Exploring the Culture of Decanal Search Processes: A Search for Excellence

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By

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Abstract

Academic deans are uniquely positioned in universities and play an important role in their organizations (Twombly, 1992; Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002). Despite the importance placed on this role, there has been little attention paid to the processes by which academic deans are identified and recruited (Twombly, 1992).The purpose of this study was to explore the culture of decanal search processes in one traditional research university. This exploration considered the views of a number of organizational culture scholars that included Schein (1985, 1992, 2004), Trice and Beyer (1993) and Hallett (2003). These views coalesced in a conceptual framework of organizational culture created by Allaire and Firsirotu (1984).

This research was conducted within a qualitative paradigm (Creswell, 2007; Klenke, 2016) underpinned by philosophical assumptions that situated me in an interpretive paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The processes of research included case study (Yin, 2003) and constructionist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2009). The primary source of data consisted of interviews and focus groups with individuals who participated in a decanal search between 2014 and 2017 (inclusive) either as a member of, or as a consultant to, the search committee.

Findings from the data revealed that research participants described their experiences as frustrating and overwhelmingly negative. Individually, research participants understood decanal search processes from the lens of their own experiences with other search and/or collegial processes and there was scant evidence to suggest any collective understanding of search processes. What was revealed was that research participants expected decanal search processes to be something different than they were. Constructive and critical insight gained from research participants resulted in several suggestions for refining decanal search processes.

Through consideration of the Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) framework what started as an exploration of culture in decanal search processes turned out to be an exploration of decanal search processes in organizational culture. This resulted in an exploration of the interrelated components of organizational culture and the extent to which they are mutually supportive and harmonious, or not.

Implications for practice, theory and research reflected refinements to decanal search processes, positioning culture as an object of study more broadly, and focusing more scholarly attention on decanal search, and other related, processes.

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This journey towards a Doctor of Philosophy degree began in Toronto. When my first undergraduate degree was conferred with great distinction, then president Dr. Pritchard shook my hand and said, “with results like that, you should do a PhD”. And so the seed was planted.

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Chapter One: The Research Question

My interest in decanal search processes has been over a decade in the making. In 2009 I became director of recruitment in human resources and it was that same year I was first exposed to a search process for a senior administrator. Although it was not a decanal search, it was governed by the same search and review procedures. During that search, I began to wonder about why we did the things we did and even wrote a short paper addressed to the provost and the associate vice-president of human resources. In that paper, I outlined my observations from the search I had participated in and offered some concrete suggestions for change; I received no reply to that paper. In the ensuing years, I was privy to the struggles of academic deans and began to notice the turnover in these roles. Harkening back to my first experience with a search for a senior administrator, I began to wonder if the processes by which we identified and recruited individuals to decanal roles might be one factor contributing to turnover. The processes associated with identifying and recruiting individuals for a position are commonly referred to as search processes. It was the search processes, in and of themselves, and how individuals tasked with operationalizing these processes made sense of them, that ultimately became the focus of my academic interest.

When I began my employment at the University of Saskatchewan (USask) in 1992 there was a sense of stability associated with the position of academic dean and it was usual for a dean to complete their term or terms once appointed (https://library.usask.ca/archives/campus-history/deans.php). Harvey, Shaw, McPhail and Erickson (2013) noted, "the average tenure for deans over the last decade has been less than four years" (p. 19), which suggested these individuals had left their positions before the end of one term; this is consistent with my more recent experience. An assessment of the decanal complement at University of Saskatchewan,

conducted in 2018, revealed that of the total complement of 17 deans: seven were appointed in 2017; three were appointed in 2016; four were appointed in 2014; two were in their second term; and, one dean was serving in an interim capacity. The University of Saskatchewan was in a period of intense search activity from 2014—2017. We had 13 new appointments during this time, which speaks to the turnover in the academic deanship experienced at USask. This stands in stark contrast to my perception of stability associated with the earlier part of my career. An exploration of how deans come to us in the first place, via search processes, had the potential to provide insight into the larger issue of decanal turnover to which I acknowledge there are multiple contributing factors.

Background to the Problem

Much has changed in our context, in universities, and in the academic deanship and yet much of what counts as accepted has remained largely unchanged. Bloland (1995) observed, "higher education is deeply embedded in the ideals, institutions, and vocabulary of modernism" (pp. 523-524). Callahan and Martin (2007) stated, "the modern era began around 1650. It was an era of science and discovery that stretched to 1950" (p. 2). Callahan and Martin also noted, "during this period [the modern era], knowledge was based on reason, scientific logic and proof" (p. 2). This view of knowledge extended to both physical and social sciences as scholars picked up on and developed the notion of extending methods of scientific and mathematical analysis into values and morality (Burgess & Newton, 2015, p. 24). The modern era had incredible staying power and much of the influences of this era remain evident in higher education. Bloland stated:

> Higher education trusts that merit should be rewarded through good jobs, promotions, higher status, and prestige…that knowledge and expertise are important for problem

> solving in the society…that science, scientific methods, and the science sensibility are better means for discovering and creating truth than tradition…treats high culture as separate and better than popular culture…values differentiation…while valuing diversity, colleges and universities treasure community and institutional autonomy. (p. 524)

Throughout the latter part of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century, it became apparent that reason, scientific logic and proof were insufficient for predicting and/or explaining the problems that were emerging. Bloland (1995) stated, "today, modernist values and institutions are increasingly viewed as inadequate, pernicious, and costly" (p. 521). Hicks (2015) suggested postmodernism "represents a response to *modernity*" (p. 105). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) suggested that postmodernism, along with post-positivism and post-structuralism all challenge the modernist conception of the world, albeit in different ways (p. 27). These challenges are reflected in paradigms, theories, and processes which become part of the culture and eventually inform the way things get done including, but not limited to, the way in which academic deans are identified and recruited.

Harvey, Shaw, McPhail and Erickson (2013) noted, "it is frequently assumed that deans are good "academics" therefore, it is assumed that they are going to be qualified to lead an academic operation unit" (p. 21). Thus, value is placed on rewarding faculty who have been deemed meritorious academics. There is an assumption that time spent in a faculty role will provide the skills and aptitudes required for leadership; however, "to become skilled in their areas of research, faculty spend years in mentored educational experiences. Why should we expect [academic leaders] to excel at their roles from the start" (Morris & Laipple, 2015, p. 242)? And yet, we do. Gmelch and Buller (2015) observed, "academic leadership is one of the few professions one can enter today with absolutely no training in, credentials for, or knowledge

about the central duties of the position" (p. 2). In addition to these assumptions, I suspected that there were also assumptions about search committees and those who find themselves serving as members of these committees. I was curious and wondered how members of search committees understood the processes of identifying and recruiting academic deans and what could be learned about search processes from members of decanal search committees. In particular, I wondered what insight the voices of search committee members might provide about search processes as one factor that might inform the larger issue of decanal turnover.

External Context

The 21st century has been described as a time that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA). In fact, Berman and Korsten (2010) suggested complexity to be the 'greatest challenge' facing leaders in the short to medium term. A recent briefing note produced by KPMG Board Leadership Center (2016) stated, "*context* is changing quickly—and perhaps profoundly—as advances in technology, business model disruption, heightened expectations of investors and other stakeholders, and global volatility and political shifts challenge companies and their boards to rethink strategy development and execution" (n.p.) While the KPMG briefing note is intended for a 'corporate' audience, the context in which universities must now operate is not so different. de Boer and Goedegebuure (2009) noted universities have gone through a period of profound change as the external environment has become more complex and as universities themselves have increased in complexity (p. 350). It is to the changing nature of universities that I now turn.

Changing Nature of Universities

Frost (2015) stated, "the modern university was shaped in the nineteenth century, with the establishment of the 'redbrick' institutions serving local communities, and the removal of religious tests for entrance. The civic universities established from 1825 were built on

commercial and industrial wealth and the demands of a rapidly growing economy" (p. 348). de Boer and Goedegebuure (2009) noted universities have increased in complexity due to the processes of massification and (research) specialisation (p. 350). Yielder and Codling (2007) observed, "universities have undergone profound change in their recent history, to the extent that it could be argued that they now have very little in common with their twelfth-century ancestors" (p. 316). Yielder and Codling concurred with Frost and de Boer and Goedegeburre that the transition from elite to mass education and differentiation among universities based on (research) specialisation has been central to this change.

Alajoutsijärvi and Kettunen (2016) suggested that universities have "fragmented into at least three identifiable contexts: the traditional research university, the academic capitalist university, and the corporate university" (p. 326). Alajoutsijärvi and Kettunen differentiated these contexts in terms of governance, faculty and research, and students and education. The traditional research university is characterized by an ethos of service to society, collegial governance, relatively reserved and weak university-industry relations, tenured faculty, appreciation for long-term breakthrough research, and a scholarly guided process of self-development, knowledge and learner that prepares students for thinking critically and democratic citizenship (Alajoutsijärvi & Kettunen, 2016, pp. 328–329). Alternatively, the academic capitalist university is characterized by an ethos of service to individuals and companies, increasingly top-down governance, corporate partnerships and research contracts, mix of tenured and contingent faculty, medium-term measured research output, and mass education and degree production with varying learning outcomes that prepare students for career excellence (Alajoutsijärvi & Kettunen, 2016, pp. 328–329). Finally, the corporate university is characterized by an ethos of providing education to make money, top-down governance, corporate

partnerships, casual academic labour, no research, training a set of skills and body of information and providing students with job training to assist with career entry (Alajoutsijärvi & Kettunen, 2016, pp. 328–329). The University of Saskatchewan is a member of a group of universities known as the U15 (http://www.u15.ca). Member institutions of the U15 all have research as core-to-mission and would be characterized as traditional research universities.

Drange (2015) suggested that there are particular leadership dilemmas associated with the research university that spring from one root cause which is, "the overwhelming value placed on scholarship in the research university" (p. 248). Drange identified three dilemmas which included:

> the trade-off between time for scholarship and time for leadership, the need for academics to embrace a new professional identity as a leader in order to be motivated to pursue and prepare for leadership positions, and leader development in an institutional culture that highly values scholarship and undervalues the preparation of academic leaders. (p. 248)

The vast majority of my career has been spent in a traditional research university and it is the lens I bring to my research.

Evolution of the Academic Deanship

Dibden (1968) noted that while the deanship's lineage can be traced back to medieval universities, its emergence in American universities is a relatively recent phenomenon that emerged in the nineteenth century (p. 1). McGrath, (1936/1999) reported the first deanship recorded in the United States dated back to 1816 and oversaw the Harvard Medical School (p. 428/600). I suspected that, similar to our American counterparts, the emergence of the deanship in Canadian universities was also a recent phenomenon. Canada's oldest universities were established in the late 1700s (University of New Brunswick, 1785; University of King's College,

1788) and the early 1800s (McGill University, 1821; University of Toronto, 1827). I reviewed the websites of Canada's four oldest universities and found at McGill University, the Faculty of Medicine was the oldest faculty and the first "head of the medical department" was William Robertson who served from 1829 – 1843 (http://www.archives.mcgill.ca/resources/guide/vol1/rg38.htm). I was unable to determine when deans appeared at the other three universities; however, at the University of Saskatchewan, which was founded in 1907, the first dean appointed was William J. Rutherford, who served as the dean of the college of agriculture from 1909 – 1930 (https://library.usask.ca/archives/campus-history/deans.php). This provides some confirmation that Canadian universities followed the trend of their U.S. counterparts.

It appeared that as universities were established the president was the sole officer of the university with the first academic deans, reporting to the president, being appointed later. Gould (1964, as cited in Drange, 2015) noted, "deans in these early years were assistants to the president with responsibility for supervision of students and administrative tasks 'that encroached on the president's time'" (p. 25). Montez, Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) observed that today deans serve multiple internal constituencies including senior administration, faculty and students, and also multiple external constituencies such as potential donors, legislators, granting agencies and accreditors. The academic deanship evolved over time, in large part, in response to the changing nature of universities themselves.

Decanal Turnover

The movement into, through, and out of a place is referred to as turnover (Merriam-Webster Dictionary); employee turnover refers specifically to movement of employees into, through, and out of an organization. Jo (2008) noted that "although employee turnover is not

necessarily negative, high levels of turnover can be disruptive and costly" (p. 565). Organizations require some level of turnover in order to keep employee complements from becoming stagnant and appropriate turnover rates are sector specific. There are typically two kinds of turnover that organizations measure. The first is voluntary turnover which is "turnover that is due to an employee-initiated departure" (The Conference Board of Canada, 2017, p. 28). The second is involuntary turnover which is "an employee departure that is initiated by the employer" (The Conference Board of Canada, 2017, p. 28). The Conference Board of Canada (2017) reported voluntary and involuntary turnover rates of 4.4% and 1.8%, respectively for the public sector and 4.0% and 1.6%, respectively for the education sector (p. 28). Turnover rates for academic deans between 2014 and 2017 far exceeded the rates for either the public or education sectors.

Looking at the turnover data from a different angle provides a similar picture. The Conference Board of Canada (2017) reported voluntary and involuntary turnover rates by employee group as follows: senior executives—4.2% and 2.3%, respectively; executives—3.2% and 2.6% respectively; and, and management—5.1% and 3.2%, respectively (p. 29). If one dean turned over each year at USask turnover rate for this group would be 5.9% which is similar to the voluntary turnover rate reported for management. Given that each of the 17 deans at the University of Saskatchewan are typically appointed to five-year terms, one might rationalize that the university should expect three deans to turn over each year which would suggest a turnover rate of 17% might be appropriate. However, using the rate of replacement data (year of appointment) the turnover rate for deans at USask in 2018 was closer to 41% which is high. Of the 13 deans who were appointed from 2014—2017, five had left by 2021 for various reasons; this is a turnover rate of 38%.

It is well-established that high turnover coincides with individual burnout and leaves those who remain in the organization demoralized (Lutz, 1979; Palmer, Hoffmann-Longtin, Walvoord, Bogdewic and Dankoski, 2015). The concern with high turnover stems from the notion that deans are uniquely positioned in the organization. Twombly (1992) stated, "deanship positions [are] important and powerful in relationship to the core technology of a decentralized research university" (p. 654). Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) suggested that "deans provide the delicate but crucial backbone of university decision-making. They, more than any other academic administrators, link central administration with academic departments" (p. vii). Gallos (2002) noted that "deans are, in essence, classic middle managers" (p. 174). I have yet to come across a scholar, publishing in this area, who has offered a contrary view on the importance of the position of academic deans within their organizations.

In addition to the costs to morale and productivity associated with high turnover of academic deans the monetary costs to identify and recruit an academic leader can also be high. In my experience, the cost to recruit an academic dean can easily exceed $200,000. Recruitment costs often include contracts for search consultants, candidate travel and accommodation, relocation of personal and professional (laboratory) effects, and start-up costs in the new organization; each of which can be significant in its own right. Given the unique position of the academic dean in the organization and the costs associated with high turnover, we should be doing everything we can to ensure the way academic deans are identified and recruited reflect the reality of the external context, the changing nature of universities, and the evolution of the role of the academic deanship.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the culture of decanal search processes in one traditional research university. To do so, I took into account three different views reflecting different ways organizational culture has been envisioned over the last three decades. Hallett (2003) characterized the three views as: culture as subjective beliefs and values; culture as context/public meaning; and, culture as a negotiated order influenced by those with symbolic power (p. 128). The scholars associated with each of these views included Schein (2004), Trice and Beyer (1993), and Hallett (2003), respectively. In employing a cultural lens, I hoped to move beyond "best practice" approaches and literature to deeply understand how decanal search processes are understood and offer suggestions for ways in which these processes may be informed and refined as we hire the next generation of academic leaders.

Statement of the Problem

Academic deans, like other employees, leave their positions early for one of two reasons: they either initiate the departure themselves (voluntary turnover) or the employer initiates the departure (involuntary turnover). In this study I did not distinguish between voluntary and involuntary turnover; both result in a new search. I have wondered why there is so much turnover in academic deans and whether this turnover has anything to do with the processes by which we identify and recruit individuals. More specifically, I wondered how culture might influence the way decanal search processes are understood, individually and collectively, by those who participate on search committees? Might culture hold the key to unlocking insights that could inform a more refined way of identifying and recruiting academic deans? I acknowledge that the factors contributing to high decanal turnover are many; however, my

inquiry focused on search processes as one factor that may be contributing to high levels of turnover.

The Research Questions

The following research questions guided my study:

1. How do research participants describe their experiences in decanal search processes?
2. How do research participants, individual and collectively, understand decanal search processes?
3. What do research participants' experiences and sense-making (individual and collective) reveal about decanal search processes?
4. What constructive and critical insight might be gained from research participants to inform the refinement of decanal search processes?

Significance of the Research

I have been asked why I care about how we hire academic deans given that my career path has been administrative not academic. The answer is simple—I have witnessed first-hand the damaging effect high turnover of academic deans has on people and it was the cost to people that motivated me to explore the culture of decanal search processes. However, I could also appreciate the productivity costs to the unit when there is high turnover and the significant monetary investment that is made every time we are required to initiate a search for an academic dean. I believed we could do better—we must do better—we owe it to our faculty, students, and staff to do better.

Decanal search processes were of interest to me because I believe that retention begins with recruitment. I was also interested in how search committee members understood decanal search processes. I suspected that both the way in which academic deans were identified and

recruited along with how search committee members understood these processes must contribute, in some way, to the high levels of turnover in these positions. I hoped that through an exploration of culture in decanal search processes I would identify ways in which to inform and refine the processes so that turnover rates are decreased (alternatively, retention rates are increased). This research established that search processes must be understood as but one component of organizational culture and to deeply understand decanal search processes includes understanding not just what we do (structural system) but why we do we we do (cultural system) and the people involved, or not, in the doing (individual actors). That is, search processes have to be considered as an combination of structural, cultural, and social systems.

Beyond a deeper understanding of decanal search processes as an amalgamation of systems, this research also addressed two shortcoming in the literature articulated by Twombly (1992). Twombly (1992) reported that "despite the importance of searches, the process is not well understood" (p. 653). Twombly further stated, "the academic search process has received little scholarly attention" (p. 653). The shortcomings identified by Twombly have not changed.

The existing literature is old and very few are writing about academic search processes in general. This was confirmed when doing literature searches using key terms, alone and in combination, such as deans, recruitment, higher education, academic search processes, and selection. The searches reveal a mixed bag of research, very little of which is focused on academic search processes. Two more recent studies validated the shortcomings observed by Twombly (1992). Lavigne (2016) noted that deans, particularly appointment, reappointment and career paths of Canadian deans remains understudied and poorly understood. Usunier (2021) also noted, "none of the studies found that examine decanal recruitment focus on process" (p. 2). This research seeks to address these persistent shortcomings.

The first shortcoming was addressed by seeking to better understand search processes in and of themselves which was the purpose of this research. The second shortcoming was addressed by focusing scholarly attention on the academic search processes through the research questions. Finally, exploring decanal search processes vis-à-vis culture was an exploration of how individuals make sense of decanal search processes which provided a unique perspective for understanding decanal search processes.

Description of the Study

Kuhn (1962) described paradigms as "models from which spring coherent traditions of scientific research" (p. 10). Klenke (2016) suggested that, "historically, there have been two major paradigms in the social and behavioural sciences: (1) logical positivism…and (2) post-positivism or postmodernism, which may be used as a shorthand descriptor of qualitative paradigms such as constructivism, interpretivism, and critical theory" (p. 13). This research was conducted within a qualitative paradigm using case study and constructionist grounded theory.

The decision to conduct this research using both case study and constructionist grounded theory was not made lightly. Hours were spent determining if the research could be conducted using either constructionist grounded theory or case study, as opposed to using both. In particular, it seemed that case study was over-complicating my research design. I initially concurred with Tight (2010) who stated, "the surrounding terminology of 'case study' not only adds little of value, but actually gets in the way" (p. 337). Constructionist grounded theory and case study research both had limitations that could be addressed through utilizing the best of both approaches. At the end of the day, I decided both constructionist grounded theory and case study approaches fit the purposes and questions of this research and were simply better together.

Assumptions

I made a number of assumptions that were reflected in this study:

1. The literature and my own experience suggested that high turnover in the academic deanship is problematic. I assumed findings from research participants' exploration of decanal search processes with me might shed light on how these processes relate to decanal turnover. I did not assume a straightline cause and effect relationship, but rather assumed that search processes were a contributing factor to decanal turnover.
2. My philosophical assumptions situated me in an interpretive paradigm which, "rests, in part, on a subjectivist, interactionist, socially constructed ontology and on an epistemology that recognized multiple realities, agentic behaviours and the importance of understanding a situation through the eyes of the participants" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 116).
3. I assumed that the relationships I had established over my 25 years at the University of Saskatchewan would facilitate my access to research participants.
4. I assumed that my actions, in all roles I have occupied during my career at USask, deemed me trustworthy and that research participants would trust me with their information and thus be open and honest.
5. I assumed that retention, which is the antithesis of turnover, begins with the search processes and how we identify and recruit academic deans contributed, in some way, to poor retention (high turnover).
6. I assumed that decanal search processes needed refinement.
7. I assumed that constructive insight was as important as critical insight and that using Appreciative Inquiry as part of my research methods would generate both.

Delimitations

I placed the following delimitations on this study:

1. Location: The University of Saskatchewan was selected as the site in which to investigate the research questions. The site was geographically convenient, the processes and procedures that govern decanal search processes were well-known to me, and the relationships I had established facilitated access to research participants.
2. Time: I asked research participants to engage in a retrospective reconstruction and reconceptualization of a search process in which they participated. Recollections fade over time and I wanted to connect with research participants within five years of their search committee participation; for research participants who participated in a search in 2014, this meant gathering data in 2019.
3. Research participants: My intent was to engage all decanal search committee members identified in the *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) (also referred to as *The Procedures)* in this exploration with the exception of students and members of related professional associations.

   My rationale for excluding students was not because their opinions were not valued, but, rather, because they were the most transient members of decanal search committees and their time as students on campus was limited by the time it took to complete (or abandon) their degree.

   My rationale for excluding members of related professional associations was because these individuals were also transient. Members of professional associations who find themselves on decanal search committees are typically members of a somewhat unique governing body at USask known as the Senate and senators have limited terms. As well,

this membership requirement is not consistent across all decanal searches; that is, it would only apply to decanal searches of colleges and schools that had a related professional association.

Those individuals who were candidates in one of the searches selected for inclusion in this research were also excluded; consideration of the candidate experience with decanal search processes was outside the scope of this research.

I also included as research participants those individuals who provide advice and guidance to search committees, such as search consultants. I have included such individuals because, while they have no vote or decision-making authority, they are not without influence.

4. Decanal turnover: Decanal turnover is a problem to which I suspected there were many contributing factors and solutions. I delimited my study to the exploration of decanal search processes, that is how deans are identified and recruited in the first place, as one factor that may contribute to turnover. Asking deans themselves about what other factors may have contributed to a decision to leave a decanal role ealier than perhaps expected was outside the scope of this research.

5. Search processes: Reference to search processes in this study are specific to those by which academic deans are identified and recruited although the *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators (2011)* apply to all senior administrators. Search processes for other academic positions, such as faculty, are governed by search processes found in other documents including, but not limited to collective bargaining agreements.

Limitations

I acknowledged the following limitations of this study:

1. My ability to facilitate interviews and focus groups that generated rich and accurate articulations of the experiences and understandings of participants.
2. My own reflexivity as a researcher and how my background shaped the direction of the research including interpretation of the information and the meaning I ascribed to the data (Creswell, 2017, p. 186).
3. I was, and still am, a novice researcher and my own skills and expertise as a researcher were limited.
4. The opportunity to include observation of a decanal search process as part of data collection was be limited by the availability of an active search to which I was able to gain access in the timeframe allocated for data collection.
5. All the data and participants were drawn from one research-intensive university that has procedures clearly articulating who must be on decanal search committees and who must chair these committees; findings may therefore be less generalizable for other types of universities and/or universities that have less prescriptive procedures guiding the composition of decanal search committees.
6. Organizational culture includes sub-cultures and the colleges and schools within USask may have cultures that differ from the overall culture in which they are embedded; however, it would be difficult to explore cultural differences between academic units selected for this study without identifying the five that were selected.
7. The 2014—2017 time period was one of considerable unrest at USask and those seeking to make application elsewhere will need to consider the USask context during this time.

8.. This research was grounded in a qualitative paradigm; the philosophical assumptions that underlie my research may not be shared by others.

Definitions

The following terms were important to the research and definitions of *academic deanship*, *senior administrators*, *search processes*, and *organizational culture* to which I subscribed are presented below.

Academic Deanship

Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez and Nies (2001) stated, "increasingly, the term "academic dean" has been reserved for those institutional leaders who head discipline-specific colleges within universities" (p. 3). de Boer and Goedegebuure (2009) also clarified, "when we discuss the changes in the academic deanship, we refer to the person formally residing over a number of schools or departments and responsible (and accountable) for both its academic and administrative operations" (p. 349). *The University of Saskatchewan Act* (1995) refers to the dean as the chief executive officer of the college. *The Act* states the dean has, "subject to the authority of the president, general supervision over and direction of the work of the college and of the teaching and training of the students of the college" (*University of Saskatchewan Act*, 1995, c.U-6.1, s. 75). The dean is the highest-ranking official in the college with wide responsibility over all aspects of the college's functioning.

I subscribed to a broad definition of academic deans as institutional leaders who head discipline-specific or inter-disciplinary colleges and schools within universities who are responsible for both its academic and administrative operations. The inclusion of institutional leaders of inter-disciplinary schools was to acknowledge that the University of Saskatchewan has, in addition to discipline-specific colleges, a number of university-level inter-disciplinary

schools which are headed by a dean or equivalent (*University of Saskatchewan Nomenclature Report*, 2011); the decanal equivalent of an inter-disciplinary school is an executive director. I also included the dean of libraries and the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies in the broad definition of academic deans given that USask has acknowledged these positions as academic deans.

In the interest of readability, I used the term academic deans with the intent that it be understood to include both deans of discipline-specific colleges and executive directors of university-level inter-disciplinary schools and the deans of libraries and graduate and postdoctoral studies. I also used the term academic dean(s) and dean(s) interchangeably.

Senior Administrators

There is no official definition for senior administrators in *The University of Saskatchewan Act* (1995), the *University of Saskatchewan Nomenclature Report* (2011) nor the *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011). However, *The Procedures* do outline the criteria that "provide a means to identify which positions should be included in the procedures…and the positions subject to the search and review procedures based upon the application of these criteria, are listed in Appendices A and B" (p. 11). In addition to the deans and executive directors, the appendices name the president, the provost and vice-president academic, vice-president finance, vice-president research, associate vice-president(s) research, vice-provost teaching and learning, vice-provost faculty relations, vice deans, associate deans and associate executive directors. For the purpose of this research I use the term senior administrators to refer to all vice-presidents, associate vice-presidents and vice-provosts in addition to the ones listed above. This is a slightly broader view than that taken in *The Procedures* but is consistent with the composition of the Senior Leadership Forum (SLF). The

SLF is chaired by the president and brings senior administrators together on a regular basis to discuss institutional issues that cut across academic and administrative portfolios.

Search Processes

I defined the search processes as the processes by which individuals are identified and recruited for a particular position. Search processes include, but are not limited to: a search committee is constituted and a chair is appointed; an external search consultant may be engaged to provide advice and guidance; a position profile, the key recruitment document, is developed; candidate pools are created through advertising and shoulder-tapping (direct or active recruitment); medium-lists are determined and candidates assessed; short-lists are determined and candidates assessed; final candidates are ranked and recommended to the provost and/or president (Dowdall, 2007; Harvey, Shaw, McPhail & Erickson 2013;Twombly, 1992; *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators*, 2011).

Organizational Culture

Bellott (2011) noted, "it is widely accepted that there is no singular, correct definition of culture" (p. 30). Definitions of culture, associated with each of the approaches I take to my exploration, are found in chapter two; however, I provide a brief summary here.

Hallett (2003) identified two prevailing approaches to culture that have emerged after twenty-five years of debate. One approach, associated with Schein "envisions culture as beliefs and values held by subjects in the organization" (Hallett, 2003, p. 128). An alternative approach, associated with Trice and Beyer "removes organizational culture from the subjective minds of actors and places it in the public….this approach views culture as a public context that articulates meaning to participants" (Hallett, 2003, p. 128). Hallett viewed both of these approaches as problematic and builds another approach to culture which he refers to as the symbolic power

approach. The symbolic power approach envisions culture as "a negotiated order that emerges through the interactions between actors, a negotiated order influenced in particular by people with symbolic power—the power to define the situation in which interactions take place" (Hallett, 2003, p. 130).

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into five chapters. This first chapter introduces the research question and provides a general overview of the topic for the study through discussion of the background to the problem, the purpose of the study, the questions that guided it, and the significance of the research. The second chapter consists of a review of the literature in those areas that were of interest to and informed the research, namely, the academic deanship, the recruitment of academic deans, and organizational culture. The third chapter lays out the research design for the study. Chapter four is a presentation of the data analysis by search, the players in search and the processes of search. I end chapter four with the good, the bad, and the ugly elements of search. In the fifth and final chapter I highlight the findings from this study via a return to the research questions, a discussion of the findings in light of the related literature in chapter two and my own insights. Implications of my findings for practice, theory and research round out chapter five. I conclude with high-level reflections on the overall study.

Summary of Chapter One

This study focused on the culture of the decanal search process in one traditional research university. In this chapter, I stated why this was of interest to me and why it should be of interest to others. Much has changed in our external context, our universities, and in the academic deanship and yet much of what counts as accepted has remained largely unchanged. The purpose of the research, the problem statement, and the research questions were constructed to explore

and understand the social phenomenon of the decanal search process from multiple perspectives of search committee members. This research was conducted within a qualitative paradigm using case study and constructionist grounded theory. Assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and definitions were articulated in an effort to present the parameters and language for the research.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the literature in those areas related to the research questions. Recall, the research questions focused on how participants' experienced and understood decanal search processes. The literature review that follows will provide the reader with a summary of the literature related to: the academic deanship—it is how we identify and recruit for this particular role within the organization that is of interest to me; the recruitment of academic deans or decanal search processes which are the object of this study; and, how participants make sense of these processes vis-à-vis organizational culture. This chapter will also suggest different ways of looking at organizational culture and offer both a tentative conceptualization of how culture operated in a decanal search process and a revised conceptualization of decanal search processes in organizational culture.

The Academic Deanship

Literature related to the academic deanship was reviewed in order to gain and be able to articulate an understanding of the extant literature in this area. A definition of academic deans along with a discussion of the evolution of the role in light of changes to universities are found in chapter one. This section continues the discussion with the role of the academic dean, ways in which deans' report preparing for the role, a new paradigm for academic leadership development, and deans intention to leave or stay in the role and in the organization.

Academic Deans: The Role

Wolverton, Wolverton and Gmelch (1999) stated, "universities are notoriously vague about what it is they expect deans to do" (p. 101). Gallos (2002) stated, "deans juggle multiple roles and a myriad of expectations from diverse constituents. Squeezed from above and below as well as from inside and outside the university, deans are caught in the jaws of conflicting

cultures, pressures, and priorities" (p. 174). Harvey, Shaw, McPhail and Erickson (2013) noted, "deans find themselves in a complex web of roles which are frequently in conflict with one another" (p. 21). My own work with deans, as we tried to create a new decanal position profile, reflected similar themes. Comments received from deans related to their role included: deans are currently managing internally, but the dean has an external focus as well that needs to be acknowledged; the dean has a responsibility outside of the university that needs to be reflected in the profile; and, the designation of chief executive officer [in the *University of Saskatchewan Act* (1995)] is problematic as it legislates authority, responsibility and accountability and yet deans have reported feeling the weight of responsibility and accountability, but virtually no authority.

An added level of complexity for deans at the University of Saskatchewan is a unionized faculty complement. All full-time faculty at USask are members of the University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association (USFA). Very few universities have "real" faculty unions created through formal certification orders, but where they do exist, they seem to influence how deans perceive their authority. Some deans have gone so far as to say to me that their authority is crippled in a unionized environment. They comment on the complete disconnect between what faculty perceive as the deans' authority and the authority granted by provincial legislation. Faculty perceive the role of dean as a figurehead who is required to attend to collegial processes which is quite different than legislated authority that positions the dean as the highest-ranking official in the college. Role conflict and role ambiguity that result from conflicting expectations and information affects how deans define their roles (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002).

Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970) reported, "when the behaviours expected of an individual are inconsistent…he will experience stress, become dissatisfied, and perform less effectively than if the expectations imposed on him did not conflict" (p. 151). Rizzo, et al. also

reported, “role ambiguity—lack of the necessary information available to a given organizational position…should increase the probability that a person will be dissatisfied with his role, will experience anxiety, will distort reality, and will thus perform less effectively” (p. 151). Drawing on the understanding of role conflict and role ambiguity articulated by Rizzo, et al., Wolverton, Wolverton and Gmelch (1999) further refined the concept of role conflict as, “the dilemma of trying to serve two masters” (p. 82). Regardless of the exact definitions employed, Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) reported, “early research specific to university administration indicated that role conflict and ambiguity permeate universities” (p. 50). Role conflict and role ambiguity can both begin to play out in decanal search processes. Given the variety of stakeholders represented on search committees it is possible to imagine inconsistent expectations; for example, faculty representatives might have quite different expectations than the Board of Governor representative. Wolverton, Wolverton, and Gmelch (1999) reported that deans who identified as both faculty and administrators experienced more role ambiguity than those who identified only as administrators (p. 98). In my view, this is one of the tensions inherent in decanal search processes as search committee members’ grapple with the criteria on which they will base the identification and assessment of candidates (search criteria): academic deans must have stellar academic qualifications which privileges the faculty identity and CEO-qualifications which privileges the administrator identity.

Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) noted, “unlike department chairpersons, who in general view the activities in which they engage as a set of tasks to be completed, deans think in terms of roles and responsibilities. Roles are contextual” (p. 41). Further, behaviours related to these roles derive from expectations, whether self-imposed, institutionally imposed, or externally driven (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002, p. 41). As noted in chapter one, the context in which academic

deans find themselves has changed over time (de Boer & Goedegebure, 2009; Frost, 2015). As universities have changed so too have the expectations of deans. McGrath (1936/1999) suggested at the inception of the deanship in the United States in the 1800s, scholar-deans did little more than provide emotional support to students and provide administrative support to presidents. Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) noted that as the responsibilities of deans expanded to include control over crucial university endeavours such as student discipline, admission, supervision of faculty, and oversight of instruction, deans became chief advisors to the president (p. 42). However, that has also changed as "with the advent of the modern university came a new breed of administrator, the provost, sandwiched in between the president and the dean, and the deans became middle managers" (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002, p. 48). Wolverton, Wolverton and Gmelch (1999) observed, "today the vision of the dean as a quiet, scholarly leader has given way to an image of the dean as an executive—politically astute and economically savvy" (pp. 81-82). At the end of the day, Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) noted neither organizations nor deans themselves can afford to ignore the effects of role conflict and role ambiguity; the cost to the individual (burnout, low productivity) and the organization (high turnover) are simply too high (p. 57). I concur with this statement and am interested in how role ambiguity and role conflict might be addressed in the search processes.

Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) identified six role sets that defined what deans do in today's universities: fiscal resource management, academic personnel management, internal productivity, scholarship, leadership, and external and political relations (pp. 42-43). These role sets were identified across public and private research, comprehensive, and baccalaureate universities in the U.S. This suggested that what deans do is remarkably consistent across universities. My work on a new decanal position profile also suggested that what deans do across

colleges within a university is also consistent. What I noticed when discussing the decanal position profile with deans is that where there was variance this was typically found in the amount of time spent on various role sets. For example, deans of colleges who had to maintain accreditation requirements and/or were deans of colleges who had close ties to the professional bodies spent more time on external and political relations; deans of non-departmentalized colleges (colleges that do not have departments within their structure) spent more time on academic personnel management because they did not have department heads to which they could delegate collegial processes. I concur with Fagin (1997) who answered both yes and no to the question as to whether a deanship, is a deanship, is a deanship (p. 95). Yes, what deans do in universities is consistent across and within universities, but there is variance within the role and not all deanships are created equal. Because context matters I chose a single site for this research.

Academic Deans: Preparation

Gmelch and Buller (2015) stated, "academic leadership is one of the few professions one can enter today with absolutely no training in, credentials for, or knowledge about the central duties of the position" (p. 2). Changes in the role and the context in which deans operate suggest there is need for "solid preparation in order to tackle the complexity and to strengthen leadership skills and resolve" (Bolman & Gallos, 2011, p. 7). And yet, "such preparation is rare in the context of academic norms and higher education career paths" (Bolman & Gallos, 2011, p. 7). Given that the "external environment has become increasingly complex, with more and more demands placed upon the university by increasingly vocal, influential and diverse groups of stakeholders" (de Boer & Goedegeburre, 2009, p. 350) the lack of preparation is "cause for deep concern" (Bolman & Gallos, 2011, p. 8).

Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) noted, “in higher education, we make a very large assumption that the deans hired by colleges possess the skills and aptitudes they need to be successful” (p. 10). And yet, if as Bolman and Gallos (2011) suggested, preparation in higher education is rare, from where do deans obtain the skills and aptitudes required to be successful? Morris and Laipple (2015) observed, “to become skilled in their areas of research, faculty spend years in mentored educational experiences. Why should we expect deans, directors, and department heads to excel at their roles from the start” (p. 242)? Two studies provided insight into this question.

In one study, Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) reported more than 60 percent of deans surveyed had been department chairs; less than 40 percent had been associate deans; and, 30 percent had held a decanal role previously. Of the 13 deans appointed at the University of Saskatchewan between 2014 and 2017 (inclusive) the picture is slightly different; however, the sample size is much smaller. Only one dean had been a department chair (8%); seven had been associate deans (54%); and, only one had held a decanal role previously (8%). The public documents from which I gathered this information did not indicate if the associate deans had previously been a department chair. Of the remaining four individuals, one had administrative experience outside of the academy and three moved from faculty positions directly into decanal roles. All thirteen individuals were faculty members at the institutions from which they were hired. The data provided by Wolverton and Gmelch and data from USask are both consistent with an observation made by Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, and Bragg (1983) that while the vast majority of deans have been faculty, no particular overarching career trajectory was found to lead to a deanship. This may exacerbate the tension noted earlier with respect to role conflict and role ambiguity.

As part of her doctoral dissertation, Greicar (2009) presented, “an understanding of how academic deans are prepared for their positions, which preparation methods are most beneficial to their overall effectiveness, and which methods contribute most to the leadership dimension of the deanship” (pp. ii-iii). From the literature, Greicar identified six common methods of preparation for deans: formal mentoring, informal mentoring, on the job training, professional conferences and/or seminars, advanced degree in Higher Education or related field, and professional training programs. Academic deans of four-year public and private colleges and universities in the U.S. were asked to “identify the preparation methods they experienced and the degree to which the method of preparation influenced their perceived effectiveness in seven leadership dimensions associated with the position of academic dean” (p. 38). Greicar found on the job training and informal mentoring were the methods of preparation deans reported experiencing most frequently (p. 82). Greicar also reported “these two methods were also found to be the highest contributors to a dean’s overall effectiveness as well as the seven leadership dimensions” (p. 83). If on the job training and informal mentoring are important to the preparation and effectiveness of academic deans, perhaps these experiences should be considered in decanal search processes; however, these experiences may not be easy for those faculty who aspire to a decanal role to access.

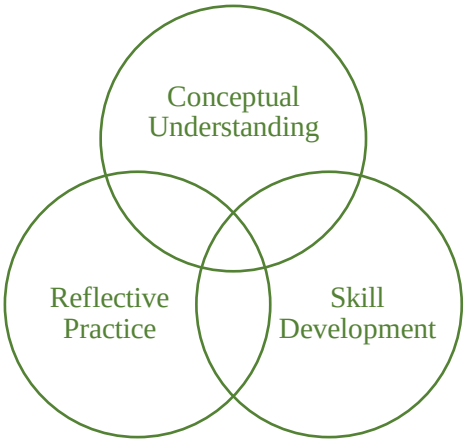
Academic Deans: Development

Beyond being a faculty member there is no particular overarching career trajectory or pathway to the deanship (Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, & Bragg, 1983). While it is not difficult to imagine a number of career trajectories that might lead to the deanship, any trajectory would require individuals to aspire to the role of dean and be ready and willing to engage in leadership development activities early on in their tenure. This aspiration is unlikely given the value placed

on scholarship in the research university (Drange, 2015). Deans do not necessarily spend their careers preparing themselves for a decanal role, or any other leadership role, so it should come as no surprise that little attention has been given to preparing faculty for academic leadership (Gmelch & Buller, 2015) or that the more traditional leadership development activities might be inappropriate. Gmelch and Buller (2015) suggested, "what academic administrators need is not a program that lasts for a day, a week, or even a month but a career-long development program that meets them where they are and carries them wherever they need to be" (pp. 6-7). Gmelch and Buller suggested a new paradigm for academic leadership development which honours the context of higher education and the way in which individuals in higher education come to academic leadership roles.

Gmelch and Buller (2015) suggested, "the transformation from successful faculty member—which involves one set of highly developed skills and attributes—to effective academic leader—which involves an entirely different set of highly developed skills and attributes—cannot be accomplished by reading a book or attending a seminar" (pp. 7-8). Rather than look at books or seminars, the latter of which Greicar (2009) noted was of limited value to the preparation of academic deans, Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) suggested, "three spheres of influence [Figure 2.1] create the conditions essential to develop academic leaders" (p. 113). The three spheres are: "(a) conceptual understanding of the unique roles and responsibilities encompassed in academic leadership; (b) the skills necessary to achieve the results through working with faculty, staff, students, and other administrators; and (c) the practice of reflection to learn from past experiences" (p. 114).

Figure 2.1
Dean Leadership Development (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002, p. 114).



Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) stated, "conceptual knowledge or understanding is the ability to conceptualize the leadership role of the dean" (p. 114). Gmelch and Buller (2015) identified two major aspects of conceptual understanding important to leadership development. The first is the perception of self; that is, "understanding their relationship to the institution, their work, and their colleagues will change in ways they may not anticipate" (Gmelch & Buller, 2015, p. 10). The second is appreciation of context; "the role that mangers and leaders play in higher education is distinctly different from the role that bosses, supervisors, commanders, and directors play in other types of organizations" (Gmelch & Buller, 2015, p. 10). Bolman and Gallos (2011) noted, "colleges and universities constitute a special type of organization; and their complex mission, dynamics, personnel structures, and values require a distinct set of understandings and skills to lead and manage them well" (p. xii). Conceptual understanding plays a key role in framing academic leaders understanding of the organization and reframing their new role within it.

Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) observed, "conceptual understanding…is insufficient without the application of appropriate behaviours and skills" (p. 115). Gmelch and Buller (2015) reinforced the importance of application in order for academic leaders to improve their skills:

“They must then practice what they’ve learned by means of simulations, case studies, role plays, action planning, and on-the-job training” (p. 10). Skills in this context encompassed both those described as readily teachable, such as performance coaching, conflict resolution, and resource allocation as well as those described as complex competencies such as strategic visioning (Gmelch & Buller, 2015, p. 115). Some of these skills can be learned through workshops and lectures while others cannot. In their research on expertise, Ericsson and Smith (1998) observed that experience is critical to acquiring expertise. Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) concurred with this assessment and suggested, “it takes various experiences: experimenting, receiving feedback, coaching, refining and perfecting” (p. 116) to acquire appropriate behaviours and skills. According to a Chinese philosopher, to know and not to use is not yet to know.

Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) acknowledged, “leadership development is an inner journey” (p. 116). Gmelch and Buller (2015) stated, “self-knowledge, personal awareness, and corrective feedback must be part of the strategy for each leader’s development” (p. 11). Drawing on work by Donald Schön (1983) Gmelch and Buller stated, “the goal [for academic leaders]…should be to reflect continually on what it is they are trying to do, why they made that decision, whether their actions lead to the desired results, and how they might respond differently to similar situations in the future” (p. 11). This effectively described Schön’s concept of reflection-in-action which Wolverton and Gmelch contended “is central to dealing with uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict—common occurrences in deans’ leadership lives” (p. 116).

In addition to the three spheres identified by Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) as essential to the development of academic leaders, the intersections were important aspects of the strategy behind a pilot project undertaken by Gmelch and Buller (2015). Gmelch and Buller noted:

> at the intersection of developing conceptual understanding and practicing leadership skills, participants in the program would be required to apply what they learned to real situations. By reflecting on how their leadership skills were improving, they would discover new ways to incorporate these skills into their regular practices. And by reflecting on the insights gained from their development of conceptual understanding, they would find new ways to ground leadership theory in application. (p. 12)

Taken together, Gmelch and Buller suggested these elements would create a much more nuanced approach to the development of academic leaders.

Academic Deans: Intention to Leave/Stay

At the University of Saskatchewan, deans are typically appointed to serve a five-year term. A decision regarding a subsequent term is usually made in the penultimate year of the current term. It is customary for a dean to seek renewal for a second five-year term. If an academic dean decided not to seek renewal or was encouraged not to seek renewal for a subsequent term there are a number of options available including, but not limited to: returning to a faculty position, serving the organization in a different capacity, or leaving the organization altogether.

There is virtually no literature that speaks to exit strategies used by academic deans or life beyond an academic deanship. Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) explored the intention of academic deans to leave their current organization and their intention to stay which provided some insight into this final phase of the lifecycle of an academic dean. When asked about their next career move, “30 percent planned to return to faculty, 20 percent planned to seek another deanship or a nonacademic leadership position, and almost 30 percent will seek a higher academic leadership position” (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002, p. 81). Wolverton and Gmelch also

reported that 20 percent of the deans in their study were sixty or older and most of this group planned to retire. The trend at the University of Saskatchewan was a bit different. I reviewed the career moves of academic deans who had served prior to the incumbent and observed: 38 percent returned to faculty, 20 percent assumed another deanship or nonacademic leadership position, six percent assumed a higher leadership position, and 12 percent either retired, left the organization mid-term, or assumed some other position within USask.

Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) identified a number of factors that influenced whether or not an academic deans' next career move is in or out of the organization. Wolverton and Gmelch observed, "when deans do not have a clear sense of where university priorities lie and do not know what is expected of them, organizational commitment suffers. As a result, they may plan to leave" (p. 84). This is directly related to role ambiguity which Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970) suggested would increase the probability that a person will be dissatisfied in their role. Wolverton and Gmelch also reported, "if too many demands placed on deans are at odds with each other or force deans to act in ways counter to their own fundamental values, deans will leave" (p. 84). Role conflict is experienced when deans are asked to play roles that conflict with their value system. As noted earlier, role ambiguity and role conflict problems permeate universities and contribute to both individual burnout and high turnover rates (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002).

Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) also reported connections between the type of position a dean sees as their next career move and their intention to stay or leave the organization. Only deans who wanted to remain deans, but at a more prestigious institution, intended to leave. Those deans who indicated their intent to return to faculty or seek a higher academic leadership position were more inclined to stay at their current organizations. These findings seem to hold true in

what I know about the University of Saskatchewan; that is, academic deans who returned to faculty positions, assumed another internal academic role, or moved into higher academic leadership positions within the organization accounted for over 50 percent of previous deans. Of the deans who left USask at the end of term, only one went on to another academic deanship; however, the institution to which they went is considered a comprehensive university which might be viewed as less prestigious than a medical-doctoral university.

Recruitment of Academic Deans

Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez and Nies (2001) reported that prior to 1950 colleges traditionally elevated their most senior faculty members to the deanship; those eligible were older, white males who were well-established scholars (p. 5). Deans were appointed by presidents with virtually no input from faculty (p. 11). With the advent of the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1960s academic deanships began to open up to women and people of colour (Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez & Nies, 2001, p. 5). As well, faculty began to lobby to have more voice in the selection of deans and limit the voices of central administrators (Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez & Nies, 2001, p. 11). This played out at the University of Saskatchewan in the late 1980s. One of the dominant events of 1988 was a strike by USask faculty and I learned that a significant outcome of that strike was the establishment of a joint faculty/management committee that would provide oversight to the procedures governing the search and review processes for senior administrators (M. Atkinson, personal communication, June 3, 2016). The search processes for senior administrators which includes deans is the next aspect of this subject that I now address.

The Search Processes

The search processes for deans bear a striking resemblance from one institution to another. Commonly, the search committee is constituted and a chair appointed; an external search consultant may be engaged to provide advice and guidance to the search committee; a position profile, the key recruitment document, is developed; candidate pools are created through advertising and shoulder-tapping (direct or active recruiting); medium-lists are determined either by the external search consultant and/or the search committee; medium-listed candidates are assessed (typically through telephone interviews); short-lists are determined by the search committee; short-listed candidates are assessed through the interview process and reference and background checking; and, final candidates are ranked and recommended to the provost and/or president (Dowdall, 2007; Harvey, Shaw, McPhail & Erickson, 2013; Twombly, 1992; *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators*, 2011).

Harvey, Shaw, McPhail and Erickson (2013) took a rather dim view of the search processes. Harvey, et al. stated, "the selection process for identifying a new dean is frequently convoluted at best, and at its worst is dysfunctional" (p. 25). Eight stages of a decanal search process are described in more or less disparaging ways. For example, on the assessment of candidates Harvey, et al. suggested, "the assessment of candidates is predicated on the search firm's need to put together a list of names to be presented to the committee maybe more than the candidates "fit" with parameters of the job" (p. 25). On the point of short-listing candidates Harvey, et al. observed, "a short list is agreed upon by members of the search committee…the interesting point being that no one has actually met with the candidates or assessed their predisposition to the specific dean position" (p. 25). The point Harvey, et al. eventually made

was that problems inherent in the search process itself resulted in conflicting expectations and actually sets the stage for conflict once the successful candidate assumed the decanal role.

Dowdall (2007) took a different view of the search process, but acknowledged, “the search process for higher education leaders is complex and at times even mysterious for both search committees and candidates” (p. x). Dowdall described twelve stages of a search process in great detail in an effort “to offer committees advice that could enhance the search process and lead to more successful conclusions” (p. ix). To this end, Dowdall outlined the typical search process over three chapters which highlight preparing for the search (chapter 12), recruiting candidates (chapter 13), and evaluating candidates and selecting finalists (chapter 14). Establishing search committees was deemed a topic worthy of its own chapter (chapter 10) and outside of the search process itself.

The difference in perspectives could come from the fact that Harvey, Shaw, McPhail and Erickson (2013) observed the processes as members of academic communities who had experienced first-hand the outcomes of the said processes. Harvey, et al. observed, “the first author of this paper has been a member of the academic community for the last 35 years….during that time he has worked under 17 different deans….the second and fourth authors have served under 11 deans in a 20-year period” (p. 19). This suggests that the outcomes of the decanal search process had perhaps been less than successful. In fact, Harvey, et al. noted that “the average tenure for a dean over the last decade has been less than four years” (p. 19). Dowdall (2007), on the other hand, observed the process from multiple perspectives of the search committee. Dowdall noted “the search process has been a fascination for me since I was first interviewed by search committees as my career began, then served as a member and later a chair of committees, and then appointed search committees and received their recommendations” (p.

ix). Dowdall took her 25 years of experience in higher education, as a faculty member and administrator, and transferred this experience to her current role as a search consultant.

External Search Consultants' Role in the Process

One of the recurring themes in the search process described by Harvey, Shaw, McPhail and Erickson (2013) seemed to be the role, and perhaps influence, of external search consultants in the various aspects of the search process. Usher, Macleod and Green (2010) stated, "committees must [thus] balance the need for support and input with the risk of being overly influenced by the search consultant in decision-making" (p. 20). Dowdall (2007) highlighted the variation in approaches taken by external search consultants. Dowdall noted, "some firms take an approach typically used in corporate searches. They will bring you the individuals the consultants consider to be the five or 10 best candidates for the position…" (p. 87). This in essence creates the candidate pool and presents a medium-list to the search committee from which the search committee then creates a short-list. Other firms "will bring you the files of all the candidates who apply as well as the candidates they have recruited, and the consultant may give you relatively little guidance as to which candidates he or she thinks are the best fit" (Dowdall, 2007, p. 87). In this case, the external search consultant essentially creates the candidate pool, but does not weigh in on who they consider to be the best candidates for the position. And, of course, there are in between variations of this. I have experienced both ends of the spectrum in searches to which I have provided support. In one search, I was explicitly asked to bring forward no more than 10 candidates for the committee's consideration and in another search I was asked to present all the applicants in a spreadsheet that included some basic information, such as educational attainment, so that the committee could see and consider all candidates. The point made by Harvey et al., Usher et al., and Dowdall was that search

committees must be clear about the role of the search consultant and how the role they are accorded might influence the outcome of the search.

Authority of the Search Committee in the Process

Once constituted, the search committee begins "the processes" of searching. While the search committee is involved in decisions made at every stage of the search, search committee members typically do not make the final determination of who will be hired. Usher, Macleod and Green (2010) observed that rather than making the final decision, search committees "bring a recommendation forward to the board of governors, president, or vice-president….[and] there are also circumstances in which a president or vice-president's final determination will differ from that of the committee" (p. 16). The *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) outline the appointment process separately, and in advance of, the actual search process. The section begins by explicitly stating, "the Board of Governors appoints the University's senior administrators. Search committees report to the Board of Governors through the President…" (*University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators*, 2011, p. 34). What this means is that, at USask, search committees recommend candidates to the president, in ranked order, who then recommends one candidate to the Board of Governors. It is the Board of Governors who must ultimately approve the recommendation.

It is important that search committee members understand the extent of their authority. In particular, search committee members need to know the authority they have for the final decision right from the start of the search. It is not enough to assume that search committee members understand they are "advisory" and their authority ends with determining which candidate(s) to recommend in what order. Engaging in an entire search thinking you have authority for the final

decision, only to find out at the conclusion of the processes that your authority ends with a recommendation, can result in disillusion, at best, and, at worst, a failed search.

The Search Committee

There are two elements of the search committee composition that deserve mention. The first is membership on the search committee—specifically, who serves on these committees. The second is the role of the search committee chair.

Membership of the Committee

Dowdall (2007) stated, "the membership of the [search] committee sends a powerful signal to candidates about the institution's values and aspirations" (p. 73). Usher, Macleod and Green (2010) observed, "they [search committees] reflect the structure of power and democratic organization of universities….search committees are typically multi-stakeholder groups that are intended to be representative of the range of university constituencies" (p. 14). The search committee structure at the University of Saskatchewan reflects this description and the *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) explicitly state the constituencies that must be represented on specific search committees including how members from each constituency will be selected to participate. Usher, et al. noted:

> broad representation is important to help ensure that the candidate selected will be accepted by the university, since "power is more diffuse in a university" and things get done based on collegial relationships and suasion, rather than a command-control approach. Academics strongly defend this arrangement, since part of what is at stake, ultimately is academic freedom (p. 15).

Not everyone supports this broad-based committee approach.

Harvey, Shaw, McPhail and Erickson (2013) described a dean selection committee as resembling "the characters found in the Star Wars bar (e.g., one of every possible constituent)" (p. 25). Some who opposed the broad-based committee structure suggested it was too cumbersome and based on a lack of trust; that is, everyone has to be represented because no-one trusts a smaller, less representative committee to make decisions with the interests of those not represented on the committee in mind. Others pointed to the political nature of search committees where they become a vehicle for members to promote agendas on behalf of the constituencies they represent (Usher, Macleod, & Green, 2010, p. 16). Dowdall (2007) suggested that the size of the committee is a relatively minor concern and that convening a committee of individuals that have good judgement and the respect of their colleagues is far more important than size.

The Search Committee Chair

The *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) state*:*

> ideally, the chair and the majority of the committee will come to agreement on the preferred candidate. If there are differing views between the chair and the majority of the committee on the preferred candidate, it is critical that there be agreement on acceptable candidates, and the chair may recommend any acceptable candidate to the President. (p. 34)

This makes the role of search committee chairs vitally important. Usher, Macleod and Green (2010) stated "the leadership role assumed by committee chairs was considered critical to the ability of committees to engage in consensus building. Committee chairs must be able to facilitate the consensus-building process" (p. 16). Dowdall (2007) observed, "the chair needs to

build the disparate committee members into a team, create a committee culture, and move the search toward a successful conclusion" (pp. 77-78). In addition to being a respected member of the community who has good judgement and a clear understanding of the nature and needs of the position, the chair must also have leadership qualities (Dowdall, 2007, p. 77). Given my interest in the culture of the decanal search process I am particularly interested in the role of the chair in creating a committee culture.

Academic Deans: Recruitment

I return briefly to the literature related to the academic deanships which included literature related to recruitment of academic deans. The literature related to recruitment recognized the importance of the decision-making processes in searches, particularly processes used by committees to assess candidates (Twombly, 1992; Gibney & Shang, 2007; Harvey, Shaw, McPhail & Erickson, 2013). A review of this literature follows.

Twombly (1992) investigated three searches for professional school deanships that took place at her institution during the 1985-86 academic year. The framework used to interpret the decision processes in the three searches was an approach to analyzing strategic decisions proposed by Lawrence Pinfield (1986). Pinfield stated that "few organizational decision are made in a logical, rational manner" (p. 365). Pinfield identified two perspectives that he argued apply to unstructured or ambiguous decision processes, which Twombly suggested characterized decanal searches. Pinfield coined the two perspectives the structured and anarchic. The structured perspective "views decision processes as structured, as they follow an orderly but iterative progression from problem recognition to resolution" (Pinfield, 1986, p. 365). The anarchic perspective views decisions as being "inferred from the outcomes of fortuitous combinations of problems, solutions, and participants in organizational garbage cans" (Pinfield,

1986, p. 365). Twombly found elements of both perspectives in the three searches in her study and stated "in order to understand adequately, and perhaps improve, the dynamics of the decision process characterizing academic searches one must understand the interaction of structure and anarchic aspects of searches and, in particular, the role of participation, context, and time in determining the values and premises upon which decisions are based" (p. 682). In my experience, the composition of the search committee can result in some voices being silenced, circumstances under which a search was convened can affect the process, and long drawn-out searches can impact the engagement of search committee members.

Gibney and Shang (2007) noted, "one frequently encountered problem [in the selection process] is the halo effect which is a rater's tendency to let one attribute of the candidate influence their overall assessment" (p. 1030). Gibney and Shang suggested bias, including but not limited to the halo effect, which seems inherent in search processes might be addressed through the use of the analytical hierarch process (AHP). Gibney and Shang stated, "at the heart of the AHP, in a personnel selection context, is the comparison of candidates based upon the a priori, advertised job criteria. Additional information extraneous to the decision criteria is excluded from deliberation in an effort to limit rater bias" (p. 1030). Gibney and Shang determined that AHP was a valuable tool and that through its use "participants become aware of the thinking process of other groups" (p. 1039). Despite stressing the importance of using the position profile in all aspects of the search and discussing bias at various stages of the search, decision making in searches is often more of an art than a science. While processes such as AHP might bring rigour to the decanal search process my experience suggests a subjectivity or perhaps even emotional element to decision making that is difficult to address. I have observed

search committee members acknowledge their bias(es) and the proceed to justify the bias in their decision making.

Harvey, Shaw, McPhail and Erickson (2013) "examine[d] the selection of deans from a theoretical perspective by employing reference point theory (RPT) as the foundation logic for understanding the difficulties of identifying and selecting deans in the twenty-first century" (p. 20). Harvey, et al. stated, "the basic premise of RPT is that individuals who have to make crucial decisions will develop reference points from their own past experiences and the observation of others as they make similar complex decisions" (p. 22). Further, "the foundation of RPT is that managers can use the strategic actions of others as guidelines for their own decision if the decision is made infrequently or is the first time decision for the decision makers" (Harvey, et al., 2013, p. 22). Given that search committees typically include a wide range of stakeholders including, but not limited to, other senior administrators, faculty, and board of governor members, it stands to reason there will be a wide range of reference points and that those new to the selection process would look to others for reference points. The problems that Harvey, et al. identified are that different individuals and groups likely select different reference points and have different time perspective of reference points. Harvey, et al. stated, "there are a number of expectations on the part of the university administration, the new dean themselves, and members of the academic staff as to what could or should be accomplished in both the short and long term. Expectations are almost always out of alignment" (p. 26). Harvey, et al. further noted, "given the variety of those on the selection committee and the expectations of the diverse groups that they represent, it is no wonder that conflict arises once the dean has taken charge" (p. 26). Harvey, et al. concluded their investigation into the selection of deans with the suggestion of a new

selection process, part of which included the development of a detailed position description which, in theory, would help focus the reference points of committee members.

The literature highlighted here draws attention to some of the challenges inherent in the search processes used to identify and select academic deans. While it was encouraging to see scholarly work that suggested ways in which decanal search processes might be improved there is little evidence of changes to these process either in theory or practice as evidenced by ongoing concern raised about turnover of academic deans.

This study is intended to take a deep dive into decanal search processes and explore the culture of these processes. So far, this literature review has summarized the literature related to academic deans (the role, preparation for the role, development in the role, and intention to leave/stay in the role and the organization) and recruitment in higher education (an overview of the search process, the composition of search committees, and decision-making within the search). The next section explores three different approaches to how organizational culture is envisioned as well as a conceptual framework of organizational culture.

Organizational Culture

In this section of the literature review I explore three different ways of looking at organizational culture and present a conceptual framework of organizational culture broadly based on the symbolic frame. In particular, I review organizational culture through the lenses of Schein (1985, 1992, 2004), Trice and Beyer (1993) and Hallett (2003) and present a conceptual framework proposed by Allaire and Firsirotu (1984). I offer a tentative conceptualization of how culture manifests in a decanal search process considering the work of Schein, Trice and Beyer and Hallet and conclude the section with a revised conceptualization of the relationship between culture and decanal search processes using the conceptual framework proposed by Allaire and

Firsirotu. Before reviewing the work of these scholars and the resulting conceptualizations of culture in decanal search processes, I begin with a brief history of the concept of organizational culture.

A Brief History of Organizational Culture

Although the study of organizational culture is not new there was little interest in culture in the workplace prior to 1980. It was around 1980 that scholars observed a growing interest in organizational culture (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984; Bellot, 2011; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Schein, 2004; Tierney, 1988; Trice & Beyer, 1993). This surge of interest was largely attributed to three things: the publication of three popular books aimed at management practitioners; the growing disillusionment in organizational theory and research with rational, empirical, and explicit approaches to understanding organizations; and, the appearance of a different orientation to cultures known as the symbolic frame (Peterson, 1985; Shafritz, Ott & Jang, 2005; Trice & Beyer, 1993). While there has been growing interest in organizational culture this does not mean there is consensus among scholars on a definition of culture, what the concept of culture should and should not include, or the best method(s) for assessing culture (Bellot, 2011, p. 30).

Both *Theory Z* (Ouchi, 1981) and *In Search of Excellence* (Peters & Waterman, 1982) "were widely interpreted as saying that organizational cultures were important for productivity and adaptability" (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 29). *Corporate Cultures* (Deal & Kennedy, 1982) received attention as it proposed one of the first models of organizational culture (Trice & Byer, 1993, p. 29). These books came along at a time when "Japan, a country with a drastically different culture, became the United States' chief competitor for economic leadership of the world" (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 30). Bellot (2011) stated, "this early writing was marketed to managers within a typical corporate structure and was designed to provide a quick fix and

competitive edge" (p. 30). Coinciding with the publication of these three books was growing interest in qualitative approaches to study organizations. Within the academic community organizational studies, up to this point, were dominated by a positivist paradigm (Bellot, 2011). However, "in an effort to be scientific, organizational researchers had reduced their phenomenon to such simplistic models that it had lots its richness and human character" (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 31). Peterson (1985) noticed a desire to shift to less rational, qualitative, intuitive approaches to understanding organizational behaviour and Trice & Beyer (1993) suggested managers were more likely to use the results of research grounded in this paradigm. Finally, Shafritz, Ott, and Jang (2005) observed "a different orientation to cultures started to appear in the organization theory literature during the late 1970s, and it developed into a 'wave' in the mid-1980s. This orientation is known as the symbolic frame, symbolic management, or organizational symbolism" (Shafritz, Ott, & Jang, 2005, p. 354). Bolman and Deal (2008) suggested the symbolic frame "depicts a world far different from canons of rationality, certainty, and linearity" (p. 253). The basic suppositions of the symbolic frame were:

- What is more important is not what happens but what it means.
- Activity and meaning are loosely coupled; events and actions have multiple interpretations as people experience life differently.
- Facing uncertainty and ambiguity, people create symbols to resolve confusion, find direction, and anchor hope and faith.
- Events and processes are often more important for what is expressed than what is produced…
- Culture forms the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise accomplish desired ends. (p. 253)

Bolman and Deal (2008) stated, "defined as 'the way we do things around here,' culture anchors an organization's identity and sense of itself" (p. 278). In the following section, I review the concept of organizational culture advanced by Schein (1985, 1992, 2004), Trice and Beyer (1993), and Hallett (2003)—all of whom contributed to research on organizational culture and to my tentative conceptualization of how culture manifests in the decanal search process. I also present a conceptual framework of organizational culture proposed by Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) which resulted in a revised conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes.

Edgar H. Schein on Organizational Culture

I begin with the work of Edgar Schein. As Bellot (2011) observed, "most recent research on culture cites Schein's (1987) definition or uses a derivation of his work" (p. 31). Edgar Schein refined his definition of culture over the years and it is the following iteration that is found in the more recent literature:

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

Schein (2004) built toward this definition beginning with the critical defining characteristic of a *group*. This is important because, according to Schein, "not every collection of people develops a culture" (p. 22). Schein stated, "I will use as the critical defining characteristic of a *group* the fact that its members have a shared history" (p. 11). Schein stated, "any social unit that has some kind of shared history will have evolved a culture" (p. 11). Schein acknowledged that the idea that certain things in groups are held in common was one of the

critical aspects of culture, but it was not the only one. In addition to the concept of sharing Schein identified four other critical elements of culture: structural stability, depth, breadth, and patterning or integration (p. 14). Schein summarized culture as the accumulated shared learning of a given group that occurs as a result of a history of shared experience that implies some stability of membership. The human need for stability, consistency, and meaning will cause the shared elements to form into patterns that can eventually be called culture (p. 17).

Schein (2004) identified three levels at which culture manifests itself which range from the obvious or overt to the covert or hidden. Schein stated it is "the deeply embedded, unconscious, basic assumptions that I am defining as the essence of culture" (p. 25). The most overt level of culture is the level of artifacts. Artifacts include "all the phenomena that one sees, hears, and feels, when one encounters a new group with an unfamiliar culture" (Schein, 2004, p. 25). This level of culture is easy to observe but difficult to decipher or interpret. Espoused beliefs and values represent the level of culture that "provide the day-to-day operating principles by which the members of the group guide their behaviour" (Schein, 2004, p. 27). Schein noted beliefs and values can predict much of the behaviour that can be observed at the artifact level, but not all of it. In particular, if espoused beliefs and values or what we say is not congruent with what is observed in what we do then large areas of behaviour will be left unexplained. As Schein noted this will leave us "with a feeling that we understand a piece of the culture but still do not have the culture as such in hand" (p. 30). The most covert level of culture is basic assumptions. Basic assumptions are those beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings that "have become so taken for granted that one finds little variations within a social unit" (Schein, 2004, p. 31). Schein stated "culture as a set of basic assumptions defines for us what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of

situations" (p. 32). Basic assumptions provide cognitive stability and thus tend to be non-confrontable and non-debatable (Schein, 2004, pp. 31-32).

In terms of how culture forms Schein (2004) stated, "it can be argued that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture" (p. 11). However, Schein clarified that his reference to leaders is not meant to imply that formal leaders are the only determiners of culture. "Culture is the result of a complex group learning process that is only partially influenced by leader behaviour" (Schein, 2004, p. 11). Schein outlined two ways in which culture forms. In one way, spontaneous interaction in an unstructured group gradually leads to patterns and norms of behaviour that become the culture of that group. Alternatively, in more formal groups the individual founder of the group will impose their personal vision, goals, beliefs, values, and assumptions on the group. If the resulting behaviour leads to accomplishment of the group's tasks and members feel good about their relationship to one another the founder's view come to be *shared* by the group (Schein, 2004, pp. 15-16).

The concept of culture articulated by Schein (2004) is consistent with one of two approaches, identified by Hallett (2003), that have emerged after twenty-five years of debate. The approach associated with Schein "envisions culture as beliefs and values held by subjects in the organization" (Hallett, 2003, p. 128). Alternatively, "the second approach removes organizational culture from the subjective minds of actors and places it in the public….this approach views culture as a public context that articulates meaning to participants" (Hallett, 2003, p. 129). This second approach is associated with Trice and Beyer (1993) and it is to their concept of culture that I now turn.

Harrison M. Trice and Janice M. Beyer on Organizational Culture

Trice and Beyer (1993) suggested that "organizational cultures, like other cultures, develop as groups of people struggle together to make sense of and cope with their worlds" (p. 4). Trice and Beyer did not offer a formal definition of organizational culture, but described cultures as "collective phenomena that embody people's responses to the uncertainties and chaos that are inevitable in human experience" (p. 2). People's responses fell into two categories: cultural substance and cultural forms. It is the interplay between cultural substance and cultural forms that cultures coalesce and maintain their existence (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 80).

The actual content or substance of a culture resides in its ideologies. "Ideologies tend to be rather general sets of ideas, but they are powerful in specific situations because they link actions and fundamental beliefs" (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 33). Trice and Beyer (1993) defined ideologies as "*shared, relatively coherently interrelated sets of emotionally charged beliefs, values, and norms that bind some people together and help them to make sense of their worlds*" (p. 33). Ideological beliefs express cause and effect relations in that certain behaviours will lead to certain outcomes; values express preferences for certain behaviours or outcomes; and, norms express behaviours expected by others and culturally acceptable ways to attain outcomes (Trice & Beyer, 1993, pp. 33-34). Ideologies differ from assumptions that Schein focuses on as the basic substance of culture in that they involve more specific ideas and are not necessarily so deeply hidden as Schein suggested assumptions are (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 43). Trice and Beyer argued "cultural meanings are not only in people's heads; rather they are ideas that are shared by social actors. They occur between as well as in them….cultural meanings have some public manifestations and therefore must be at least somewhat observable" (p. 43). This is consistent with the view of culture as a public context.

Trice and Beyer (1993) acknowledged cultures incorporate multiple ideologies. When ideological contradictions surface conflict can result between individuals or subgroups within the culture if people feel compelled to resolve the contradictions; however, people are quite able to live with these contradictions and tend to avoid direct confrontation between contradictory ideologies (pp. 37). At first glance, this is a point of similarity with Schein (1990) who stated, "it is perfectly possible for coexisting units of a larger system to have cultures that are independent and even in conflict with each other" (p. 111). However, this statement suggests that conflict is inter-culture versus intra-culture which then becomes a point of differentiation as Trice and Beyer acknowledge intra-culture conflict or conflict within the culture.

Trice and Beyer (1993) stated "cultures also help people cope with uncertainties by providing them with accepted ways of expressing and affirming their beliefs, values, and norms. Cultures have repertories of cultural *forms* that members use to express the substance of their cultures" (p. 2). Trice and Beyer suggested symbols, language, narratives, and practice are the four major categories of cultural forms (p. 77). Symbols are the most frequently encountered form of cultural expression and are often incorporated into other cultural forms. Like symbols, language is basic to and incorporated into other cultural forms, but language differs from symbols in that language conveys meanings in more complex ways than symbols do. Narratives employ both symbols and language and several kinds of narratives are used to express feelings and beliefs. Practice is the most complex category of cultural forms given that people's actions both do and say things and activities undertaken for practical purposes often carry cultural messages (Trice & Beyer, 1993, pp. 77-79). Assigning symbols and other cultural forms a more central role in culture also distinguishes the work of Trice and Beyer from the work of Schein

(2004). Trice and Beyer observed “by making assumptions the underlying and most basic part of culture, Schein downplays the crucial role of symbolism” (p. 42).

Cultural forms are important because they “contribute to sense-making processes and thus to the emergence and persistence of cultural ideologies” (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 77). Sense-making refers to processes through which people try to create order and make sense of the situations in which they find themselves (Berger & Luckmann, 1990). Trice and Beyer suggested “sense making is a cognitive process in that it involves knowing and perceiving, it is a behavioural process in that in involves doing things, and it is a social process in that it involves people doing things together” (p. 81). Trice and Beyer observed, “in work organizations, cultural forms guide people in how to think and act by telling them ‘how we do things around here’” (p. 82).

Trice and Beyer (1993) noted “new groups need to work out their ideologies over time because they cannot fully anticipate in advance the precise nature of the challenges and problems they will face” (p. 38). Groups adapt their ideologies to changing circumstances; to deal with new and/or changing circumstances, individuals act—they try out innovations that can be adapted and imitated by others if they appear successful or if their proponents are especially influential or persuasive (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 38).

Hallett (2003) suggested the approaches to how organizational culture is envisioned articulated by Schein (2004) and Trice and Beyer (1993) were both problematic. The approach that views culture as subjective beliefs tends to ignore conflict and the approach that views culture as a public context does not adequately explain change (pp. 128-129). Hallett suggested that “organizational culture needs an overhaul” (p. 129). Hallett builds a third approach to culture which he refers to as the symbolic power approach (p. 128). It is to this approach that I now turn.

Tim Hallett on Organizational Culture

In presenting the symbolic power approach Hallett (2003) builds upward from "practice into interaction, symbolic power, and the negotiated order" (p. 128). In this section I summarize these elements as presented by Hallett, share how Hallett suggested organizational culture is created, and articulate the resulting definition of organizational culture advanced by Hallett.

In his overhaul of organizational culture Hallett (2003) drew on theories of practice, theories of interaction, and the negotiated order approach to organizations. He draws on these theories and approaches to "theorize symbolic power at the mesolevel of organizational culture" (p. 133). Hallett portrayed a number of theorists, including, but not limited to: Pierre Bourdieu (practice); Erving Goffman (interaction); and Gary Fine and Anselm Strauss (negotiated order). Hallett suggested "theories of interaction enable us to move from practice to the mesolevel of 'organizational culture,' and theories of practice provide a micro-macro link that bounds interaction, symbolic power, and the emergent negotiated order" (p. 129).

Hallett (2003) also depicted the work of Pierre Bourdieu in providing the micro-macro link and stated, "Bourdieu's concept of practice is tied to his view of the broader social order, providing a link between micro actions within organizations and macro social structures" (p. 130). Bourdieu conceived of society as a social space where people exist in relation to one another based on their economic, culture, and social capital. This social space was an objective social structure that people were able to move through; the movements being the manifestations of the *habitus*. Hallett summarized: the habitus is *structured* by the *objective* conditions in which the individual develops. These objective conditions instill dispositions and tastes that reflect the individual's position in the objective social space and *structure* the individual's subjective actions and experiences. The habitus is structured but the individual has an agentive role acting

on the dispositions and tastes of the habitus. The subjective actions have a *structuring* affect, typically reproducing the "objective" conditions from which the habitus is born. Hallett suggested, according to Bourdieu, the operation of the habitus can be understood through a person's practice (p. 130). The point Hallett makes is that "when people enter organizations, they bring their habitus—and their relation to the broader social order—with them, and individuals practices within organizations are informed (but not determined) by the habitus (linked to a position in the broader social order)" (p. 130). Essentially, Hallet acknowledged that we do not come into organizations as "blank slates".

Hallett (2003) acknowledged "organizational culture is more than the sum of individual practices" (p. 131). In moving from practice into interaction, Hallett draws on the work of Erving Goffman and, in fact, brings the work of Bourdieu and Goffman together. Schwandt (2015) noted Goffman "pioneered the analysis of the interactional order of social life (what people do when they are in the presence of others)" (p. 78). Hallett noted the distinction Goffman made between the conscious, intentional "signs given" during interaction and the unconscious, unintended "signs given off". Hallett likened the unintended "signs given off" as "manifestations of the unconscious tastes and dispositions of the habitus" (p. 132). In making this connection, Hallett positioned the habitus in the realm of interaction and stated "the habitus plays an important role in interaction because it is so unconscious" (Hallett, 2003, p. 132). Hallett suggested the habitus plays a role in enabling and constraining impression management because "for the typical person to disregard the dispositions of the habitus—to engage in practices that are totally foreign—is to risk humiliation on the part of signs given off, manifestations of the habitus that is rejected" (p. 132). Hallett further argued that "through interaction comes the *symbolic power to define an interaction order*, to create and recreate an order" (p. 133).

Hallett (2003) stated the organizational culture that emerges from social interactions is informed by individual practices, but the social interactions that occur are shaped by those who have acquired symbolic power (p. 131). Hallett described the work of Gary Fine and Anselm Strauss in reconceptualizing organizational culture as negotiated order and draws his own conclusions about symbolic power in negotiating order. Fine (1984) summarized the negotiated order approach articulated by Anselm Strauss as follows: all social order is negotiated order and organization is not possible without some form of negotiation; specific negotiations are contingent on the structural conditions of the organization; negotiations are renewed, revised, and reconstituted over time; and, structural changes in the organization require a revision of the negotiated order (p. 241). Building on the work of Strauss, Fine (1984) stated "the negotiated order approach has sensitized researchers to the fact that these relations [in organizations] are ultimately dependent upon the agreement of their parties and that they are constructed through a social, rather than entirely policy driven process" (p. 243). However, Hallett (2003) noted "to state that organizational culture is a negotiated order does not imply equality in the negotiation" (p. 133). Hallett draws on the concept of symbolic power articulated by Bourdieu, but reframes it as "the *power to define the situation* in which the interactions that comprise the negotiated order take place" (p. 133). Certain negotiators come to have disproportionate power over the negotiated order.

Hallett (2003) summarized the manner in which he uses symbolic power and negotiated order as follows:

> negotiators, who engage in various practices within the organization…are imbued with legitimacy by those who value the practices in which the negotiators engage. This legitimacy can be deployed as symbolic power, the power to define the

> situation….symbolic power is typically deployed to further entrench the reality that defines as valuable the practices that are the basis of legitimacy. (p. 133)

This process may go unnoticed by both the negotiators and those who imbue them with legitimacy and symbolic power. Hallett also acknowledged "this process is further conditioned by the 'structural' and 'negotiation' contexts" (p. 134). Hallett uses the concepts of structural and negotiation contexts advanced by Strauss (1978). The structural context relates to the broader social order in which the negotiation occurs. Fine (1984) stated, "advocates [of the negotiated order approach] do not claim that structures do not exist or affect other relationships, nor do these theorists believe that formal rules make no difference" (p. 241). However, embedded in context, valued practices become the basis of legitimacy that negotiators deploy as the symbolic power to define the situation and influence future practices, interactions, and the ongoing negotiated order (Hallett, 2003, p. 136).

While acknowledging context(s), Hallett (2003) stressed that "to grasp the content of organizational culture we must not lose sight of practice and interaction" (p. 135). Hallett stated "*practice and interaction have a constitutive role,* propelling structure forward but also modifying structures in the process" (p., 135). Hallett (2003) suggested "organizational culture….is born of the symbolic power that emerges from practice and interaction" (p. 135).

The formal definition of organizational culture advanced by Hallett is "a negotiated order that emerges through the interactions between actors, a negotiated order influenced in particular by people with symbolic power—the power to define the situation in which interactions take place" (p. 130).

The view of all three of these scholars is consistent with a symbolic view of culture in which "significant symbols, or products of mind, constitute the raw materials for the

interpretation of the ordered system of meaning in terms of which the social interaction takes place" (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984, p. 199). Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) acknowledged that their framework is "broadly based on the symbolic concept of culture" (p. 213) which proposes "culture as *products of mind, as shared meaning systems*" (p. 206). This framework is consistent with a philosophical view of culture as a subjective reality that is socially constructed. I turn now to the conceptual framework of organizational culture proposed by Allaire and Firsirotu.

Allaire and Firsirotu: A Conceptual Framework of Organizational Culture

Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) outlined three interrelated components in their conceptual framework which is depicted in Figure 2.2. The first is "a *sociostructural* system composed of the interworkings of formal structures, strategies, policies and management processes, and of all ancillary components of an organization's reality and functioning" (p. 213). The second is "a *cultural* system that embodies the organization's expressive and affective dimensions in a system of shared and meaningful symbols manifested in myths, ideology and values and in multiple cultural artefacts" (p. 213). The third is "the *individual actors*…with their particular endowments, experience and personality are not merely passive recipients of a prefabricated reality…they become contributors and moulders of meaning" (p. 215).

Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) noted, "the cultural system is shaped by ambient society, the history of the organization and the particular contingency factors impinging upon it" (p. 213). While not explicitly stated, the visual of their framework suggested that the sociostructural system is also shaped by the ambient society, history and particular contingency factors. What Allaire and Firsirotu articulated was the relationship between these two systems. Allaire and Firsirotu noted, "the cultural and sociostructural systems should have developed concomitantly and harmoniously, the former bestowing legitimacy upon the latter, and in turn receiving support

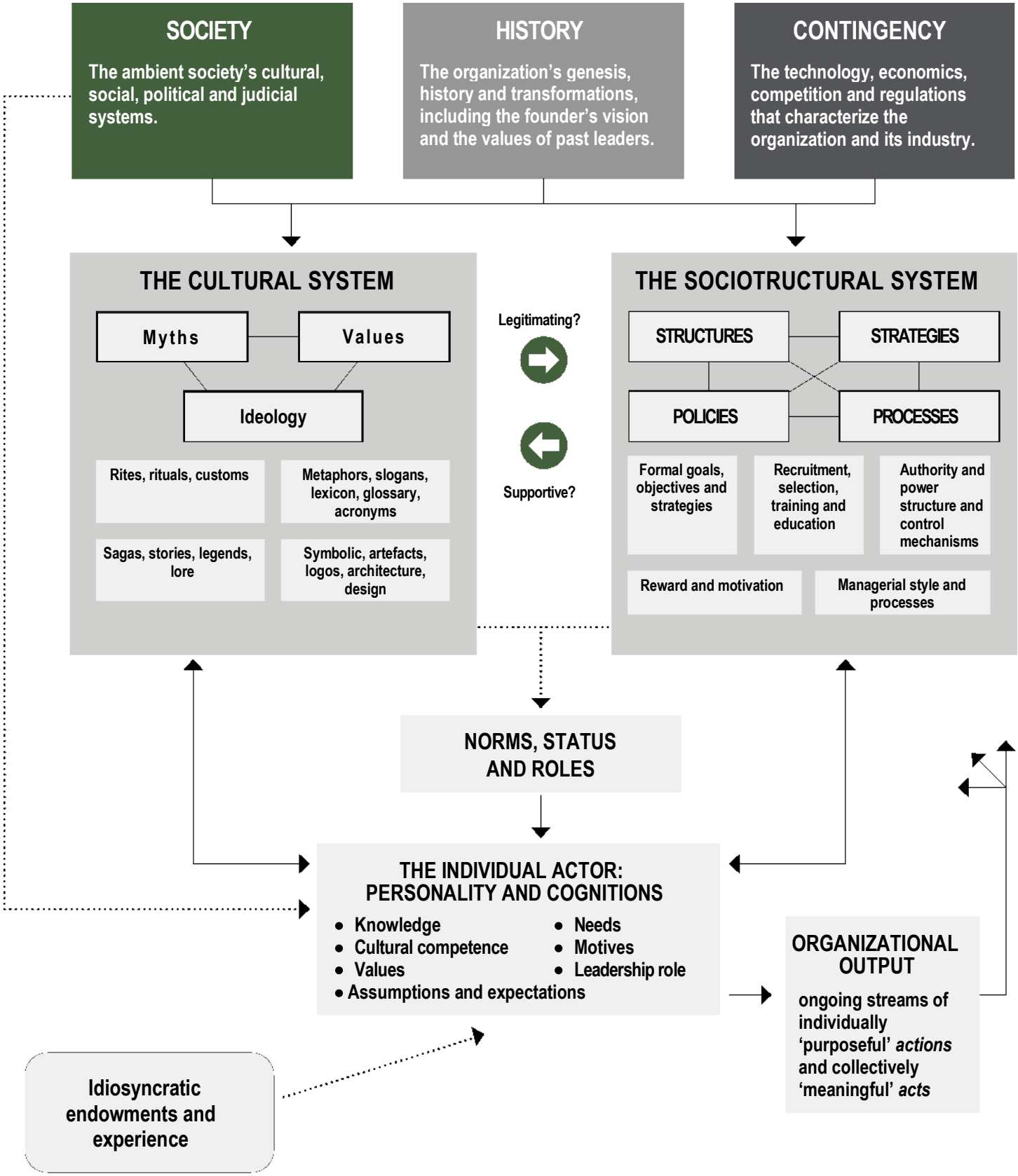
and reinforcement from it" (p. 215). This is consistent with the work of Trice and Beyer (1993) who suggested it is the interplay between cultural substance [the cultural system] and cultural forms [the sociostructural system] that culture coalesce and maintain their existence (p. 80).

