflect on their initial impressions and experiences of the culture(s) within their sport team/organisation (e.g., "can you tell me about the culture

here?"). Consistent with a narrative interviewing style, I attempted to "stay with" interviewee responses, using probing questions to follow up and accrue further insight where necessary (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It is important to emphasise that I did not set out to uncover or deduce themes of integration, differentiation and fragmentation during the interview process. Rather, my understanding of the usefulness of Martin and Meyerson's three perspective approach (i.e., how it could guide later stages of analysis and be used to frame the wider study) evolved organically. The interviews lasted for a mean of 65 minutes and were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim producing 210 double-spaced pages of data. Three of the interviews occurred face-to-face, in an environment comfortable for the participant, while four interviews were conducted over Skype.

Data Analysis and representation

After familiarisation with each participant's data and immersion into participant narratives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), we focused closely on the form and content of each story told (cf. Spector-Mersel, 2010). We also considered each interview as unique and thus focused on the internal working of the stories rather than on a cross data set analysis (Ronkainen, Ryba, Tonge, & Tikkanen, 2019). In line with these principles, we paid close attention to the general plot(s), structure(s) and storyline(s) of each participant's narrative (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). When reading the transcripts, we asked questions such as "What did the story or storylines convey or seem to be about?" "What were the key events and in what sequence did they occur?" "Who were the other key characters and what role did they play in the events and storylines communicated?" Preliminary work on the content involved noting initial ideas in relation to the meanings participants seemed to ascribe to events, stories, practices, beliefs, rituals and values, and other cultural elements that together comprised and informed the narrative resources for individual stories.

Subsequent phases of analysis were more expressly deductive and involved detecting patterns in the data and coding them thematically in relation to Martin and Meyerson's three perspectives of integration, differentiation and fragmentation. Consistent with Martin's (2002) argument that all cultures inherently contain characteristics from each perspective (integration, differentiation, fragmentation), initial thematic work confirmed the presence of patterns (to varying degrees) of integration, differentiation and fragmentation within each participant's data. However, we came to realise and agree with the theorisations of Martin (2002), that the extent to which each perspective is emphasised in research is ultimately determined by a) the degree to which perspective dominates a participants narrative and b) the researcher's own culture lens (framework for understanding culture) and the corresponding emphasis they place on each perspective in the various stages of the design and analysis of the study.

Codes were further developed, combined and eventually grouped into categories under the major themes of integration, differentiation and fragmentation, indicating which patterns were most prevalent in each participant's data. To further flush out and determine the core narrative (integration, differentiation, fragmentation), that each individual was communicating, we paid particular attention to Frank's (1995) notion of narrative type in order to uncover the most general storyline that could be recognised underlying the plot and tensions of particular stories. We 'matched' each participant's data ' ─ based on story content and the dominant narrative in each participant's data ─ with one of the three perspectives, and then began to fashion a coherent narrative from the many events and stories spread throughout each interview that centralised the voice of the participants as well representing each perspective. During this process, we searched the transcript to find and consider units of text, passages and patterns of meaning that supported or contradicted the core narrative's plausibility, and constantly checked and compared themes against existing literature and theoretical material.

In the following representation, we use participants' stories as exemplars (cf. Carless & Douglas, 2013) to illustrate Martin and Meyerson's three perspectives (integration, differentiation, fragmentation) and to show how each can be used as an analytic lens by researchers and practitioners to construct and represent participant experiences. The three cases (the performance director, the academy sport scientist and the assistant coach; all Caucasian, British, male and aged between 28 and 50) were selected because they offered the most eloquent narratives depicting the three perspectives. They had worked/performed in their current or most recent elite sport context for at least one year and therefore had a detailed insight about its workings. Moreover, these participants' interviews had lasted longer than 60 minutes, offering rich material to reconstruct the stories. Direct quotes from the participants were used extensively to form the basis of the narratives. Some minor information and parts of the narrative were modified to enhance flow, feel and aesthetic of the stories and to help anonymise participants (cf. Smith, 2013). Pseudonyms were also created for each participant to protect their identity.