The individual actors' relationship to the cultural system and the extent to which actors share meanings is variable and while "all actors fabricate their 'meaning' from the same cultural raw materials, a considerable degree of sharing of meaning will tend to evolve among actors interacting in the same context for a prolonged period of time" (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984, p. 215). One might surmise the following proposition is also true—that sharing of meaning will not evolve unless actors interact in the same context for a prolonged period of time. This is consistent with the view of Schein (2004) that not every group of people develops a culture and that the defining characteristic of a group was shared history. Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) are not explicit about the individual actors' relationships to the sociostructural system; however, these systems must be created by individual actors who themselves are influenced by broader societal structures. Drawing on Bourdieu, Hallett (2003) contended, "when people enter organizations, they bring their habitus—and their relation to the broader social order—with them, and individual practices within organizations are informed (but not determined) by the habitus (linked to a position in the broader social order)" (p. 130). Individual actors are imbued with legitimacy if their individual practices are valued by the audiences with whom they interact. These practices then become part of the sociostructural system which will reinforce some aspect of the cultural system and are legitimized, or not, by that system. If they are not legitimized, this may create dissonance between the cultural and sociostructural systems.

Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) acknowledged these systems [cultural and sociostructural] change and evolve in response to changes in the environment (p. 215) as well as the influence of

“contemporary dominant actors” (p. 213). Further, “the requirements of adaptation may be accommodated by changes in the formal sociostructural system that may not be, and could not be, immediately translated into the cultural system, thus bringing these systems into a state of dissonance and dyssynchronization” (p. 215). Conversely, I would argue, the requirements of adaptation may be accommodated by changes in the cultural system that may not be, and could not be immediately translated into the sociostructural system, again, bringing these systems into a state of dissonance.

Figure 2.2
A Conceptual Framework of Organizational Culture (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984, p. 214)


SOCIETY
The ambient society's cultural, social, political and judicial systems.
HISTORY
The organization's genesis, history and transformations, including the founder's vision and the values of past leaders.
CONTINGENCY
The technology, economics, competition and regulations that characterize the organization and its industry.
THE CULTURAL SYSTEM
Myths
Values
Ideology
Rites, rituals, customs
Metaphors, slogans, lexicon, glossary, acronyms
Sagas, stories, legends, lore
Symbolic, artefacts, logos, architecture, design
Legitimating?
Supportive?
THE SOCIOTRUCTURAL SYSTEM
STRUCTURES
STRATEGIES
POLICIES
PROCESSES
Formal goals, objectives and strategies
Recruitment, selection, training and education
Authority and power structure and control mechanisms
Reward and motivation
Managerial style and processes
NORMS, STATUS AND ROLES
THE INDIVIDUAL ACTOR: PERSONALITY AND COGNITIONS
Knowledge
Cultural competence
Values
Assumptions and expectations
Needs
Motives
Leadership role
ORGANIZATIONAL OUTPUT
ongoing streams of individually 'purposeful' actions and collectively 'meaningful' acts
Idiosyncratic endowments and experience

Schein (2004), Trice and Beyer (1993), and Hallett (2003) all had something to offer to my research and together their approaches informed my tentative conceptualization of how culture manifested in decanal search processes. However, it was the conceptual framework of Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) that illuminated decanal search processes in culture and resulted in a revised conceptualization of the relationship between culture and decanal search processes. It is to these conceptualizations that I now turn.

A Tentative Conceptualization of Organizational Culture in the Decanal Search Processes

As noted in the literature related to search processes, the search processes for academic deans bear a striking similarity from one institution to another and there was little variation in how each element of the search was carried out (Dowdall, 2007; Harvey, Shaw, McPhail & Erickson, 2013; Twombly, 1992). When I considered each element in the decanal search separately, it opened up the possibility to contemplate the decanal search process as **processes**. This in turn caused me to think about **cultures** of decanal search **processes** as opposed to a culture of a singular process. In this way, I could begin to imagine how culture as envisioned by Schein (2004), Trice and Beyer (1993), and Hallett (2003) might manifest in a decanal search.

Hallett (2003) suggested two approaches have emerged after twenty-five years of debate about organizational culture. The approach associated with Schein "envisions culture as beliefs and values held by subjects in the organization" (Hallett, 2003, p. 128). "The second approach removes organizational culture from the subjective minds of actors and places it in the public….this approach views culture as public context that articulates meaning to participants" (Hallett, 2003, p. 129). The third approach, developed by Hallett (2003), envisions culture as a negotiated order influenced by those with symbolic power (p. 128). I imagined how each of these approaches to culture might manifest in decanal search processes.

Search processes appeared to be well-established in the literature (Dowdall, 2007; Harvey, Shaw, McPhail & Erickson, 2013; Twombly, 1992; *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators*, 2011) and what I read in the literature was consistent with my experience. The search processes included:

1. Convening a search committee
2. Appointing a search committee chair
3. Developing a position profile
4. Creating candidate pools through:
    a. Advertising to solicit applications
    b. Active/direct recruitment of individuals
5. Determining medium-list of candidates
6. Assessing medium-listed candidates
7. Determining short-list of candidates
8. Assessing short-listed candidates through:
    a. In-person interview
    b. Reference/background checking
9. Deciding which candidates to recommend in what order

In the following paragraphs and Table 2.1, that follows, I articulated my tentative conceptualization of how culture might play out in a decanal search, as envisioned by Schein (2004), Trice and Beyer (1993), and Hallett (2003).

I imagined that subjective beliefs and values associated with Schein (2004) manifested in the composition of search committees and the appointment of a search committee chair. Dowdall (2007) suggested, “the membership of the committee sends a powerful signal to candidates about

the institution's values and aspirations" (p. 73). Usher, Macleod and Green (2010) suggested, "they [search committees] reflect the structure of power and democratic organization of universities" (p. 14). The search committee, including who resides as chair, might be considered an artifact. The espoused beliefs and values associated with search committees relate to representation of various constituents. Usher, et al., noted, "search committees are typically multi-stakeholder groups that are intended to be representative of the range of university constituencies" (p. 14). The *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) confirmed the "desire to provide a broad perspective" (p. 39) which suggested that both the subjective and espoused beliefs and values of search committee members may also represent a broad perspective. It is important to recognize, as Schein did, that not every group develops a culture and it should not be assumed that search committees will develop their own culture (p.88).

The position profile which is the key recruitment document could be considered an artifact, but I imagined it as a cultural form. Trice and Beyer (1993) acknowledged that Schein deals with cultural forms in passing through the most visible level of culture in his conception which is artifacts; however, Trice and Beyer gave cultural forms a more central role in culture (p. 42). It seemed to me the position profile played a central role in the search which is why I thought of it as a cultural form. The position profile provides the narrative for the search. "Narratives are used to convey relatively subtle and intricate sets of cultural meanings" (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 128). I wondered about the narrative in the position profile, the ideologies that are expressed through the narrative and the kind of candidates to whom the narrative might appeal.

The cultural forms of narrative and practice are evident in the creation of candidate pools and the assessment of candidates. The narrative in the position profile carries through in the advertising and the stories that are told to encourage prospective candidates to apply. The narrative also provides some indication of the qualifications and attributes that are important for the candidate to have and, presumably, should therefore be assessed. The practices employed in creating candidate pools and assessing candidates are also telling. "Various practices become cultural forms when their effectiveness is taken for granted and their appropriateness is rarely questioned" (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 128). Contracting an external search consultant to provide advice and guidance, public presentation and social interactions, and lengthy interviews that candidates have with the search committees are all examples of practices that are rarely questioned. Practices are the most complex category of cultural form as "activities in organizations that are undertaken for instrumental purposes also carry important cultural messages to members and other observers" (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 79). What cultural messages might our practices convey, what ideologies are expressed in our practices and might there be conflicting ideologies within the search committee?

I drew on Hallett (2003) in imagining how organizational culture might develop towards the end of a search which is where symbolic power might emerge from practice and interaction. In particular, I wondered who has the power to define the situation. Is it the external search consultant who, by virtue of their specialized knowledge of recruitment practices, are "imbued with legitimacy" (Hallett, 2003, p. 133)? Is it the chair of the search committee who, by virtue of his or her position in the hierarchical structure of the organization, is granted legitimacy? Is it a particular member of the search committee who, by some other valued virtue, is imbued with legitimacy?

Table 2.1
Tentative Conceptualization of Culture in Decanal Search Processes

Phase	Stage	Cultural Approach
1. Convening a search committee 2. Appointing a search committee chair	Launching the search	Schein (2004)
3. Developing a position profile 4. Creating candidate pools through advertising and/or direct recruitment	Creating the narrative	Trice and Beyer (1993)
5. Determine medium-list of candidates 6. Assess medium-listed candidates 7. Determine short-list of candidates 8. Assess short-listed candidates through in-person interview and reference/background checking	Assessing Candidates	Trice and Beyer (1993) Hallett (2003)
9. Deciding which candidates to recommend in what order	Ranking and Recommending	Hallett (2003)

This commentary was intended to provide examples of ways in which I imagined the work of Schein (2004), Trice and Beyer (1993), and Hallett (2003) contributing to my exploration of decanal search processes. The examples provided were not intended to be exhaustive nor were they intended to be pre-conceived notions of what might actually be—they were simply manifestations of my own musings. However, I was also aware that this narrative likely reflected my own ideologies which may have influenced my tentative conceptualization.

A Revised Conceptualization of Decanal Search Processes in Organizational Culture

The tentative conceptualization focused on the search processes in and of themselves and my desire was to draw on and align concepts of culture with the various search processes. In the revised conceptualization my focus shifted to the components of organizational culture which illuminated the relationship between decanal search processes and culture. This highlighted decanal search processes as one component of organizational culture—these processes are part of

a much larger system that influences and is influenced by other components. Thus, the relationship between culture and decanal search processes is re-conceptualized in terms of three interrelated components articulated in the conceptual framework of organizational culture proposed by Allaire and Firsirotu (1984). A brief description of the revised conceptualization follows and is visualized in Figure 2.3.

The cultural system includes not one homogeneous culture, but rather any number of heterogeneous cultures. I use the reference to cultures explicitly in recognition of the co-existence of multiple cultures within the academy. In 1992, William H. Bergquist "identified four different, yet interrelated, cultures found in North American institutions of higher education" (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 1). Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) observed "that additional external influences in our global culture are pressing down on the academic institution, forcing it to alter the way it goes about its business, and two new cultures are now emerging as a result of these global, external forces" (pp. 1-2). This resulted in a revised and expanded edition of the original work of Bergquist. Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) identified six unique organization cultures within the academy and observed "although most colleges and universities, and most faculty and administrators, tend to embrace or exemplify one of these six cultures, the other five cultures are always present and interact with the dominant culture" (p. 7). The raw materials in the cultural system from which actors construct their meaning is not homogenous. Bergquist and Pawlak noted, each one [culture] has much to say about the education mission, vision, values, and purposes…" (p. x) and, in fact, likely includes beliefs and values that are as diverse as the individual actors themselves.

Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) suggested, "all actors fabricate their 'meaning from the same cultural raw materials…" (p. 215); however, the raw materials an individual actor uses to

construct their meaning is influenced by their own beliefs and values as well as the influence of others. Within the cadre of individual actors, some will have the power to influence the construction of meaning. The power to influence can come from status or position and/or real or perceived expertise in a particular domain. Typically, those in formal leadership roles have been seen as a key influencers, but they are not the only ones who may be imbued with the power to influence as Hallett (2003) observed. Individuals may also have symbolic power that can be just as influential as positional power. This is not to suggest that individuals are passive recipients of meaning that has been decided upon for them and individuals will construct their own meaning. Shared meaning tends to "evolve among actors interacting in the same social context for a prolonged period of time" (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984, p. 215). Given that the individual actors associated with decanal search processes come from within and outside of the academy as well as from various colleges and units within the academy the evolution of shared meaning within decanal search committees cannot be assumed.

The decanal search processes, in and of themselves, belong in the sociostructural system. The structures, strategies, policies and processes in the sociostructural system are the most visible aspects, but what is not seen are the influences of the cultural system and the individual actors on these elements. Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) noted, "the cultural and sociostructural systems should have developed concomitantly and harmoniously, the former bestowing legitimacy on the latter, and in turn receiving support and reinforcement from it" (p. 215). Allaire and Firsirotu do not speak to the individual actors influence on the sociostructural system, but it is not a stretch to imagine that the power and influence of individual actors would also bestow legitimacy on the sociostructural system which in turn would support and reinforce the power and influence of the individual actors.

Figure 2.3
Revised Conceptualization of Decanal Search Processes in Organizational Culture

Of course there is more to this conceptual framework than this simplistic view of these three components and I revisit this framework in chapter five where I integrate the work of Schein (2004), Trice and Beyer (1993) and Hallet (2003).

Summary of Chapter Two

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a summary of the literature in those areas related to the research questions which focused on how participants' experienced and understood decanal search processes. To this end, the literature review covered: the academic deanship as the role for which we recruit that was of interest to me; the decanal search processes as the object of study; and how participants make sense of these processes vis-à-vis organizational culture. The literature on academic deans covered the role of the academic dean, ways in which deans' reported preparing for the role, a new paradigm for academic leadership development, and deans intention to leave or stay in the role and in the organization. The recruitment of academic deans follows fairly standard search processes that I articulated and I highlighted literature related to the search committee and the search committee chair as well as decision-making models within the search processes themselves. The chapter proceeded with an exploration of different ways of

looking at organizational culture. To this end, I provided a brief history of organizational culture and reviewed it through the lenses of Schein (1985, 1992, 2004), Trice and Beyer (1993) and Hallett (2003). I then presented a conceptual framework of organizational culture proposed by Allaire and Firsirotu (1984). A tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes that considered the work of Schein, Trice and Byer and Hallett was suggested. A revised conceptualization of the relationship between culture and decanal search processes using the framework of Allaire and Firsirotu concluded the chapter. The literature review informed how the research questions would be addressed and in chapter five I compare my findings to the literature. Specifically, I return to the academic deanship, the recruitment of academic deans, and how participants made sense of decanal search processes vis-à-vis organizational culture.

The approach to my inquiry, as outlined in the chapter three, was designed to explore the research questions "at the level of subjective experience" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 28) which in this case was by listening to the voices of the participants. It is to the research design that I now turn.

Chapter Three: The Research Design

This chapter lays out the research design for this study. "Research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in a research design" (Creswell, 2014, p. 12). I begin with an overview of the research approach. I then introduce case study and grounded theory methodologies and situate this study within the traditions of Yin (2018) and Charmaz (2014). I then proceed with a discussion of methods following an outline offered by Creswell (2014) which included: (1) educating readers about the intent of qualitative research, (2) reflecting on the role of the researcher, (3) overall data collection and recording procedures, (4) steps of data analysis, and (5) approaches for validating the data (pp. 183-184). To review, the purpose of my research was to explore the culture of decanal search processes in one traditional research university. The questions that guided this study were:

1. How do research participants describe their experiences in decanal search processes?
2. How do research participants, individually and collectively, understand decanal search processes?
3. What do research participants' experiences and sense-making (individual and collective) reveal about decanal search processes?
4. What constructive and critical insight might be gained from research participants to inform the refinement of decanal search processes?

Research Approach

This research was grounded in a qualitative paradigm. Klenke (2016) suggested that, "historically, there have been two major paradigms in the social and behavioural sciences: (1) logical positivism…and (2) post-positivism or postmodernism, which may be used as a

shorthand descriptor of qualitative paradigms such as constructivism, interpretivism, and critical theory" (p. 13). Creswell (2014) stated, "*qualitative research* is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). This research made use of elements of both case study and constructionist grounded theory. Both case study and grounded theory are qualitative approaches to research which I combined to fit the purposes and questions of this research. The philosophical assumptions that underlie my research approach are outlined in the following section.

Philosophical Assumptions

A paradigm makes assumptions that distinguish it from other paradigms; in this case the philosophical assumptions related to ontology, epistemology, axiology, and views of human nature were used to distinguish among qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method paradigms. My philosophical assumptions placed this research firmly in a qualitative paradigm.

Ontology

Burrell and Morgan (1979) suggested assumptions of an ontological nature are concerned with, "whether the 'reality' to be investigated is external to the individual—imposing itself on individual consciousness from without—or the product of individual consciousness" (p. 1). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) noted these questions spring from the philosophical nominalism-realism debate. Burrell and Morgan stated, "[t]he nominalist does not admit to there being any 'real' structure to the world…'names' used are regarded as artificial creations whose utility is based upon their convenience as tools for describing, making sense of and negotiating the external world" (p. 4). The realist, "postulates that the social world external to individual cognition is a real world made up of hard, tangible and relatively immutable structures. Whether or not we label and perceive these structures…they still exist as empirical entities" (Burrell &

Morgan, 1979, p. 4). This debate is about the very nature of reality and what an individual believes about the existence of a 'real world'.

Epistemology

Burrell and Morgan (1979) suggested assumptions of an epistemological nature are, "about the grounds of knowledge—about how one might begin to understand the world and communicate this as knowledge to fellow human beings…whether knowledge is something that can be acquired…or is something which has to be personally experienced" (pp. 1-2). Burrell and Morgan framed epistemological assumptions as positivism or anti-positivism. At the extremes, "[p]ositivist epistemology is in essence based upon the traditional approaches which dominate the natural sciences…[while] anti-positivists tend to reject the notion that science can generate objective knowledge of any kind" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 5). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) noted the positivist believes, "that knowledge is hard, objective and tangible [and] will demand of researchers an observer role, together with an allegiance to the methods of natural science" (p. 6). Cohen, et al. also noted, "to see knowledge as personal, subjective and unique, however, imposes on researchers an involvement with their subjects and a rejection of the ways of the natural scientists" (p. 6). This debate is about the source of knowledge, that is what an individual should take to be "the truth" and why.

Human Nature

Burrell and Morgan (1979) identified two extreme views of human nature which concern, "the relationship between human beings and their environment" (p. 2). At one extreme, "a determinist view [which] regards man and his activities as being completely determined by the situation or 'environment' in which he is located" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 6). At the other extreme is "the voluntarist view that man is completely autonomous and free-willed (Burrell &

Morgan, 1979, p. 6). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) noted, "two images of human beings emerge from such assumptions—one that portrays them responding mechanically and deterministically to their environment…controlled like puppets; the other, as initiators of their own actions with free will and creativity, producing their own environments" (p. 6). Wenger (2016) characterized this debate as, "a tension between theories that give primacy to social structure and those that give primacy to action" (p. 12).

Methodology

Burrell and Morgan (1979) noted, "the three sets of assumptions outlined above [ontology, epistemology, human nature] have direct implications of a methodological nature….different ontologies, epistemologies and models of human nature are likely to incline social scientists towards different methodologies" (p. 2). Burrell and Morgan framed the methodological assumptions as ideographic or nomothetic. The ideographic approach is "based on the view that one can only understand the social world by obtaining first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 6). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) stated if one favours the view of social reality that stresses the importance of the subjective experience of the individual then the search for understanding focuses on how individuals create, modify and interpret the world (p. 6). The nomothetic approach "lays emphasis on the importance of basing research upon systematic protocol and technique" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 6). Cohen, et al. stated that if one favours the view which treats the social world like the natural world the focus will be on procedures and methods designed to discover general laws which explain that which is being observed (p. 6). This is not so much a debate as it is two outcomes of the previous debates related to the nature of reality, the source of knowledge, and human agency.

Axiology

While axiology is not part of the Burrell and Morgan (1979) framework, a statement of axiology or values was important in situating myself. The scientific approach claims to pursue research, "that is value free and unbiased" (p. 17). However, I concurred with Klenke (2016) that, "our values affect how we do research and what we value in the results of our research" (p. 17). My values affected my research; they affected the purpose, questions and research design as well as the interpretations I brought to the data, the findings I reported and the recommendations that I made.

Situating Myself

My views in each of these four domains situated me in what Burrell and Morgan (1979) referred to as the interpretive paradigm which is, "informed by a concern to understand the world as it is, to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience" (p. 28). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) suggested an interpretive paradigm, "rests, in part, on a subjectivist, interactionist, socially constructed ontology and on an epistemology that recognized multiple realities, agentic behaviours and the importance of understanding a situation through the eyes of the participants" (p. 116). Cohen, et al. nicely summarized my own assumptions and it was clear that my assumptions aligned with a qualitative (interpretive) paradigm.

Burrell and Morgan (1979) noted, "different ontologies, epistemologies and models of human nature are likely to incline social scientists towards different methodologies" (p. 2). Cohan, Manion and Morrison (2011) also stated, "contrasting ontologies, epistemologies, and models of human beings will in turn demand different research methods" (p. 6). Methodologies

and methods are influenced by the paradigm with which the researcher identifies which made situating myself an important precursor to these sections of chapter three.

Methodology for Study

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) stated, "in planning research it is important to clarify a distinction that needs to be made between methodology and methods, approaches and instruments, styles of research and ways of collecting data" (p. 128). Corbin and Strauss (2008) stated, "the research question should dictate the methodological approach that is used to conduct the research" (p. 12). Methodology can be defined as "a way of thinking about and studying social phenomena" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1). The methodology for this research combined case study and constructionist grounded theory. In this section I provide the rationale for this choice including the choice of proponents in each space whose work informed my thinking and studying the phenomena of decanal search processes.

Yin (2018) stated, "the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. Case studies allow you to focus in-depth on a "case" and to retain a holistic and real-world perspective" (p. 5). Charmaz (2017) stated, "constructivist grounded theory attends to researchers and research participants' language, meanings, and actions" (p. 299). Both case study and constructivist grounded theory are qualitative approaches to research and both contributed to studying the social phenomena of decanal search processes in different ways, and in my view, complemented each other well. One of the challenges associated with case study is the analysis. Yin (2018) stated, "the analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed aspects of doing case study. Too many times, researchers start case studies without having the foggiest notion about how the evidence is to be analyzed" (p. 165). Charmaz (2014) noted that "grounded theory is a way of conducting inquiry that shapes data collection

and emphasizes analysis" (p. 26). While I did not use grounded theory to develop theory, as that was not the goal of this research, utilizing the assumptions and tools of grounded theory proved useful. Thinking about what to do with the data as it was collected and considering data analysis and data collection simultaneously helped avoid the pitfall of case study articulated by Yin.

Case Study Methodology

There are two prominent names that appear in the literature related to case study research: Robert K. Yin and Robert E. Stake. According to Creswell (2007), "Stake (1995) systematically establishes procedures for case study research and cites them extensively in his example of 'Harper School'" (p. 73). The procedures and example to which Creswell refers are found in *The Art of Case Study Research* (Stake, 1995). This work is cited frequently and is a seminal book on case study research. Creswell (2007) noted, "Yin (2003) … espouses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to case study development and discusses explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive qualitative case studies" (p. 73). Yin has continued to update his thinking and writing as it relates to case study research and his seminal book *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (2018) is now in its sixth edition. In a historical overview of the case study, Pratt (1992) suggested, "the best-known modern work is, [however], a specialist textbook by Yin" (p.44). I used the work of Yin to guide the case study aspects of my research.

Constructionist Grounded Theory Methodology

Virtually every book and article I read on grounded theory began with a reference to the work of Glaser and Strauss. That they are the 'founding fathers' of grounded theory is without question; however, as Charmaz (2014) pointed out, "grounded theory marries two contrasting—and competing—traditions in sociology as represented by each of its originators: Columbia

University positivism and Chicago school pragmatism and field research" (pp. 8-9). Bryant and Charmaz (2010) noted:

> Glaser's background comprised a rigorous training in quantitative methods and middle range theories, working at Columbia University under the guidance of both methodologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld and noted theorist and sociologist of science Robert K. Merton. Strauss, in contrast, had a background in symbolic interaction, derived from his studies with the Chicago School and its emphases on pragmatist philosophy, George Herbert Mead's social psychology, and ethnographic field research. (p. 32)

Charmaz noted, "Glaser imbued the method with dispassionate empiricism, rigorous codified methods, emphasis on emergent discoveries, and its somewhat ambiguous specialized language that echoes quantitative methods" (p. 9). Strauss, on the other hand, "brought notions of human agency, emergent processes, social and subjective meanings, problem-solving practices, and the open-ended study of action to grounded theory" (p. 9). It appeared almost inevitable that Glaser and Strauss would ultimately take grounded theory in somewhat different directions.

Others, including Charmaz who was a student of both Glaser and Strauss (Charmaz, 2006, p. xii), have also taken grounded theory in different directions. Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006) described a methodological spiral of grounded theory and suggested researchers choose a point on the spiral based on the ontological and epistemological position (p. 32). My ontological and epistemological position aligned me with constructivist grounded theory of which Charmaz is the leading proponent (Mills, et al., 2006, p. 31).

Constructivist Versus Constructionist Grounded Theory

Ward, Hoare and Gott (2015) observed ambiguity between constructivist and constructionist grounded theory. In particular, Ward, et al. stated, "the terms constructionism and

constructivism are used interchangeably by various authors, including Charmaz, making any differences unclear" (p. 454). Upon further investigation, there was evidence that Charmaz was actually very conscious in her choice of language. Charmaz (2008) reported, "in earlier works, I have referred to my approach as constructivist grounded theory to distinguish it from objectivist iterations" (p. 409). More recently, Charmaz (2014) stated, "I chose the term 'constructivist' to acknowledge subjectivity and the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data and to signal the difference between my approach and conventional social constructionism of the 1980s and early 1990s" (p. 14). Charmaz acknowledged, "social constructionism has evolved over the years and my position is consistent with the form it takes today. Strong currents of social constructionism are apparent in constructivist grounded theory, as are its links to social constructivism" (p. 14). In its simplest form, constructivism is concerned with the individual while constructionism is concerned with the collective. This research is concerned with both; however, it was the inclusion of focus groups in the collection of data that moved this research more towards constructionism. With this understanding I reference constructionist grounded theory, but acknowledge strong alignment with constructivist grounded theory articulated by Charmaz.

Methods for Research

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) noted, "the decision on which instrument (method) to use frequently follows from an important earlier decision on which kind (methodology) of research to undertake" (p. 129). Corbin and Strauss (2008) defined methods as "techniques and procedures for gathering and analyzing data" (p. 1). In this section, I proceed with a discussion of methods which includes the intent of qualitative research; the role of the researcher; data

collection and recording procedures; steps of data analysis; and, approaches for validating the data (Creswell, 2014, pp. 183-184).

Intent of Qualitative Research

Klenke (2016) stated, "fundamentally, qualitative research is a process of naturalistic inquiry that seeks in-depth understanding of social phenomenon within their natural setting or context" (p. 6). This highlights some of the core characteristics of qualitative research including collecting data in the natural setting and taking a holistic account of the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2014, pp. 185-186). Creswell (2014) also suggested several other core characteristics of qualitative research: researcher as key instrument for collection of data; gathering multiple forms of data; the use of inductive and deductive approaches in data analysis; focus on participants' meanings; reflexivity; and, flexibility in the research design (pp. 185-186). These core characteristics are evident in the sections that follow.

Role of the Researcher

My eclectic professional and educational background and my interest in, and more recently, concern for leadership in the academy brought me to this pursuit of knowledge related to decanal search processes. I have been asked why I care so deeply about decanal search processes given that my 25-plus year career at USask has been firmly planted in the administrative world. My response to this is two-fold. The last decade, spent in a senior role in human resources, provided me with a unique vantage point from which I witnessed both the best and worst of those appointed to decanal roles and I wondered how the same search processes could result in hiring leaders who did great things and leaders who were terribly destructive. I have also been both a search committee member and internal consultant to several searches for senior administrators. While I have never been part of a decanal search, all senior administrative

searches are subject to the same set of search and review procedures and I assumed my experience with senior administrative searches was not unique. These experiences raised questions for me about the way we do things—aka, culture (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 278) and caused me to think about what must change and the potential levers for change. In particular, might culture hold the key to unlocking insights that could inform a more refined way of identifying and recruiting deans? And how might constructive and critical insight gained from this research inform decanal search processes?

These particular research questions highlighted two important beliefs, or perhaps biases, that I brought to this research. The first was my belief that the current decanal search processes need to be "refined;" however, this was supported by evidence of high turnover in the academic deanship I observed at the University of Saskatchewan as well as the decanal literature. The few scholars who have published in this area often prefaced their reports with a statement regarding high turnover of deans at their institutions and acknowledgement of their concern in this regard (Harvey, Shaw, McPhail & Erickson, 2013; Twombly 1992). The second was my interest in gaining constructive, as well as critical, insight. This reflected my natural disposition to focus on what can be done to strengthen and build on the good that is already in the systems or processes which was reflected in my use of Appreciate Inquiry as part of my research methods.

I assumed my personal background and experiences would facilitate my access to research participants and that I was deemed to be trustworthy. However, Charmaz (2014) noted, "both interviewer and interview participants bring their own priorities, knowledge, and concerns to the interview situation which may not be entirely compatible" (p. 58). I had no way of knowing how compatible my priorities, knowledge and concerns would be with those of the research participants and I anticipated this might present a particular challenge for me depending

on my identity within the university. My move, over a decade ago, from a “quasi-academic” role and unit that worked closely with students and faculty to a purely “administrative” role and unit, had some academics commenting on my move as “going over to the dark side.” While I assumed compatibility and trustworthiness I appreciated that participants might question whose interests I actually represented (Charmaz, 2014, p. 58). My initial assumptions proved accurate and facilitated my access to research participants who deemed me to be trustworthy and were incredibly gracious with their time and forthright with the information they shared.

I have spent the majority of my career at USask and I am very much embedded in the culture of this place. I also had and have my own perceptions of decanal search processes which I constructed through my experience, my conversations with colleagues on the topic of academic leadership in general, and my own reading on this topic. Beyond biases and perceptions, I was aware of the need to consider how my background shaped the direction of the study. My background influenced the research questions, the methodology, and methods guiding this research and I have reflected on how my role in the study, personal background, culture and experiences have shaped interpretations and the meaning I ascribed to the data (Creswell, 2014, p. 186).

Data Collection

Creswell (2014) stated, “the data collection steps include setting boundaries for the study” (p. 189). This was consistent with the notion of bounding the case in case study research (Yin, 2018). Table 3.1 summarized the data collection that occurred.

Table 3.1
Summary of Data Collection

The case: decanal search processes	
The site: University of Saskatchewan	
Research participants: 23 individuals involved in a decanal search between 2014—2017 (inclusive) excluding student representatives and members of professional organizations.	
Sources of data:	Process for collecting data:
Interviews Focus Groups	Researcher as instrument: I, as the researcher, conducted the interview and focus groups

In this section, I articulate the boundaries for this study including defining the case, stating the site for the research (purposefully selected), identifying research participants (purposefully selected), determining how many research participants will be included (saturation), the multiple sources of data (interviews, focus groups), and the processes for collecting the data (researcher as instrument, memos).

Defining the Case of the Research

Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) distinguished between cases and populations and suggested researchers who subscribed to a constructivist epistemology would study particular cases or particular instances of a phenomenon whereas positivist researchers study sample populations (pp. 24-25). The case that was of interest to me was decanal search processes at the University of Saskatchewan. This case was of interest to me because of the monetary, morale, and productivity costs associated with high turnover rates noted in the literature and observed through my own experience. Further rationale for this study is elaborated in chapter one.

The Site for Research

Creswell (2014) noted, “the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites…that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research

questions" (p. 189). The site for this study was the University of Saskatchewan which was purposefully selected for three reasons.

First, the literature highlighted particular leadership dilemmas associated with traditional research universities (Drange, 2015). The University of Saskatchewan is a member of a group of universities known as the U15 (http://www.u15.ca) which all have research as core-to-mission. Alajoutsiijärvi and Kettunen (2016) characterized universities that have research as core-to-mission as traditional research universities (pp. 328-329). Attention to decanal search processes at a traditional research university might shed light on the leadership dilemmas associated with these types of universities. Second, the vast majority of my career has been spent at USask which is a traditional research university and it is this culture and context with which I am most familiar. And third, Charmaz (2014) observed, "the kind of data the researcher pursues depends on the topic and the access" (p. 23). One of the assumptions I made is that the relationships I had established over 25-plus years at USask would facilitate my access to research participants.

The Research Participants

The research participants for this study were purposefully selected and included those individuals involved in a decanal search between 2014 and 2017 (inclusive). This four-year period was a time of intense search activity as 13 of 17 deans and executive directors were newly appointed during this time. Five of the 13 searches that were chosen for this study somewhat reflected the diversity of the 17 colleges and schools (see Appendix A) within the University of Saskatchewan. These colleges and schools include those that train for careers in specific professions (Law, Engineering, Business) and various health sciences (Medicine, Nursing, Veterinary Medicine), graduate schools (Environment & Sustainability, Public Policy, Public

Health), as well as one college that provides education across the broad spectrum of arts and sciences (Arts & Science).

Decanal search committees at the University of Saskatchewan typically include: the Provost and Vice-President Academic or designate (chair); a member of the USask Board of Governors; the Vice-President Research or designate; one dean, vice-dean, or associate dean from a cognate unit; one member of the General Academic Assembly who is not a member of the faculty of the college and who holds a senior administrative position in the University; three members of the faculty of the college; one undergraduate student selected by the College's student society; one graduate student from a discipline taught in the college or school, selected by the GSA; and, one member of a related professional association selected by the professional association (*University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators*, 2011, pp. 41-42). For the purposes of this research, students and members of professional associations were excluded as research participants. The remaining members of decanal search committees were included as research participants in this study and I refer to these as the official members because they were there by virtue of official procedures.

The official members of decanal search committees had "voice and vote" so long as they participated fully in the search processes as outlined in *The Procedures* (2011). Their key function was to assess all of the information gathered on each candidate as the search processes evolved and to decide which candidates to advance through the search processes through to recommending candidate(s) for appointment. When I refer to "voice and vote" and am signaling that the official members of the search committees got to participate in the decisions related to advancing candidates up to and including the final recommendation for appointment. These

decisions involved some kind of "voting" mechanism and the formality of such appeared to be somewhat dependent on the dynamics within the search committee itself.

Beyond the official members of the search committee, I also included search consultants as research participants. Search consultants could be internal and/or external and were called upon to provide advice and guidance to the search committee. The *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) acknowledged, "search consultants are highly knowledgeable in their own right and if retained their services should be used in such a way that the committee receives maximum benefit from their expertise" (p. 35). The role of the search consultant varied, but typically included creating the candidate pool for the search, providing reference checks on one or more of the final candidates and/or providing guidance on legislated requirements such equity. These individuals have "voice, no vote" which I used to signal that, in theory, they do not participate in the decision-making processes. All of the decanal search processes that took place between 2014 and 2017 retained an external search consultant.

With the delimitations, as noted, I expected to have approximately 43 potential research participants. Search committee membership is considered public information and often, but not always, acknowledged in communication announcing the decanal appointment that is shared with the campus community. I gathered names of search committee members and consultants from the announcements and was able to identify 37 of the 43 potential research participants. At the end of the day, 23 individuals agreed to participate in this research.

Sources of Data

Creswell (2007) noted, "the backbone of qualitative research is extensive collection of data, typically from multiple sources of information" (p. 43). Creswell identified four basic

sources of information: interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials (p. 43). Interviews and focus groups were the main sources of information and were supplemented by some documentary evidence. These are all qualitative methods which Klenke (2016) stated "are consistent with and reflective of a social constructivist perspective, in which reality is best understood by studying the ways in which people perceive, experience, and make sense of the events of their lives" (p. 13). These methods of data collection are also consistent with both case study and constructionist grounded theory.

Yin (2018) outlined six sources of evidence "commonly found in case study research: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts" (p. 113). Charmaz (2014) noted, "grounded theorists increasingly use interviewing as their main tool for gathering data" (p. 22). Yin explicity acknowledged focus groups as the "group counterpart" to the single interview (p. 120). Charmaz did not explicitly reference focus groups as a tool for gathering data; however, I did not take this as a signal that the inclusion of focus groups would be precluded or in any way inappropriate.

Regardless of the source, my intent was to gather rich data which is described as "detailed, focused, and full. They reveal participants' views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 23). "Rich data get beneath the surface of social and subjective life" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 22). This is consistent with the overall purpose of my research which is to explore the culture of the decanal search process.

Process for Collecting Data

Charmaz (2014) noted, "grounded theory made the iterative practice of moving back and forth between data and analysis a common strategy in inductive qualitative inquiry" (p. 94). One of the defining features of grounded theory is the iterative process for collecting and analyzing

data. While I address them separately in this proposal for the purpose of clarity, collection and analysis of data did in fact move back and forth throughout my research, with one informing the other.

Creswell (2014) noted "qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behaviour, or interviewing participants" (p. 185). The researcher is the instrument in qualitative research. I conducted all of the interviews and focus groups myself in keeping with research in a qualitative paradigm.

Interviews. Charmaz (2014) advocated for intensive interviewing which is "a gentle-guided, one-sided conversation that explores research participants' perspective on their personal experience with the research topic" (p. 56). Charmaz identified key characteristics of intensive interviewing to include: selection of research participants who have first-hand experience with the research topic; in-depth exploration of experiences and situations; open-ended questions; detailed responses; understanding the perspective, meanings and experiences of the participant; following up on unanticipated information (p. 56). The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) interview exemplifies the characteristics of intensive interviewing identified by Charmaz; however, there are three aspects of the AI interview that make it unique and appropriate for this research. The first is alignment to constructionism. The constructionist principle is central to AI and states, in part, "human knowledge and organizational destiny are interwoven. We are constantly involved in understanding and making sense of the people and world around us" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 49). The second is alignment to grounded theory as "images of the future emerge out of grounded examples from an organization's positive past" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 29). The third aspect is the focus on searching for the best which reflected my natural disposition. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) stated "the uniqueness and power of an AI interview stem from

its fundamentally affirmative focus" (p. 25). The ways in which AI aligned to my methodology and to my personal views made it an appropriate philosophy on which to base the interview questions and incorporate into the focus group protocol.

The Appreciative Inquiry interview was adapted to guide the interviews. Interviews were conducted with research participants who were identified as chairs of each of the search committees and search consultants who supported decanal search processes. Individuals who received an invitation to participate in a focus group, but were unwilling and/or unable to do so were also granted a one-on-one interview if it was requested.

The AI interview protocol that guided conversations with chairs of search committees and search consultants are described in detail in the Appendices C and D. These appendices also include the e-mail invitation that was used to invite individuals to participate in an interview as well as the confirmation email, sent to participants approximately 24 hours prior to the interview. The confirmation email included the date, time and place of the interview, the tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes, and the consent form. Appendix E details the communication with research participants who were invited to participate in a focus group discussion, but were unwilling and/or unable.

Focus Groups. Charmaz (2014) stated, "a constructivist would emphasize eliciting the participant's definitions of terms, situations, and events and try to tap his or her assumptions, implicit meanings, and tacit rules" (p. 95). The goal of the focus groups will be to tap into both individual participant's and collective participants' assumptions, implicit meanings and tacit rules and to use these constructive and critical insights to inform the decanal search process.

Focus groups were identified as a unique, but appropriate, method for collecting data for this study. First and foremost, Morgan (1997) noted that, "the basic argument in favor of self-

contained focus groups is that they reveal aspects of experiences and perspectives that would not be as accessible without the group interaction" (p. 20). The use of focus groups aligned well with the constructionist focus of this research and presented an efficient way to gather data. Charmaz (2014) acknowledged grounded theorists typically use interviewing, ethnographic methods, and document analysis for gathering data. Introducing focus groups as a tool for *constructionist* grounded theorists to consider was one potential contribution of this research.

Search committees members were invited to participate in a focus group with those with whom they had served as part of a decanal search committee. I kept the focus groups "search-specific" as it was this group of individuals who had to come together to construct a collective understanding of decanal search processes and make a recommendation for appointment. Wenger (2016) suggested participating together in a process "refers to a process of taking part and also to the relations with other that reflect this process. It suggests both action and connection" (p. 55). Berger and Luckmann (1990) acknowledged that while individuals "cannot exist in everyday life without continually interacting and communicating with others….that the others have a perspective on the common world that is not identical with mine" (p. 23). Individuals came to decanal search committees with their own values, beliefs, and assumptions which both aided and hindered how they participated in navigating decanal search processes individually and collectively.

Morgan (1997) acknowledged an important question to consider when conducting focus groups is to ask "how actively and easily the participants would discuss the topic of interest" (p. 17). The *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators (2011*) identify the Provost and Vice-President Academic or designate as the chair of decanal search committees. Given the high likelihood of direct reporting relationships and the positional

authority of the Provost and Vice-President Academic, chairs of the search committees were excluded from the focus groups to ensure participants felt comfortable discussing the topic of interest. The chairs were invited to participate in this research through individual interviews as previously noted.

The Appreciative Inquiry interview protocol was adapted to guide the focus group discussion. The AI focus group protocol is described in detail in the Appendix B. This appendix also includes the e-mail invitation that was used to invite individuals to participate in a focus group as well as the confirmation email, sent to participants approximately 24 hours prior to the focus group. Each participant received a confirmation email that included the date, time and place of the focus group, the tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes, and the consent form.