Research Quality and Validity

We addressed rigour from the realist understanding that validity is conferred through the relationship between the researchers' account and those things it is supposed to be an account of, rather than by following a standard set of procedures (Maxwell, 2012). In line with this understanding, we sought to counter threats to descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity (cf. Maxwell, 2012; Ronkainen & Wiltshire, 2019). Most importantly, threats to validity concern the ways that a researchers' understandings and conclusions may be wrong (Maxwell, 2017). For instance, misinterpreting or misrepresenting what a participant has said, arriving at implausible interpretations or neglecting to consider alternative explanations; and subsequently, what (and how) threats to validity can be addressed to enhance the credibility of the conclusions reached (Maxwell, 2017; Ronkainen & Wiltshire, 2019). Descriptive validity

(factual accuracy and accurate reporting of events, subjects, setting, time, and places within participant accounts) was increased through careful transcription of audio recorded participant interviews and substantial familiarisation with the data set. Interpretive validity – relating to the meanings held by participants and involving inference from their words and actions in the situation studied (Maxwell, 2012) – was increased by drawing on additional contextual resources provided by co-researchers' extensive experience of working in elite sport environments. Both descriptive validity and interpretive validity were addressed by the extensive use of participant quotes and own language in the representation of their narratives. Finally, theoretical validity refers to the capacity of the theoretical explanation to describe or interpret the phenomenon (Ronkainen & Wiltshire, 2019). We addressed this through the research team's critical scrutiny of the narratives crafted and by using an 'outside' critical friend currently employed in elite sport as a sport psychologist to consider the plausibility and the practical utility of the accounts.

Results and Discussion

For analytic purposes, the results are shaped to illustrate the three perspectives and emphasise the features of each. Following the presentation of each narrative, an interpretation is provided – while recognising other meanings may be evident or extracted by different readers – in order to further explicate the meanings that participants identified and ascribed to their organisations' cultures.

Simon's Narrative of Integration: From a game for players to a sport for athletes

My mantra coming in [to golf] was that I needed to change it from being a game for players to a sport for athletes. I'm about high-performance. That's my background; as an athlete, as a coach, as a performance director. I need athletes with the right mindset, the right physicality to really push themselves onto the next level and that was massively alien to 99.9% of them. That transition was huge really, and, probably naively, I thought some of it would have been easier

to do than it really is. For starters, we don't have a centralised programme, like cycling or canoe might have, where their athletes go to one place and all meet up and train regularly. What we have are a lot of regional bodies and clubs throughout the country and within that, you have to try and develop a performance culture and a structure to feed players through into what is still a very young national academy programme. That's extremely complex. The sport also has a massive cultural heritage – upper middle class, real old school blazers, ties and badges…stuff that's great for the history of the sport and its place in the nation, but that can be an utter hindrance when it comes to performance and making changes. So it was critical to try and get those doors open really quickly and not having come from the sport, you know with no strong allegiances, actually made it a little easier for me to knock on doors and build rational plans that key stakeholders could see make sense. You know, going away from some of the stuff that happened in the past to where we wanted to go and getting people to buy into that relatively quickly. I've got people who are far better than me to go out and negotiate with individuals about coming on board with programs because I'm not an expert in the sport, I've never played it and I don't really know the nuances of clubs and their structures, so once we've decided what we need to do I rely on my team of experts who are really embedded in the sport to do all that.

One of the first big changes I made was to go abroad [for a training camp] for a month before Christmas and then somewhere else again for six or seven weeks early in the new year and just spend a lot of time with all the players and coaches and service providers. It enabled us to start changing the way players perceived their support and training programs, you know, making a difference to their habits, their attitudes, their expectations. When we go on training camps now we have a skill acquisition expert, a bio-mechanist, a physiologist, a psychologist, a physio, spending chunks of time with the squad, educating them, talking about the culture you need to be high performing athletes. It's about creating the right environment to develop that kind of understanding in young players. We developed the concept of development centres.

Getting the best players into centres and giving them the opportunity to get a good quality of coaching and all the other things that come with that so there is standardisation. At first, a lot of the players had come through the old system doing what they wanted to do, good players, but never really bought into some of the support. They've left the program. They didn't want to do all the things I wanted them to do. The majority we've got now are very young players, and a lot of them have come through the new system and are more willing and able to buy into what we're doing.

A lot of it is carrot and stick. We've got performance bonuses for people who do well. If they win, we'll put some money in their expense account. The better they play the more money they get. If they comply, they get additional access to things: resources, funding, equipment… because as you move through you get access to what we have access to. If someone isn't doing it, they get warnings. So if they don't respond to emails they'll get a reprimand; if they don't turn up for a psychology booking, we'll take money out of their expense account. Historically, it's been a relatively soft, passive sport. There are rules and regulations but often they've never been applied. I've toughened them up and applied them. We need to make examples of people who aren't really showing the right change in the right direction and recently we just removed somebody from the squad for not fulfilling the requirements in their athlete agreement. We have another one on a red warning and unless they change their ways in the next month or so they'll be off the squad as well. Obviously, there is a bit of give and take, but ultimately if you bend the rules too much you will get kicked out. It's still nowhere near where I want to get to, but we've moved on a massive way and that is your huge, big sport cultural shift right there.

Discussion of the Integration Narrative

Like many of the existing integration accounts in sport (e.g., Cruickshank et al., 2013), the tale begins with the vision and planning activities of the leader set firmly against described disorder,

conflict and the lack of alignment between key stakeholders that are assumed to exemplify an underperforming organisation. Culture is predictably depicted as malleable and the role of leaders and those in authority in its creation, management and control is emphasised, thus aligning with existing sport psychology culture change literature (e.g., Cruickshank et al. 2013, 2014, 2015; Henriksen, 2015). Simon has substantial creative, strategic, operational and decision-making autonomy to shape the culture to his vision ("a sport for athletes") which he ultimately achieves through the deployment of a familiar array of culture change and management tactics, for example: establishing a compelling vision and ensuring that people 'buy' into it, building strong partnerships, managing upwards and downwards in the hierarchy, seeking out cultural allies, knowledge experts and sport insiders to deliver and sell key messages outside of the performance team (cf. Cruickshank et al., 2013, 2014, 2015; Henriksen, 2015).

Early in the narrative, Simon also alludes to the importance of *cultural fit*. Ideals and images of high performance are embedded in his own identity and self-descriptions as a former athlete and coach at the elite level, so he understands the precise fit ("athletes with the right mentality") required and is subsequently able to set the terms and conditions that make an athlete successful (or not) within a high-performance culture. As in other sport psychology integration accounts (e.g., Cruickshank et al., 2013, 2014, 2015; Henriksen, 2015), athletes are moulded (socialised) through education, role modelling, incentivising, punishment and even expulsion; so that they either transition out of the programme or come to exemplify and display the culturally desirable behaviours demanded within the new system. This array of tactics is consistent with advice in seminal organisational culture texts (e.g., Schein, 2010) and are used to minimise resistance to change and increase compliance to the new system. Over time, alternative meanings attached to the old way of doing things are simply replaced with the ideals of high performance that Simon values most of all.

Simon's narrative is typical of culture change in sport (e.g., Cruickshank et al., 2014, 2015) and organisational management (e.g., Schein, 2010) in that there is an awareness of resistance, but it is a relentless march toward progress that dominates the account. The new system – of which Simon, as the leader, is a standard bearer - is symbolic of modern performance sport: consistent, scientific, rigorous, standardised and clinically efficient, while established ways of doing things, that embody tradition and the history of the sport are perceived as unhelpful and outdated. In this regard – and consistent with the integration perspective – resistance is constructed as a temporary obstacle and an old consensus is simply replaced by a new, more effective one.

Oliver's Narrative of Differentiation: There's Trouble Abroad

If I looked back to that team, that tournament, it's an absolute fallacy to say that we had a culture of x or y. It was quite clear from that journey, from when we first got together, that the culture of the group ebbed and flowed and there was a variety of subcultures at play at times. There was a culture within the coaching team. There were various sorts of cultures within the player groups. Looking back, it's almost impossible to identify that there was one set of values or one culture or thread that ran through the whole group.

I mean at the national team level, the make-up of the player groups are potentially quite distinct anyway. Individuals are coming from different backgrounds both socially, culturally and even their sport development and experience of coaching has been different. Geographically, I mean, there would be players from the east, west and from up north, and down south. There are some quite definitive splits in terms of how the sport organised and played in those different geographical areas. So their club cultures are probably quite different. Then you bring them together as a group and it can take a long time to bring along that mentality of "this is how the national team are going to do it."

Before we went off to the championship, the governing body allowed us to have about 25 hours of contact time before we went off, which is nothing. The time is so short that the focus has to be on the tactical, technical side of the game, the game critical stuff. We did do a few exercises… I wouldn't call them cultural exercises exactly but perhaps team group exercises to try and break down some of the barriers in the group to try and bring the team together. We developed documents with team standards, core values, what we believed, that sort of thing. We probably thought prior to the tournament that we had been successful in developing a culture, our way of doing things.

So we get to the tournament, right? We felt that with the talent we had we were capable of going and winning the tournament. Like we really thought we could do well and in the first game we ended up losing late on and it was probably the first sense we had that all wasn't well. We picked up on some disharmony among the players about how various people were performing. One player, in particular, didn't seem to be playing at the level we were accustomed to and we were aware that there were conversations going on between players that weren't overly favourable about team selection, tactics, who was playing and so on. We managed to regroup though, actually got to the semis and if we lost that game we'd be playing for the bronze. Basically, in the semis, they scored quick and our heads dropped. It was a blowout. Quite a few words were exchanged after that game. There were a number of comments about players from different clubs not doing their job properly and you know, "that's how he always plays when he's playing for his club and why should we expect anything different when he is playing for us now?!"