Number of interviews and focus groups. Charmaz (2014) identified three presuppositions on which the question of how many interviews rests. First is the presupposition that the number of interviews relates somehow to standards with more interviews being associated with higher standards of research performance. The second presupposition is that a concrete number of interviews can be specified by experts. The third presupposition is that experts would agree on the same concrete number (Charmaz, 2014, p. 105). I conducted interviews with 14 research participants who I identified as search consultants to decanal search processes, chairs of the search committees being investigated and research participants from the focus groups who requested an interview.

While the same presuppositions could be applied to focus groups, Morgan (1997) noted that the rule of thumb in determining the number of focus groups is three to five for any one project (p. 43). The basis for this rule of thumb "comes from the claim that more groups seldom

provide meaningful new insights" (Morgan, 1997, p. 43). Morgan acknowledged that this is another way of expressing what Glaser and Strauss (1967) described as "saturation" or the point at which additional data collection no longer generates new understanding. Focus groups were convened in three of the five searches selected for inclusion in this research and included those I identified as official members of the search committee, subject to stated limitations.

Data Analysis

Yin (2018) stated, "the analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed aspects of doing case studies" (p. 165). Yin also acknowledged, "much depends on a researcher's own style of rigorous empirical thinking, along with the sufficient presentation of evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations" (p. 165). In an effort to bring some rigour to case study analysis, Yin articulated four strategies to consider in case study data analysis. The four strategies are: relying on theoretical propositions, working your data from the "ground up," developing a case description, and examining plausible rival explanations (pp. 168-174). The data from this study were analyzed using the tools of grounded theory including, but not limited to creating codes from the data, the use of sensitizing concepts, employing constant comparative methods, and the use of memos. Data were analyzed independently both by me, as the researcher, and by a professional researcher I contracted through the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR) at the University of Saskatchewan. We each used the tools of grounded theory, but used different tools in different ways. In this section, I provide a brief overview of the tools of grounded theory and follow with how these tools were actually used in the analysis of the data.

Tools of Grounded Theory: Coding

Charmaz (2014) acknowledged "the lines between what constitute data collection and what constitutes analysis blur" (p. 93). With that in mind, there are two phases of coding that are fundamental to grounded theory: initial coding and focused coding. Charmaz stated, "during initial coding, we study fragments of data—words, lines, segments, and incidents—closely for their analytic import" (p. 109). Focused coding is the second major phase of coding. Charmaz noted, "while engaging in focused coding, we typically concentrate on what we define as the most useful initial codes and then we test them against extensive data" (p. 138). Theoretical coding is a third type of coding which "is a sophisticated level of coding that follows the codes you have selected during focused coding" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 150). Not all grounded theory analysis necessarily involves theoretical coding. Charmaz noted, "used wisely, theoretical codes can help you specify possible relationships between categories you have developed through focused coding. When merely applied, they impose a framework on your analysis and may encase it in an esoteric jargon" (p. 150). Because the goal of this research was not to generate theory, initial coding and focused coding were adapted and employed. Theoretical coding was not used.

Initial Coding

There are three ways to approach initial coding of data. One way, preferred by phenomenologists is word-by-word coding (Charmaz, 2014, p. 124) which is literally coding word-by-word. Another is incident-with-incident coding where "you compare incident with incident, then as your ideas take hold, compare incidents to your conceptualization of incidents coded earlier" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 128). The third alternative is line-by-line coding. Charmaz (2014) suggested "line-by-line coding works particularly well with detailed data about

fundamental empirical problems or processes, whether these data consist of interviews, observations, documents, or ethnographies and autobiographies" (p. 125). Line-by-line coding was loosely employed in my own data analysis as it best aligned to the data that was collected. Charmaz (2014) also observed, "line-by-line coding frees you from becoming so immersed in your research participants' views that you accept them without question" (p. 127). This was particularly important for me as I have been embedded in the culture of the university for 25-plus years and needed to be aware of accepting the same assumptions as the research participants' and reproducing them in my research.

As indicated, the purpose of this study was to explore the culture of decanal search processes in one traditional research university. Charmaz (2014) observed that "by studying the data and following leads you find in them you make fundamental processes explicit, render hidden assumptions visible, and give participants new insights" (p. 133). Charmaz might just as easily have suggested studying the data and following leads that you find you will make the culture visible. This exemplifies yet another connection between initial coding and the purpose of this research.

Focused Coding

Charmaz (2014) stated, "engaging in focused coding brings you further into the comparative process" (p. 140). It is difficult to determine when focused coding begins and Charmaz (2014) acknowledged, "the move from initial to focused coding is often seamless" (p. 141). Charmaz (2014) observed that focused codes are often more conceptual and analytical than initial codes. As well, "we think of focused coding as following initial coding. But moving to focused coding is not entirely a linear process" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 141). There must be sufficient initial codes to contemplate and focused coding often begins with noticing initial codes

that appear frequently, but it does not end there. Focused coding may result in revisiting existing data in light of the new code and/or new questions that require further data analysis. Focused coding was also employed as a data analysis tool in an effort to make sense, so to speak, of the initial coding.

Tools of Grounded Theory: Constant Comparative Methods

Grounded theory uses the constant comparative method in the analysis of data. The purpose of constant comparative methods is to "establish analytic distinctions—and thus make comparisons at each level of analytic work" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 132). Comparisons may be made within data which would suggest comparing data within one search and/or across data which would suggest comparing data across searches. Comparison can also be made across time if appropriate; this is particularly useful if research participants are engaged more than once. Charmaz (2014) stated "our task is to make analytic sense of the material which may challenge taken-for-granted understandings, and grounded theory strategies lead you to remain engaged in comparative analysis to test your ideas" (p. 132). Once again, the reference to revealing "taken-for-granted understanding" enhanced my confidence in using the tools of grounded theory in the data analysis.

Tools of Grounded Theory: Memos

Memos were written following each interview and focus group in order to provide insights and windows into the data analysis.

Actual Data Analysis

Data consisted of transcripts from three focus groups and 14 interviews. Recordings of the focus groups and interviews were transcribed by the CHASR. As I received transcripts from the CHASR I reviewed them for accuracy prior to sending them out to the research participants

for their review. All but one research participant consented to release of the transcripts as presented. The one individual who did not consent felt they had been far too forthright with me during the interview and was not comfortable having their reflections included in the study.

The iterative nature of the data collection and analysis occurred naturally via the timing of interviews and focus groups and resulting transcription of the recordings. While I did not change the interview or focus group protocols during the course of my data collection, I found myself listening for language that would suggest similarities and/or differences within and across the searches. I captured what I perceived to be similarities and differences, as well as my own musings, in memos which provided further insight as I analyzed the data. Data were also analyzed for corroboration by a CHASR qualitative research professional, impartial to the research, to ensure cohesive and congruent understanding between interview and focus group dialogue and themes arrived at.

CHASR professional data analysis. The CHASR professional executed multiple passes of the data, each with a different agenda. Broad-based categorization was first applied in order to establish collections of data pieces. These data pieces were initial codes to digitally 'flag' that which was deemed meaningful to the research questions that could be further interrogated and determined as substantively connected or not. A secondary pass at the data consisted of scanning and locating poignant quotes driving the conversation applicable to the research question(s) and exercising axial coding (to digitally articulate properties and dimensions of categories) in a manner consistent with grounded theory (Saldaña, 2013). After that, final coding took the initial broad categories and reorganized, split or submerged themes or sub-themes and placed data instances in their most appropriate categories (Creswell, 2013). This step involved delving into the broad nodes and determining the most appropriate placement of earlier coding.

The aim of the data analysis was to remain inductively close to the data and the constructed and social meanings that cultivated individual experiences, and apply categorization only as needed to organize ideas and avoid premature and early temptations to code data into specific categories (Creswell, 2013). It is important to note that all quotes extracted for analysis were generated directly from participant language. In other words, in efforts to stay true to the constructed meanings brought forth by participants, their words and their wording only were flagged and coded. Interviewer wording was only embedded to give context to verbatim dialogue where necessary and is clearly identified.

Researcher data analysis. I began my data analysis coding using the interview and focus group questions as sensitizing concepts. Charmaz stated, "sensitizing concepts can provide a place to start inquiry, not to end it" (p. 31). Sensitizing concepts can come from the literature or theoretical frameworks. I used the interview and focus group questions, which reflected the literature and the tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes, as sensitizing concepts.

As each transcript was reviewed, I highlighted phrases that I felt were particularly salient to the question that was asked and I began to capture the essence of these phrases with a word or words. This was my version of initial coding. The highlighted phrases were then transferred to a separate document for further analysis. Considering the highlighted phrases out of the context of the original transcript provided another perspective from which I began to make analytic decisions that resulted in not just more focused ideas or codes, but also the references that best reflected those ideas or codes. This analysis resulted in a refined set of codes that reflected ideas and concepts I felt most authentically represented the voices of the research participants.

Once I reached this stage, I compared the data coded by the CHASR research professional against the sensitizing concepts to test the ideas that had emerged for me. In particular, I was interested in exploring whether phrases that resonated with me had been referenced to a code by the research professional and if so, whether the code to which the reference had been assigned was similar to or different from the code I assigned. What I observed was that while we may have used different words there was a great deal of congruence between what the codes represented. There was also a great deal of congruence between the phrases that resonated with me and the references the research professional coded. This increased my confidence that my data analysis was not being unduly influenced by my own knowledge, experience, and biases.

At the next stage of refinement, all of the codes and phrases assigned to the codes that had emerged from the data analysis done by both me and the research professional were reviewed and themes were developed. This process was repeated for each of the 13 transcripts for which I had received consent to include in my research.

Upon completion of this work, I moved to comparing themes that were generated for transcripts within a search (search-specific) as well as themes that were generated across the five searches. I reviewed the memos written at the end of each interview or focus group to help me reflect on how much my own knowledge, experiences, and biases found their way into the data analysis. The memos revealed that much of what I captured immediately following interviews and focus groups was reflected in my data analysis. I took this consistency as some indication that I continued to listen and honour the voices of the participants throughout the data analysis processes.

The role of software. The analysis undertaken by the CHASR research professional was digitally facilitated with NVivo 12 Pro (qualitative analysis software) developed by QSR International (2018). A myriad of NVivo features were utilized including: a flexible node hierarchy where coding to different thematic levels could be rearranged as analysis unfolded yet different phases or rounds of coding could be retained; matrix coding queries were used to explore overlap in coding among two or more items, framework matrices, word frequencies and text searches were employed to view how frequently single concepts were discussed within and across searches. Coding helped organize data and use of annotations and memos allowed the tracking of analytic curiosities. Eventually the CHASR research professional was able to build a sense of individual cases and possible connections among parts of the dataset (linkages between phenomena within one search or linkages between phenomena across searches) and even collective wholes (thematic categories and patterns across different cases) (Creswell, 2013).

Eventually the codes for the data came to be housed in a hierarchy of "parent" and "child" codes representing overarching themes and sub-themes (aspects or qualities encapsulating each larger theme). The resulting hierarchy included twelve parent codes and over 100 child codes. The number of references attributed to the parent codes ranged from five to 995 and the number of references attributed to child codes ranged from two to 144. It should be noted that high frequency references did not necessarily correspond to a more important code, but rather that some references may have been more prominent in the data given how often it was discussed relative to other topics. Enlisting a colleague check on the data mitigated potential biases by having a qualitative research professional external to the project check for representativeness and help the researcher move from particularities to generalities with coding

motivated more in descriptive relevance (Miles & Huberman, 1994), rather than theoretical immersion.

Coding done by the CHASR professional and my own coding were compared and contrasted over a series of in-person and online meetings to ensure participant viewpoints were acknowledged and interpreted cohesively. The resulting hierarchy generated by the CHASR professional reflected many of the same themes that resulted from my own data analysis.

Trustworthiness of Research

Schwandt (2015) stated "trustworthiness was defined as that quality of an investigation (and its findings) that made it noteworthy to audiences" (p. 308). Trustworthiness may be defined as the quality of an investigation, but the question that must be answered is how is that quality assessed? Lincoln and Guba (1985) asked, "how can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue?" (p. 290). In response, Lincoln and Guba proposed criteria that they believed fit better with naturalistic inquiry than the conventional criteria.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated, "there is no question that the naturalist is at least as concerned with trustworthiness as is the conventional inquirer. We say "at least" because it is precisely on the point of trustworthiness that the naturalistic investigator is most often attacked" (p. 294). In fact, naturalistic inquirers may try to avoid this attack by listing their orientation (naturalistic, qualitative) as a limitation of their research.

Klenke (2016) suggested "key issues in discussions about quality and rigor of qualitative research may be summarized by three distinct positions" (p. 37). The first position is for qualitative researchers to simply adopt positivistic criteria; the second position is to establish

distinct and separate criteria to ensure the quality of qualitative studies; and, the third position is to reject all predetermined quality criteria (Klenke, 2016, pp. 37-38). The early work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) is cited as an example of the second position and the following paragraphs attempt to summarize this work.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested, "criteria defined from one perspective may not be appropriate for judging actions taken from another perspective" (p. 293). Lincoln and Guba did not take issue with the questions underlying the establishment of criteria for trustworthiness and stated that the questions were "also appropriate to ask of naturalistic inquiry" (p. 218). What they did take issue with was applying the conventional criteria formulated in response to the questions—internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity—to naturalistic inquiry.

The questions underlying the establishment of the criteria for trustworthiness to which Lincoln and Guba referred included: how to establish confidence in the "truth" of findings (truth value); how to determine the degree to which findings may have applicability in other contexts or with other respondents (applicability); how to determine whether findings would be consistent if replicated with similar respondents in a similar contexts (consistency); and, how to establish the degree to which findings stem from the respondents and the context and not the inquirer (neutrality) (p. 290). In response to these questions, Lincoln and Guba (1985) established criteria appropriate to the naturalistic paradigm which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Descriptions of these four criteria along with suggestions on how to meet them are addressed below.

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested in order to demonstrate the "truth value" the researcher must show they have represented multiple constructions of reality adequately, that is

they are “credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities” (p. 296). To demonstrate credibility, the inquiry must be carried out in such a way that “the probability that the findings will be found to be credible is enhanced and…having them [the findings] approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied” (p. 296). Prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation are three activities Lincoln and Guba suggest increase the likelihood that credible findings will be produced (p. 301). Each of these activities was considered in this research.

Prolonged engagement relates to spending sufficient time at the site of the inquiry to understand the culture, be able to detect distortion or misinformation, and establish trust. I have been immersed in the culture of USask for over 25 years and have also made the study of culture part of my formal academic work. Part of the rationale for choosing the University of Saskatchewan as the site for this research was precisely because of my familiarity with the culture. I assumed that my name recognition and good reputation at the University of Saskatchewan would both limit intentional distortions and misinformation and that I would be deemed trustworthy by participants. Persistent observation is intended to “identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). The iterative nature of data collection and data analysis associated with grounded theory is, in and of itself, a form of persistent observation. Triangulation refers to the act of checking constructions, inferences, themes, or assertions being considered by the researcher from more than one vantage point (Schwandt, 2015, p. 307). The vantage points might be multiple and/or different data sources, methods, investigators, or theories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 305-307). The variety of data

sources and data analysis tools, including independent coding by a third party, provided the opportunity to check construction, interferences, themes and assertions that I made.

Peer debriefing is suggested as a way to establish credibility by engaging the researcher in analytic reflections. In a peer debriefing session, "the inquirer's biases are probed, meanings explored, the basis for interpretations clarified….the task of the debriefer is to be sure that the investigator is as fully aware of his or her posture and process as possible" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 308). Peer debriefing occurred through inviting discussions with my academic and professional colleagues who were familiar with the area of inquiry and/or the methodological issues associated with qualitative research.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted, "member checking is both informal and formal, and it occurs continuously" (p. 314). Informal member checking occurred "in the moment" during the interviews and focus groups and I was conscious of asking for clarity and/or paraphrasing my understanding so that I was not making assumptions. Formal member checking occurred through providing transcripts from the interviews and focus groups to research participants and inviting them to acknowledge the accuracy of their comments. Questions of accuracy were resolved by returning to the original recordings and/or providing participants the opportunity to clarify their comments. Guba and Lincoln (1989) stated, "member-checking processes ought to be dedicated to verifying that the constructions collected are those that have been offered by respondents" (p. 241). This statement guided member-checking processes used in this research.

Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested determining the degree to which findings may have applicability in other contexts or with other respondents is the responsibility of the person seeking to make an application elsewhere. Lincoln and Guba stated, "the original inquirer cannot

know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do" (p. 298). Further, "the responsibility of the original investigator ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgements possible" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 298). In part, providing a comprehensive description of the context was intended to situate this research such that others are able to determine the applicability in other contexts.

Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested consistency is a key concept undergirding the conventional definition of reliability which is typically demonstrated through replication of findings using similar inquiry processes under similar conditions (pp. 298-299). Lincoln and Guba established dependability as the criteria that responds to the questions of consistency in natural inquiry. Schwandt (2015) noted, dependability is "focused on the process of the inquiry and the inquirer's responsibility for ensuring that the process was logical, traceable, and documented (p. 309). Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggested "the technique for documenting the logic of process and method decisions is the dependability audit" (p. 242). In the course of a dependability audit an external examiner explores the extent to which the process is established, trackable and documented. Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out, since there can be not credibility without dependability, as demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter (p. 316). Consultation with my supervisor throughout this study negated the need for a dependability audit. Together we ensured that I followed the steps necessary to ensure the dependability criterion was met. This included, but was not limited to, clearly and carefully documenting decisions I made and articulating data collection and analysis methods utilized.

Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested a qualitative definition of objectivity which "removes the emphasis from the investigator…and places it where…it ought more logically to be: on the data themselves" (p. 300). The issue now becomes whether or not the data are confirmable (p. 300). Guba and Lincoln (1989) stated that assurances that findings are rooted in the data "means that the data…can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit in the narrative of a case study" (p. 243). Guba and Lincoln suggested the confirmability audit and dependability audit can, and should, be carried out together. Consultation with my supervisor again negated the need for a confirmability audit. The interview and focus group transcripts were paginated separately and a schema for referencing data was developed in consultation with my supervisor.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted one final technique that has broad-ranging application all four of the aforementioned criteria; that technique is the reflexive journal. The reflexive journal "records a variety of information about *self* (hence the term reflexive) and *method*" (p. 327). Schwandt (2015) noted, "reflexivity can be a means for critically inspecting the entire research process….reflexivity understood in this way is held to be a very important procedure for establishing the ***validity*** of accounts of social phenomenon" (p. 268). Memoing is a concept that originated in grounded theory and continues to be important in that context. Memos are "primarily used as a means of recoding the researcher's ideas on paper and then using those memos for reflection and analysis" (Schwandt, 2015, p. 197). Memos were used in this research as a form of reflexivity.

Authenticity of Research

Guba and Lincoln (1989) referred to the criteria of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability as "*parallel* or *foundational*, criteria because they are intended to parallel the rigor criteria that have been used within the conventional paradigm for many years" (p. 233). In later work, Guba and Lincoln (1989) advanced a second set of criteria called "'authenticity criteria' which spring directly from constructivism's own basic assumptions" (p. 245). The rationale for this was two-fold. First, Guba and Lincoln observed parallel criteria, "have their roots and origins in positivist assumptions" (p. 245). While adjustments were made for the different assumptions underlying the naturalist paradigm, "there remains a feeling of continuing to play 'in the friendly confines' of the opposition's home court" (p. 245). Second, Guba and Lincoln noted parallel criteria "are primarily *methodological* criteria. That is they speak to *methods* that can ensure one has carried out the process correctly" (p. 245). This is insufficient for naturalistic inquiry because "relying solely on criteria that speak to methods…leaves an inquiry vulnerable to questions regarding whether stakeholder rights were in fact honoured" (p. 245). The authenticity criteria, based directly on assumptions of constructivism, included fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, pp. 245-250). Descriptions of these five criteria along with how I met them are addressed below.

Fairness

Fairness is the "extent to which different construction and their underlying value structures are solicited and honored" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 245). Fairness addresses the quality of balance and different constructions that must be presented and taken into account in the emergent construction. Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggested fairness may be achieved through

an audit trail that identifies all potential stakeholders and seeks out their constructions in the final analysis (p. 246). I was conscious of ensuring that I did not rely on data from particular searches and/or interview or focus groups, but rather brought forward data that reflected majority and minority views.

Ontological authenticity

Guba and Lincoln (1989) stated ontological authenticity relates to the extent to which individual research participants' own constructions are more informed and more sophisticated as a result of their participation in the research (p. 248). Ontological authenticity relates to worldview and is determined by an assessment of the extent to which research participants can attest that they have gained new understanding of or appreciation for the issues relevant to the study. Guba and Lincoln suggested testimony from research participants and reviewing the audit trail for "progressive subjectivity" are ways in which ontological authenticity may be assessed (p. 248). Research participants were asked to reflect on any insights they might have gained as a result of the interview or focus group. Responses to this suggested that most research participants did indeed gain new understanding of or appreciation for the issues relevant to the study.

Educative Authenticity

Guba and Lincoln (1989) stated, "educative authenticity represents the extent to which individual respondents' understanding of and appreciation for the construction of others outside their stakeholder group are enhanced" (p. 248). Educative authenticity relates to building awareness and appreciation of the construction of others. As with ontological authenticity, Guba and Lincoln suggested testimony from research participants and reviewing the audit trail for entries related to increased awareness and appreciation of others are ways in which educative authenticity may be assessed (p. 249). In this research, the focus groups were deliberately

comprised of the different stakeholder groups represented on search committees. It was within the focus groups that research participants reported increased awareness and appreciation of others understanding of decanal search processes. I also observed "aha" moments in the focus groups and interviews that suggested educative authenticity was achieved.

Catalytic Authenticity

Guba and Lincoln (1989) stated catalytic authenticity "may be defined as the extent to which action is stimulated and facilitated" (p. 249). Catalytic authenticity is concerned with moving from theory to action. Catalytic authenticity in this research may be assessed by the extent to which constructive and critical insights gained from research participants inform the decanal search process. During the latter stages of this study, I was able to offer refinements to senior administrator search processes, in general, based on what I was learning. Some of these suggestions have, in fact, been taken up which would suggest that this research has already stimulated and facilitated action. There has also been interest expressed by members of the board of governors in learning more about my research once I have successfully defended this dissertation.

Tactical Authenticity

Guba and Lincoln (1989) stated, "tactical authenticity refers to the degree to which stakeholders and participants are empowered to act" (p. 250). Comments from research participants suggested that they would feel empowered to act, and what that action might look like, should the opportunity arise. For example, some research participants noted they would be less deferential to those search committee members who had more power. A chair also asked themselves why they didn't reach out to all short-listed candidates to thank them for their interest

and participation in the processes—particularly as there is nothing to preclude this, but we seem content to leave it in the hands of the search consultant.

In summary, parallel criteria were used to determine trustworthiness and authenticity criteria were used to assess authenticity—both of which are important in research that has a constructionist ontology and epistemology.

Ethics for this Study

An *Application for Behavioural Research Ethics Review* was submitted upon successful defense of the research proposal. The most recent *Certificate for Re-Approval* can be found in Appendix F.

Given that the partipcants for this research were a small group of people, some of whom were known to each other and might be identifiable on the basis of their comments, extra care was given to addressing anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity and confidentiality were, of course, addressed in the *Application for Behavioural Research Ethics Review.* I also made sure that both the invitation to participate and the consent form clearly stated that I could offer confidentiality, but not anonymity. Opportunities were provided for research participants to review transcripts of focus groups and interviews and add, alter, or delete information attributed to them. Research participants were also aware of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. After the data/transcript release forms were duly signed, I assigned each search and transcript a number. Searches were simply referred to as S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5 and did not reflect any particular order. Transcripts associated with each search were assigned a cardinal number (1, 2, 3, etc.). These numbers did not identify whether the transcript was from a focus group or an individual interview. Direct quotes were attributed to the search and the transcript (S1.1) without attribution to the research participant.

Summary of Chapter Three

It is important that the methods are congruent with the paradigm in which the research is grounded and I took care to ensure that the "purposes, questions, and methods of research are all interconnected and interrelated" (Creswell, 2007, p. 42). To summarize: this was qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Klenke, 2016); underpinned by philosophical assumptions (ontology, epistemology, human nature, methodology) that situated me in an interpretive paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979); the process of research included case study (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007) and constructionist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2009). Techniques and procedures (method) for gathering and analyzing data for this study were described and the section concluded with approaches for validating the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) in an interpretive paradigm.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

I was fortunate to have a rich set of data but not everything that was captured will, nor necessarily should be, reported in this chapter. My intent is to report the most salient findings versus everything that was uttered in the course of my data collection. Figure 4.1 provides a visual representation of the chapter and highlights the content that forms each of the three sections.

Figure 4.1.
Overview of Chapter Four

Context for the Study
- *Purpose, Participants, Data Collection, Data Analysis*
- *Governance*
- *USask before and after 2014*
- *The Deanship*
- *The Colleges: Current State*

The Data: Search Specific
- *S1: Legacy*
- *S2: Tensions*
- *S3: Perceptions and Power*
- *S4: Structured Chaos*
- *S5: Collegial Decision Making*
- *Researcher's Endnote: Reflections on Outcomes*

The Data: The Players
- *The Faculty, the Chair, the External Search Consultant*
- *The President*
- *The President's Executive Committee (PEC)*

The Data: The Processes
- *Decide to Search*
- *Contract Search Consultant*
- *Convene Search Committee*
- *Create Search Documents*
- *Gather and Assess Information*
- *Rank and Recommend Candidates*

Summary: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly
- *The Good*
- *The Bad*
- *The Ugly*

What you will see in the following pages is the context that situated this study, a presentation of the data analysis by search, the players in search, and the processes of search. At the end of the chapter I will look back and pull out the good, the bad and the ugly elements of search; this will provide a summary to the chapter.

Each of these sections connected to an aspect and view of culture that contemplated not only "the way we do things" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 278) but also considered why we do the things we do and who has the power to influence both the way and the why we do the things we do. I will return to a discussion of culture in decanal search processes in chapter five.

Context for the Study

Prior to presenting the data and findings, I offer the context for the study including a brief summary of the purpose, participants, data collection and data analysis. Following this is a short section on governance, a description of the University of Saskatchewan before and after 2014, commentary on the deanship and context for the colleges that were selected for inclusion in this research. References from the informants as well as documentary data are included; the documentary data added legitimacy to my own perceptions and understandings of these contextual pieces.

Purpose, Participants, Data Collection, Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to explore the culture of decanal search processes in one traditional research university. This research was conducted within a qualitative paradigm adapting constructionist grounded theory and case study. The vast majority of data for this research came from informants and was gathered in focus groups and one-on-one interviews; however, some data was also document based. Research participants included those who had a

role in the identification and recruitment of academic deans through participation on or support to a decanal search committee.

All participants were provided with a tentative conceptualization of how culture might play out in a decanal search process. All participants were asked to unpack the elements of the search process in the USask search in which they participated with the exception of the search consultants who were asked to unpack the elements of a particularly memorable search which may or may not have been a USask search. While perhaps overly simplistic, what the tentative conceptualization revealed was the actual complexity of decanal search processes. As is so often the case with culture the real story lies beneath the surface in what is unwritten and assumed.

Thirteen decanal searches took place during 2014—2017 (inclusive). The data set for this research included five searches that somewhat reflected the diversity of the 17 colleges and schools (see Appendix A) within the University of Saskatchewan which include those that train for careers in specific professions (Law, Engineering, Business) and various health sciences (Medicine, Nursing, Veterinary Medicine), graduate schools (Environment & Sustainability, Public Policy, Public Health), as well as one college that provides education across the broad spectrum of arts and sciences (Arts & Science).

The data gathered for each search varied but included at least one transcript from a focus group, an interview with an individual invited to participate in a focus group but who was unwilling and/or unable to do so, or an interview with the chair of the search committee. The result of this was that I gained more insight from some searches than others, depending on the data. In particular, I noticed that the searches in which I was able to convene a focus group and the searches in which a variety of search committee members participated provided particularly

rich data. Interviews with two search consultants rounded out the data set but were considered separately as they did not relate to a specific USask search.

I began my data analysis coding using the interview and focus group questions as sensitizing concepts as they reflected the themes I was interested in analyzing. I also contracted with the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR) at USask to have the transcripts coded independent of the interview and focus group questions. I adapted a constant comparative approach to my own data analysis as well as between my data analysis and that done by the CHASR research professional. Each view of the data generated insights and helped reinforce the analysis presented in this chapter.

University of Saskatchewan Governance

This study took place on the main campus of the University of Saskatchewan which is located on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Métis in Saskatoon, SK Canada. The University of Saskatchewan is a member of a group of universities known as the U15 (http://www.u15.ca). Member institutions of the U15 all have research as core-to-mission and would be characterized as traditional research universities according to the typology suggested by Alajoutsijärvi and Kettunen (2016). The University of Saskatchewan is comprised of 17 colleges and schools which includes the Library and the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. A dean or executive director, who is typically appointed to a five-year term, heads each college or school. A second five-year term is possible; however, it involves different processes that are outside the scope of this study.

The *Academic and Curricular Nomenclature Policy* (2017) defines a college as:

> an organizational unit of the university, the faculty council of which is assigned the general responsibility for the development and delivery of programs and courses leading

to degrees, certificates, diplomas and other forms of recognition approved by the university and for matters of scholarship and discipline relating to the students enrolled therein.

The dean of a college is an officer of the university with duties and authority described in *The University of Saskatchewan Act* (1995).

A university-level school is governed by a faculty council and carries a status that is similar to a college, with the head of the school having a status similar to a dean. (https://policies.usask.ca/policies/academic-affairs/nomenclature-report.php, Section I: Organizational Definitions)

The University of Saskatchewan was in a period of intense search activity from 2014—2017 (inclusive); 13 of 17 deans and executive directors were newly appointed during this time. All searches for senior administrators, which includes deans, are governed by the *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011). *The Procedures* fall under the authority of and are formally approved by the Board of Governors, but review and revision of this document falls to a Joint Committee that includes representatives from both the Board of Governors and University Council (often referred to as the Senate in bicameral governance structures). This is in accordance with a Letter of Understanding between the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association dated 2003.

USask Before and After 2014

Prior to 2014, the University of Saskatchewan had experienced a period of stability within the executive suite. As one participant noted, “we had stability with Peter MacKinnon and

then we went through a period of time where that stability was lost" (S2.1, p. 7). The same participant also noted the consequence of losing that stability:

> why would somebody step into that if they didn't see where the institution was going? Until you have people at those most senior levels who can articulate their vision and what we're going to do as an institution and be the storyteller for where we're going, it's hard for people to attach to that. (S2.1, p. 7)

This instability played out differently from one search to the next and more in some searches than others.

Peter MacKinnon was installed as the university's eighth president and vice-chancellor in 1999 and served in that role until 2012. The provost, Michael Atkinson, joined the University of Saskatchewan in 1997 and served two five-year terms punctuated by a one-year administrative leave; the provost's second term finished in 2007. Not only was there stability, but this particular combination of president and provost seemed to complement one another extremely well. My perception of this relationship, gleaned from opportunities to work closely with both the president and the provost, individually and together, was that they shared a common vision for the University of Saskatchewan, they were very clear about each of their roles and the authority of said roles and they communicated regularly. There also appeared to be a strong personal relationship and a great deal of trust. Additional evidence of this positive personal and professional relationship can be found in the opening chapters of the book *University Leadership and Public Policy in the Twenty-First Century: A President's Perspective* which Peter MacKinnon wrote and published upon leaving the president's office.

Ernie Barber was named interim provost and vice-president academic for the year 2007—2008 and Brett Fairbairn was named provost and vice-president academic in 2008. Ilene

Busch-Vishniac succeeded Peter MacKinnon and was installed as the University of Saskatchewan's ninth president and vice-chancellor on July 1, 2012.

Beyond the president and provost, the vice-president finance and resource portfolio and the vice-president research portfolio had and continue to have relatively stable leadership. Tony Whitworth served as vice-president finance and resources from 1994 until his retirement in 2005. Richard Florizone succeeded Tony Whitworth and served from 2005—2013 when he was appointed president at Dalhousie University. Greg Fowler has been in this role since 2013. The vice-president research role was created in 1997 and Michael Corcoran served as vice-president from 1997 until his retirement in 2002. Steven Franklin succeeded Michael Corcoran and served from 2003—2008 when he was appointed president at Trent University. Karen Chad served in this role from 2008—2021. Baljit Singh began his tenure as vice-president research in February 2021.

In May 2014, the University of Saskatchewan became the focus of national and international media attention after the executive director of the School of Public Health was terminated for "acting contrary to the expectations of his leadership role" (On Campus News, May 23, 2014, Vol 21, Issue 18). The termination applied to both the executive director role and the individual's tenured faculty position. While the tenured faculty position was quickly reinstated the damage was done as the public raised concerns about tenure, academic freedom, and the university's leadership, vision and values. With alarming speed, the provost resigned and the president, who had served less than two years of her term, was removed. An interim provost and interim president were named, but the upheaval had created an element of uncertainty at the university that lasted for several years. The current president, Peter Stoicheff, was appointed October 2015, but it would take another two years to appoint Tony Vannelli as provost and vice-

president academic. As of this writing, the president has been renewed and will serve a second five-year term. Dr. Vannelli resigned from his position, citing family reasons, effective August 1, 2020—three years to the day from when he started. Dr. Airini began her tenure as provost and vice-president academic in February 2021.

Research participants reflected on the 2014—2017 time period and the impact of the instability on candidate pools and actual decisions of whom to recommend for appointment. The University of Saskatchewan's reputation as a desirable place to work in general was negatively impacted, but more specifically, the university was not seen as a hospitable place to come and take on a leadership role if you were external to the university. As well, in the aftermath of the loss of the president, provost, and at least two other senior leaders following the events of 2014, there seemed to be a desire for calm and a greater tendency towards appointment of candidates who were well-known internally.

The following comments reflected the damage to both the institution and the people who were left behind in the aftermath:

> I'm pretty sure that there were candidates—external—who could've been good candidates who didn't put their names forward because they were unsure about whether or not the university was a place they wanted to work….and I would say a strong uncertainty about how open the institution was to external candidates. I think we went through a period of time where lots of people would have concluded…if you're from away, don't go to the University of Saskatchewan to be a leader. (S1.3, p. 12)
>
> The other thing that was on the front burner was TransformUS [program prioritization exercise] and the loss of the president and provost and [other] senior leadership. People were really pretty PTSD…If there was any narrative that allowed the not talked about to be

articulated, the narrative would have been, 'We need healing. We need restored morale. We need time of calm. And that started factoring into the candidate selection.' (S1.2, pp. 4-5)

The conversations had within the focus groups and interviews reflected varied remembrances of this time and, having spoken of USask before and after 2014 generally, I will include further commentary only if it is relevant to something more specific.

Of course, there were other factors that may have contributed to the behaviours observed during the 2014—2017 time period. For example, transition to responsibility centre management (RCM), lingering opposition to focus on research intensiveness at the expense of being "the peoples' university", enrolment challenges, maturation of integrated planning to the place where "vertical" cuts could become the norm, reduction in non-targeted government funding, and increased competitiveness of universities to name a few (E. Barber, personal communication, November 26, 2021). However, research participants may or may not have been aware of these other factors and/or they were not perceived as significant as the very public turnover in senior leadership.

The Deanship

As noted previously, I have yet to come across a scholar, publishing in this area, who has offered a contrary view on the importance of the position of academic deans within their organizations. Participants highlighted the importance of the role of the dean within the organization that was reinforced by documentary evidence. And yet, search committee members did not appear to have a good understanding of this role. Participants reflected on the dual nature of the decanal role as both an institutional and college leader as well as the challenges associated with positioning the dean as the CEO of the college.

Peter MacKinnon (2014) stated, “having outstanding deans is critical to the success of the university and its academic units, and their appointments are usually made by boards on recommendation of presidents” (p. 147). Research participants reinforced this view:

> Our university I think appropriately has taken steps to make it clear the absolutely pivotal critical role the dean—the role of the dean at this university—for us to be as successful as we want, the processes we put in place—our resource allocation process, our resource generation process, our faculty complement processes, everything. We need to be dean-centric at this university. If I’m drawing a picture of this university and the leadership of the university I actually put the deans at the top or the outside or right in the dead center or something. Then I see the president and vice-presidents providing an overarching direction. But I see them as much as anything making sure that the deans have what they need to be successful. Because if the deans are successful—and I don’t mean the deans. That the deans are successful in their leadership. So I think that incredible effort needs to be made to find the right dean but that even—probably even more important we need to support those deans to be maximally effective as part of a consortium of colleges. (S1.3, p. 17)

> I actually think that for every organization our most critical, critical assets are your leaders. Therefore I think we have to be much more proactive, much more strategic, much more coordinated in a very comprehensive way. We have to put the time and energy and resources into this [decanal searches] because look where we end up [when we don’t]. (S3.3, p. 9)

These participants highlighted that we need our deans, in particular, to be successful in order for the organization to be successful. When you consider that deans represent over half of

the senior leadership of the university you begin to appreciate how their individual and collective success as leaders is so vital to the success of the organization.

However, research participants also noted that the role of the dean did not appear to be well understood:

> Oh one more thing I was going to say that's really important. Most of the people on the committee do not have a clue about the real job of a dean. So they really do not have a clue….You think that a dean is 90% for the faculty and then every so often disappears to do something at the big house. The Peter MacKinnon house. And that is not so. (S1.2, p. 9)

The lack of understanding appeared to stem from two sources. The first was lack of appreciation of the role as both a leader of a college and as an institutional leader:

> A lot of times search committees and the members who come from the colleges are completely consumed with what the college needs and what it's all about from a college's perspective...I need to remind the committee that we are recruiting somebody who's going to join a larger team, and so the university itself has an interest in the quality, qualifications, whatever of these people. So I'm not just there to convene this meeting and hear what you think, you need to hear what I think, but there's always typically a member from the Board, somebody from the Senate. You know, you need to listen to these people as well, even if they don't have much to say in the early going, you need to understand that this isn't just about the leadership of the college. (S3.5, p. 7)

The second was the positioning the role as the chief executive officers (CEO) of the college:

> Dean positions are sold to candidates as the CEO of the unit, the reality is the deans are not the CEO. Deans, when you arrive and you realize how little authority you actually have, you realize you're a branch manager is what you are….So you realize very quickly what I would say is misalignment between the authority you have and the accountability you have. So you certainly have the accountability of a CEO, you don't have the authority of a CEO. (S3.2, pp. 1-2)
>
> Don't sell the position as having executive authority if it really doesn't because it creates a fundamental misunderstanding from the beginning. (S3.2, p. 2)

These participants unearthed two fundamental question plaguing the role of the dean. The first is a question of primacy—is the role of dean primarily to lead a college or primarily to contribute to the leadership of the institution? That is, is the role primarily to be a collegial leader or an institutional leader? This needs to be decided and/or clearly articulated. The second is whether the reference to the dean as the chief executive officer of the college, found in the *University of Saskatchewan Act* (1995, U-6.1, s. 75) is literal or metaphorical? If it is literal then the authority and accountability need to align. If it is metaphorical and intended to represent a CEO-like role then this needs to be made clear. I return to the importance of role clarity in my findings.

The Colleges: Current State

Five searches that took place between 2014—2107 (inclusive) were selected for investigation. The five chosen somewhat reflected the diversity of the 17 colleges and schools within the University of Saskatchewan (see Appendix A). Each of the searches was governed by the *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) and all resulted in a decanal appointment.

In order to maintain the confidentiality of the research participants, I have not identified the five searches that were selected for investigation nor have I identified the transcript from which any particular reference was drawn. I assigned each search and transcript a number. Searches were simply referred to as S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5 and offer a page number and did not reflect any particular order. Transcripts associated with each search were assigned a cardinal number (1, 2, 3, etc.). These numbers did not identify whether the transcript was from a focus group or an individual interview. Direct quotes were attributed to the search and the transcript (S1.1) without attribution to the research participant.

The following provides an overview of the current state of each college going into the search for a dean at this particular point in time (2014—2017).

Search 1 (S1): Legacy

Going into the search this college was being led by an interim dean. The individual who had been appointed previously had not completed their first term and had moved on to pursue another opportunity. The previous search had not gone well and the dissatisfaction with that search was very public.

> This is a college that is at a stage where it is attempting to rebalance in a number of ways. So it's a college that's trying to rebalance the amount of effort that is put into education for people who will graduate with a degree in S1 and how much going into contributing to the education of other students who will graduate with other degrees. This is a college that's sorting that out and the priorities that it should give. It's a college that is trying to sort out how research intensive it can be. (S1.3, p. 8)

Every research participant associated with this search spoke to the previous search and how damaging it was to relationships within and outside of the college and the challenges it created for the individual who was ultimately appointed as a result of that search.

Search 2 (S2): Tensions

This college had a decade of stable leadership as the incumbent dean had served two terms and was finishing their second term at the time of the search. However, it was widely acknowledged that may not have been the best thing for the college. The college had a history of underperformance and resistance to change. The context of underperformance set the stage for tension among search committee members; in particular, the chair and a long-standing faculty member.

> In the case of the college of S2 you had a culture of a college that was failing to punch above its weight on both teaching and research. It had a number of weak deans in succession. It was not research active. It was not innovative. It was pretty much allowing people to come in, teach, subsidize their salary through [other activity]….So the culture was not good. (S2.2, p. 1)

The tension between the desire of some search committee members to maintain the status quo and the desire of other search committee members for change resulted in an acrimonious search. The tension also created confusion for search committee members who watched these unexplained and unarticulated desires for status quo versus change play out within the search committee meetings and time and energy was spent wondering about the behaviours they observed—what was happening and why it was happening.

Search 3 (S3): Perceptions and Power

This college had a history of relatively stable leadership and was being led by an interim dean at the time of the search. The previous dean had completed their first term and moved on to pursue another opportunity.

> ...there was a sense that the stakes were high. That the college was simultaneously central to the university's overall mission but kind of oddly marginalized in terms of the sets of priorities that the institution seemed to be articulating….So you come into a college that is feeling a bit beset, by the same token, by other criteria including students and frankly a lot of accomplishments, the college was actually in pretty good shape. But from the point of view of people on the committee, their stress was not really on how great we are and how we need to recruit somebody who's as great as we are, but how vulnerable we are, and how we need to recruit someone who will shore up those vulnerabilities and represent our strengths appropriately. (S3.5, p. 2)

Perceptions loomed large in this search: perceptions about the state of the college as well as perceptions about the importance of the search itself. Of interest was that perceptions differed depending on each individual's identity on and role in the search. The power differential in identity and role, while not necessarily captured in the quote, was also evident in this search.

Search 4 (S4): Structured Chaos

This college had experienced significant churn in leadership at the decanal level. In a decade there had been no fewer than four interim deans; two deans had been appointed as a result of search processes and both left prior to the end of their first terms. The college was being led by an interim dean at the time of the search.

> This particular college had worked its way into the crosshairs of the university administration….So there was a strong sense among some people in the college that some kind of change would be appreciated. For the university that was like absolutely, the college had kind of been underperforming and underperforming on just about every metric you wanted to look at….so they interpreted the decanal search differently. So while the college wanted stability and security, and give me somebody who can explain to the rest of the world how great we are, the university wanted somebody who was going to shake things up and get this college to face the fact that it was underperforming. (S4.3, p. 5)

There is an inherent chaos even within structured processes that can, and do, produce unpredictable outcomes. In the case of this college, the outcome of the search processes was that what they got was not what they thought they were getting.

Search 5 (S5): Decision-Making

This college was being led by an interim dean at the time of the search. The previous dean had served one full term and moved on to pursue another leadership opportunity.

Unlike other searches, there was no commentary on the state of the college going into the search. I attributed this to two things. First, the data source for this search was limited to one interview with a search committee member who may or may not have had that kind of insight. Second, everything I heard about the outgoing dean suggested that they were viewed as a good leader who advanced the college and contributed positively as a member of the senior leadership of the university.

The Data

As noted earlier in this chapter, I was fortunate to have a rich set of data but not everything that was captured will, nor necessarily should be, reported. What is reported here reflects the data analysis described in the previous chapter.

Line-by-line coding was loosely employed in my first pass through the data and I highlighted words and phrases that appeared most salient. I identified words and/or phrases as salient if I recollected strong emotion attached to the words and/or phrases, if they captured what I suspected was an important concept, and/or if they were repeated by various research participants. At this point, I referred back to the memos that were written following each interview and focus group to check my own recollections. I wanted to be as sure as I could be that I was honouring the voices of research participants and not succumbing to my own knowledge, experience and biases. The most salient words and phrases are quoted in this chapter.

Once I had gone through each transcript at least once and referred back to my memos, I moved on to more focused coding although it was clear that moving from highlighting salient words and/or phrases and thinking about the data more conceptually and analytically was not a linear process. The process of focused coding, for me, meant looking across the data for similarities and differences and trying to make sense of what these similarities and differences were telling me. I looked across the data I had both within and across searches. What I intend for the reader to see in the following sections that reflect the data analysis is how words and phrases selected during the initial coding phase came together to paint a picture of culture in decanal search processes as seen through the stories of the searches, the players perceived as most influential, and the search processes themselves which reflected how we actually do things.

I met with the CHASR research professional regularly to discuss their data analysis. On every occasion I was surprised by the level of congruency between what was emerging from their analysis and my own. Like me, the CHASR professional took multiple passes through the data and worked from words and/or phrases to creating categories that added colour to the picture of culture in decanal search processes.

The Data: Search Specific

In this section, I share the story of each of the five searches that were included in this study. The participants constructed these stories vis-à-vis what they shared with me and I have simply weaved together and amplified their voices. While the search processes do not vary much, if at all from search to search, each one is unique. The stories I heard reflected the history of the college, the current state of the college and the aspirations for the college. Remembrances and perceptions of participants reflected the past, present and future on which there was both agreement and disagreement. As one research participant noted:

> So there's a whole story—a search process isn't—it doesn't start with the people coming in the room and devising a profile. It starts with a whole history of the previous search and the previous dean's legacy or lack thereof, what happened three times ago. (S1.2, p. 4)

I acknowledge that as I constructed these stories there were many things I could have highlighted; however, I chose to give voice to those remembrances and perceptions that told the most authentic story of the search.

Search 1 (S1): The Story of Legacy

The data set for this search was one focus group with two participants, both of whom had some experience with decanal search processes; one interview with a search committee member

who stated they had participated in "lots" of decanal searches; and, one interview with the search committee chair who had served in this role on a least six occasions.

All participants described this search as collegial—to a fault according to one search committee member who commented, "I felt that people were trying very hard to—in a sense behave. To be collegial, to be welcome and opening to candidates. I felt actually too much so" (S1.2, p. 1). All of the participants acknowledged that the previous search had not gone well. One search committee member described the previous search as "extremely poisonous and on the public record as very poisonous" (S1.2, p. 1). Another member of the search committee stated, "the last dean's search there were some pretty scandalous accusations made against the people that had been on the previous search committee. Relationships were absolutely ruined over that at the senior admin level and down at the college. There were pretty hard feelings at the end" (S1.1, p. 6). Even the chair noted, "there was trouble with the last search and so I knew I had to do this one myself…I didn't even think about delegating this one" (S1.3, p. 2). As one participant observed, "…in the case of the S1 search all the nastiness that had gone on before really I felt caused a shadow. Even though people didn't talk about it (S1.2, p. 4).

The story of this search was, in some ways, the story of the previous search. The legacy of the previous search played out in virtually every aspect of this search: creating the narrative and finding candidates, assessing the candidates, and ultimately in the final recommendation.

Creating the Narrative and Finding Candidates

Right from the beginning of the search it was clear that there would be internal candidates competing for the role and it was apparent right from the beginning that the college was interested in having an internal candidate as their next dean. This resulted in faculty who were on the search committee consciously or unconsciously setting the stage for this outcome:

> …in some way affects what the faculty and others then associated with the college do in terms of how hard they work to find other candidates….It can happen though when it's kind of like 'well anybody but this'….Or it can happen...where 'it can't be anybody else but this one and therefore we're going to keep our mouth shut and we're going to orchestrate the whole thing to get who we want. (S1.3, p. 5)

> I felt that people were very torn between wanting to write a profile as if there was no internal candidate—the kind of fair profile, 'we want someone who can fundraise, who can inspire the troops, who can show bravery in the face of danger, who communicates well. We want perfection'. But the problem was the candidate was not perfect. But the desired candidate was not perfect….There was a lot of torment I think in the committee about how to write something that showed the aspirations of the college and balance with having the comfort of the candidate they wanted. (S1.2, p. 3)

Some would argue that the bias observed among faculty on the search committee, that favored an internal candidate, was not unconscious; indeed that bias is always conscious. Other members of the search committee recognized this bias early on and tried to mitigate it, but the desire for an internal candidate was great and the stage appeared to be set right from the start to get to that outcome.

Assessing the Candidates

Assessing candidates was a topic of conversation in every search. How it manifested in this search was in opposing views on whether internal candidates deserved a "pass" to the short-list and then how assessment criteria was applied to candidates who made the short-list.

There were two views on whether internal candidates deserved a "pass" to the short-list. One view was, "if an internal candidate is brave enough to put their name forward we should

interview them anyway" (S1.3, p. 5). The other view was, "I'm not interested in wasting my time shortlisting and taking out for dinner and getting hopes up" (S1.2, p. 2). This created some tension among members of the search committee as they were assessing candidates for the short-list and then actually assessing short-listed candidates. One research participant observed:

> At one point he and I were like southern sheriffs where we looked at the internal college people and we said, 'why are you including this person on the shortlist? So that you won't disappoint them? I don't understand in what way you feel that you have to give everyone a chance to shine...'. So that was the only sort of tense part was why did we feel we had to honour everybody who put their name forward from within but not from without? (S1.2, p. 2)

The desire for an internal candidate was amplified during the assessment processes. One research participant spoke frankly about their perceptions of what transpired as candidates were assessed:

> I felt that though we were all happy with the outcome, in a sense the outcome felt predetermined. That the candidates from the outside were viewed more harshly than the candidate from the inside. Anything was used to disqualify outsiders and nothing was used to disqualify insiders. I believe the criteria were applied differentially. (S1.2, p. 1)

There was a desire to "stack the deck" with internal candidates and then apply the selection criteria, which was created with an internal candidate in mind, in such a way that the outcome was inevitable.

Final Recommendation

As the search progressed search committee members from outside the college deferred more and more to the search committee members from inside the college and an internal

candidate was ultimately recommended for appointment. Final comments from focus group participants stressed the collegiality and trust in the processes. However, another participant saw this focus on process as more nefarious; the process was simply the means to justify the ends. One participant noted "when the internal candidate got through to the short-list, then I knew it was game over" (S1.2, p. 3). This same participant observed:

> I remember it became apparent that S1 would be happiest if there was a process of healing where they got to choose their own. I think—my post-hoc recolle—reconstruction of it is they're the ones that have to live with it [the decision]. I will defer. (S1.2, p. 3)

This was contrasted with the view that this search was done "by the book". As one participant suggested, "I think the faculty wanted to be really clear that 'we are doing this exactly by the book as we always would'" (S1.1, p. 6). Other comments, such as "we follow process" (S1.1, p. 25) and "I think we have trust in the process" (S1.1, p. 26) served to highlight how important process was in this search. But, another research participant articulated a more nefarious view of process, "there was no naiveté. People came in with favourites. They wanted to make sure the process was clean to an outsider. That the favourite was going to get it but nobody could make a complaint about the process" (S1.2, p. 2).

One member of the search committee was of the view that searches are, "a combination of bureaucratic and wishful thinking and flexible and discovery. Sometimes people know what they want before the committee starts. So you're dealing with the whole range of human behaviours" (S1.2, p. 10). Even by following process, which was critically important in this search, it was possible to influence search processes to favour a particular outcome. In this case, the favoured outcome was appointment of an internal candidate which is exactly what happened.

The title “Legacy” is intended to reflect how the past can find its way into present search processes, influence the outcome and thereby set the stage for the future.

Search 2 (S2): The Story of Tensions

The data set for this search was one focus group with three participants and one interview with the search committee chair. The experience of the focus group participants varied; for one it was their first decanal search while the other two had participated in a number of decanal and/or other senior administrator searches. The chair had served in this role on 10 or more occasions. The culture in this college was described as “not good”. There had been a number of weak deans and the faculty in the college were not research active nor innovative in their approaches to program delivery. As one research participant noted:

> Every search is potentially problematic depending on the culture and the faculty in the college. When faulty are appreciative of what a dean’s responsibility is, when they have the best interest of the university at heart, and when they don’t have a self-agenda or a predetermination of the fact the dean is going to be someone who is their stepping stone, someone who’s going to listen to what they want and not be the CEO of the unit; then the search can be problematic. (S2.2. p. 1)

This search was problematic and the context of real or perceived historical underperformance set the stage for tension among search committee members. The chair made clear the desire for a leader who would put the college on a different trajectory, but this desire seemed to be at odds with the desire of at least one of the faculty members on the search committee which set the stage for tension within the search committee right from the beginning of the search. This tension played out in the behaviours of the chair and that particular faculty member. Focus group participants commented on the behaviour of the chair while the chair

commented on the behaviour of the faculty member. Both the focus group participants and the interview participant noted how this tension played into decision-making.

The Tension

Very early in the focus group the participants commented on the performance of the college and the anxiety of the faculty members who were on the search committee. Language like "life and death" was used which suggested the stakes were high. Participants also noted that while the faculty acknowledged that the college was underperforming they did not necessarily accept that change was needed.

One research participant noted that anxiety was evident right from the start which they found interesting because, as noted, faculty will keep their jobs and deans will eventually go away:

> So with the faculty around the table at the dean's—in the S2 dean search was—there was real anxiety about how this is going to impact us in a way. Because good or bad life goes on and you're going to keep your job and the dean's going to go away eventually no matter how bad he is. But that's not how the faculty came to the table. It was life or death for them if they hired the wrong guy. At least that was my sense of the—and then when the faculty in this case all knew that everybody on campus thought they were a poor performing college and whoever was to be hired was to change that—that just ramped up the level of anxiety. I found it a really interesting search to be part of and I think we saw some of that anxiety around the table from the faculty members especially. (S2.1, pp. 3-4)

This same research participant also noted that the anxiety ramped up as the faculty realized "the gig was up" so-to-speak and that change was coming. As the anxiety ramped up, the behaviour deteriorated which a research participant alluded to in the following comment:

> When people come in and they have all these great ideas and they're going to challenge you to be more research active and more of a better teacher, it rocks your boat. Change is tough. Gee, might have to come to work and earn your pay. And so someone that's going to hold you accountable and expect you to do that suddenly becomes some person non-grata. So that's what we had. (S2.2, p. 5)

In this search, the participant(s) advocating for change were very vocal about the need for change and had no qualms about laying the current state of the college firmly at the feet of faculty and the previous dean(s). This challenge appeared to evoke a "flight or fight" response in at least one faculty member on the search committee and the response was fight.

The Behaviour

The focus group participants' references to behavior focused on the behavior of the chair. What was interesting was that as the participants reflected on the anxiety and resistance to change that they observed within the search committee the behaviour of the chair became more and more justified. In the end the behaviour of the chair was actually viewed as helpful to the search committee:

> I do think—and probably rightly so—like I said before the chair was very tight. They controlled it very tightly and definitely at times it was tense for sure. Just the conversations were a bit tense. I think a lot of that came down to the mannerisms of the chair. But I think you have to be pretty firm, obviously. It seems like you do. So I'm not trying to be critical of that, I'm just explaining how I felt about it. I wasn't expecting that to be honest but I guess you've got to run a tight ship. That's probably a good thing with academics who can be a bit headstrong. (S2.1, pp. 4-5)

> I would agree with P's perception of the chair's role….The—I would say, if that was a really high performing college in a really top three university and the chair tried to run that search the way they did they would have got a lot more push-back than they ended up—yeah—getting. But I think they had to take that approach because they knew there was a lot of anxiety and a lot of resistance to change. (S2.1, p. 5)

The previous comments from research participants illustrate how they made sense of the behaviour they were observing within the search committee. The following exchange shows how by the end of the conversation, not only was the behaviour of the chair justified, but it was actually lauded.

> In fairness to [the chair]…they could've had bits of history with S2 that would've made it combative no matter what. I have no idea.
>
> But I never felt like that was a distraction or that it in any way impeded the work of the committee. In fact it might have freed us up in some respects.
>
> Yeah. No I think you're right.
>
> Kept us on track. I would say it—we didn't divert down rabbit holes and things were efficient probably because of that. So yes. It just created a little tension at times. That was obvious. (S2.1, p. 14)

The final comments in this section again rationalized the behaviour of the chair and illustrate the "us versus them" tension that permeated this search:

> Some of the faculty, particularly one or two faculty members who were on the search committee, and that's part of the problem too, had it in their minds that they wanted to rig the search to end up with the candidate that would be the best candidate in their mind, not necessarily the university's mind. (S2.2, p. 1)

> In this particular search it was clear there was at least one member of the search committee, one of the faculty members, he was dead set against anyone other than his preferred candidate. And so the candidates that other people might've thought would be good, this person tried to do everything and anything they could to undercut and to basically get them out of being a short-listed candidate. Even after the person was short-listed and ultimately was the preferred candidate. I mean, I had to really ride shotgun on this faculty member and remind him of his role and what he was supposed to be doing. (S2.2, p. 4)

The final comment in this section illustrates how the chair viewed their role in this particular search process.

> And my job as the chair is to kind of keep things on track, keep things moving, and make sure that someone doesn't do something stupid by attempting to undercut a particular candidate for personal vested interest. And I don't know if I had that happen, I think I had warned people ahead of time that I wasn't going to let that happen, and so I ran a pretty tight ship that way. (S2.2, p. 6)

As we will see later in this chapter, research participants clearly identified the faculty and the chair as those who had the greatest influence on search processes. If they are at odds, as they were in this search, tension was inevitable.

The Decision

The tension and the behaviour continued to manifest in the decision-making process. The struggle over leadership of the college came down to a discussion of the differing leadership styles of two short-listed candidates—one who was more assertive and one who was presumably less assertive. And the tussle between and chair and the faculty member continued.

One research participant noted “the interview and that ranking after the interview was definitely very much about the anxiety about change. That was coming through and I think that’s when the chair had to kind of do more steering at that point” (S2.1, p. 6). Another participant observed, “ I guess the only thing I’d say I think in the discussion and again it just came down to that tension between two different types of leaders” (S2.1, p. 9). Change versus status quo, a leader who would drive change versus one who would maintain the status quo, and how a leader might drive change were tensions foregrounded in the decision-making process. These tensions were evident in the following comments related to the process of actually making a decision on which candidate to recommend for appointment:

> Unfortunately, it’s hard to get people to put aside their biases, their preconceived ideas about who should be the dean, what a good dean is. And in some instances it’s the fact that they don’t want to be challenged and they don’t want to change their way of doing things. They want to just live in that rut and they could care less about the college or the university, they just don’t want to upset the apple cart they’re riding in. And you’ve got to get people out of that mindset. (S2.2, p. 10)
>
> Again the only thing I would say there were just occasional times with that particular individual as a chair that I thought tensions rose maybe when they didn’t need to, just by—again I’m not trying to be critical of the person by their mannerisms—they were kind of rough at times and I felt like we were all going to be tussled around a bit but you know what? It may be we truly needed that I didn’t understand the perspective of how threatened people may be felt. From a change perspective. The horse had to be taken to the water. (S2.1, p. 13)

The title “Tensions” is intended to highlight the impact when there is disagreement right

from the onset of a search. In this case the disagreement over whether the college needed to change or not, whether the incoming dean would be someone who would change or maintain the culture manifested in the behaviours of the chair and particular search committee members throughout the search. Tension was evident right to the end wherein the decision about which candidate(s) to recommend in what order was a conversation, in large part, about how different leaders with different leadership styles would approach a change agenda.

Search 3 (S3): The Story of Perceptions and Power

S3 had the largest data set which, in some ways, made it one of the most interesting and complicated data sets. The data set included one focus group with three participants; three interviews with search committee members; and one interview with the chair. Members of the focus group each reported having participated in one decanal search and for two of the members this search was the one to which they were referring. The search committee members who were interviewed brought more experience to the table and had each participated in at least three decanal searches. The chair had served in this role on 10 or more occasions.

The story of this search was one of perceptions and power; in particular, how a perception of apathy played out in the search processes and the influence of power on the participants and ultimately the outcome of the search. The focus group participants commented on the time it took to complete the search and the lack of engagement of the chair, both of which were interpreted as lack of interest on the part of "the university." There was a perception that this particular search was not an institutional priority. The perceptions of the chair were very different. The chair of this search committee came in mid-stream so from their perspective the search had not gone on all that long. The chair also reported relying on a group of high-quality faculty in the processes and articulated some regret at not being more present throughout the

search due to competing demands. Focus group participants also commented on the power differential, inherent in the committee composition structures, and the impact that had on their voice and how they felt about the search.

The story of perception of apathy and the influence of power was not as prevalent in the interviews with other members of the search committee as it was in the focus group and showed up differently, but it was still there. In particular, perceptions of apathy and the influence of power were less about this particular search and more about the search processes in general.

Perceptions of the Search Committee

The first theme that emerged from the focus group was one of apathy. The reason for the perceived apathy was attributed to the fact that there was an incumbent in place who could simply carry on with little or no detriment to the college—there was simply no sense of urgency. When the incumbent became the successful candidate it reinforced the assessment that the intent had always been stay with the status quo—that the outcome had been pre-determined all along and the entire search had been a waste of time.

This first quote connected the perception of apathy with the length of time it took to complete the search. For this research participant time was a direct reflection of the priority this search was given by "the university" aka the senior administrators involved with the search:

> One of the things that really stuck with me with the process was how long it took. I politely I think complained about how long the process was taking and I was told 'oh well we have a large number of searches going on and'. The impression I got was that this was not an important search for the university….there was almost an assumption that we're going to stay with the status quo and so therefore it didn't need to [be a priority]. (S3.1, p. 2)

This second quote connected the perception of apathy with engagement, or lack thereof, of the chair in particular. For this research participant the lack of engagement was a direct reflection of the interest senior administrators had in the search:

> I was also disappointed by the, the way the senior administration involved itself in the search from what we would see….so nobody from the Provost's office or anything was there to introduce candidates or, like to me, I think if I'd come into that as an interview I wouldn't have been very impressed. Like not as a, like they don't really give a crap about this process kind of thing. Just my take. (S3.1, p. 2)

This third quote from yet another research participant substantiated the perceptions of the previous research participants. The time it took and the level of engagement of people involved suggested the search was not a priority. Additionally, this research participant suggested that even if the search was not a priority, for whatever reason, efforts should have been made to create the appearance that this search was important:

> You want an image, at least an image of importance and priority applied to it. Like I say everything from the timeline to the lack of attention to detail through the process to me sort of said it was a, yeah it wasn't seriously important to the people involved. And I don't know if the candidates picked up on that or not but I would guess they should have. (S3.1, p. 15)

There was a strong sense that the outcome of the search had been pre-determined—that the incumbent had always been the desired candidate and, once again, the search processes lined up to support that outcome. One participant reflected that "this was a senior leadership decision that had a committee under it. It wasn't our decision, it was decided" (S3.1, p. 17).

The perceptions these search committee members had of this search left them feeling that the investment of their time and energy had been a waste of time. Furthermore, when asked if they would participate in another decanal search the unanimous response was no.

Perceptions of the Chair

The perceptions of apathy that the focus group participants had and the assessments they made based on that perception were acknowledged by the chair. However, the chair was not apathetic; rather, they were relying on a strong committee in the face of competing priorities.

During their interview the chair admitted that they would have preferred to be more active in this search, but were relying on what they perceived as a strong committee. The chair noted, "it [the committee] I think consisted of uniformly high-quality people, and by that I mean well-intentioned, well-informed, and quite accomplished themselves" (S3.5, p. 1). The fact was that there were 13 decanal searches during 2014—2017 (inclusive) and chairing these search committees was only one aspect of a provost's (or their delegates) role. It was not necessarily a lack of interest in the search processes, but simply too many competing priorities that impacted the participation of the chair:

> I left the candidates in the hands of the college representatives largely to introduce them to the college and to host them, really….But when I think about it, if I hadn't had all the searches and I didn't have every other thing that was happening…I would've attended the presentations….I would've been present so people could see I was present, and taking it all in….And on other occasions I did do that. But in this occasion, and partly I was leaning on a fairly strong committee, faculty representatives, I didn't do it (S3.5, p 8).

The view of the chair as it related to the outcome of the search processes also differed from the view of the focus group participants. It was not that the outcome was pre-determined but

rather, “recruiting candidates for academic administrative leadership is a tough business because the candidate pool is more…is more shallow than you might think” (S3.5, p. 8). The chair noted, “I suppose over the years, and in this particular search, I paid quite a bit of attention to the incumbent. And if I had a bias going in without knowing the person it would be slightly in favour of somebody who is acquainted with the institution” (S3.5, p. 9). The chair also noted:

> And so, not to steal the whole story, but to me the story of that search was one of growing comfort with the incumbent when presented with alternatives. And then once that happens, once the alternatives are there, it’s not that the incumbent is somehow seen differently, but there’s a reference point and you’re in a position to be able to make comparisons. (S3.5, p. 3)

An alternative view of bias in favour of an incumbent candidate was articulated as seen by one participant as “settling:”

> I think we do settle. I think we settle. So when—again is you had a dean that was interim for [period of time]. Then the conversation started to go, ‘well if we continue the search we might lose them’….we back ourselves into corners. I could see the way the conversation was going….You could just see the way then it change, change, changed, to ‘Well. This was the better outcome—given what we have at the table this is the better outcome’. (S3.3, p. 7)

The challenges associated with comparing internal, incumbent, and external candidates showed up time and again in search processes and is a theme to which I return later in this chapter.

That perceptions differed among search committee members in and of itself was not the problem, the problem was the impact that the perceptions had on these individuals. The

perceptions of apathy and of settling left search committee members feeling as though the entire thing had been a waste of time and energy—they did not feel good about their participation in the search and perhaps more importantly, indicated that they would be unlikely to participate in such a search again.

Member Power Differential

A second theme that emerged from the data related to power, in particular, the power differential among members of the search committee. The composition of decanal search committees will always include a undergraduate and graduate students, three or four faculty, at least two senior administrators, a member of the board of governors, and the vice-president research (or designate) in addition to the chair who is typically the provost and vice-president academic (or designate). The positional power of the various search committee members in and of itself contributed to the power differential within the search committee, but symbolic power is another power differential within search committees of which people seemed completely unaware.

In this particular search, the power differential was mentioned several times and search committee members believed it affected their voice in and ultimately the outcome of the search. It also influenced how they felt about the search processes at the end of the day.

Research participants commented on the impact those with positional power had on their participation and how those with positional power used their power. In particular, it seemed as though positional power was used to limit engagement of search committee members in favour of driving to outcomes.

> And I, one thing I was particularly unhappy about was there was a particular senior individual on the committee who I felt was very dominant in an inappropriate manner. I

> just left feeling like well if the decision was already made before we started, why did we do this process? (S3.1, p. 3)
>
> Yeah and I think it's important to note that people on a committee have a power relationship with other people on the committee and I think that people with more power have a responsibility to be sensitive to the fact that they have more power. And I did not see that in place here at all. I think it was quite the opposite in that, I was left feeling that it was process for process's sake only. (S3.1, p. 3)

One research participant commented specifically on the effect positional power had on whether search committee members who had less positional power offered feedback—especially if it was contrary:

> Well and it comes down to leadership around the table through right? I mean those individuals, if they wanted the right kind of valid feedback should be saying that so let's start with so and so rather than starting with the [senior administrator] who was a very strong opinion. And then all of a sudden you've got a bunch of people who are like much further down the food chain from that sort of going well I don't know if it's appropriate to rock the boat here and say that no I don't think that's appropriate (S3.1, p. 3).

And finally, research participants noted that while the search processes resulted in a dean being appointed, the processes were more divisive than unifying. In this search, the divisiveness appeared to be directly related to power—the power that some had, and used, to limit feedback and silence dissenting voices:

> Like I think one aspect that's missed in this kind of process is that there's the outcome of the decision but there's also the outcome of the effect on collegiality of the individuals that are part of the process. I may have succeeded, I'd say our process succeeded in

> coming to a decision, I'd say it failed miserably in terms of collegiality….I left that process thinking, I didn't have confidence in the role of representation in these processes. And I felt like my time was wasted. (S3.1, p. 5)
>
> And like I think there needs to be some thought given to not just the outcome in terms of who's hired but the outcome in terms of do these processes bring us together as a university or do they divide us? (S3.1, p. 13)

The title "Perceptions and Power" is intended to highlight that perhaps it is not that our processes in and of themselves that are good or bad, but rather how they play out and/or are perceived to play out that is good or bad. Not the what, but the how.

Search 4 (S4): The Story of Structured Chaos

The data set for this search included three interviews. Two of the interviews were with search committee members and one interview was with the search committee chair. Both of the search committee members had been involved in one other decanal search process. The chair had served in this role on more than 10 occasions.

The college pointed to the turnover of deans as a contributing factor for their underperformance. As a result, there was a desire for a dean that would bring both continuity to the role and be a game-changer for the college. The first quote is one research participant's reflection on the state of the college going into the search:

> The college evinced a kind of culture of victimization. Or culture of despondency that had nothing to do with them but other people's decisions of one kind or another had left them in an awkward or difficult situation. So they pointed to the record of decanal searches over the past number of years, and pretty much suggested that [university administration] must not have done a good job in finding these deans because no sooner

had found them then they left….So it was a revolving door. And they were quick to point that out. (S4.3, p. 1)

This quote reflects the remembrance of another research participant of the expressed desire for a dean who would stay, presumably for at least one term, and be willing and able to shift the culture of despondency that evidently permeated the college:

…the committee, especially the faculty, to look for continuity, look for somebody where we can now so…the college had endured a steady number of deans over the past several years, maybe a few decades that there had been deans serving for a very limited period of time that didn't make it to their renewal, that might have left for another position, there was a variety of acting deans and a series of those people. So I think there was a desire to put an end to this rinse and repeat that we seemed to be experiencing….But the other observation that I picked up serving from the search committee is that there was a desire within the committee to really look at somebody who could—I think my 'aha' moment was to look at somebody who could be a real game-changer for the college. (S4.1, p. 4)

One of the participants described the culture of decanal search processes as "structured chaos" (S4.1, p. 11) which sums up the story of this search. The themes of structure and chaos played out in two ways. The first was that the structure of the processes did not "highlight all that was necessary to be highlighted" (S4.2, p. 3). Where this ended was that, "the person we selected was not the person we thought….We hired someone that was different than the person we thought we were hiring (S4.2, p. 1) which reflected the chaos of not knowing what you are going to get as a result of these processes. A "coming together of what the university was looking for and what the college was looking for" (S4.3, p. 12) reflected the second way in which this played

out—the structure of the well-defined purpose of the desired outcome and the chaos of getting to that outcome.

Structured Chaos

There is a lot of structure built into search processes: the structure of the search committee is defined; the chair of the search committee is defined; and, the authority and process for that actual appointment is clear. And yet, for all the structure, search processes do not always or even consistently produce what we expect. One of the participants noted, "I feel somewhat hoodwinked. Although now I can put it in some context and see how our dean has some strengths, and those played well in the selection format, in the process. And what was important was not in the process" (S4.2, p. 2). This participant went on to describe how, in hindsight, the outcome was somewhat inevitable. Starting with a great cover letter, the rest of the processes just kept providing more confirming information that culminated in the reference checks that confirmed everything that had come before, and which this participant ultimately viewed as worthless.

The phrase 'structured chaos' was coined by a research participant who seemed to have remarkable insight into the complexity of decanal search processes. The first two quotes in this section speak to that insight and provide a picture of how these processes can simultaneously reflect both structure and chaos:

> Structured in the sense that there's a set of procedures. Structured in the sense that there's a shepherd, a provost who is shepherding it as the chair. Structured in the sense that you've got representation from designated participants on the committee, faculty, other deans, industry representatives, board, students, support services. Structured in the sense

> that you're looking for a well-defined purpose. Chaos in the sense that once it begins all bets are off, you never know. (S4.1, p. 11)
>
> You never know what you're going to get…. Chaos in terms of people are different in person than they can appear on paper. On paper obviously it's you see their CV or read external letters, in person they can be dramatically different, maybe they're not an effective communicator, maybe they speak with not a compelling voice, maybe they don't craft that vision. Also chaos in terms of you could hire external person X, they look great in a three-day interview, and then July 1st when they are hired, it's like a totally different person when they're assuming the role. So I call it structured chaos. (S4.1, p. 12)

The following series of quotes from research participants paint a picture of this search and serve to illustrate how it was entirely possible for each process to reinforce what came before to the point that, in hindsight, the outcome seemed inevitable. First impressions, perhaps combined with wishful thinking, just kept getting reinforced:

> I think most people had open minds. But starting with the cover letter, the writing was on the wall, and then every step after reinforced it in varying degrees such that you get to the end and it seems difficult to make any other choice other than what we did; that was based on a letter. (S4.2, p. 5)
>
> The current dean had wrote a great letter, like way better than anybody else's and I think that stark contrast sort of highlighted them as, 'Wow. They're great'. In fact, if I'm not mistaken the chair said this was the best letter that they'd ever read for that kind of application process. And you know, I wouldn't have disagreed, I mean it was a great letter, they really hit all the marks; looked just like what we needed. So that sort of set the

> stage for A, the number one person is going to be hard to beat and B, number two, the acting dean really underperformed; so that sort of set expectations, I would say. (S2.4, p. 5)

> The interviews for me were much more balanced, or somewhat more balanced. Let me put it that way, somewhat more balanced. Although the number one was still number one, the number two still number two, number three almost out of the running at that point. The presentations, same thing, number one still number one, maybe not quite as dominantly. Number two underperformed. And number three, why did we even invite them….So again, reinforcement, reinforcement, reinforcement….the dinners with each candidate largely reinforced, at that point, beliefs that one had about the candidates. The number one candidate maybe showing some chinks in the armour, but not enough to seriously think that that was worth say 'no', or number two, or whatever. (S4.2, pp. 5-6)

The last quote in this section reflects the frustration of one research participant as they reflected on the search processes:

> If you want the core problem it's we're not getting the right information. The question is, how do you get the right information, and my understanding is, legally speaking, it's actually impossible to get the information we need, so where does that leave you? Because as you know from the start of this discussion, my feeling is the best information is references from people who they've worked with in the past and not of the people for you to talk to. And if we're not allowed to do that then it's a fool's errand. (S4.3, p. 11)

I have asked myself the question 'how is it, for all the structure that is built into search processes that they do not always, or even consistently, produce what we expect?' The answer seems to be in the realm of human nature—how we make sense of information, our biases, how

we optimistically see what we want to see. Is it the case that we are not getting the right information or is it the case that we are not doing the right things with the information we get?

Coming Together

One of the participants suggested that the search processes were, "structured in the sense that you're looking for a well-defined purpose. Chaos in the sense that once it begins all bets are off, you never know" (S4.1, p. 11). I interpreted the structure of the well-defined purpose as a "coming together of what the university was looking for and what the college was looking for" (S4.3, p. 12). The chaos is in the interpretation of the well-defined purpose. "So the college wanted stability and security, and give me somebody who can explain to the rest of the world how great we are. The university wanted somebody who was going to shake things up and get this college to face the fact that it was underperforming" (S4.1, p. 5). The success of the search was in finding the candidate who would be acceptable to both the college and the university. One research participant offered commentary on what happened when candidates were not acceptable to both and noted, "over the years we had had candidates who were acceptable to one and not the other [college and university] and none of that had ended well. So finding somebody who was acceptable to both was the task" (S4.3, p. 6). This meant coming together.

The follow quotes reinforced the importance of bringing structure to the chaos and coming to agreement, at least within the search committee, on what the university wanted and what the college wanted:

> In this particular college I think there was a very big gap between how the university saw the college and what they wanted out of the decanal search, and what the college saw of itself and what the college wanted and expected. Now I think those two perspectives kind

> of came together inside the search committee, I don't think they have ever come together inside the college. (S4.3, p. 5)
>
> The college came increasingly to understand that it needed a change-agent. And that was of course—that meant a kind of coming together of what the university was looking for and what the college was looking for….it would've been really problematic if we couldn't produce that person. So the success of the search wasn't simply in everybody agreeing that is what we need. The success of the search was in actually finding that person and having that person accepted by the committee and by the university administration. (S4.2, p. 8)

The title "Structured Chaos" is intended to highlight that our structured processes can and do produce outcomes that seems reasonable in the moment and can be justified in hindsight, but there is an inherent chaos in the processes that can, and do, produce unpredictable outcomes. It also highlighted the chaos that can come with holding multiple, perhaps even competing, desires for a leader who will lead a unit and be expected to contribute to the leadership of the university as a whole.

Search 5 (S5): The Story of Collegial Decision Making

The data set for this search was one interview with a search committee member. This individual had not previously participated in a decanal search process and noted "S5 was my first one, so I was really trying to do a watch and learn approach to it" (S5.1, p. 3).

This college was being led by an interim dean at the time of the search. The previous dean had served one full term and announced they would be moving on to pursue another leadership opportunity. There was nothing remarkable about this college—no nasty legacy, no

record of underperforming, no revolving door of deans; perhaps this in and of itself is remarkable.

Three major themes emerged from the data for this search but all were connected to the nature of collegial decision making. The first theme was the public nature of the search and the corresponding exposure of candidates. The second theme related to composition and authority of the search committee. The third theme related to the behaviour of the chair of this particular search committee and the impact it had on the participant and potentially the outcome of the search. While this search committee member expressed frustration with many of the processes that they believed reflected collegiality, by the end of the interview, they expressed appreciation for and acknowledged how collegial processes contributed to what, at the time, was seen as a good decision:

> And so I think one of things it [the interview] has forced me to acknowledge that I appreciate the collegial decision making, and I never wanted to admit that, but I think good decisions are made that way, I just think we've got too many people weighing in on those decisions and we could make that good decision with a far fewer people. (S5.1, p. 11)

It is interesting how reflection can shift our perceptions.

Public Nature of the Search

There was a perception that the public exposure of candidates impacted who applied and/or who carried through with their application. Concern with the vitriol of the written feedback solicited from those who attended the public presentation was also articulated.

The first three comments reflected the ongoing narrative related to the public nature of decanal search processes and the perceived impact of this on candidate pools:

> You know in any other situation, applying for a job is very private until it's awarded. And the public nature of this, because that's what people are used to maybe it's okay, but knowing that you're looking outside of your current position for a job and then not getting it is—I mean, your boss knows. Like, nobody wants their boss to know they're looking for a job, and that's because it colours your existing relationships if you have to come back to it. So I'm a little concerned about the public nature of it. (S5.1, p. 2)
>
> It's just too much. It's too public. And I think because of that we may not get the candidates that we want. And then there's the embarrassment if you don't—and I put that in air quotes, embarrassment, in air quotes—if you don't get the position. I just think it's not sensitive to the candidates. (S5.1, p. 2)
>
> Like I said, people pulled out. And I think, again, that might lead to the publicness. If people think they're being seriously considered, do they re-evaluate rather than seeing it through? And you'd rather have them pull out then go all the way through the process and then turn down an offer, but that was definitely a challenge. (S5.1, p. 8)

Over the course of the conversation, the narrative related to public nature of decanal search processes in general to the public presentation, more specifically. This research participant noted and expressed concern about the feedback processes associated with the public presentations:

> So the committee composition is not bad. But to me it's the public presentations and everyone weighing in on the public presentations, that's fraught, and especially when it's going to be a colleague. You know, if you said you didn't like this person and they end up getting hired, they're never going to know on this side, but how are you ever going to work with them. So having that opportunity to put it on paper that you don't like

> somebody, or that you really like somebody, then they're not selected or whatever, I just think it's going to colour your future relationships one way or the other, regardless of how confidential that information is. (S5.1, p. 11)

The narrative related to the public nature of decanal search processes, and the feedback processes associated with public presentations shifted again to hone in on the vitriol of some of the feedback received, in particular, feedback from faculty:

> I think the biggest shift is going to have to be with faculty in the consultation process. And why do people feel that because they have right to weigh in that they can be nasty? That's not appropriate, and where is the line between academic freedom and inappropriateness and bullying. And so to me that's a shift that faculty has to make, and faculty needs to own, because that's where the problems are coming from, right? To me academic freedom is wonderful. Viciousness is not acceptable. (S5.1, p. 11)

It was interesting to note how the narrative around the public nature of decanal search processes moved from a general concern that this might impact candidate pools to a more specific concern about the feedback process connected to the public presentation to a very specific concern about the viciousness of the feedback. It was liking watching layers of an onion be peeled back which, in time, revealed the true nature of the concern.

Committee Composition vis-à-vis Consultation: Trust

A clear message in this interview was that if we are going to have large search committees that represent the key constituents (faculty, students, governing bodies, etc.) then we should not need so much consultation—we should empower and trust the committees to make decisions. Alternatively, if there is a need and/or desire for broad consultation then we should have smaller committees. The participant noted, "I've had to struggle with my own frustrations at—what's the

word? I look at the size of the committee, I look at the consultative process, and it just—it frustrates me" (S5.1, p. 3). The consultative process was connected back to the public nature of the search, but in this narrative it was connected to the trust people had in the search committee:

> So I think one or the other. If you're going to have a collegial-based hiring committee, you don't need the public presentations. Because these people have given their responsibility over to the committee members. If you're going to make the committee smaller, then you need to have so there an opportunity for the collegial weigh in. But I don't think you need both. I don't think you need both. Collegially they need to trust their representatives on the committee. (S5.1, p. 9)
>
> And then I also think that appointing representatives and then not empowering them is not right. And I think the public nature of this level of search, I mean, you appoint representatives, you've got to trust them. (S5.1, p. 11)

The message here seemed to be that if there were higher levels of trust there would not be any need for the searches to be so public.

The Chair

This participant observed that "I think the personality preferences of the chair came a little bit too into the fore. And personally, I found it intimidating" (S5.1, p. 5). Once again, a research participant highlighted how power can hinder engagement:

> And it was my first search, and I don't really know, but I felt the chair made comments that maybe discouraged—because of the comments that were made, so I went first in the round-table after the interview, and it became very evident that I was the only one with those thoughts. And then I was very uncomfortable speaking up again. (S5.1, p. 5)

> And I would say that the chair did not like the personality style [of the candidate]. Be that what it may, the chair needs to understand that they're chairing…your role as chair is to facilitate not opinionate….I mean their position, their opinion carries a lot of weight...I think that the chair role needs to be more neutral, they can weigh in at the end, but they should not be weighing in early on. (S5.1, p. 6)

The title "Collegial Decision Making" is intended to highlight that the decisions that result from collegial processes are generally good decisions; however, to engage in collegial processes is time consuming and requires public consultation which perhaps detracts from the authority of the search committee. This research participant also surfaced some of the perceptions that are sometimes associated with collegial processes including everybody gets a chance to have a say, people feel quite free to say whatever they want however they want, and that even in collegial decision-making power has the ability to silence.

Researcher's Endnote: Reflections on Outcomes

The processes for decanal searches are virtually identical and yet each search is unique and has its own story. The stories shared above reflected the remembrances and perceptions of participants as heard and interpreted by me, the researcher. They also reflected the history of each college and its current state at the time of the search. The stories reflected hopes and dreams for the future which in some cases were realized and in other cases were not.