A number of players and one player in particular, who had had quite a distinguished domestic playing career, just kind of called out the head coach in front of the group, said that he felt he had made the wrong decisions. This was going to be his last tournament, his last opportunity to play for us so no doubt he wanted to go out on a high. Some of the criticism, I

agreed with. There were valid points but that's easy to say when you're not the one totally accountable. So yeah, some of those resentments and deeper feelings definitely did carry over even after we had created this model for performance and expected behaviour, and I would say those became more evident when we lost. Maybe on reflection, resentments were always bubbling under the surface and sometimes you know, they kinda came over the surface and went too far. There was a whole lot of tension in the group in the aftermath of that game, and we still had to play for third place!

And you know what, the player that that wasn't playing to the level we thought he was capable of. . . after the bronze medal game, he turns around to us and shows us his foot and it was all swollen. It was purple at which point he tells us that he thought he had actually broken it just prior to the tournament. "Well, why did you not say anything?" And he said "well I knew if I said anything, I wouldn't get to play". So we were starting this guy, a star player, in every game and we're thinking "why's he not playing properly? Why is his head going down?" Well, he's playing with a serious injury and he didn't feel he could tell the coaches before the tournament. I think that's quite insightful that he didn't feel he could tell someone. Or at least tell us, the coaches, because there were a group of players who certainly knew how bad his injury was. He hadn't told all the players, but the players from his club knew, the ones he was close to and no one felt they could tell the coaches! And I was blown away by this. It was the exact opposite of our espoused values, being a team, competing for each other. But when I said something, the other coaches almost. . . almost kind of laughed it off, like "well I might have done the same."

Personally, I got on quite well with the other coaches, but there's been a slow change in the sport, in terms of embracing modern coaching. They probably aren't overly professional from a coaching standpoint because everything is done on an absolute shoestring. They're all volunteers, nobody gets paid. You get to go out to tournaments and there's a feeling among the

traditional ones that it's a bit of a holiday and all that, sort of "well they're almost kind of lucky to have me so you know if I'm coming out here, well yeah, I'm going to have a beer after the game and I'm going to relax and enjoy myself." I suppose my criticism is that they didn't approach the whole incident with as much professionalism as they could have and in a way, they endorsed the behaviour of an athlete who had covered up his injury and let everyone down.

Discussion of the Differentiation Narrative

Oliver, an assistant coach of an international men's Basketball team, described a number of subcultures and the tensions between them. Prior to the tournament, subcultures formed on the basis of club affiliations, the geographic locations of those clubs, and intense competition/rivalry for places, reinforcing recent assertions (Wagstaff, Martin, & Thelwell, 2017) in sport psychology literature that subgroup formation can originate from a broad array of sources. Selected players brought with them other styles of play, methods of training, and expectations of coaching and behaving, as well as previously existing feelings towards other members of the team. Such understandings derived from personal as well as 'other' cultural resources (cf. Girginov, 2010) and did not simply dissipate upon national team selection and in the face of other cultural standards and values that the coaching team tried to inculcate. Rather, they remained dormant in the face of attempts to manage them out and achieve unity. The narrative is aligned with other sport psychology research that has suggested the presence and influence of subcultures in elite sport and that suggests tensions and conflicts manifest, even intensify during the stress and high stakes of an important tournament or in the aftermath of an unexpected loss or poor performance (McDougall et al., 2015). Even more broadly, Oliver's narrative reaffirms suggestions within sport psychology research that conflict between team-mates and between athletes and coaches is an inherent but underestimated part of sport team life (Wachsmuth, Jowett, & Harwood, 2017).

Typical of differentiation studies (e.g., Ogbonna & Harris, 2015), Oliver's narrative shows a multiplicity of understood and ascribed meanings through which players and coaches resisted and challenged the 'official' culture and the espoused team ideals and values set forth by leadership. Similarly, in Oliver's narrative, there is tension between individual needs and organisational requirements. Players demonstrated that they held individually oriented meanings and that playing in the tournament (even if in poor form or injured) was personally significant even if it was to the detriment of the team. Consequently, contentious issues of de-selection and loss provided the grounds for conflict, assignment of blame and the means for players to challenge hierarchy and authority.

Oliver also identifies and labels subcultures in dichotomous terms ─ a hallmark of a differentiation perspective (Martin, 2002) – such as (east/west/north/south, players/coaches, selected/de-selected, professional coaching/unprofessional coaching). While consensus is typically described as contained within these boundaries (e.g., players uniting against coaching decisions or failing to tell coaches about an injured 'club' team-mate), sometimes consensus is also informal and transcends boundaries (cf. Gilmore, 2013) or occurs in response to arising issues and events. For instance, Oliver finds himself in agreement with players regarding some criticism towards the head coach, while later in the narrative, a coach appears to informally support the actions of the injured player. For Oliver, the incident confirmed the fractured and opaque relationship between coaches and players and the ultimate failure of the coaching team to instil ideals of unity, togetherness and a single way of operating. The incident also spoke to latent differences within the coaching team, and more broadly, to tensions that have been observed in wider sport literature between the voluntary coaches and an emerging younger, more professionalised generation of coaches (Grix, 2009; authors names removed for review purposes, under review). Oliver, a progressive, young coach identifies with a more professional approach to coaching and is in internal disagreement with the sometimes casual and somewhat

ambivalent views of the ‘voluntary coach generation’ where tournaments abroad are interpreted as a “holiday” and not only as a benchmark of performance and something to be won. This is a strong example of the described frictions inherent and centralised in differentiation studies (Martin, 2002; Ogbonna & Harris, 2015), and specifically points to tensions between espoused values and (in Schein’s terms) ‘basic underlying assumptions’ or taken for granted values and values (Schein, 2010, p. 24), highlighting again that inconsistency and not the consistency of the integration perspective exemplifies culture.

Mark’s Narrative of Ambiguity: Into the Unknown

It was slow going initially because I started the role towards the end of the season when everything was winding down. Moving into football, I’d prepared for a whirlwind, because that’s what you hear in your education and training, and actually it was the end of the season coma. People were in and out, some were having time off and it was perhaps one or two weeks until I actually even met some key people in the academy. It was just a case of being told by one or two people who were still around that “This is it”, having a little bit of a tour, “here are the buildings, here are the facilities, here's the people” and then being left to just figure quite a lot out. You know, have at it really.

I joined under the premise of doing a very particular role and being responsible for a very particular thing, and within six months I was doing stuff that other people were doing or supposed to be doing. I was chipping in everywhere, gaining an understanding of different facets of the organisation, which was great for me because I was able to learn what was really valuable, and you get to see the perspectives of lots of different people in different roles. So my role has changed considerably in the last three or four months, yet my “official” role, job description and job title hasn’t. And it’s not just me. . . [long pause] it’s flipping baffling. You can’t work it out. I mean if you had to look at an organisational chart of how a sport organisation runs, and then you look at our organisational chart, there would be questions galore: “Who

controls this aspect of the academy? Who controls or who is accountable for ensuring this takes place?" And it's kinda like "oh well, he also does that" "oh right ok...well what about this side of things?" yeah well he's picking this up at the minute". In terms of role clarity, you know role clarity in terms of perceived versus actual roles, it's messy. Really messy. You can't make sense of it.

Some of that's because we, support staff I mean, we basically get on our hands and knees and run about doing whatever the coaches say. You've got people within the academy management team doing jobs where [laughs heartily] where they could quite easily turn around and say "I shouldn't be doing this, this isn't my job whatsoever". It's been like that since I joined. The coach is the teacher and you're support network, so you provide the coach whatever it is they need at a particular moment in time. Whatever that might be, who knows? They have this power over other employees who technically on the organisation chart are on the same level, or even above them, because they almost see themselves as the experts of everything, whereas and you're merely there to offer a suggestion. So even though the line manager is above an age group coach, according to the unofficial organisational chart, or how things really are, culturally, he's below them.

Take communication, or lack of it. I'll give coaches a feedback report or an observational report and not hear back from them. "Did you get my report? I sent it over to you, you want to grab a coffee and talk? Make sure we're on the same page?" "Nah, it was good mate, some good points in it". Essentially that's all you get. So you don't know where you stand on anything really and the communication and the cohesion, goes completely downhill. Because coaches, they're 'football people' they think they know how to develop players, develop teams but when it comes to it, do they know how to communicate? Or produce cohesive teams of staff and a cohesive organisational model? And that's important because they're the unofficial decision makers. We've got demands as an academy. We're a category

1 academy, so the expectations, the blueprint that we're trying to aspire to, I don't know how we are able to maintain the category that we are. We're not doing successful multi-disciplinary work because no-one communicates. The demands are much greater than the ability of some people. No one challenges the coaches. We've got a ridiculously low budget for what we expect to achieve. I don't know how we're going to achieve what we're supposed to. No one seems to know. We just sort of plough on.