The Data: The Players

The *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators (2011)* specifies the composition of the search committee for each search governed by *The Procedures*, including decanal searches. Decanal search committees are comprised of about 12 individuals and *The Procedures* state "the committee composition seeks

to balance the desire for broad input against the practical logistics associated with the size of the committee, related to the need to facilitate regular meetings and meaningful engagement with the candidates, the University community, and external constituencies" (pp 12-13). There may be an assumption that all members of the search committee are equal in terms of their power to influence search processes, but this is not necessarily so. One research participant observed:

> Some voices on the committee speak more loudly than others….let's recognize that it's not every member is created equal, maybe nor should they be. What I would hope for going into the future is that there'd be an opportunity for even greater contributions from all members. (S4.1, p. 5)

Another participant actually named the players they felt held the balance of power and therefore most of the influence within the search:

> You tend—I think you tend to have two groups dominating. If there's a VP [vice-president] in the room—then whoever is chairing looks to the VP in the group to help steer the conversation if they as the chair can't. Then I think it's your faculty. (S3.3, p. 9)

While I heard something about most of the players who participated in decanal search processes, I will speak to those identified by research participants as most influential; this included the faculty, the chair and the external search consultant. Members of the "official" search committee are identified by role and individuals who represent those roles find their way onto search committees by selection, election or appointment. In the case of the external search consultant, they are contracted for their expertise in search processes and to provide support to the committee in the execution of said processes.

I have also chosen to highlight the role of the president and the president's executive committee (PEC) in search processes even though they were identified by only a handful of

research participants as having a role in decanal searches or, alternatively, having no role at all. Given their power to influence by nature of their positon(s) and/or expertise they are or should be important players and thus are included in this section.

The Faculty, the Chair, the External Search Consultant

Research participants clearly identified the faculty and the chair as those who had the greatest influence on search processes. Comments from research participants also suggested an awareness of the influence the search consultant could have on search processes. A point on which there was less awareness was that the influence of the search consultant could be amplified depending on their relationship with the chair. These constituents are granted the power to influence through their position(s) in the university and/or the expertise they bring to the search committee. Furthermore, the power to influence was legitimized through deference of other search committee members in acknowledgement of position and/or recognized expertise. Once granted, this legitimacy gave credence to the influence of that player or group of players.

Faculty (elected by the faculty in the college)

Participants recalled deferring to faculty who were on the search committee throughout the search processes. This deference was given because of the expertise faculty brought to the table as academics with discipline-specific knowledge and as employees with intimate knowledge of the college. Within the faculty constituency, participants observed that junior faculty tended to defer to more senior faculty which afforded senior faculty additional power to influence by virtue of their position within the ranks. For the most part, faculty themselves did not perceive that they had much power to influence and reported feeling silenced by those on the committee who held various roles as senior administrators or were there to provide specific expertise.

Research participants reported deferring to faculty based on their expertise as academics who could be counted upon to help make sense of academic CVs:

> So it's very hard for non-academic people if not impossible to look at a CV and determine if this person is really a strong academic or not. Or whether they're just filling pages….Very reliant in my opinion on the faculty people on the committee. I think they have a really large role. (S1.1, p. 4)

> So how do I approach an academic and a review of a resume? I read them and I think, 'man they all look good to me'. And so I really weigh on the other members for that culling process. (S5.1, p. 4)

This particular research participant spoke of the role faculty had in educating other search committee members about the college in which the search was occurring. Faculty were viewed as having expertise as employees with intimate knowledge of the college that they could bring to the search:

> And honestly, and this is something that is worthwhile observing in general, and that is that typically the members of the committee coming from the college over a period of meetings in effect educate the other members of the committee about what the college needs. So educate is not quite the right word because there is some back and forth, and certainly members of the college, committee members, cannot be counted on to be completely in agreement on these things. But there is quite a bit of querying by members of the committee, other than the college representatives, of the college representatives. (S4.3, p. 2)

Research participants across searches commented on deferring to faculty members on the search committee precisely because they were deemed to be most knowledgeable about the college needs. The following comments reinforced this:

> You know, the other members of the committee [not faculty] were not as decisive, and I think they were probably a little bit—they probably felt, like you listened to these people you probably feel, 'okay, well I know squat about this, so I'm just going to kind of roll with this and see what happens, and if I have an opportunity to make a positive contribution I will'. (S3.5, p. 7)

> I did feel like there were too many people on the committee that were not strong enough stakeholders really. But the faculty in the group were usually given great deference for their contribution, so ultimately I didn't feel that was a big problem. (S4.2, p. 2)

Not all faculty on a search committee are equal and position within the ranks could afford senior faculty additional power to influence the search processes:

> That is the role of the chair, is to make sure everybody has a voice, and a voice that can't be squelched by someone. You don't want senior faculty to be intimidating to junior faculty, and I don't think I had that situation happen. (S2.2, p. 10)

> Senior faculty—the junior faculty basically allowed as how they were afraid to give their opinions because of the power over them of the more senior faculty specifically and the tenure track process. For an outsider who's heard so much about academic freedom I was shocked. Really shocked. (S1.1, p. 4)

What I found interesting was that with all the commentary research participants provided on deferring to faculty, faculty themselves did not perceive that deference as power granted to them because of their expertise:

> When we [faculty] voiced it [a concern], it was sort of I think pushed aside, but when they [a consultant] voiced it, it was taken seriously and then. Which then sort of, I was grateful they were there but it also sort of reinforced the position that we were just slightly above the student rep and the grad student rep who were there to tick a box only. But we didn't really matter. (S3.1, pp. 7-8)

The disconnect between the power and influence others suggested faculty had and the power and influence faculty perceived they had might be understood by considering power by virtue of position versus power by virtue of expertise. Power attributed to an individual(s) by virtue of expertise is not as obvious and may go undetected if the individual(s) does not feel their expertise is valued.

Chair (appointed as per The Procedures)

The *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) stated, "the committee will normally be chaired by the individual to whom the appointee will report" (p. 34). Deans report to the provost and vice-president academic who typically chairs decanal search committees, but they have the leeway to delegate this role. It is of interest that delegation of the role of chair, when done, was most often to a vice-provost versus another vice-president. Regardless, the delegation was to another player who had the power to influence by virtue of both position and expertise; the gravitas of these senior position within the university as well as the chairs' experience with search processes, which outweighed the experience of any other search committee member by a factor of about 10:1, both contributed to the chairs' power to influence.

All of the chairs interviewed for this research seemed aware of their power to influence decanal search processes although each brought a different lens to the role, which may have been

influenced by the circumstances of the search that they chaired. One chair viewed their role as somewhat neutral in terms of letting the processes unfold. Another chair viewed their role more as managing the processes versus letting them unfold. Yet another chair spoke of their role in guiding the committee to an outcome that everyone could live with—acknowledging their power to veto the recommendation of the committee, if necessary. The three quotes that follow reflected these views of the chair role:

> It's really really important for the chair of all people—it's important for everybody but the chair has got to really really make sure that you let the process unfold and don't put too much of your own exclusive knowledge into it right at the beginning. You have to make sure—you have to be prepared for other people to know something that you don't know, and make sure then that you don't ever be seen to be driving a particular outcome. (S1.3, p. 5)

> My job as the chair is to kind of keep things on track, keep things moving, and make sure that someone doesn't do something stupid by attempting to undercut a particular candidate for personal vested interest….I think I had warned people ahead of time that I wasn't going to let that happen and so I ran a pretty tight ship. (S2.2, p. 6)

> But actually for me success means getting a credible dean in place and conducting the process in such a way that people are satisfied, that even if person was not their choice, it's all been done in a—and I think generally speaking we succeeded on both counts….once again we had relatively few candidates who I thought were going to be acceptable to the administration and the college. And frankly over the years we had had candidates who were acceptable to one and not the other, and none of that had ended

> well. So finding somebody who was going to be acceptable to both was the task. (S4.2, p. 6)

The fact that the chair held veto power was not well-known or if it was well-known it simply did not come up. This is not power that is often exercised but it can be and has been which perhaps is also not well-known:

> …each of the colleges in general, in terms of their relationship to the university, have a different kind of relationship, and that gets brought into those committees by the members of the college, typically. But also when we take these candidates out and show them to the college, then you get all kinds of behaviour, some of it not so positive. Sometimes I wince when I listen to them. But you know, everybody's got their views. You learn to just listen and know that in the end…you are not going to allow a clearly bad decision to be made. I mean, you may make a mistake, and I've made mistakes, but you know that you're in the position to basically veto a bad decision. And I've done that. (S3.5, p. 11)

At the end of the day, the chair holds the balance of power within search committees. This appeared obvious to all of the chairs interviewed for this research, but it may or may not be obvious to members of the search committee:

> And it was one of those kind of, you'd think fairly obvious lessons in how things work. But to be fair, as an ordinary faculty member, which I was for a long time, not in any of these positions, I too may have been under some mistaken view that if a majority of people on a committee or in a college, whatever, want something to then that's what happens. (S3.5, p. 11)

The position of the chair within the university and the experience they brought to the search processes both contributed to the power they had to not just influence, but actually determine the outcome of a search. How they wielded this power appeared to depend on the nature of the search itself as well as the personality of the chair.

External Search Consultant (contracted by the Provost's Office)

The *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) stated, "a search consultant, if retained, shall be advisory to the search committee. Search consultants are highly knowledgeable in their own right and if retained their services should be used in such a way that the committee receives maximum benefit from their expertise" (p. 35). While *The Procedures* suggested that search consultants were optional and clearly stated they are advisory to the search committee, search consultants were almost always retained and their expertise with search processes in general gave them the power to influence.

The tentative conceptualization did not include any reference to search consultants, but they came up time and again regardless, and every search selected for investigation in this research used a search consultant:

> Is there a search consultant piece in here? No. You know, that's really important. Identifying and deciding whether we want a search consultant or not has been—it's a topic of conversation the very first meeting….I think we tried some searches without search consultants, but increasing over the years it became the standard way of operating. (S3.5, p. 4)

While the use of search consultants may have become the standard way of operating there were several comments that suggested care be taken to limit their power to influence:

> The consultants are there to support the committee. They're not there to run the committee. Although they bring I think some experience and background and they help us populate the talent pool—the choice of consultant is actually pretty important in and of itself. That's done outside the committee… (S2.1, p. 6)
>
> …I knew how important it was for me as the chair of the search committee to set the expectations and the tone and not leave that for the search consultant. Whereas I had seen in other searches that too much was left to the search consultants. (S1.3, p. 3)
>
> I think that we always need to be cautious in these searches about how much credibility we give to the search firm. I've kind of gone full circle with search firms…sometimes we—you can put too much credibility on the search company. (S2.1, p. 5)

Like chairs, different search consultants have different styles. Different chairs also have preferences for different styles, a point to which I return in chapter five:

> I would have preferred a search consultant where I was having more of a conversation and less being kind of told what the world was like. And what was possible and what wasn't, and what they were going to do, and all of this, as it was a bit—formulaic is not quite the right word—but a bunch of decisions as to how this was going to unfold had been made. And they weren't bad decisions in some ways, and as I say, they presented us with quite credible candidates. But I would've preferred a different tone and a different kind of conversation (S3.5, p. 8).

Search consultants bring considerable professional expertise to search processes. Given that for most members of the search committee, the search in which they are participating might be their first, considerable deference was granted to search consultants for the expertise they

brought. As previously noted, the power to influence was legitimized through deference of other search committee members in acknowledgement of recognized expertise.

The President

MacKinnon (2014) noted:

> the board's authority to appoint deans on the recommendation of the president and the provost is not a formality for the rubber-stamping of a bare majority view on a search committee. Universities need excellent leadership from their deans, and it is the responsibility of the senior administration to ensure that they get it. (p. 147)

The president is not a member of decanal search committees and yet *The Procedures* (2011) are clear that the final decision about which candidate to recommend to the Board of Governors for appointment lies with the president. The president also has the leeway to disagree with the ranking of the search committee and recommend any acceptable candidate to the board or recommend a failed search if they do not think any of the candidates are worthy of recommendation. While I am aware of occasions where a president has recommended a candidate other than the one the committee ranked as number one, I am not aware of any occasion in which a president has not recommended any of the candidates forwarded by the search committee and declared a failed search.

The Procedures (2011) state:

> the President will recommend one name to the Board of Governors from the short-listed candidates. If the President's recommendation differs from the majority view of the search committee, a rationale for the alternative recommendation shall be provided to the Board of Governors, and the rationale for the alternative recommendation should be provided to the search committee for information. (p. 34)

Given that the president makes the final recommendation to the Board of Governors all the chairs who were interviewed acknowledged that keeping the president in the loop during the search was an important, but perhaps not well-understood, element of the search processes:

> You want the president to know how you're doing. So the one place where confidentiality is—at least where I have felt fine about breaking confidentiality of the search committee is in my conversations with the president. The president needs to know. Who are you considering? What are you considering? What's the depth of the candidate pool? If you have to make a trade-off where are you making it? That's the important thing to do here. (S1.3, p. 9)
>
> And I want to go back to what I said about the university's needs. And this is something you probably do know, it's not a formal stage, but I would advise the president of the university on these searches, and we would sit down and I'd say College of X—this is the situation. So what's your view on this person? Here are the others, here's the profile. This is what it looks like, this is how it's unfolding, what do you need to tell me? What do I need to know from you? Because the recommendations coming to the president so from my perspective, making sure the president is up to speed on everything and understands what's going on and has an opportunity to weigh in….it's a feature of the process that most people I think don't understand, and it goes to the case of the university needing a candidate we can live with. (S3.5, p. 9)

While the chair holds the balance of power within the search committee, the president holds the balance of power when it comes to the decision of who to recommend to the Board of Governors for appointment. This begs the question of how the president is actually engaged in the search and whether more engagement with the search committee as a whole would be

beneficial. Engagement with the search committee as a whole has the potential to provide a more diverse view of the candidates that the chair alone may not be able to provide.

The President's Executive Committee (PEC)

The President's Executive Committee (PEC) was identified as a key group whose collective voice was missing from the search processes and whose individual voices could be compromised or completely absent. The PEC includes the president, the four vice-presidents, and the university secretary.

In *The Procedures* (2011) the provost and vice-president academic is identified as the official chair of decanal search committees and the vice-president research is identified as a member of all decanal search committees. These two vice-presidents have the option of delegating their role on these search committees and often do. The vice-president university relations and the vice-president finance and resources, who are the more administrative of the VPs are notably absent as members of decanal search committees, as is the university secretary. This is of interest because it appears to be a reflection of the academic/administrative tension inherent in the role of the dean. We include the vice-presidents who can speak to the academic desires and qualifications, but we do not include the vice-presidents who could speak to the non-academic or more CEO-like aspects of the role.

As a whole, the PEC has very little input into or involvement in decanal search processes beyond brief one-on-one meetings with the short-listed candidates. As a collective, one participant recognized that the PEC likely held the most comprehensive view of the current state of any college, but this view is not leveraged to inform the search:

> …I'm actually thinking that one of the reasons I don't think we are effective as we are is because we see that the first phase actually begins with [convening] the search

> committee. And I would say we're missing a first phase. That to me is the second phase of this. I would've put a top one. That's a discussion, and probably most importantly with the President's Executive Committee. (S3.3, p. 2)
>
> So I think the first phase is where is this college right now? Where has it been? Where is it today? Where does it need to go? What do the President's Executive committee feel is important for the institution first of the type of dean or senior leader we need?....Who has the best vantage point of that is your President's Executive team. Because you cover all the bases….It enables to sort of take a real hard look at this particular college. (S3.3, p. 2)

Search committees are constituted to gather broad input into the search in real time, that is once the search is underway. The same principle could apply pre- and post-search—that is gather broad perspectives vis-à-vis the PEC about the college pre-search and engage the PEC in regular post-search debriefs wherein there is reflection on the outcomes of the search.

Research participants identified the faculty, the chair and the external search consultant as most influential. These constituents were granted the power to influence through their position(s) within the university and/or the expertise they brought to the search committee. The power to influence was legitimized through knowingly or unknowingly deferring to other search committee members. Once granted, this legitimacy enhanced the credibility of that player or group of players.

All players operated within a system of structured processes and it is to these processes to which I now turn.

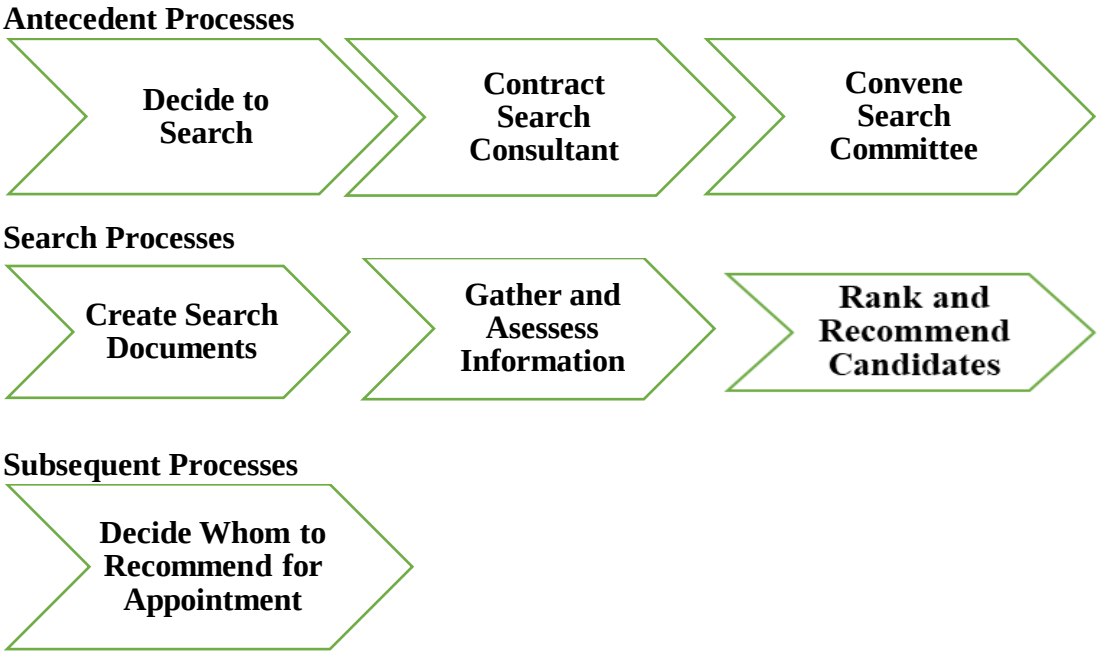
The Data: Search Processes

The *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) are silent on the actual search processes and each committee is invited to

establish their own processes. The literature suggested search processes for academic deans bear a striking similarity from one institution to another and there is little variation in how each element is carried out. This point was also made by at least one participant who noted, “I think I would suggest Kelly that the procedures, the process, the systems that we currently employ I don’t think are much different anywhere quite frankly across Canada” (S2.1, p. 18). This is likely true, but what was most interesting about unpacking the University of Saskatchewan search processes with participants was that what was captured in the tentative conceptualization did not always occur and what did occur what was not necessarily captured. For example, research participants did not make any reference to the creation of “medium-lists” and in at least one search there was some question about whether or not reference checking occurred. Alternatively, engaging a search consultant emerged as an important element that occurred in every search, but was not captured in the tentative conceptualization.

The full tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes can be found at the end of chapter two. In this section I highlight the processes, or the outcomes of processes, on which research participants expressed strong views. These included: deciding to search; contracting a search consultant; convening a search committee; creating search documents; gathering and assessing information on candidates; and, ranking and recommending candidates for appointment. Figure 4.2 provides a visual guide to this section of the chapter. A revised conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes concludes this section.

Figure 4.2.
Decanal Search Processes



The processes of deciding to launch a search and contracting a search consultant are the purview of the provost and convening a search committee is guided by *The Procedures* (2011). While the majority of search committee members have no engagement in these processes they still elicited strong views.

Creating the search documents was often the first search process in which individuals were asked to engage as a member of the search committee but they were not exclusively engaged and any decisions on content were typically made by the provost, possibly in consultation with the search consultant.

It was the processes of gathering and assessing information and then ranking and recommending candidates in which members of search committees had the most engagement and on which there were strong emotional responses, particularly frustration and disappointment. Other processes, such as creating candidate pools while acknowledged, did not elicit the strong

views or emotional responses that the other processes did and thus are not addressed here. It is not that these particular processes are not important, but rather the data gathered does not add any depth to the analysis.

Decide to Search: To Search or Not to Search

Launching a search must necessarily be preceded by a decision to do so. The provost and vice-president academic, likely in consultation with the president and perhaps the board of governors, is responsible for this decision. Presumably, the decision to launch a search would occur as soon as it is known that a decanal position has or will become vacant. Positions can become vacant for a number of reasons including but not limited to: a decision to pursue another opportunity inside or outside the organization prior to the end of a term; decision to not seek renewal for a second term upon completion of a first term; or, the unwritten (and subsequently written) rule that limits deans to two terms. On occasion, the employer has removed deans from their decanal role.

In the case of being removed from the role or leaving to pursue another opportunity, it is likely that the employer would not have time to identify and recruit a dean prior to the incumbent's departure and an interim dean must be appointed. However, in the case of the incumbent deciding not to seek renewal for a second term or pending completion of two terms the employer is given ample opportunity to identify and recruit a dean, but we do not seem to take advantage of this opportunity. As a result interim deans are appointed even when there is sufficient notice of an incumbent's departure. The challenge participants identified with interim appointments is two-fold: first, the interim appointee may or may not be interested in competing for the "not interim" role; and second, interim appointees often deferred decisions, such as faculty hires, that are potentially detrimental to the college.

Deans can only serve two terms and must declare their intent to seek renewal, or not, in the penultimate year of their first term and yet searches are not necessarily started in a timely manner:

> I know that we have some deans that have months and months and months ago that we know are not renewing. Well why does it take us six or eight months to do anything about it? So that we leave things to the last minute. It doesn't give enough room for the process to flow organically. What I mean by that is then search committees feel pressure. (S3.3, p. 3)

Search committees feel pressure when searches are left to the last minute, in part, because of the challenges and consequences of interim appointments. As one participant noted:

> A dean leaves and you then try to look for an interim dean that actually doesn't want the job. Because it's really hard to have an interim in a search process so you then try to find somebody who actually doesn't want the job and that's a really bad outcome. (S3.2, p. 7)

So now you have somebody leading the college who doesn't want the job and is unlikely to make any significant decisions or changes. The longer that an interim dean is in place, the greater the potential risk to the college as noted:

> We've known for more than a year that [name] is leaving. So as soon as that happens you create a search committee and you go forward with it, but the system is not set up to prioritize that, and [college] is going to suffer because of that period of limbo, and that's unfair. And [college] was pretty much the same, [name] was acting for how the hell long right? I mean, that's nuts. (S3.4, p. 4)

> The biggest thing I thought that we held back on was the hiring. To our detriment because then the university clawed back a whole bunch of money that we had not spent

> because we were waiting for a dean and then, ‘oh you guys haven’t’—anyway. So what are you supposed to do? I guess you just spend it like a—spend it when you have it even if you don’t have set leadership in place. (S1.3, p. 10)

The final point to be made in deciding whether to proceed with a search once a decanal role becomes vacant is who got to decide. Given that deans report directly to the provost and vice-president academic, it seemed reasonable that the decision on how to proceed would lie with the provost. However, one research participant suggested that who and how this decision was made was not clear:

> Then who and how do we make a decision of, ‘let’s appoint somebody interim.’ Or, ‘let’s start the search.’ Or ‘let’s do the interim now and start the search right away’. Where’s that part of the guidelines? (S3.3, p. 3)

In a perfect world there is a rhythm to decanal appointments. Deans are initially appointed to a five-year term with a review in the penultimate year that usually results in a second five-year term. This rhythm should allow us to stagger decanal appointments such that a certain number of searches (and reviews) in any given year might be expected and managed accordingly. However, the world is not perfect and deans can and do leave at various points in their term(s) for various reasons. This is not within our control, but what is within our control is what we do next. There are a number of possible decisions that a provost could consider when a position becomes vacant including, but not limited to: immediately launching a search for a new dean; launching a search for a “strategic interim” dean; or, considering whether an internal candidate might be ready for “succession.” While a vacancy may still result in the appointment of an interim dean, but this should be the exception rather than the rule.

Contract an External Search Consultant

The tentative conceptualization made no reference to search consultants. This was the most interesting "gap" identified—something that occurred that was not captured in the tentative conceptualization. Research participants had mixed feelings about the efficacy of search consultants and there was very little understanding of who decided, or had input into deciding, which search consultant would be contracted to provide expertise and guidance to a particular search. The fact was that the provost and/or the chair of the search committee was the one who chose the search consultant:

> The consultants are there to support the committee. They're not there to run the committee. Although they bring I think some experience and background and they help us populate the talent pool—the choice of consultant is actually pretty important in and of itself. That's done outside committee typically that's going to be the provost or the chair that's making that selection. (S2.1, p. 6)

There were varying views on who should have input into that decision. One research participant commented on the college's interest in the search consultant:

> But they [the faculty] were very keen on the role of the consultants and very skeptical, and even to the point of talking about how much we're paying and feeling that the college, this was all coming out of the college coffer. So a lot of misconceptions went along with that. And I guess the feeling that, 'well we should have a direct say, and we should vet these people because their track record is pretty pathetic' and so on. (S4.3, p. 2)

Whereas another research participant suggested that perhaps the search committee might have some say in which search consultant is hired to support the search. This participant pointed

to other searches, outside of the university, where deciding on the search consultant was part of the work of the search committee:

> So I will say that we didn't get to choose our own search consultant. I know in other situations hiring the consultant and deciding whether the consultant meets your needs is a big deal in terms of what they have to offer and who they might be. That hasn't happened at this university in any of my experience. They somehow love that one [consultant] and use them all the time. I don't know why. Not that they're bad or anything but it—sometimes you just wonder why we do that and we don't actually search out and have the committee decide whether or not a search consultant meets their needs or is going to do the job they want. I'm sure it's cost. But if it's cost then the university bears that if we're not getting necessarily what we are thinking we might. (S1.1, pp. 3-4)

Apart from the decision about the search consultant with whom to contract, the other interesting bit of commentary was related to past experiences where things had not gone well. The perception in one instance being that the search consultant had not done what they were supposed to do:

> I mean, it's critical to have a search consultant that does due diligence, we've experienced a number of instances at this university where the search consultant, whether it's a presidential search or a decanal search or executive director search, did not do the due diligence or the background checks that need to be done, and it hurt us badly and we got burned. (S2.2, p. 9)

The commentary about past experience actually circled right back to who should have input into the decision about whom to contract:

> It's also important is that—do we also get feedback about our search consultants? I think we get feedback on the real cases where things haven't gone well. But we tend to—when we have the search firms all of a sudden I see that somebody has this search firm I'm thinking 'Oh god. I didn't have a good experience' [with that firm]. So where is the institutional transferring of part of this process—where's the part of the process about deciding about the search firm? Who decides? (S3.3, p. 6)

Contracting with an external search consultant occurred in every search selected for this research. There was little understanding about who decided, who had and/or should have input into deciding, or how search consultants were vetted—if at all. Given the perceived risk if search consultants do not do what they say they will do or do not do it well, one might expect far more diligence associated with this particular process.

Convene a Search Committee

The original tentative conceptualization began with the stage of launching the search which included convening a search committee and appointing a search committee chair. The *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) detail the composition of each search committee and state, "the search/review committee is intended to bring the perspective of constituent groups. The desire to provide broad perspective must be balanced against the desire to ensure the size of the committee is functional" (p. 39). *Appendix A: Search and Review Committee Composition by Category* details not just the composition of the search committee but also how representatives from constituent groups are chosen for search committees. It was this latter piece, how representatives find their way onto search committees, that seemed to be particularly frustrating for some. Participants also expressed frustration with: the expectations we have of search committees that we do not state in

advance; the experience, or lack thereof, of search committee members; and, the impact of members knowing or not knowing one another going into search processes.

Choosing Representatives from Constituent Groups

Participants noted that although *The Procedures* (2011) stated the composition for each search committee by identifying those constituents that must be represented and whether the member from that constituent was selected, elected, appointed or on the committee by virtue of their role, this did not guarantee diverse perspectives and hindered the ability to shape the committee.

A comment from one participant suggested that the process of choosing representatives might be more strategic. This participant suggested a "front end" discussion about the actual people that are invited to serve on a particular search committee is missing:

> Do we have even guidelines in place to help us inform the procedures and process? For example I actually think right now our processes and procedures just say, 'Appoint a search committee. It has to have this representation and the chair...' But what's the front end part of that process? (S3.3, p. 3)

Another participant expressed a similar frustration—there is simply no opportunity to be strategic about who, from each constituent, actually ends up on the search committee. However, for this participant, it was an issue of diversity:

> So everything is so structured and it's all—it's somebody else's job to do it and getting things sequenced—for example there is no way to guarantee diversity on these search committees. No way at all. That's a major—because we're looking for diversity of perspective. But you can't guarantee it. You can't even influence it. (S1.3, p. 2)

This same participant suggested an alternative. Instead of striving for broad perspective it might be more helpful to strive for critical perspective:

> Searches for dean used to be the faculty got to decide. We've moved a long way to include other influences but I still think that a better way by far….Certain critical partner—critical not partners—critical constituencies involved. So it's a—look there have to be faculty on this thing. Got to be. There's got to be—the dean's going to come in and be a member of the senior leadership team. There's got to be senior leaders on this thing because we want to function as a whole. Then you add to that. (S1.3, p. 15)

So who does have the ability to shape search committees? Given that constituents could be elected, selected, appointed, or on the committee by virtue of role it appeared that shaping the committee is, intentionally or unintentionally, in the hands of the various constituents.

Expectations of Search Committee Members

Participants also commented on the expectations of search committee members of which they may or may not be aware. Expectations that search committee members will make the search a priority, the expectation that they will bring their own voice and views as a representative of a particular constituency and the expectation that they do not use the search committee as a place for personal agendas were all highlighted.

Recall that participants spoke about searches not being a priority from a number of perspectives. The following comments suggested that search committee members did not necessarily prioritize decanal searches for a variety of reasons. Participants pointed out it could be that search committee members are simply unaware of the time required to participate in a decanal search process and/or other things emerge that are deemed to be more urgent, and perhaps more important:

> We don't actually talk about with the search committee people what the job entails until after they already agreed to do it. That just seems to me to be backwards….and then when you actually go to convene the search committee you find out that people have not necessarily—when they agreed to do it—they haven't necessarily got it in their heads that it has to therefore be a priority. (S1.3, pp. 2-3)

> The urgency of immediate deadlines overtakes the importance of a decanal search. So everybody's freaked out about the provincial budget, so searches get put to one side, can't be allowed to happen, just can't. People need to clear calendars, people need to put this as a higher priority. We have colleges who are absent of leadership, and I mean, sure there are times when an incumbent leaves very abruptly, you know, and. But it feels like central administration doesn't care about the colleges when they don't put searches for deans as a high personal priority of central administration. (S3.4, p. 4)

Beyond the expectation that search committee members make searches a priority, there were also expectations about how search committee members "show up". Being asked to bring the perspective of a particular constituent group appeared to be a delicate balance between understanding the interests of the constituent group and appropriately acting on those interests:

> Rather than asking or getting faculty [search committee members] to try and relay what the college position was on certain things it was very clear: you are there as a faculty representative but you also have to bring your own kind of—you have to bring your own judgement to bear on whether or not you think this person is the appropriate candidate….You've seen and you've been through interviews. You've done this. So it's still—yes you're a representative but you will have to bring your independence to bear.

> You’re not just a representative from the faculty….It’s not like a delegate that way. (S1.1, p. 13)

> So people—by the time you actually convene the search committee….It’s too late to make sure that you haven’t got at least too many people who are single agenda—people who volunteered basically to be on it because they’ve got some issue that they want to bring in. Search committees should never be a place to air individual agendas. That’s not what they’re supposed to be about. (S1.3, p. 3)

There is an assumption that search committee members come with some appreciation of what is expected of them in this role. However, given the experience of search committee members, it is perhaps not a reasonable assumption.

Experience of Search Committee Members

The literature does not talk about the experience, or lack thereof, of search committee members. At the first meeting of the search committee, the search consultant and/or the chair typically provided an overview of the processes including what members could expect to happen in what order and some expectations around things like confidentiality. For search committee members for whom this was their first decanal search there was a huge learning curve that was simply left to chance. Of the research participants in this study, this was the first decanal search for one-third of them.

There was an assumption that people knew how to be a search committee member which resulted in little to no training. One research participant noted, “I think we take for granted when we put—when people are selected to come on search committees that they know how to be a search committee member” (S3.3, p. 8). Another participant reinforced the importance of

training, “when I think about how important this process is, to ask a group of untrained people to do it seems a little bizarre to me. I think we should train them up” (S1.3, p. 11).

A less experienced participant expressed surprise and some frustration with all the “ground rules” associated with decanal search processes, some of which appeared counter-intuitive:

> Was a lot new to me because I hadn’t been involved in anything quite like that…the sort of leading up to that [the interview], setting the ground rules—there’s a little bit of friction at times because people want to ask certain questions or they want to contact people that they know at institutions that might know these individuals and learning all about those rules and regulations. (S2.1, p. 2)

A final comment from a research participant connected experience with voice. In particular, being more senior in the hierarchy(s) of the university could potentially impact how much people were willing to engage versus defer:

> Imagine even the group of the three of us as [faculty] having been through an extra two years we probably would have a different opinion on some things too. Maybe a little less deferential to authority. (S3.1, p. 15)

Unclear or unstated expectations of what it meant to be a search committee member along with little or no experience required to participate on a decanal search committee appeared to contribute to frustrations expressed by search committee members.

Getting to Know One Another

Finally, there is little acknowledgement that, for the most part, we are bringing together people who may or may not know or be known to one another and asking them to very quickly come together around the common purpose of identifying and recommending one or more

candidates for a decanal appointment. Participants commented on trying to learn the rules that govern search processes and creating a team that could coalesce in relatively short order. Depending on the personality of the chair, the search consultant, and the members, these groups of people came together more easily in some searches than in others.

Respect and trust, and the time it took to generate respect and trust, featured in the comments related to getting to know one another:

> Furthermore—and maybe this is why the search process should take as long as it does, is that people—committees—task groups, whatever—that come together to do a job—there's two things going on. They're getting their job done but they're also getting to know each other as well. So you throw a bunch of people together and they're sorting out each other while they're making decisions. It's a damn good thing that the first real decision they make actually doesn't come until right at the end. So at least that means the critical decision they have to make comes after they've had ample opportunity to get to know each other, maybe respect each other's viewpoints, etcetera. (S1.3, p. 11)

> Which leads me to another point which is the comment about getting to know each other a little bit more. I don't know quite how you do that. Every group goes through the forming, storming. But how—if you could be done storming when you're trying to make a shortlist it would be really good….Because we got to a place where we trusted each other more, and if we could've gotten there earlier it would have been good. (S2.1, p. 14)

As one research participant noted, "so although you might come at it from different ways, a really good search team actually kind of comes together. This one I think it was very hard to get there" (S3.3, p. 1). Decisions are made whether members of the search committee come

together and respect and trust each other, or not. But the previous comment suggested that it is better when members do come together.

Appoint a Search Committee Chair

The Procedures (2011) state, "the committee will normally be chaired by the individual to whom the appointee will report" (p. 34). Comments related to the chair were captured in the section entitled "The Players" and will not be addressed further here.

Create the Search Documents

Two documents are important to search processes. One is the position profile which is intended to articulate the role of the dean as well as the qualifications necessary to compete for the role. The role of the dean is articulated through descriptions of the nature of the work they might expect and the major areas for which they will be accountable. Qualifications are typically articulated through defining skills, education and experience. The second document is the advertisement which is used to generate interest in the role via websites, various job boards, etc. The advertisement will often include a subset of information found in the position profile, such as major accountabilities, but tends to focus on providing information about the university, the college and the attributes or qualities of ideal candidates. Sometimes a third document referred to as a "search prospectus" is created. This is a much longer document that combines and enhances information from the position profile and the advertisement; this document is generally shared only with candidates who are actually interested in submitting an application.

Search committee members do not necessarily distinguish among these documents and the literature offered very little commentary on any of them. Comments from search committee members focused on the position profile, in particular who had input and who should have input into the profile as well as the content of the profile.

The Position Profile: Who Has Input

It appeared that pretty much anyone who wanted to have input into the position profile could have input, but at the end of the day decanal profiles all looked pretty much the same.

One research participant articulated a somewhat cynical view of this process:

> The decision about the position profile, we do a whole bunch of grunting and groaning, and in the end we really do leave it to the chair and in this case [the support person] and the search consultant to decide. We pull input in from others but we've got this thing around the university where everybody has a comment but in the end nobody actually cares that much. (S1.2, p. 7)

Another research participant suggested that all of the input might serve a more nefarious purpose:

> So I have to admit the developing a position profile piece of this, **wow.** Everyone has an opinion, and I think we're too wanting to make sure everyone's heard, and I think the position profiles are too long to really succinctly get your arms around, it's so easy to say, 'well they can't meet this piece of the profile so we'll discard them'. Well when you've got a 10-page profile, or a five-page profile, nobody's going to meet everything….And I feel like that's—like the wordsmithing on these position profiles is really something else. (S5.1, p. 3)

A final comment reinforced the notion of a "whole bunch of grunting and groaning" in every decanal search over a document that actually didn't change much from one search to the next:

> We met and established what the qualifications would be for dean. What type of person we were looking for. I remember a lot of discussion—[ ] What if they were an academic?

> What if they were not yet a full professor? What if they were a full professor? All of the—this is the usual stuff. Do they have to fundraise? Do they not have to? Do they walk on water? To what extent do they walk on water when they walk on water? Do they float? Or do they actually touch the water? It goes through—a normal process goes through a rather tedious kind of 'this is what the ideal candidate would look like.' Which I have to say as a member of many, many search committees I secretly roll my eyes back into my head. (S1.2, p. 2)

The cynicism expressed by these research participants, each of whom represented a different constituent group, pointed to wide-spread dissatisfaction with creation of the position profile.

The Position Profile: Who Should Have Input

Who should have input was an entirely different topic of conversation and fell along constituent lines and seemed to revolve around who had what expertise. Faculty were acknowledged as knowing the college, but not necessarily the role. Other deans might know the role, but the role itself differed from one college to another. And finally, there was a view that creating a position profile should be done outside of search committees altogether.

One proponent of the profile being driven by the college stated, "then again, the development of the position profile, that's very much driven by the college, in my opinion, I think it should be" (S3.4, p. 1). In providing an alternative view, one research participant noted that faculty might not have the most fulsome view of the role and that perhaps deans would have this broader view:

> I agree the position profile is hard and we tend to focus on what we know and so faculty might just focus on curriculum or academics right? Or research. So without really—you

> have people on the committee that don't know what the dean's job is. So I think having other deans around the table is important because they should have some input into that [the profile]. (S1.1, p. 18)
>
> One of the things that I like about the Saskatchewan system is putting successful deans on other dean searches….The problem is the faculty members don't necessary know. There's a little bit of a disconnect within the committee on what a faculty member's looking for. They're looking for someone who supports research and is there on a collegial committee. And a dean's job is just so beyond that (S1.2, p. 9).

While the previous comment suggested that other deans around the table might have a more fulsome view of the role and therefore their input would be important, at least one dean expressed an alternative view, deferring back to the college representatives:

> I can't recall any direct input that I as a decanal representative had on the committee for dictating what should be recognized in the profile. The profile was primarily an artifact of the chair as well as faculty members in that college who had perhaps a greater awareness of what should be, a greater understanding of how a particular profile could help them to recruit the candidate required for the college at that time. (S4.1, p. 2)

A third view was that the creation of the position profile should be done outside of the search committee altogether:

> Why we are looking at position profiles at the search committee level is beyond me. Or that we're letting it into the hands of this particular group of individuals. So it's not so much—I just think there's not the inclusivity of who needs to be around the table. There's a disproportionality of some members. It's because—and we're asking them to do things that in my mind I don't think they should be doing. (S3.3, p. 3)

> Also what do we need from this kind of leader at the institution? Going into then the search procedure should be that context. That narrative….and I don't think search committees have that type of membership nor has the membership had that kind of—they could not have that conversation because it's an institutional one. (S3.3, p. 2)

The question of who should have input was unresolved and raised a further question of whether the position profile should be created inside or outside of the search committee.

The Position Profile: Content

The content of the position profile was also critiqued. The strongest critique was positioning the role of the dean as the CEO of the college which was viewed as disingenuous at best and blatantly dishonest at worst. *The University of Saskatchewan Act* (1995) refers to the dean as the chief executive officer of the college; if this is not an honest portrayal of the role then either *The University of Saskatchewan Act* or the role needs to change. The second critique related to the qualifications of the dean. A PhD (or equivalent) and demonstrated success in teaching and research are almost always positioned prominently and there is far less attention on qualifications associated with the role of a CEO such as implementing strategy and leading change.

There was a lot of commentary from one research participant, in particular, on positioning the role of the dean as the CEO of the college. From this participant's perspective there is misalignment related to authority of the dean, the things over which the dean has control (or not), and the accountability of the dean in relation to authority:

> Dean positions are sold to candidates as the CEO of the unit, the reality is deans are not the CEO. Deans, when they arrive and realize how little authority they actually have, they realize they're a branch manager is what they are. (S3.2, p. 1)

> [Deans] inherit collective bargaining agreements with all sorts of unions and you may get asked for your opinion on how the bargaining should proceed and what your issues are but you're not part of it so you inherit the labour context in which you. You inherit the pay. I mean you don't have a role in setting some of your most important cost structures. There's a very murky relationship with central administration on how every one of your students brings in a couple of buckets of money and where do they go once they come in your door as a dean?....Deliberately murk? I don't know but it's not a transparent structure so you realize, a normal CEO would have control over those kinds of decisions. (S3.2, p. 1)
>
> So you realize very quickly what I would say is a misalignment between the authority you have and the accountability you have. So you certainly have the accountability of a CEO, you don't have the authority of a CEO. (S3.2, p. 2)

Positioning the dean as CEO of the college did not necessarily translate into the qualifications required, particularly the qualifications that might be more aligned to the role of a CEO. Research participants picked up on this disconnect:

> You have people with certain strengths, weaknesses in some areas and so it's a bit of trying to decide then what should happen. I think that is a reality because so often you want someone with an academic background. We're looking for people who have been professors or former professors that typically—and they won't have a lot of management opportunities in their faculty position. And what might make them successful as an academic doesn't necessarily make them successful as a manager. (S1.2, p. 8)

> But I agree if they come from the academic stream they haven't had that much opportunity to be an administrator and if they're an administrator primarily they haven't got an idea as to how, as you say, how the university works. (S1.2, p. 8)
>
> So when we're looking for deans we're looking for academics with leadership skills. But leadership skills and academic don't necessary go together. (S5.1, p. 12)

The voice of research participants, thus far, have revealed challenges within the search committee itself and the creation of search documents. As I turn to reporting on how information is gathered and assessed, it was not surprising to find those search processes also fraught with challenge.