To make matters worse, the shit has hit the fan this week. The Academy Director is gone. Just gone. No idea what happened there yet. No one's said. Now he's gone, we can't really even make small decisions. There are people as part of the management team, who are there to make decisions, and I suppose could, but it's like they've been programmed not to make them because, in all the other matters, the coaches have been the unofficial decision-makers. So now, there's no one to give the final thumbs-up. It's like "yeah we might have to park that idea until the new guy comes in". So essentially, we're functioning without someone to make the final decision on many, many things because that's the way the culture works. And there's been no communication about it from club leadership. There is a total lack of communication, a real gap there. We've got a CEO who is overseeing everything just now and the academy is probably in the middle of his list of things to do and be responsible for. We're in the total unknown here and there are decisions that need to be made and things that need to get done right now.

Discussion of the Fragmentation Narrative

In the fragmentation perspective, ambiguity is at the core of the narrative (Martin, 2002). Like many neophytes in a new and unfamiliar position (e.g., Lindsay, Breckon, Thomas, & Maynard, 2007; Thompson, Potrac, & Jones, 2015), Mark describes feelings of immediate uncertainty due to his new role (his first in sport and in the world of football) and a tokenistic induction that provided little guidance or clarity as to what he should be doing on a day-to-day

basis. Instead of this uncertainty lessening as the nuances of the role are learned, Mark's confusion was maintained as he finds himself doing a variety of tasks that lie outside the sphere of his job description and his expectations of what he is responsible for, muddying his ideas of what his job actually *is*.

Somewhat paradoxically, the lack of existing structure provides Mark with the opportunity to learn more about other people's roles and the unknown facets of the organisation. He is able to gain knowledge that might have otherwise remained hidden to him in an organisation with a more rigid, bureaucratic structure, with well-defined roles and responsibilities that are enforced. Such mobility, resulting from a lack of bureaucracy, has also been found in organisational literature and can lead to benefits such as a fluid, more agile organisation, broader competency (as opposed to entrenched capability) and the opportunity to recombine knowledge in novel and valuable ways (e.g., Ravasi & Verona, 2001).

A further layer of paradox and irony, which are also recurrent features of fragmentation studies (Martin, 2002) and organisational life more broadly (Hatch, 1997), is woven into Mark's narrative as this broader perspective and increased knowledge reveal to Mark not clarity, but a complex, layered relationship between coaches and other staff. The formal organisation – depicted by organisational charts and stated structures of hierarchy – is juxtaposed with the informal organisation (cf. Gulati & Puranam, 2009), whereby coaches maintain a historical power and sway over others in the environment. On the one hand, this provides a common framework of meaning to better understand unwritten rules and 'how things really are'. On the other hand, it brings disorder, disorganisation, ineffective multi-disciplinary work and further obscurity to Mark's role; not least because Mark and other staff are subservient and their job outlines are dependent on the fluctuating needs and whims of coaches. He, therefore, experiences ambiguity due to a lack of control over what he does day-to-day and because of the opaqueness of internal decision-making.

The unpredictability and constant flux of academy organisational life described by Mark may be typical of organisational life in a football academy (cf. Gibson & Groom, 2018). It is also indicative of the micro-political power struggles that permeate football and coaching environments (Cushion & Jones, 2006) in general, rendering such contexts as chaotic, confusing and unpredictable (cf. Thompson et al., 2015). The narrative concludes with the sudden and unexpected departure of the Academy Director. The informal culture has undermined and eroded the legitimacy and competency of those in positions of authority and in the aftermath, there is a decision-making vacuum; with no one seemingly able or willing to sign off on important decisions that must be made. The narrative ends with the academy in stasis and uncertainty, leaving Mark unsure of what is happening, how stated academy goals and plans will be achieved and if, when and how important issues will be resolved. In organisational literature, this discrepancy, or gap between formal organisational goals and what can actually be achieved on the ground is a source of both ambiguity and anxiety for employees (Hoyle & Wallace, 2008).

Conclusions and Recommendations for Research and Practice

The three narratives depict (in order) the three culture perspectives of integration, differentiation and fragmentation (Martin, 1992; Martin & Meyerson, 1988; Meyerson & Martin, 1987) and highlight how the different lenses can be applied by sport psychologists (researchers and practitioners) to view and understand culture. The narratives support and extend recent reviews in sport psychology (McDougall et al., 2019; Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018) and sport management (Maitland et al., 2015) that have critiqued the integration perspective and pointed out how this position is theoretically and operationally restrictive. Plainly, the integration perspective can simplify cultural life. Moreover, it is a position that often (explicitly or implicitly) serves managerialist agendas by de-emphasising and diminishing the cultural meanings ascribed by other actors in sport environments.

Aligning with the aforementioned nascent reviews and critical organisational management literature (e.g., Alvesson, 2002), the current study suggests that sport psychologists should therefore, adopt a questioning and sceptical approach to the discovery and development of value sets and messages that appear homogeneously and uniformly understood. Hence, it is important that sport psychologists attend to multiple culture patterns (i.e., beyond those of integration) so that they can more accurately capture the complex reality of organisational sport life in their research and applied practices (McDougall & Ronkainen, 2019; Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018).

As highlighted in Oliver's narrative, the differentiation approach, for instance, can be used as a means to examine themes of conflict, resistance to authority, as well as ideational inconsistencies between different cultural values or between espoused values and actual behaviour (Martin, 1992, 2002; Ogbonna & Harris, 2015; Smerek, 2010). Though rarely acknowledged in organisational sport psychology culture research to date, these themes and the significant (sometimes destructive) influence of subcultures were problematised in a recent longitudinal study of cultural processes within a UK Olympic sport (Feddersen, Morris, Littlewood, & Richardson, 2019). The present study supports the findings of Feddersen and colleagues by reinforcing the need to acknowledge subcultures, conflict, and contestation as important aspects in cultural analysis of organisational sport life. Indeed, cultural research that can tackle the other side of consensus is now particularly valuable in light of recent sport scandals and reminders that sport psychologists have a duty of care to support the development of ethical cultures, not only performance ones (Wagstaff, 2019a; Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2018).

Mark's narrative of fragmentation can also be usefully contextualised by recent research of organisational practices in sport. Although understudied, there is growing empirical support for the idea that ambiguity is endemic in sport organisations and that the everyday

realities that sport personnel face primarily involve the management of complex social situations that are ambiguous (Gibson & Groom, 2018; Santos, Jones, & Mesquita, 2013). As Gibson and Groom noted, however, the salience of ambiguity in sport is not yet reflected in the way sport personnel are educated or trained to practice within sport. The present study, therefore, has value in that it shows how a fragmentation approach can be used to examine unclear organisational goals, ill-defined roles and objectives, layered and contradictory cultural meanings, and individual sensemaking in complex environments. Such tracks of future research are likely to be fruitful in elite sport contexts, where ambiguity perhaps naturally coalesces with the fast-paced, volatile, short-termist, unpredictable nature of these environments (e.g., Nesti, 2010). Per Gibson and Groom's (2018) conclusion, we therefore also recommend that ambiguity must be researched and made sense of (rather than omitted from cultural analysis) if applied practitioners are to be better prepared for the deeply challenging and uncertain contexts of high-level sport.

There is extreme practical value in revealing the differentiated and uncertain aspects of organisational life. Envisaging culture beyond consensus and clarity can help prevent people with the authority to dictate courses of actions, from failing to see events and issues from the perspectives of others. For example, assuming consensus and harmony and "buy-in" to managerial programs of change, where in fact there might be little, or even none. A failure to detect resistance or to overestimate support for planned changes is likely to decrease the chances of successful change (Alvesson, 2002). Furthermore, understanding how people negotiate and re-produce culture in patterns that are differentiated and fragmented can help to re-configure the very idea of resistance to leader-led change (and practices that focus squarely on its identification and suppression). If conceived of as a cultural form – as opposed to being labelled as evidence of a lack of culture, or of a weak one, such as in the view of Schein (2010) – resistance can be reconceptualised from something to be overcome to something that must

be culturally understood (Ortner, 1999). That is, resistance can be reformulated as evidence that planned change may be wrongheaded or that alternative cultural meanings are in play. Thus, the possibility for cultural preservation or renewal as opposed to radical change based on the erosion and expulsion of existing cultural meanings may be an entirely sensible option for leaders to weigh. In this regard, sport psychologists can have value, not only as social 'allies' of leadership, who champion the desired culture and socialise others to it or as 'cultural architects' who are involved in the design and execution of culture *change* (Cruickshank et al., 2014, 2015; Eubank et al., 2014; Henriksen, 2015; Molan, Kelly, Arnold, & Matthews, 2019), but as preservers and protectors of culture. In this role, sport psychologists can act less as managers of meaning (cf. Girginov, 2010) and more as skilled and culturally sensitive professionals who can help people to have meaningful conversations within and across cultural lines. Indeed, because sport psychologists increasingly have opportunities to work in a broader organisational role with different groups and personnel from across the sport organisation (Cruickshank et al., 2015; Eubank et al., 2014; McDougall et al., 2015; Wagstaff, 2019b), they may be ideally positioned to encourage a more collaborative approach to planned change efforts by helping to ensure that alternative and marginalised viewpoints are heard and considered by leaders in the decision-making process. Developing competencies in this area of service provision may be one way sport psychologists may be able to "break free of the shackles of the science and medicine team, and . . . offer their services across the organizational hierarchy." (Wagstaff, 2019b, p. 135).