Gather and Assess Information

A decision is made to launch a search, a search consultant is contracted, a search committee is convened, search documents are created, and candidates apply. This is when the work of the search committee begins in earnest which is the work of gathering and assessing information that will be used to differentiate candidates and ultimately to make decisions.

The first discernment process is a process referred to as short-listing. Search committee members independently assess information provided by each candidate, typically a curriculum vitae (CV) and cover letter, and choose a small number of candidates on whom they would like to gather more information. Search committee members collectively come to agreement on the final short-list of three candidates and, once established, an itinerary is created. The itinerary outlines the various processes by which more information on short-listed candidates will be gathered. I refer to these as the interview processes.

Sometimes a medium-list is established as a precursor to the short-list, but the intent is similar—to determine a smaller number of candidates on whom you would like to gather more

information. Information gathering at this stage might take the form of an abbreviated interview between candidates and search committee members or the search consultant might be instructed to interview the medium-listed candidates and bring information from the interviews back to the search committee for deliberation. Regardless of how information gathering happens at this stage, the goal is to gather additional information on a select set of candidates, assess the new information and determine the short-list. None of the participants spoke of establishing a medium-list as part of the search processes save one participant who noted the absence of this element.

Short-listed candidates proceed through the interview processes which are intended to gather information in a variety of ways from a variety of sources including, but not limited to public presentations, social interaction(s), small group meetings, one-on-on meetings and a formal interview. While interview processes allow search committee members, and other members of the USask community, to gather information about the candidates, these processes also provide an opportunity for candidates to learn about USask—an important point that may not be well understood.

Information gathered through the interview processes is verified and/or complemented through checking references on which participants expressed strong views—most of which were negative. Once information from all sources, including reference checks, is compiled the search committee members assess the information and decide which candidates to recommend to the president for appointment in what order. While a unanimous recommendation is always the desired outcome, this is not always the case and provision is made in *The Procedures* (2011) for the expression of dissenting views. *The Procedures* also allow the chair to recommend any

acceptable candidate to the president if there are differing views between the chair and the majority of the committee on the preferred candidate (p. 34).

What became apparent was that these processes are fraught with challenges almost before they even start. I begin this section by highlighting some of the challenges and speaking briefly to the short-list of three—almost always three. I then move into the various interview processes themselves, including reference checks, and data related to the processes of ranking and recommending candidates for appointment.

The Challenges

Generally, the basis on which search committee members are asked to discern among candidates is not well understood. This is not surprising when one considers the limited and sometimes conflicting view of the decanal role search committee members bring and the unfamiliarity with academic CVs and credentials that search committee members from outside of the academy have. Search committee members are asked to: consider candidates in the role of both a college and institutional leader and assess candidates' qualifications on the basis of an academic CV that is structured to highlight academic accomplishments and a cover letter that is often a better reflection of how well an individual can write than whether or not they meet stated qualifications. Search committee members are also instructed to put aside personal feelings and opinions and bring objectivity to highly subjective processes.

Research participants commented on the challenge of search committee members taking a broad view of the candidates as both college and institutional leaders:

> A lot of times search committees and the members who come from the colleges are completely consumed with what the college needs and what it's all about from a college's perspective….I need to remind the committee that we are recruiting somebody who's to

> join a larger team, and so the university itself has an interest in the quality, qualification, whatever of these people. So I'm not just there to convene this meeting and hear what you think, you need to hear what I think, but there's also always typically a member from the board, somebody from the senate. You know, you need to listen to these people as well, even if they don't have much to say in the early going, you need to understand that this isn't just about the leadership of the college. (S3.5, p. 7)

The task of ensuring a broad view of the candidates seemed to fall to the provost. This commented begged the question posed earlier about who among the players has the most fulsome view of the needs of the college and the institution:

> Hopefully the provost has a role of looking out for the university as a whole as well, that has a bigger picture view on how this person as a dean will fit into whatever that grand vision is. (S1.1, p. 17)

Research participants noted the challenges associated with assessing decanal candidates based on academic CVs. There are members of the search committee for whom these CVs are completely foreign and they readily admitted to relying on the faculty who were on the search committee. Participants also seemed to be aware that other information, such as reputation, could influence the assessment of candidates:

> So it's very hard for non-academic people if not impossible to look at a CV and determine if this person is really a strong academic or not. Or whether they're just filling pages….Very reliant in my opinion on the faculty people in the committee. (S1.2, p. 4)
>
> And again, coming into an academic field where you've got members who really know the field well, they're going to know the names of the candidates, they're going to know their reputation, they're going to know all of that, and so they're already marking against

> that. Whereas myself coming in from [constituency] I don't have that knowledge. So how do I approach an academic and a review of a resume? I read them and I think, 'man they all look good to me'. And so I really weigh on the other members for that culling process. And the culling often happens on reputation. (S5.1, p. 4)

Participants also commented on the challenges associated with assessment of internal versus external candidates. While not always the case, the following comments reflected preference for internal candidates:

> Yeah I felt that though we were all happy with the outcome in a sense the outcome felt predetermined. That the candidates from the outside were viewed more harshly than the candidate from the inside. Anything was used to disqualify outsiders and nothing was used to disqualify insiders….I believe the criteria were applied differentially. (S1.2, p. 1)
>
> And then why in some ways did we disregard a lot of the criteria that we say we were looking for, in favour of a preferred candidate? I like the preferred candidate very much don't get me wrong. But then why did we spend so much time writing criteria? (S1.2, p. 2)

A lot of the challenges seemed to reflect bias—conscious or unconscious—that search committee members brought with them into the discernment processes. Bias towards what is best for the college, bias towards academic credentials, and bias towards internal candidates. The challenge, as articulated in the following comment, is that while our current processes do not necessarily serve us well a viable alternative is illusive:

> In this case we had a good candidate pool but yet I still kind of think that's an issue. But then where it really comes down, where we need way more help in my mind, is how do you court candidates? How do you court them? How do you go through a discernment

> process to find out what kind of leader they are? And what kind of leader they could grow into be. How do you determine fit for the job? Fit with the institution and fit for the job. How do you actually determine that? I think we've just been doing the same thing over and over again and it most of the time seems to get us some reasonable results since we keep on doing it. But even if other processes wouldn't get to a final outcome any better maybe it would get there with less time and with less cost and less people expense. (S1.3, p. 16)

The results we get with the current processes are just good enough or produce outcomes that are just good enough that the motivation to change how we do things is low.

Short-lists: The Rule of Three

The first assessment of information provided by candidates against the criteria articulated in the search documents results in a short-list of candidates who are then invited to move onto the interview processes. What was interesting to me was that almost without fail, three candidates were short-listed; and not just any three, but rather two external and one internal. This rule of three raised concerns of bias towards external candidates and challenges with internal candidates. Comments on this "rule of three" appeared in four of the five searches selected for this study. One research participant offered a rationale for this practice:

> Whereby, universities seem to think that expertise is inversely related to how close you are to the university. So you see it in the unwritten rule of a search, a search is going to have three candidates and one's going to be internal and two are going to be external….So you end up with this bias towards external people and you could say well it's an innocent bias. (S3.2, p. 2)

It was also observed that even if the provost had a preference for an internal or external candidate, they were loath to express it and seemed content to let the "rule of three" play out:

> I think there has to be absolute honesty from the provost, do you want an internal candidate or do you think it's time for an external. Let's just have the conversation upfront, instead of saying, 'well as long as we have one internal and two externals then we're fine.' Well there shouldn't be a rule there, the provost has authority and if the provost is convinced it's time for someone from the outside then just have the courage to say that from the beginning. (S3.2, p. 7)

As one participant commented, "dealing with internal candidates that you don't wish to take forward. Just internal candidates is always a challenge" (S1.3, p. 13). I would suggest it would be even more challenging if there is no intention to seriously consider an internal candidate.

At the end of the day, the short list will very likely have three candidates, and it is likely that two will be external and one internal and the next step is to gather and assess information on the candidates:

> I remember—you know ultimately that you're trying to get to where you've got three candidates that you can say, 'based on how much information I have right now on these three, looks like they would be able to do the job and do it well. Then the next processes are about sorting out which one will do it the best. Where's the best fit? (S1.3, p. 4)

According to one participant, "in a perfect world I would love to have three very appointable candidates that we were totally conflicted on" (S2.1, p. 13). Getting to this outcome moves the search into establishing an itinerary for candidates and engaging in the interview processes.

The Itinerary

The itinerary created for candidates looks the same from one search to the next which may or may not meet the individual candidate's needs. It may not meet the needs of search committee members or the best interests of the institution either. There was concern expressed that because participation in some parts of the itinerary is optional and/or designed to exclude most of the search committee members that not everyone had the same or even all the information going into the final decision making process of ranking and recommending candidates for appointment.

This research participant commented on what the itinerary generally includes, which all seemed very practical and logical:

> So you arrange, my office, our office, would work to put together an itinerary and make arrangements to bring these people in. And then what you want to do is make sure they're here for two full days of meetings with faculty and students and staff. You want to make sure that they have opportunity to meet with other senior leaders, the provost, the president, the vice-president research, some other deans. Put them in informal settings, take them out for dinner, you know, the search committee would….And then you'd have the structured interview. (S2.2, p. 5)

However, this research participant wondered about the strategy behind the itinerary and suggested a standard itinerary was a missed opportunity:

> How much strategy goes into the creation of the search itinerary?....So you want to have consistency and yet it's—to me it's not equality, it's equity. So you know that this is maybe what this candidate needs more than this. Do we put enough thought into strategy? Who's in charge of that?....I think sometimes we take these kind of—so much for

> granted. ‘Oh this is the standard protocol. Yeah. Can do it behind—with our eyes tied behind our back. Yeah. This tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick.’ So I think sometimes we get a little bit complacent. (S3.3, p. 7)

It was surprising to learn how much of the itinerary is considered optional and/or designed to exclude search committee members:

> I know there are other occasions on campus like when candidates come in they’ll meet with the President or they’ll meet with the VP Research or other senior leaders on campus whoever they may choose to do that. We take them for supper and try to get to know them a little bit in an informal setting. There’s lots of information feeding into that and some of that information isn’t necessarily known to the committee. So the committee tends to work pretty much in isolation. (S2.1, p. 7)

There was also an observation about proceeding with search committee meetings in the absence of search committee members and then having no process in place to fill them in on what they missed:

> We’re awful about leaving people behind. There’s a decision to be made at the end that requires everybody for it to be the best possible decision. But along the way we do things at meetings where some people are missing. And we do not do enough to catch up the people who weren’t there. (S1.3, p. 11)

Maybe it doesn’t matter that not everyone has the same or even all the information going into the final decision-making process of ranking and recommending candidates for appointment—or perhaps it matters a great deal—we just don’t know.

The Interview Processes

The interview processes typically spanned two days and involved not just a formal interview (exchange of information between the candidates and search committee members), but could also include any or all of the following: a public presentation which is open to pretty much anyone and which search committee members may or may not attend; a social interaction usually in the form of a dinner with some, but not all, members of the search committee; an interaction with small groups of deans—usually whomever is available; an interaction with small groups of undergraduate and graduate students—sometimes together and sometimes apart; and, possibly one-on-one meetings with the PEC and/or other senior administrators such as vice-provosts and associate vice-presidents from which search committee members are excluded.

Public presentation. Participants expressed concerns about the public nature of some of the interview processes, such as the public presentation, and how exposing candidates in this way might impact candidate pools. The following comments were illustrative of this concern:

> It's just too much. It's too public. And I think because of that we may not get the candidates that we want. And then there's the embarrassment if you don't—and I put that in air quotes, the embarrassment, in air quotes—if you don't get the position. (S5.1, pp. 2-3)

> This would be in some ways generic to the searches I've been involved in but it was no different in the context of this search was how exposed the candidates are. For someone who doesn't come from the academy or that particular setting it is always a bit intriguing to me how people are prepared to put themselves out there, particularly when they're shortlisted and they need to present themselves to the campus community and particularly the faculty and students that they're going to be working with…I don't know if that can

> be altered in any way to ensure that we protect the candidate and protect their institutions and maybe improve the depth of the talent pool. (S2.1, p. 2)

These concerns seemed to be unique to search committee members from outside of the academy.

Social interaction. Some participants felt that the social interaction was appropriate in that it provided additional information about the candidates that could feed into the final decision while others felt it was inappropriate.

This research participant was of the view that the informal opportunities, of which the social interaction is one, provided valuable insight:

> …interview is important and how they answer in the interview is important….but it's also the informal opportunities to get to know these people because, sometimes people—they'll say one thing and then when you're in your quiet conversations they act a little differently than what they're portraying and to me that's a bit telling. (S1.1, p. 19)

This research participant had a different view and believed the social interaction provided opportunity for conversation to drift to prohibited spaces:

> The other thing, and I'm not too sure where to put this, but the practice of having a social interaction and going out for dinner, I'm just not sure where that fits other than it's an opportunity to find out what's their family, what's their family plan, and stuff that's really none of our business….It's nice to socialize but every time something comes out about the spouse, something comes out about the kids, and 'what does your partner do' that's just normal conversation. And all of a sudden the question, 'are they moving with you' comes up, we can't ask that. (S5.1, p. 1)

If a question would be deemed to be inappropriate in an interview it should probably not be asked at dinner. The social interaction should not be seen as a means to gather information that would not otherwise be gathered.

The interview. The interview appeared to be the one element which required the participation of all search committee members. If a search committee members was unable to participate in all of the interviews they were unable to participate in the final decision of whom to recommend for appointment. The comments from participants suggested general dissatisfaction with the interview including, but not limited to, determining the questions to which candidates would be asked to respond and the ability of the questions to differentiate among the candidates.

It appeared that formulating the interview questions was left to the search consultant. This would make sense given their expertise in the area of search processes; however, some participants expected more consultation. This also makes sense given the expertise search committee members would bring with respect to the college (faculty) and the institution (provost and/or chair). The follow comments were illustrative:

> And then we'd have the interview which is set up for about two, two-and-a-half hours. It's a structured interview where we've had a series of questions formulated and they're the same questions for everyone. There's some opportunity for probing questions. We typically assign people the same question for all the candidates, so you're kind of doing the same thing over, and over, and over again. (S2.2, p. 5)
>
> I found that some stuff was left to the recruiting company and I think they did a crappy job, like coming up with a list of questions for us to ask. They didn't actually consult

> with the group in terms of developing questions that would be suitable and then we didn't see the questions until like 10 minutes before the first interview started. (S3.1, pp. 1-2)
>
> Well I remember…talking with the recruiting team and sort of coming, them saying we can help you come up with the questions that you want to get the information you need to assess the candidate. But they never talked to us about that, either individually or as a group. (S3.1, p. 9)

Beyond determining what questions would be asked by whom in the interview, there were several comments about the interview in and of itself. In particular, there was a perception that the interview was somehow failing us on two fronts: the first, is that search committees are not getting the right information and second, the information search committees do get is not particularly useful. The following comments reflected these views:

> Again for me the interviews—I don't know if I would say that I thought they delineated the candidates as well as I hoped that they might. Actually in the interview questions I found sticking to the questions actually quite confining sometimes when you really wanted to delve a bit deeper but to try to be fair it's just like our [administrative] process. You have to keep it pretty tight so that you aren't—you're really fairly evaluating one individual to the next but I think there were times when you wanted to explore a little bit more what they said and you really couldn't. (S2.1, p. 5)
>
> I'm not confident that the interview part of it is as good as it could be. I think I'd feel a lot better if there was some more I guess I would say professionalism—not professionalism because I think we do it well—but I think there's just—it would be better if we had somebody who just knew more about the whole psychology of finding fit and sorting out. (S1.3, p. 6)

One research participant noted the balance between evidence and intuition. The view of this participant was that both were required:

> There's got to be some balance between the rigour and trying to get as much evidence-based material into the decision process but it's also important to understand the individuals that you're interviewing and sort of intuitive approach to their capabilities and whether you feel they have the requisite skill. (S2.1, p. 6)

The interview is the process that required all search committee members to be present—it was not optional in the way the public presentation and social interactions were. This suggested that the interview was critically important in the assessment of candidates. And, if the interview was critically important, the questions and the ability of the questions to differentiate candidates would also be critically important. And yet, there was little confidence that the questions that were asked in an interview were the right questions and there was little confidence in the ability of the questions to differentiate candidates.

Candidates' assessment of us. The interview processes were generally seen as a "one-way street" where the University of Saskatchewan was gathering information on and assessing candidates. This is true, but candidates also used interview processes to gather information on and assess the University of Saskatchewan. This did not appear to be well understood. As one participant noted, "I think that there's this—still this culture that we're interviewing you and—as opposed to they're interviewing us" (S3.3, p. 7). Another participant commented on how candidates might react to an interview that was focused solely on "buying:"

> …I think that the committees need to be more oriented to the fact that they're selling. It's—there's a lot of time—and I find myself…reminding people to say, 'hold it. You're selling as much as you you're buying here.' And if you come across too much like

you've got to, you know, 'we're letting you in and you have to be good enough to be let in.' Then that's—that can be very off-putting. (S2.1, p. 16)

There is a degree of ego at play to think that every candidate that applied, was short-listed, and ultimately interviewed would actually accept an offer, regardless of their experience with the search processes.

Checking References

The reference checks were a particular point of contention and participants commented on the value, or lack thereof, of checking references as well as who should be accountable for checking references. There was particular criticism of search consultants on this element and while one participant suggested this was an area where search consultants added value another participant cautioned against relying on search consultants to gather this information.

Value of reference checks. The main critique of reference checks was the fact that candidates decided with whom the reference checker could speak. Even in a "360 degree" reference check designed to elicit information from a wide range of individuals such as direct reports, supervisor(s) and peers, candidates determined the names they provided as "referees" and these were the only people with whom the reference checker was authorized to speak. While it is understandable that candidates would want to provide names of individuals who would speak well of them it does leave the whole process of reference checking wanting if there is no ability to seek out diverse perspectives on candidates—especially when we know that no-one is perfect.

Comments related to reference checking ranged from the mild suggestion that references were distorted to the inability of reference checking to uncover sociopathy:

> But there is a presumption when the search comm—when you get the references, that they are accurate in some way. They're not distorted. There's a trust that if you call people they're going to tell you the truth. But I've come to distrust it more. (S1.2, p. 5)
>
> I think it's possible in our searches for somebody to hide some pretty influential personal characteristics. I think it's possible—between that [the interview] and the deep-dive reference checks. I think it's still possible for people to hide—keep from exposing some things that if exposed would make them a less desirable candidate and maybe not an eligible candidate. (S1.3, p. 6)
>
> And there's the other odd conundrum that no matter how well you do things true sociopaths can game any selection system. I don't know if the references really get strongly enough at sociopathy. (S1.2, p. 6)

Another set of comments were of a similar vein in that reference checks were not to be trusted. While the previous comments suggested that the information gleaned, or not, from references could be problematic the following comments suggested that references are problematic because of the limitations on with whom the person doing reference checking could speak:

> Yeah, and moreover in talking with colleagues where the dean came from, it was obvious that what we're seeing now was not new. And it never came up in the search even though I naively at the time insisted that the search firm, the head hunters, do a good job with their reference checks, because the previous full-time dean we'd had was also a massive failure. I won't way this one is a massive failure yet. But certainly mixed. (S4.2, p. 1)
>
> I put no value, none, in references, in this type of search process now. Because the references come from the candidate, and they're not going to suggest somebody who's

not going to speak highly of them, so they're worthless. Absolutely and utterly worthless. And unless you can talk to people without the permission of the candidate, all references are pretty much worthless. (S4.2, p. 2)

Like interview questions, the questions that are asked of referees did not appear to get at the right information which may be attributed, in part, to whom the questions may legitimately be asked.

Accountability for reference checks. Accountability for checking references was almost always the domain of the search consultant although, in my experience, search consultants often conferred with committee members to determine what information should be validated and/or sought during conversations with referees. One research participant noted, "…if search consultants have a pretty much hands down usefulness it's in creating the candidate pool. Their second area of usefulness…has to do with reference checking" (S3.5, p. 4). The search consultants were assumed to have expertise in this space.

There was also an assumption that the search consultant reported their findings back to the search committee, but this could range from being as simple as stating there were "no flags" to providing full verbatim transcripts of the conversations with referees. There was also a perceived conflict of interest as search consultants had a vested interest in placing a candidate in order to get paid; however, I would argue the risk to a search consultant's reputation is great if they place a candidate who it turns out to be a "massive failure."

One research participant suggested that accountability for reference checks should lie squarely within the search committee. They stated, "so I think search processes should include a role for the search committee, maybe at the chair level or the vice-chair level if there's an official

vice-chair position, to take responsibility and accountability for reference checking and background checking" (S3.2, p. 4). Another research participant echoed this view:

> …the committee gave us the authority on their behalf to go out and do the reference checking on our short-listed candidates. Having done that in that context I can see how valuable it is and how important it is. Because we took the committee perspective into those interviews whereas as [name] indicated, the consultant goes out, they're just trying to get a match….I mean how do you make sure you've got the right fit? You can't contract that out. You can't abdicate that responsibility….probably there should be some thought to the committee taking that responsibility at least in part so that it's not exclusively left to the consultant. (S2.1, p. 7)

There seemed to be some suggestion that engaging search committee members in the process of reference checking produced better outcomes. This is interesting if one considers that the people to whom someone can speak does not change, but what does potentially change are the questions that are asked of referees and the interpretation of the responses by those who know the institution. This begs the question of what expertise is best brought to bear where.

Rank and Recommend

The search committee does not appoint the dean. The search committee makes a recommendation to the president—a recommendation that the president does not have to accept—and the president makes the final recommendation to the board of governors. One participant commented at some length on the final stage of ranking and recommending one or more candidates and how a college might inadvertently end up with a less preferred candidate by virtue of this process. Search committee chairs also offered a perspective on ensuring that whomever was recommended was a candidate with whom the university could live.

It appeared that search committees were well aware of their role which was to make a recommendation which may or may not be accepted:

> Oh yeah, well I think the whole, the way the process is supposed to work is we make a recommendation to the president and the president makes the recommendation to the board for appointment. So the president could say no and the provost could go into the president's office and say yeah I'd pick number two. I think that would lead to some hard feelings. (S3.1, p. 12)

This research participant stressed the role of the chair in making sure search committee members are clear not just about their role, but about the process following the ranking and recommending:

> I think where the chair was really important was recognizing that the search committee does not appoint the dean, the search committee makes a recommendation to the president that would then be approved by the board, and I think that from a governance perspective is lost on some people….Now there may be cases where the president or the board may disagree with the recommendation, that's totally appropriate, but I think it's really clear for us to be aware when I'm speaking to other faculty or staff of the role of the committee, chair and the committee itself, is to make a recommendation that can then be taken forward to other senior leaders for approval. (S4.1, p. 4)

There are two decisions related to ranking and recommending candidates for appointment in which search committee members are asked to participate. The first decision is to determine whether or not a candidate is suitable for appointment. In the event that there is more than one suitable candidate, members are then asked to rank all suitable candidates in order of preference with the top candidate being the preferred candidate. What is often not clear to search committee

members, particularly those who are new to these search processes, is that the preferred candidate is not necessarily the one with whom you will end up. This could happen in two ways. One way is that negotiation with the preferred candidate is unsuccessful and negotiation proceeds with the next candidate on the list. The other way is that the president does not accept the recommendation of the search committee and recommends a candidate, other than the preferred candidate, to the board of governors for appointment. Either results in a candidate being appointed simply because they were suitable:

> There can be, you can introduce unintended consequences by how you do the ranking….the committee needs to recognize that they've got a crucial role, the message they send by way of the non-preferred but suitable candidates, is a very important observation for the president and of the board. So I think they need to be, not necessarily strategic, but simply aware of the implications. If you deem all three suitable and you say, 'well go to A, then to B, then to C' you're saying you're happy with C….So don't simply assume that is we really love A, we make everybody suitable, you could get door number three….So you need to be very aware of the consequences of your recommendation. (S4.1, p. 10)

There are nuances to search processes of which search committee members may or may not be aware, particularly those search committee members who come with little or no experience. Some of these nuances, such as those related to ranking and recommending candidates often only come to light when a less preferred candidate is ultimately appointed and search committee members are left wondering how that happened.

Revised Conceptualization of Search Processes

Table 4.1 offers a revised conceptualized of search processes acknowledging that what was captured in the tentative conceptualization does not always occur and what does occur was not necessarily captured.

Table 4.1.
Revised Conceptualization of Decanal Search Processes

Element	**Process**	**Purview**
Decide to Search Contract Search Consultant	Antecedent Process Antecedent Process	The provost (likely in consultation with the president)
Convene a Search committee Appoint a search committee chair	Antecedent Process Antecedent Process	*The Procedures* (2011)
Create the Search Documents (profile, advertisement, search prospectus)	Search Process	Search committee members, faculty (and to a lesser degree staff) in the college, search consultant
Create Candidate Pools	Search Process	Search consultant with input from search committee members
Gather and Assess Information • Public Presentation • Social Interaction(s) • One-on-One meeting(s)	Search Process	Search committee members may or may not be involved in any of these information gathering processes
Gather and Assess Information • Formal Interview	Search Process	Search committee members
Gather and Assess Information • Reference Checks	Search Process	Search consultant
Rank and Recommend Candidates	Search Process	Search committee members
Decide whom, among those ranked and recommended, to recommend for appointment	Subsequent Process	The president

As opposed to phases and stages, the revised conceptualization identifies those processes which are antecedent and subsequent to engagement of the search committee in addition to search processes in which search committee members are engaged. Both antecedent and subsequent processes occur without any direct involvement of the search committee and are the purview of other people or processes—also identified in the table.

Summary: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

I began this chapter providing context for the study followed by various presentations of the data analysis including by search, by players and by search processes. What I observed across all sections of this chapter were themes that I came to think of, and call out, as the good, the bad and the ugly. This felt like a good way to summarize this chapter.

The Good

There was very little that emerged in the data that was good even though research participants were specifically asked to recall what worked well in the search in which they participated. My perception that my data was light on what worked well, or what was good, was validated by the emergent data analysis that was done by the CHASR professional. Only 68 comments were coded to *Strengths* whereas 199 comments were coded to *Weaknesses and Challenges.*

Furthermore, what one participant recalled as good could just as easily be recalled as a weakness or challenge by another participant. The following examples highlight these recollections and perceptions.

Recall that the itinerary was not seen in a particularly positive light. The itinerary did not vary from one search to the next which and much of the itinerary was optional for search

committee members. An alternative view was that the itinerary provided a positive candidate experience:

> I think our candidates are in general provided with a very good experience of campus. I think they get to meet a good range of the appropriate people, I think there's a lot of care taken in putting together the range of folks that candidates meet with. I think that in general people on campus are quite open to those kinds of meetings. Those sorts of things I think we do well here. (S3.5, p 5)

The behaviour of the search committee chair drew criticism in at least three of the searches but there were also a smattering of positive comments related to the chair although these were confined to a single search:

> I do think it was nice that the chair came to the college near the beginning of the process to kind of tell people 'this is what's happening'. Give people a sense of what the process was going to be. A general timeline of how long things were going to take and solicited input on the position description and that kind of thing. (S1.1, p. 13)

And finally, despite the mostly negative commentary related to external search consultants, there were a few comments that spoke to the value of the search consultant. One participant noted, "I think the search consultant worked well for us. I think the relationship was very good" (S1.3, p. 15). Another participant credited the search consultant with keeping the search moving along. This participant noted, "I recall the search being very efficient. It was well handled. [Name] kept it flowing. It was scheduled well, we found the times. It just sort of proceeded in a very non-crisisy way" (S1.2, p. 6). An alternative view is that perhaps the search committee members in this search simply made the search a priority. One research participant commented on the candidate pool and observed, "in this case we used [name] and I think they

have done a number of searches on our campus and have been able to bring us good candidate pools…" (S2.1, p. 6). And finally, one research participant expressed appreciation for the expertise shared by the search consultant. This participant noted, "…some of us we were all—some of us were very new to the process so just the orientation and I definitely appreciated the way they [search consultant] walked us through that" (S2.1, p. 4).

When all was said and done, the following comment seemed representative of the good, "What else worked really well? It's funny that my list's so short" (S1.3, p. 8). Sadly, the list of what worked well in decanal search processes was short for all participants across all searches.

The Bad

Much of what participants recalled as they walked me through their recollections of search processes revealed a great deal of frustration with virtually every aspect of the search. The search took too long, the power differential silenced some voices, the candidates were too exposed, the interview didn't differentiate the candidates well enough, the references were useless, and on it went. By the time I got to the question that specifically asked participants to recall challenges, I needn't have bothered as it was largely challenges that were recalled throughout the interviews and focus groups without any prompting at all. Given all of this I continued to wonder why we are so committed to doing things the same way we have always done them every time we have a decanal search. And, once a search is launched it seems we were committed to ending with an appointment versus ever even contemplating a failed search.

Timeliness

Timeliness, of lack thereof, emerged as a theme that caused considerable angst for search committee members. Timeliness was viewed as important, problematic and a proxy for the priority or importance of the search to the central administration.

The following comments suggested timely appointments would address at least some of the challenges that come with naming acting or interim deans and mitigate the risk of losing candidates from already shallow candidate pools:

> Because I think timeliness is important and I think with all searches timeliness is important for lots of reasons in terms of just the candidates. Bringing in candidates, getting it done. But also then being able to make a timely appointment. (S1.1, p. 3)
>
> The other thing I would think about the process here, is that it takes way too long, it is not proactive. We have way too many times when there are acting deans, when it's known well in advance that the incumbent is leaving. (S3.4, p. 4)
>
> It's the timing of all this that sucks so badly at this place, it takes too long. Honestly, in a lot of ways it is disrespectful. It is disrespectful of the colleagues in the college, it is disrespectful of the people who are on the search committee, it is disrespectful of the other deans. It sends all the wrong messages. It send the wrong messages to candidates. (S3.4, p. 6)

The problems with timeliness seemed to be linked to search committee members not understanding and/or under-estimating the time commitment required for search processes and the challenges of convening a large group of individuals for whom this is a volunteer commitment:

> When you agree to be part of a group that involves ten or more people, you have to understand that there's going to be scheduling difficulties and you have to be prepared to make this a priority in your own work or else it's not going to get done. (S1.3, p. 3)

One research participant also observed, "the urgency of immediate deadlines overtakes the importance of a decanal search….can't be allowed to happen, just can't. People need to clear

calendars, people need to put this as a higher priority" (S3.4, p 4). The same research participant suggested, "it feels like central administration doesn't care about the colleges when they don't put searches for deans as a higher personal priority of central administration" (S3.4, p. 4).

These comments illustrated the perception several of the research participants had that if a search happened in a timely way that it was a priority; if it didn't, it wasn't.

Power Differential

Power, and particularly the power to influence search processes was a key theme. Power differential, whether by virtue of position or expertise, impacted what people were willing to bring to the discussions of candidates. And there was an expressed desire for people who hold the power to be mindful of this and mitigate this differential versus using it to their advantage.

For the most part, the power differential research participants identified were student-faculty, junior faculty-senior faculty and faculty-senior administrators:

> But sometimes there's just the ability to defer to the expert or defer to one of the senior people, you get into a power imbalance. Maybe it's most relevant for faculty vis-à-vis students. Like I'm not saying this was the case, but there could be perceived power imbalance between the chair who's the provost versus other members of the committee…(S4.1, p. 5)
>
> I had an experience in another search and I did not see this at all in the [name] one but in the other one. Senior faculty—the junior faculty basically allowed as how they were afraid to give their opinions because of the power over them of the more senior faculty specifically and the tenure track process. For an outsider who's heard so much about academic freedom I was shocked. Really shocked. Because if that isn't an opportunity to

> exercise academic freedom I don't know what is. So I was very disappointed in that. (S1.2, p. 4)

This research participant identified the power relationships, but also commented on the impact this had on their participation in the search processes:

> But I do think there should be very explicit attention to power relationships within the process. I mean you've got student representatives who, I believe both student representatives used to be in my department just by coincidence and there's a potential power relationship between student representatives and faculty. There's definitely a power relationship between senior admin and faculty and that, I thought it created some problems. Like at certain points for me I said oh well, I can voice this point, I know it won't be well received. I know that it's not going to be. There will be no action taken on it and it's going to annoy this particular person who I don't need to have annoyed at me so I just won't make my point. (S3.1, p. 12)

This research participant acknowledged that not all voices carry equal weight, and suggested perhaps that was appropriate, but they also expressed desire for greater participation from all members:

> Some voices on the committee speak more loudly than others….But there within the committee student voices were there, but generally may not carry the weight of say a senior faculty member, may not carry the weight of a member of the board, maybe not carry the weight of a member of one of the professional societies. So I think that's…let's recognize that it's not every member is created equal, maybe nor should they be. What I would hope for going in the future is that there'd be an opportunity for even greater contributions from all members. (S4.1, p. 5)

One of the reasons for structuring the composition of the search committees the way we do is the desire for broad input. Power differentials made it difficult to obtain broad input as those holding the balance of power used it, consciously or unconsciously, to silence dissenting voices and/or amplify their own voices.

Exposure of Candidates

Several participants expressed concern that decanal search processes left the candidates too exposed which they suggested could impact candidate pools. *The Procedures* (2011) state, "for decanal searches, it is widely understood by candidates that their candidacy will be public, and they will be expected to present themselves to the collegium" (p. 19). Presenting oneself to the collegium is the essence of an open search. In a closed search "the identity of the short-listed candidates is not made public, and there is no opportunity for feedback from the community at large about the candidates prior to appointment" (*The Procedures*, 2011, p. 19). Open searches that expose candidates are somewhat unique to the academy and search committee members were more or less comfortable with this depending on their experiences in and with the academy.

Comments from research participants outside of the academy reflected concern with and an alternative to open search processes. This alternative which is a closed search currently exists within *The Procedures* (2011), but decanal, indeed almost all senior administrator searches, are open and a case needs to be made in order to declare a search closed. The following comments illustrated:

> This would be in some ways generic to the searches I've been involved in but it was no different in the context of the S2 search was how exposed the candidates are. For someone who doesn't come from the academy or that particular setting it is always a bit intriguing to me how people are prepared to put themselves out there, particularly when

> they're short-listed and they need to present themselves to the campus community and particularly the faculty and students that they're going to be working with…I don't know if that can be altered in any way to ensure that we protect candidates and protect their institutions and maybe improve the depth of the talent pool. (S2.1, p. 2)
>
> You know in any other situation, applying for a job is very private until it's awarded. And the public nature of this—because that's what people are used to maybe it's okay, but knowing that you're looking outside of your current position for a job and then not getting it is—I mean, your boss knows. Like nobody wants their boss to know they're looking for a job, and that's because it colours your existing relationships if you have to come back to it. So I'm a little concerned about the public nature of it. (S5.1, p. 2)
>
> The candidate pools—I think you always have to work hard to try and get the deepest pool possible. Consultant's one way to get there but I think you have to do other things to make sure that you create a process that doesn't allow really good people to opt out. That's where I get a little bit torn on this idea of confidential with an open feature versus a closed search. I know there's real tension on campus about that. People are pushing for more transparency all the time and how they define that is they want full disclosure. But it's really hard to respect confidentiality when you get into some of those situations. (S2.1, p. 7)

As noted previously there was also concern with the vitriol of the feedback the search committee received from processes that are characteristic of open searches such as the public presentation.

Gathering and Assessing Information

There was a great deal of criticism leveled at the processes for gathering and then assessing information on candidates. It began with the challenges associated with the basis on which candidates were differentiated and finished with commentary on the relevance of reference checking. It is not necessary to revisit the data on gathering and assessing information but there appeared to be widespread agreement that these processes did not serve us well. This is highlighted by the reflection of one participant that came at the end of their interview—the underlying question being how can a committee engage in all the processes and all agree on a candidate who then does so poorly?

> And you know, what's really surprising is that even though you think they work out, there have been things that come back either a year or two later, and suddenly it's like, 'what the heck happened here?' You thought you had the best candidate, and then you find out they're having problems and are not being an effective leader, and they're actually going to be stepping down or doing something else. Right? And it's like 'whoa, what happened there?' Because the committee on whole thought that you had the right person, and then something goes wrong, sideways; and those things you just don't see. (S2.2, p. 19)

> And you know, I don't have an explanation for why that's the case. Sometimes it's the faculty cohort who cause problems. Sometimes it's the management style of the individual who might've been a great researcher, but not a good leader in terms of administrative college or school. And those things you just never really know, not until you got somebody in the position and see how they perform. (S2.1, p. 19)

This appeared to be the million dollar question, quite literally, and the question that drove me to engage in this study.

Fear of Failure

Perhaps it is our fear of failure that results in appointing one of the short-listed candidates seemingly at any cost. None of the searches selected for this research ended in a failed search being declared. A candidate was appointed in every instance. In fact, I am having trouble recalling any decanal search being declared "failed."

Research participants reflected on this and offered differing views of why we are loath to declare a search failed:

> What's maybe missing in your thinking is what happens if there's a failed search. Or a deadlock. I've been part of those—the disappointment, the sense that you've sunk in time. Sometimes the escalation of commitment to losing a candidate. You find something out that is disconfirming about someone. And you proceed. (S1.2, p. 5)
>
> It's easy though for these searches—in these searches with the way we put our committees together and the way we charge them—it's easy for a committee, instead of saying 'do we have the person that this university needs right now to lead this college forward? We'll accept nothing less than somebody who can do it." The courage to ask the question that way as opposed to, 'can one of the people in front of us do the job?' Those are two different questions. Just the way we talk about searches and we talk about failed searches I think leads us to not want to fail. So therefore to accept the best of what we've got as opposed to saying, 'not sure. Maybe not.' (S1.3, p. 13)
>
> But I think the structure of our searches is kind of set up and the culture of our searches—maybe just the culture of the institution is that we—I think if anything you

> could err on the side of keeping on looking until you find the perfect and that is not what you want. Whatever perfect might be. But on the other hand I think we also have to be careful not to kind of—take an inferiority complex and say 'well we're not really good enough anyway and let's just accept somebody who we think can do it' (S1.3, p. 13).

One research participant summed up the fear of failure nicely. This participant noted, "and if we don't [appoint a candidate] then it's a failed search. I hate that phrase "failed search." I think it's—because you're not supposed to fail in academia, right" (S2.1, p. 11)? You are not supposed to fail in academia. Failure is not an option. So appointments are made and when the dean fails, it is on them or on the college or on whatever, but it is not on "us."

The Ugly

While the good was scarce and the bad was prevalent the ugly was highlighted by strong emotions and strong language.

The "Fuss" of 2014

At the beginning of this chapter, as part of the context for this research, I described the University of Saskatchewan before and after 2014. I also indicated that I would revisit this time only if it was relevant to something more specific. I believe that what transpired in May 2014 was part of "the ugly." The University of Saskatchewan had participated in a program prioritization (aka cost-cutting) exercise coined TransformUs. This exercise was carried out by a small group of people under a veil of secrecy. The outcomes of TransformUs were made known to deans in the latter part of 2013 and it was one of the outcomes against which the executive director of the School of Public Health spoke against in a very public document entitled "The Silence of the Deans." The aftermath of this document, which I described earlier, really did leave many in our academy reeling. One research participant noted, "the other thing that was on the

front burner was TransformUs and the loss of the president and provost and senior leadership. People were really pretty PTSD" (S1.2, p. 4). To suggest people were suffering from PTSD is a strong statement and, based on my experience, was a deadly accurate statement.

Sabotage

One definition of sabotage is "deliberate subversion" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). This played out in a number of ways.

In one instance a participant described faculty members as trying to rig the search which they did through actively and consciously trying to discredit any candidate other than the one they wanted:

> Some of the faculty, particularly one or two faculty members who were on the search committee, and that's part of the problem too, had it in their minds that they wanted to rig the search and end up with the candidate that would be the best candidate in their mind, not necessarily the university's mind. (S2.2., p. 1)
>
> In this particular search it was clear that there was at least one member of the search committee, one of the faculty members, he was dead set against anyone other than his preferred candidate. And so the candidates that other people might've though would be good, this person tried to do everything and anything they could to undercut and to basically get them out of being a short-listed candidate. (S2.2, p. 4)

In a second instance a participant described what I refer to as "gaming the process" in which the all search processes lined up so that the favourite was going to get it. Given the focus on process in that particular search I am not sure that search committee members, faculty in particular, were actively or consciously trying to drive towards a specific outcome, but it was clear from the onset that there was a preferred candidate:

> There was no naiveté. People came in with favourites. They wanted to make sure the process was clean to an outsider. That the favourite was going to get it but nobody could make a complaint about the process. (S1.2, p. 2)

The third way in which sabotage played out was the unwritten rule of search in which short-lists seemed to be designed to have two external candidates and one internal candidate; at least one participant wondered about the motivation for this rule:

> So you see it in the unwritten rule of a search, a search is going to have three candidates and one's going to be internal and two are going to be external….So you end up with this bias towards external people and you could say well it's an innocent bias. And the innocent bias is simply that you want to draw from a wide pool and over the course of two or three days, people present really well and you don't see their dents and scratches so you then make this innocent assumption that people are coming from elsewhere without dents and scratches. Well of course that's not true, that's never the way it works. Or you could say it's nefarious you could say that it's a deliberate attempt to create allegiance with the Provost as opposed to allegiance with the college. (S3.2, p 2)

While to suggest sabotage might seem ridiculous, it was clear that individuals, consciously or unconsciously, came to search committees with agendas which other search committee members watched play out throughout the search.