Nevertheless, while it can be useful to look at culture through a 'single' perspective, sport psychologists should bear in mind that each perspective and the corresponding analysis/representation that is derived from it is incomplete (Martin, 2002). To adopt a single perspective – even when couched within the precise aims of a particular study – invites an unavoidable tautology: the culturally informed researcher or practitioner defines and

conceptualises culture in specific and narrow terms and then seeks out the ascribed cultural meanings and interpretations that support those views while reducing or omitting what does not fit (Martin, 2002). Accordingly, although each single perspective offers heuristic value when making sense of culture, it should not be used to promote categorical thinking (i.e., "this is an integrated culture", "team X has a fragmented culture"). The narratives presented here are therefore meant as illustrative examples of each outlined perspective rather than intended as typologies and models of culture.

In relation to this potential pitfall, Martin (1992, 2002) advocated for a fourth possibility: each perspective can be held simultaneously. When adopted, this position enables sport psychologists to attend to a wider range of cultural meaning and subjective interpretation. That is, sport psychologists can capture aspects of culture that are integrated, differentiated and fragmented, demonstrating that multiple and competing cultural meanings and patterns can be in play at any one time within a team or organisation (Martin, 2002). Using the three perspectives together could, therefore, be a way to examine layered and complex cultural meaning ascribed to any number of significant events, practices, and issues that occur in elite sport (e.g., major tournaments, de-selection, coach behaviour, organisational change). It could also provide a means to explore how culture is understood at different levels of hierarchy or between various groups that make up the sport environment (e.g., experienced athletes/junior athletes, athlete/support staff, coaches/sport science/administration) or among demographic groups (e.g., older/younger, male/female). As we have already outlined, sport psychologists increasingly work more broadly across the sport organisation with an array of athletes and personnel. Consequently, the adoption of a more nuanced, expansive concept of culture (i.e., one that exists beyond leadership ideals of integration and homogeny) is logically and inherently valuable to sport psychologist endeavours in this still new and evolving frontier of service delivery.

Finally, and with a view to further shaping the future of applied practices in the area, greater awareness of the three perspective approach can challenge the pervasive idea that culture is a totalising, monolithic whole. This assumption has deep practical implications for sport psychology delivery because it encourages practices that imply culture can be identified and moved in extreme, wholesale and mechanistic ways, through leader or sport psychologist design and intervention (Cruickshank et al., 2014, 2015; Henriksen, 2015; Molan et al., 2019). Culture, according to the three perspective approach, is not unitary but is always differentiated and fragmented. At a practice level, this perhaps suggests the need for the sport psychology community to be more modest about what our applied culture work entails and can reasonably achieve. It also suggests the opportunity for research and practice directed toward smaller scale culture intervention such as work with different groups and subcultures in an organisation, and in or across silos of hierarchy, role, and specialism to effect realistic, incremental, yet still meaningful culture change (Alvesson & Sveninngsson, 2015; Harris & Ogbonna, 1998).

There are some limitations in the study that future research could address to enhance associated applied practices. First, the selected narratives all showcase a white male perspective, and as such, do not reflect the diversity that exists in elite sport environments. Further, the differentiation and fragmentation narratives constructed arguably do not show subcultures or ambiguity in a particularly positive light. Indeed, both accounts could be read as cautionary tales for what happens when integration fails or is not implemented correctly. To address this critique, future research from a critical stance could deliberately seek out more positive accounts of conflict and ambiguity, such as how they might foster creativity (such as 'play' at work or in sport performance), positive disruption, or the acceptance of alternative and dissenting viewpoints. Such accounts exist in wider organisational literature and provide counsel as to how a non-consensus approach to culture and organisation can act to support organisational effectiveness and morale. These limitations notwithstanding, it is hoped that this

study shows how different patterns of meaning, such as demonstrated in the three perspective approach, can be used to enhance analyses of culture that tease out the diversity and contextual richness of organisational sport life.

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