Researcher's Endnote: Reflections on The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

I have been reflecting on decanal searches for years. I have reflected on the turnover in decanal roles, the impact of high turnover, what might be contributing to the turnover and what, if anything, could be done to reduce the turnover. This chapter, along with the summary, has highlighted that there is more wrong than right with decanal search processes. The good news is

that we can do something with this data. In chapter five, the findings, discussion, and implications of this research provide a way forward—and it is to this chapter that I now turn.

Chapter Five

Summary, Findings, Discussion, Implications, Reflections

In this chapter, I present a brief review of this research project, following which I highlight the findings from my study via a return to the research questions. A discussion of the findings in light of the related literature examined in chapter two, as well as my own insights, form a large section of this chapter. I then discuss the implications of my findings for practice, theory and research. In the final section, I reflect on the research methodology and examine the strengths and weaknesses of the study's design, bring together my own learnings and insights, and offer high-level reflections on the overall study.

Summary of the Study

The struggles of academic deans I have witnessed and the turnover in academic deans that I have observed led me to question the processes by which we identify and recruit individuals to these positions; processes commonly referred to as search processes. The literature, comments from research participants, and my own experience suggested search processes for deans bear a striking resemblance from one institution to another; high turnover at the University of Saskatchewan suggested to me there was more going on in these processes than was visible the eye. To move beyond the obvious to deeply understand what occurs in these processes I chose to explore the culture of decanal search processes, vis-à-vis how research participants' understood and made sense of these processes, in one traditional research university.

A qualitative paradigm adapting constructionist grounded theory and case study was used to explore:

1. How do research participants describe their experiences in decanal search processes?

2. How do research participants, individually and collectively, understand decanal search processes
3. What do research participants' experiences and sense-making (individual and collective) reveal about decanal search processes?
4. What constructive and critical insight might be gained from research participants to inform the refinement of decanal search processes?

Throughout chapters one and two I reviewed and presented literature pertaining to academic deans, recruitment of academic deans and organizational culture. A definition of academic deans along with a discussion of the evolution of the role in light of changes to universities was articulated in chapter one as background to the problem. A discussion of the academic deanship and recruitment of academic deans was presented in the first part of chapter two. The latter half of chapter two provided a brief history of the concept of organizational culture and reviewed the work of three scholars who have contributed to research on organizational culture. Taken together, the literature related to academic deans, recruitment of academic deans and organizational culture, informed my tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes. The conceptual framework of organizational culture proposed by Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) resulted in a re-conceptualization of decanal search processes in culture which wrapped up chapter two.

Data were gathered through interviews and focus groups. The Appreciative Inquiry interview was adapted to guide the interview and focus group discussions. The tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes provided the structure for the interviews and focus groups. Memos were written to record my observations immediately following each interview and focus group. Research participants were purposefully selected and included those

individuals involved in a decanal search process between 2014 and 2017 (inclusive) excluding student representatives and members of professional organizations. Research participants' comments reflected the specific search in which they were engaged as a member of the search committee as well as other collegial and search processes in which they had been engaged previously and which they used to make sense of decanal search processes. Five searches, from the 13 that took place during that time period, were selected for exploration; the five that were chosen somewhat reflected the diversity of the 17 colleges and schools within the University of Saskatchewan (see Appendix A) which include those that train for careers in specific professions (Law, Engineering, Business) and various health sciences (Medicine, Nursing, Veterinary Medicine), graduate schools (Environment & Sustainability, Public Policy, Public Health), as well as one college that provides education across the broad spectrum of arts and sciences (Arts & Science).

Twenty-three individuals participated in an interview or focus group.

Using the interview and focus group questions as sensitizing concepts provided a place from which I could begin my data analysis. In my initial coding I reviewed each transcript noting words and/or phrases that might have analytic significance. Through an iterative process that involved multiple passes through each transcript more focused codes emerged. I also contracted with the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR) at the University of Saskatchewan to have the interview and focus group transcripts coded independent of interview and focus group questions. The CHASR research professional employed a similar process that also involved multiples passes through the data whereby initial coding eventually resulted in more focused codes.

I adapted a constant comparative approach to my own data analysis as well as between my data analysis and that done by the CHASR professional. I compared my data analysis both within searches (all interviews and focus groups associated with a particular search) as well as across searches in an effort to seek out and establish analytic distinctions. I also compared the coding generated from the CHASR with my own coding—this was done for each transcript—also in an effort to seek out and establish analytic distinctions.

Employing multiple approaches to data analysis allowed greater insight into the data and was useful in demonstrating credibility.

Findings

All research participants had been members of a decanal search committee or had provided professional support to a decanal search committee. They included faculty, senior administrators, members of the board of governors, and search consultants. Those participants who were members of search committees were invited to: share what stood out for them in that particular search; walk through the search processes as described in the tentative conceptualization as they recalled them; imagine and describe the search as they would have liked it to be; share any insights they might have gained from the conversation; and finally, provide a statement that described the culture of decanal search processes. The interview protocol for those who provided professional support to decanal search committees followed the same structure, but these individuals were asked to speak to their experience with search processes more generally as opposed to in the context of a specific University of Saskatchewan search. I return now to answering the questions that guided this research.

Research Questions

1. **How do research participants describe their experience as participants in the decanal search process?**

Research participants described their experience as participants in decanal search processes as frustrating. A number of things contributed to this frustration, but an overarching theme was frustration related to the time individuals needed to invest in the processes and the time it took for a decanal search to run its course. Time invested and time spent might have been viewed as less frustrating if participants had felt that the search processes worked; however, participants reported that the search processes did not seem to work. That is, the time invested and time spent was not proportional to the outcome. Indeed, a number of participants suggested that the same, or perhaps even better outcomes, might be possible with fewer people and less processes. The assumption here is that less people and less process would result in less time needing to be invested by those individuals who find themselves on search committees and less time for search processes to run their course.

In addition to this overarching frustration with time, there were "constituent" specific themes that contributed to the frustration expressed by research participants. Faculty expressed frustration with priority, or lack thereof, given to decanal search processes and felt that their participation was not valued. Search committee members from outside of the academy expressed frustration with assessing academic resumes and the amount of input and consultation that took place. Search committee chairs expressed frustration with managing competing interests within search committees and holding onto candidates that did apply.

Faculty expressed frustration that decanal searches did not seem to be a priority nor were they given enough attention. This theme manifested in comments related to time—if the search

had been a priority it would have taken less time to identify and recruit a dean. There is no doubt that some searches dragged on beyond what might be construed as reasonable; however, none of the chairs suggested that decanal search processes were not a priority. Rather the processes were dependent on a number of other factors including, but not limited to being able to convene a large search committee in a timely manner and creating a candidate pool that offered both qualified and diverse candidates. A number of faculty did not feel their participation was valued.

Faculty reported scheduling conflicts being resolved in favour of non-faculty members so that they would either be forced to miss meetings or cancel other commitments such as teaching which impacted students. Faculty also reported concerns raised in search committee meetings that were not addressed and sometimes not even acknowledged. There were several examples where faculty members reported their concerns were either dismissed completely or dismissed until someone else, often the search consultant, reiterated the same concern. This left faculty feeling marginalized and that their participation was not valued.

Members of search committees who were not faculty and/or who came from sectors outside of post-secondary expressed frustration assessing academic resumes. The frustration expressed was related to the sheer volume of information included in an academic resume (one CV running over 175 pages), as well as the frustration of actually trying to assess the relevance of all the information in an academic resume in relation to the role of an academic dean. These members also expressed frustration with the amount of input and consultation that seemed to permeate the search processes. In particular, the amount of input requested and the amount of consultation, within and outside of the committee, seemed both inappropriate and excessive.

Chairs were also generally frustrated with search processes; but this was due to their having to manage competing interests within the search committee and trying to hold onto

candidates who did apply. Chairs spoke about balancing the interests expressed by search committee members from within the college with broader institutional interests, especially when they knew the interests conflicted; this typically played out as an interest in hiring a leader who would maintain the status quo versus hiring a leader who would lead change. Chairs also commented on the challenge of holding on to candidates throughout the entire search and the extra mile they would go to establish good relations and ensure, inasmuch as it was possible, that candidates had a good experience.

Language used by participants to describe the culture of decanal search processes included adversarial, transactional, paternalistic, pre-determined, unmotivated, disappointing, perfunctory duty, necessary evil, standardized, conventional, and a fool's errand. The only word used by participants to describe the culture of decanal search processes that was positive was collegial and this reference was only made twice; however, even collegial came with a negative connotation around the amount of consultation and input that was associated with being collegial.

There was little that research participants had to say about the search processes that could be described as positive. Furthermore, what one participant described as positive could just as easily be described as negative by another participant. For example, standardized interview questions were seen by some participants as helpful and by other participants as limiting and while SharePoint technology worked for some it did not work equally well for all. Participants generally felt that USask did a good job of the candidate experience however this was either speculation, as participants could not know the experience the candidates had or didn't have, or it was a reflection of their own experience as candidates in a decanal, or other, search processes at USask.

Overall, search committee members described their experience as participants in the decanal search process as frustrating and overwhelmingly negative.

2. How do research participants, individually and collectively, understand decanal search processes?

The *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) stated: "subject to the approved principles and procedures for searches and reviews, the committee shall establish its own procedures" (p. 35).

That search committees are free to establish their own procedures suggested there were no standard procedures available that might have served as a point of reference for search committee members. Given the number of search committee members who indicated they had no previous experience with decanal search processes, this was problematic. One search committee chair confirmed that only a few members of the search committee entered the search with any idea of how the search processes worked. And yet, even if search committee members had relatively little experience, individuals did not enter decanal search processes as "blank slates." Individually, the research participants in this study appeared to understand decanal search processes from the lens of their own experiences with other search processes and other collegial processes.

One search committee member commented on their experience with faculty searches. This participant noted that faculty searches are very ordinal and hierarchical; that is, individuals are ranked against one another as part of the decision-making processes. In a faculty search, assessment criteria might include the prestige of journals in which candidates are published, how much is published in a given time period, the greatest potential for grant capture, and the prestige of said grants that are captured; academic criteria on which academics place high value. The goal

is to secure the candidate that ranks highest on most of the criteria. This participant went on to observe that while this kind of ranking on this kind of assessment criteria may be appropriate for decision-making processes in faculty searches it may or may not be appropriate in a decanal search.

Other search committee members commented on searches outside of the academy in which they had participated including searches in for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. In both instances, search committees were perceived to have more authority than they did in decanal searches. This was evident in comments that related to having input into the selection of a search consultant, which search committee members did not necessarily have in decanal searches, and the power to make decisions within the search committee with little or no input from or consultation with individuals outside of the search committee, which is also a departure from decanal search processes. While it is quite clear that decanal search committees make a recommendation to the president and that the final authority for a decanal hire lay with the board of governors, search committee members appeared to expect that they would have more authority than they did.

Yet another search committee member reflected that they had gone into the decanal search processes expecting something more like a doctoral defense where the process, apparently, can be quite hostile. What this participant noted about the doctoral defense process was that committee members do their best to discredit the candidate. If the candidate can "defend" their research then they are rewarded with the credential. Examples of hostility within decanal search processes abounded.

One chair commented on search committee members provoking candidates during the interview and wondered about the possible drivers for such behaviour. Do search committee

members understand that they are “selling” this role, in this college, at this institution, which might suggest they should be on their best behaviour? Or, do they understand the search processes only as processes by which candidates are “selling” themselves, which might suggest that pushing candidates outside of their comfort zones and trying to discredit the claims they make is appropriate? This chair finished this thought by lamenting that the chair can’t tell individuals on search committees what to do anyway; if search committee members want to behave badly they will.

A search committee member from outside of the academy actually commented on the viciousness of feedback obtained through processes outside of the formal interview, such as the public presentation. This participant noted the feedback from faculty was particularly nasty. Even if the candidate never actually saw the written feedback, because it was supposed to be confidential, this participant felt that it would impact relationships if the candidate against whom the viciousness was directed was ultimately offered and accepted the role of dean.

This brings me to how members of search committees, collectively, understood the decanal search processes; there was scant data to suggest that they did. Each individual brings into the search committee their own understanding of decanal search processes, shaped by their own experiences with other search processes and other collegial processes. An individual’s understanding may have been shaped by nothing more than their experience with their own recruitment, which only reflects their experience as a candidate. However, an element of “common sense” also was displayed in findings. For example, one participant noted that the tentative conceptualization that had guided the interview was really just a procedure and that it was merely standard, rational and logical. Another participant suggested that search processes are pretty homogenous. What this suggested to me is an assumption, on the part of search

committee members, that they are bringing a collective understanding into the decanal search processes when, in fact, they are not.

Search processes are not rocket science and a quick google search for "recruitment processes" yields images, videos, step-by-step instructions, text—all of which look remarkably similar. These search processes are probably a reasonable approximation of an individual's experience with their own or other search processes and a reasonable basis for collective understanding of search processes. Where collective understanding begins to fall apart, if it ever indeed existed, is when beliefs and values that underlie experience are contradictory. For example, for members of search committees who are internal to the university, there was a belief that strong academics make good leaders. This belief did not hold true for members of search committees who were external to the university. As opposed to surfacing these contradictions and resolving them in a way that contributed to collective understanding, what happened was that people simply deferred to an individual who held positional or symbolic power or to the group who represented the dominant beliefs and values of the search committee. The consequence of this was that we did not get the benefit of the diversity of a broad-based committee. Any diversity of thought was simply assimilated by the individual(s) with power and/or the dominant group.

3. What do research participants' experiences and sense-making (individual and collective) reveal about decanal search processes?

What was revealed about decanal search processes was that the research participants in this study expected the search processes to be something different than they were. Search committee members expected decanal search processes to be timely—and they were not; they expected decanal search processes to be like other search and/or collegial processes—and they

were not; and, they expected to share some collective understanding of decanal search processes—and they did not.

Research participants described their experiences as overwhelmingly frustrating and timeliness, or lack thereof, seemed to be a particular source of frustration for all members of the search committee including the chair. Research participants expected that the search in which they were participating would be a priority for the university and therefore proceed in a timely fashion. When weeks and sometimes months passed between meetings and searches dragged on the result was an unmet expectation. Another factor that contributed to this frustration with timeliness included expectations participants had about the search processes themselves. Faculty expected that their voices would be heard and their participation valued and search committee members from outside of the academy expected less input and consultation would occur outside of the search committee. Again, an expectation for something other than what was experienced resulted in an unmet expectation. As unmet expectations compounded, it is perhaps not surprising that research participants described their experiences as overwhelmingly frustrating and negative.

Weick (1995) noted, "people make sense of things by seeing a world on which they already imposed what they believe" (p. 15). Individual search committee members believed that decanal search processes would be much the same as other search and/or collegial processes with which they were familiar and imposed this understanding on decanal search processes. While this strategy may have helped people make sense of decanal search processes it also resulted in what I have framed as "tensions." A good example of this was in the tension that arose between the expectations for a closed search process versus an open search process. For those individuals who believed decanal search processes would be like for-profit and/or not-for-profit search

processes, an open search process compromised the confidentiality of the candidates. For those individuals who believed that decanal search processes would be like faculty search processes, an open search was assumed in the name of transparency. Tension was created when members of search committees who are making sense of search processes had different expectations, based on their experiences that reflected contradictory beliefs and values.

The problem was not that search committee members came to decanal search processes with different expectations and contradictory beliefs and values; the problem was that no one ever talked about those issues. Search committee members never articulated their expectations going into the search nor did those who provided professional support to the search committees ever address expectations. Nor did search committee members ever acknowledge or articulate where their beliefs and values might be contradictory. Search committee members believed, and expected, that decanal search processes would proceed in a timely manner, be much the same as other search and/or collegial processes and that they all understood decanal search processes in the same way—that is to say, they collectively were presumed to understand these processes. The expectations of search committee members, and the degree to which these expectations were met, or not, appeared to have been bound to impact the outcomes of decanal search processes. The final question, to which I now turn, is focused on insight that might be gained to inform refinement of decanal search processes.

4. What constructive and critical insight might be gained from research participants to inform the refinement of decanal search processes?

As one research participant observed it may not be the search processes, in and of themselves, that need to be improved. The information shared with members of search committees focused almost exclusively on the logic and mechanics of search processes

themselves—that is those phases and stages that operationalize a search, but little was done to create collective understanding among search committee members about what to expect and why. The following "top ten" list highlights the constructive and critical insight gained that can inform the refinement of decanal search processes to which I will return towards the end of this chapter.

1. Searches need to start with more honesty. In particular, honest conversations about the kind of leader that was required for the college and the university at the point-in-time of the search seemed to be missing. Would the dean be expected to lead a change agenda in the college or engage in restorative work (restore trust, restore a colleges reputation, etc.)? Was there an internal candidate who was appointable to the "permanent" role or was an external candidate required? What exactly were we searching for and who got to have input into that decision?

2. Role clarity is vital. The dean is both the leader of a particular academic unit as well as part of the leadership of the university as a whole; a fact that is not always well understood or appreciated. There is also a disconnect between authority and accountability the dean has. The dean is positioned, via the *University Act* (1995) as the CEO of the college and while they may have the accountability commensurate with a CEO they do not have the authority.

3. Search committee members need information that will prepare them to serve well on a search committee. Individuals did not receive any information regarding expectations of them, such as time commitment, prior to volunteering to serve on these committees. Information about expectations of them as well as what to expect in the search could influence an individual's decision to serve. Once the search committee was convened, there was still precious little information shared beyond rules (i.e. confidentiality) and logistics (i.e. expected number of meetings) and search committee members were more-or-less left to their own devices to figure

out for themselves their role and how they could contribute as a member of the search committee.

4. Convene smaller search committees that can be more nimble and task them with intentionally gathering information that will inform their decisions. For starters, it is easier to convene a small group of people than a large group. Trying to schedule a large group impacted scheduling meetings and the time it took to complete a search. Given the amount of consultation and input from constituents search committee members are supposed to represent it seemed odd to insist on a broad based committee. However, the consultation and input gathered was not necessarily intentional and the influence of the consultations on the outcome of the search left search committee members feeling as though decision-making was actually outside of the committee structure. Which it kind of was….see number five.

5. The president, who makes the final decision on which candidate to recommend to the board for approval, is not a member of the search committee. The chairs kept the president apprised of the search activity and the president would meet with each short-listed candidate, but these could be the only sources of information the president had unless he/she from knew the candidates from outside of the search.

6. Identify practices that consistently yield good outcomes. We keep on doing the same things over and over again hoping that "this time" the processes will produce something different. Good outcomes are just as easily attributed to good luck as good processes and practices. We do not debrief either successes or failures of search processes to learn from those experiences and evolve our practices so that we might reasonably expect good outcomes.

7. Acknowledge the unique expertise of external search consultants and use it deliberately. External search consultants do bring expertise to search processes. However, because of this

expertise deference was given to search consultants on virtually all things related to the search. External search consultants were asked not only to find candidates for consideration, but they were also asked to create the interview questions and do the reference checks. The most critical aspects of the search are left, often unintentionally, to an outsider.

8. Purposefully and relentlessly support deans beyond the search. Incoming deans are often left to sink or swim and do not receive appropriate orientation, onboarding, coaching, mentoring, etc. Deans also need to receive adequate feedback, throughout their tenure, from the provost who is their immediate supervisor. After four years, most deans who seek renewal enter the review process virtually blind and are often blind-sided. There should be no surprises in the review process.

9. Appreciate that culture includes cultural systems, social systems and structural systems. Everything that surfaced in my findings—the frustration, the unmet expectations, the assumptions that were made about decanal processes—all pointed to tension that goes unresolved both within a single search and from one search to the next. The same tensions surfaced over and over again across searches which, in order to resolve, we need to surface and talk about. We need to understand what is driving "the way we do things" from a much broader and holistic perspective.

10. We can change the systems that will change "the culture." We are not powerless or helpless. People created the structural system aka decanal search processes that exist and they can be re-created. If the new structures provide better outcomes they will come to be the accepted way of "how we do things" at the University of Saskatchewan and we will help change "the culture" but changing the structural system is not enough. We must consider the integration

of the cultural, social and structural systems and consider the impact changing one will have on the other two. The goal is to create integration and harmony.

These constructive and critical insights suggest refinements to decanal search processes versus a sea change or complete transformation. However, if these refinements are taken up by those responsible for decanal search processes, it could result in transforming the outcomes of these processes. These refinements are not limited to decanal search processes. The research participants' commentary on decanal search processes provided insights that could easily transfer beyond decanal search processes to other searches for senior administrators in academic and not-for-profit organizations, in particular. While there are similarities and differences, these refinements might be construed as principles which are far more transferable.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the culture of decanal search processes in one traditional research university. In this section I return to the literature related to academic deans, recruitment in higher education, and organizational culture. Within each of these areas I examine connections between the data, the literature and my findings, and offer my own insights.

The Academic Deanship

To identify and recruit a dean necessarily requires some understanding of the role of a dean. Scholars agree that expectations of deans are vague, conflicting and complex (Gallos, 2002; Harvey, Shaw, McPhail & Erickson, 2013; Wolverton, Wolverton & Gmelch, 1999) and participants observed that most search committee members do not have a good understanding of the decanal role.

Of particular note were comments related to the dual nature of the decanal role which Gmelch and Buller (2015) described as "the dilemma of trying to serve two masters" (p. 5).

Participants reflected on the role of the dean as part of the leadership of the university and the role of dean as the leader of a particular academic unit within the larger university. Participants noted attention often focused on what was required for leadership of the college, at least initially, and less on what was required to be part of the leadership of the university. At least one chair commented on having to remind the search committee that they were not just looking for a leader for the college, but also someone who would provide institutional leadership. As one chair noted, the task was to find an individual with whom both the faculty of the college and the senior administration of the university could live which was not always an easy task.

While acknowledging that it is good to have other deans on the search committee there was recognition that the decanal role differed from college to college; so even the decanal perspective on the role was of limited value when it came to understanding the role within a specific college. This is consistent with the literature wherein Fagin (1997) answered both yes and no to the question as to whether a deanship, is a deanship, is a deanship (p. 95). Yes, what deans do in universities is consistent across and within universities, but there is variance within the role and not all deanships are created equal.

Finally, at least one participant identified a disconnect between how the role is positioned as the CEO of the college (*University of Saskatchewan Act*, 1995, c.U-6.1, s. 75) which assumed authority commensurate with accountability and the authority the dean actually has which is not commensurate with the accountabilities of the role. For example, deans have accountability for ensuring the financial health of the college, but no authority for the most significant cost structures, such as salaries, which are determined through collective bargaining processes into which they have little input.

To enter into search processes without clarity around the role of the dean sets the stage for confusion and tension throughout the rest of the search processes. Without clarity on the role, there cannot be clarity on qualifications, and without clarity on qualifications, there cannot be clarity on assessment of candidates. The latter two points emerged as sources of tension for members of the search committee—both of which will be explored later in the discussion.

Recruitment of Academic Deans

Recruitment of academic deans is a relatively new phenomenon in universities. Prior to 1950 colleges traditionally elevated their most senior faculty members to the deanship; those eligible were older, white males who were well-established scholars (Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez & Nies, 2001, p. 5). Over time, as the external context changed (de Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009), as universities changed (de Boer & Goedegeburre, 2009; Frost, 2015; Yielder & Codling, 2007), and the deanship changed (Montez, Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002) so to have the ways in which academic deans are appointed changed. No longer are senior faculty elevated to the role of dean, but rather processes whereby individuals compete for decanal roles have become the norm. The processes for identifying and recruiting academic deans are well-established in the literature and consistent with my own experience (Dowdall, 2007; Harvey, Shaw, McPhail & Erickson, 2013; Twombly, 1992; *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators*, 2011); however, both the literature and my experience were incomplete as we saw in the process intelligence laid out in chapter four.

The role and influence of external search consultants in search processes, search committee membership, and decision-making within search processes received particular attention in the literature and each of these topics emerged in the interviews and focus

groups—sometimes without prompting and sometimes framed slightly differently, but evident nonetheless.

External Consultants

Writers who have focused on decanal recruitment have spoken to the role and influence of external search consultants in the various aspects of the search processes (Dowdall, 2007; Harvey, Shaw, McPhail & Erickson, 2013; Usher, Macleod & Green, 2010). While I did not include engagement with an external search consultant in the tentative conceptualization used to facilitate the interview and focus group discussions, search consultants inevitably came up in the course of just about every conversation.

In general, search committee members held a dim view of the search consultants who had supported their search committees. While the chairs acknowledged the value search consultants could bring to the search processes, even their comments were not overly favourable and preferences for certain consultants and/or style of consultant were evident. For the most part, search consultants were perceived as a necessary evil—they had become part of the search processes and it was no longer a question of if a search needed the professional support of a search consultant, but rather, which search consultant should provide the support.

While the engagement of a search consultant might be a given, search committee members were unclear about the role of the search consultants and wondered about the value that these consultants added to the processes relative to the cost. In some instances, participants' actually assigned blame for poor outcomes to the search consultants. For example, the candidate pool was not adequate and, therefore, choices were limited, the interview questions did not differentiate candidates well enough, reference checking was poor and did not reveal character flaws—the list went on.

External search consultants were clear on their role as support to the chair and bringing best practice to the search processes. They also saw themselves in partnership with the chair and recognized the importance of being on the same page as the chair with respect to the desired outcomes of the search. One consultant acknowledged that this close relationship with the chair might result in the consultant being seen as an arm of central administration and, by extension, more or less trustworthy depending on who was in the role of chair. One of the search consultants spoke about their role as an ambassador for the university and how they help to tell the University of Saskatchewan story outside of the university. The point being made was if you, as the consultant, understood the story well then this allowed you to contribute in a positive way to the image and/or reputation of the university. Interestingly, both of the consultants interviewed had a much broader view of their role than did the search committee members who were interviewed. Search committee members seemed to expect that search consultants would generate candidate pools, but had little understanding and virtually no appreciation for their roles beyond that specific activity and were of the view search consultants overstepped the boundaries of their role.

The pool of external search consultants was seen to be relatively small and those who provide expertise in identifying and recruiting academic leaders was even smaller. A recent request for proposals to provide executive search services at the University of Saskatchewan garnered 13 submissions and only four of those firms were offered multi-year contracts. Once "in the pool" there is a noticeable lack of process around selecting consultants for specific searches. Over time, chairs developed relationships and preferences for particular consultants and/or firms and it was customary for the chair of the search committee to simply choose the search consultant with whom they preferred to work. This should not be surprising given how the

consultants viewed their role vis-à-vis the chair. While this may be a reasonable approach, if a chair chose to work exclusively with one search consultant, one might wonder about the impact of this kind of "exclusive" relationship on the search processes. This musing is outside of the scope of this research, but may be deserving of further exploration.

Membership of the Search Committee

Dowdall (2007) and Usher, Macleod and Green (2010) suggested membership of search committees often reflect the institution's values and aspirations as well as the structure of power in universities. Another view offered by Harvey, Shaw, McPhail and Erickson (2013) suggested decanal search committees resembled the cast of characters in Star Wars in which you have a character from every possible constituent. Usher, et al. noted that in order to ensure the successful candidate is accepted by the university, broad representation on search committees was important, but also suggested that broad representation was cumbersome, denoted a lack of trust, and was a vehicle for promoting individual agendas (pp. 15-16). Comments from search committee members tended to reflect the downside of broad-based committees.

Many of the comments related to the time it took for a decanal search to runs its course were attributed to trying to schedule meetings with a large committee. The challenge of convening a large committee impacted the participation of some members of the search committee, as not all members were always able to participate in all of the meetings. Depending on the meeting that was missed (e.g., short-list meeting versus an in-person interview) search committee members' ability to fully participate in the decision-making processes could be compromised. The challenge of convening a large committee also impacted the composition of the search committee itself as members dropped off as terms ended (e.g., terms on governing bodies ended, academic terms ended for students). Depending on the phase and stage of the

search these members may or may not be replaced, which undermined the benefits attributed to broad representation.

One participant commented specifically on trust when they noted that if we are going to have large, representative committees those committees should be empowered and trusted to make decisions on behalf of the constituencies they represented. This participant also noted that this might eliminate some of the consultation required and reduce the time it takes to get to an outcome.

One search committee chair stated, unequivocally, that search committees were not the place for promoting agendas and yet participants observed and commented on this very activity. Agendas played out in terms of manipulating search processes in order to influence a particular outcome and using positional power to silence dissenting voices and/or shut down conversation. In some instances, a number of faculty also noted that a number of individuals volunteered to represent the faculty. This scenario resulted in a vote to determine who would ultimately end up participating in the search. For the most part, faculty members who volunteered to participate in a decanal search did so in good faith, but one participant commented on the politics involved in determining faculty representation on search committees with the suggestion that motives were not always altruistic.

Any discussion about the membership of search committees was not necessarily a discussion about more or less people constituting the committee, but, rather, a discussion about status and power; who had power and who did not.

Recruitment: Decision-making

Literature related to the recruitment of academic deans focused on the decision-making processes in searches, particularly processes used by committees to assess candidates (Gibney &

Shang, 2007; Harvey, Shaw, McPhail & Erickson, 2013; Twombly, 1992). Scholars referred to decision-making literature (Pinfield, 1986) and/or decision-making models (Gibney & Shang, 2007; Harvey, Shaw, McPhail & Erickson, 2013) to analyze decisions and offered suggestions for improving decision-making in search processes.

When participants were asked outright to comment on how they came to decisions at the various phases and stages of the search there appeared to be agreement that most decisions were made by consensus with the final decision on which candidates to recommend in what order being made by vote. One chair noted that depending on how well the committee worked together these votes could be as simple as a show of hands or as formal as confidential ballots. Regardless, how decisions were made did not emerge as problematic. What did emerge as problematic was the basis upon which decisions were made. This finding is slightly different, but consistent with, what was presented in the literature. While the literature highlighted a challenge with how decisions were made, the search committee members highlighted information on which decisions were made as the root of the problem. The point being made by scholars and members of search committees was that the decision-making in search processes is highly subjective and benefits from more process rigour.

Gibney and Shang (2007) and Harvey, Shaw, McPhail and Erickson (2013) pointed back to documents created by or provided to search committee members at the beginning of a search, the advertised job criteria or detailed position description, as aids to decision-making. Ideally, these documents could and perhaps should be developed with more rigour, but this would require far more insight, and perhaps agreement, into the role of the dean than currently exists. This was the first place in which not having a good understanding of the decanal role began to show up in search processes. Several participants commented on the amount of input and consultation that

went into creating a document that tried to capture the role of the dean. This suggested to me that the role of the dean was open for debate and individuals believed there was an opportunity to influence the role of the dean that was presented to potential candidates.

Without clear and common understanding of the role of the dean there are no clear standards or guideposts in place to assist with assessment of candidates. No rubrics or templates clearly articulating qualifications were given to search committee members to guide assessment of candidates. While this allowed for each individual search committee member to bring their own perspective to the assessment, and was seen as part of the benefit of having a broad-based committee, it actually introduced bias into the decision-making process. While this did not come out in the data, we know that when we make hiring decisions our biases influence our assessment of candidates in favour of those who are "most like us" which is known as affinity bias (Tore, 2017). For example, men on the committee may view non-traditional academic paths as "less than" a more traditional academic path within the academy. The more "like-minded" constituents on a search committee the higher the likelihood of this, and other, kinds of bias creeping into search processes.

Participants noted search committee members could reach agreement on the top candidates relatively easily, but who rose to the top was influenced by committee members with academic backgrounds who were familiar with academic CVs. Participants also observed that faculty often knew candidates from their academic and/or professional circles and would bring this knowledge into the discussion of candidates. Finally, those with positional power would wield that power to influence the conversation for or against particular candidates.

After the assessment on paper, the in-person assessments continued in much the same vein. Participants expressed lack of confidence in the interview process. One participant stated

that we are not getting what we need out of the interview process meaning we do not seem to get enough information and/or the right information during the formal interviews with candidates. Another participant noted the interview processes did not do a good enough job of differentiating candidates. Part of this was attributed to the standardized interview questions, but again, I suggest that without a clear understanding of the role of the dean and a clear understanding of the qualifications we want our deans to have, it is difficult to know, for sure, the skills and attributes for which we should be assessing.

It seems that for all the processes we put around decanal searches we still do not always get the outcomes we desire. As one participant questioned, how can a whole committee reach consensus around a candidate who then flames out before the end of their first term? An exploration of culture may help understand why we do not always get the outcomes we desire and it is to culture that I now turn.

Organizational Culture

While there has been growing interest in organizational culture since 1980 there is still no consensus among scholars on a definition of culture, what the concept of culture should and should not include, or the best method(s) for assessing culture (Bellot, 2011, p. 30). This makes the study of organizational culture challenging, but not impossible. I can live with this ambiguity, but it is important as a student interested in the study of culture, to be clear about my views on organizational culture.

In my initial foray into an exploration of culture in decanal search processes, I identified and reviewed the work of scholars who had contributed to the literature on organizational culture and whose contributions resonated with me. These scholars included Schein (1985, 1992, 2004), Trice and Beyer (1993) and Hallett (2003). Although Trice and Beyer distinguished their work

from that of Schein, and Hallett distinguished his work from that of both Trice and Beyer and Schein, I found useful concepts in each body of work that I could apply to decanal search processes, but I struggled to tie them all together. When I happened upon the work of Allaire and Firsirotu (1984), who presented a conceptual framework for organizational culture "broadly based on the symbolic concept of culture" (p. 213), I was finally able to ground the concepts that resonated with me.

Schein (2004) stated, "culture is both a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions with others and shaped by leadership behaviour, and a set of structures, routines, rules, and norms that guide and constrain behaviour" (p. 1). Trice and Beyer (1993) summarized cultures as "collective phenomenon that embody people's responses to the uncertainties and chaos that are inevitable in human experience. These responses fall into two major categories. The first is the *substance* of a culture—shared, emotionally charged belief systems that we call ideologies. The second is *cultural forms*—observable entities, including actions, through which members of a culture express, affirm, and communicate the substance of their culture to one another….cultures are a natural outgrowth of social interactions that make up what we call organizations" (p. 2). In his reconceptualization of culture, Hallett (2003) offered a view of how culture is socially constructed. Hallett defined culture "as a negotiated order that emerges through the interactions between actors, a negotiated order influenced in particular by people with symbolic power" (Hallett, 2003, p. 130). The views of these scholars are consistent with a symbolic view of culture in which "significant symbols, or products of mind, constitute the raw materials for the interpretation of the ordered system of meaning in terms of which the social interaction takes place" (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984, p. 199). I bring this together in a discussion that focuses on

creating harmony within a larger system of organizational culture which decanal search processes are but one component.

Decanal Search Processes in Organizational Culture

Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) outlined three interrelated components or systems in their conceptual framework. These systems take into account an organization's formal structures, strategies, policies and management processes (sociostructural system), an organization's expressive and affective dimensions (cultural system), and the individual actors (pp. 213-215). This framework allowed me to see connections and relationships more clearly. In particular, connections among cultural systems, social systems and structural systems—all of which contributed to my understanding and exploration of decanal search processes in a specific organization—the University of Saskatchewan—in a new way. In seeing the connections and relationships among these systems I came to a much deeper understanding of decanal search processes within organizational culture. This understanding of decanal search processes within organizational culture also highlighted that while the processes in the structural system may be remarkably similar from one institution to another, it is the interplay of the culture and social systems that may contribute to differential outcomes from one institution to another.

In the discussion that follows, I will review each of these systems in isolation, referencing other scholars and connecting to the data as appropriate. The final piece of this chapter will focus on creating harmony among these structures; both why this is a worthwhile goal and how it might be achieved.

Cultural Systems

The cultural system is the meaning system of the organization. The way in which scholars refer to this system will vary, but there tends to be some reference to beliefs (Schein,

2004), ideologies (Trice and Beyer, 1993) or meanings (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984). Geertz (2000) suggested it is through the cultural system that "human beings interpret their experience and guide their action" (pp. 157-158). The cultural system is the "framework of beliefs, expressive symbols, and values in terms of which individuals define their world, express their feelings, and make their judgements" (Geertz, 2000, p. 157). The theory on organizational culture acknowledged that culture is not singular and inasmuch as there are multiple interpretations of the cultural system there are also multiple cultural systems.

Trice and Beyer (1993) acknowledged that cultures can incorporate multiple ideologies which may be contradictory but are able to co-exist unless or until individuals or subgroups feel compelled to resolve the contradiction (p. 37). Other scholars, such as Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) have explicitly referenced multiple cultures within the academy itself and, in their most recent work, identified six organizational cultures that included the collegial culture, the managerial culture, the developmental culture, the advocacy culture, the virtual culture, and the tangible culture (pp. xiii-xiv). Bergquist and Pawlak went on to say that "although most colleges and universities, and most faculty and administrators, tend to embrace or exemplify one of these six cultures, the other five cultures are always present and interact with the dominant culture" (p. 7). What stood out for me early in the data analysis were contradictory or conflicting interpretations or views among members of the search committees. In particular, search committee members had conflicting views related to qualifications a dean must have, public versus private assessment of candidates and succession planning. I see now that the source of these conflicting views was multiple ideologies within the cultural system—in particular, collegial and managerial cultures as described by Bergquist and Pawlak, which are also referred to in the literature as academic or corporate cultures.

The tension between corporate culture and academic culture is well-documented (Bolden, Petrov & Gosling, 2008; Christopher, 2012; de Boer, Goedegebuure, & Meek, 1998). Bolden, Petrov and Gosling (2008) summarized the inherent tensions between the corporate management culture and the traditional values of academia as being between "the need for collegiality and managerialism, individual autonomy and collective engagement, leadership of the discipline and the institution, academic versus administrative authority, informality and formality, inclusivity and professionalization, and stability and change" (p. 364). de Boer, Goedegebuure and Meek (1998) noted, "academics by and large voice discontent about institutional management and believe that academia clearly is a species on its own, with traditions that go back centuries, and obviously cannot be run like a car-factory, post-Fordism or not" (p. 104). Christopher (2012) noted the academic culture is defined by characteristics that reflect collegiality and autonomy whereas the corporate culture is defined by characteristics associated with the concepts of accounting and accountability (pp. 557-558). This dissonance between academic and corporate culture was evident in throughout the decanal search processes and tended to resolve in favour of those who could influence the group and/or had status and power.

Conflict appeared early in the processes with differing views of the qualifications that a dean must have. For some there was no question that academic prowess was the most important qualification for a dean. For others good academics did not necessarily make for good leaders. This conflict was directly related to how search committee members interpreted and understood the role of the dean. Was the role of the dean understood primarily to be the academic leader of the college or the CEO of the college? Was the role of the dean understood primarily to be the leader of a particular unit or as an institutional leader? It was clear that search committee

members interpreted the role differently depending on the culture one tended to embrace or exemplify.

Public versus private assessment of candidates was also a source of tension. Decanal search processes are almost always open versus closed. Open search processes include public presentations, which are advertised broadly and open to anyone who feels compelled to attend; feedback is then invited from anyone who attended the presentation. For those who placed high value on formality and professionalization associated with more private or closed search processes, not only was this input considered inappropriate, but open search processes were viewed as a violation of candidates' privacy. For those who placed high valued on the need for and informality and inclusivity associated with a more public assessment of candidates, an open search was desirable because it provided an opportunity to include those outside of the search committee in the search processes and represented transparency in decanal search processes.

A final example of tension was found in the notion of succession planning which included the possibility of actually identifying successors for academic leadership roles. Succession planning is simply part of good talent management in organizations; however, one participant observed that universities seemed to actively discourage identification and development of upcoming talent within the academic ranks. Perhaps succession planning smacks of institutional management of the kind found in a car-factory and not in keeping with academic beliefs and values. From the perspective of a corporate cultural system lack of succession planning was viewed as downright irresponsible. From the perspective of an academic cultural system succession planning was actively discouraged—perhaps because the notion of a successor being chosen and "groomed" by someone, often the incumbent leader, flies in the face of collegial processes.

These conflicts did not fall along "constituent" lines. As Schein (2004) noted, "ambiguity and conflict also result from the fact that each of us belongs to many groups, so that what we bring to any given group is influenced by the assumptions that are appropriate to our other groups" (p. 17). Consider a member of the board of governors who is also a faculty member; a faculty member who is also a member of a professional association; a senior administrator who holds a faculty position; and so on. We are multi-dimensional and our lives are rarely limited to one dimension. With this in mind I turn my attention to the social systems.

Social System

The social system, in the context of decanal searches, represented the people or the players involved in the decanal search processes. There are many individuals involved in decanal search processes including, but not limited to the formal members of the search committees who represented particular constituencies.

Scholars' agree that each person, or player, has more or less ability to influence others' interpretation of meaning; this ability can be based on expertise, status, power or any combination thereof. For Schein (2004) "leaders" and leader behaviour were key influencers (p. 11). Trice and Beyer (1993) noted when a new group was required to deal with new circumstances the actions of those individuals who were especially influential or persuasive were adopted or imitated (p. 38). Hallett (2003) made explicit reference to the ability of those with symbolic power to define the situation (p. 144). Symbolic power recognizes power that is obtained through legitimacy given to an individual by other individuals versus power that manifests through formal authority (p. 133). And finally, Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) noted, "individual actors…are not merely passive recipients of a pre-fabricated 'reality'; depending on their status and leadership role, they become contributors and moulders of meaning" (p. 215).

What became clear for me was where the status and power were situated in this particular social system: with the chair, the faculty, and the search consultant.

The *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) specify that search committees "will normally be chaired by the individual to whom the appointee will report" (p. 34). Decanal search committees are normally chaired by the provost and vice-president academic who is one of the most senior administrators within the University of Saskatchewan—a position that comes with status and power. Even in those instances where the provost delegated the role of chair to a vice-provost, as was sometimes the case, these individuals also had status and power by virtue of their position in the organization.

The chair was also the only member of the search committee who had any significant experience with decanal search processes beyond the external search consultant. Search committee members looked to the chair to reinforce, or not, the information provided by the search consultant. If there was skepticism about "best" practices that seemed to be more aligned with a corporate culture, the chair was looked upon to validate these practices within the context of the academy. When the chair shared their experiences of other decanal searches that had come to successful conclusions, aka a candidate being appointed, that also helped search committee members make sense of and feel more confident in some of the practices that were new to them.

Comments from faculty suggested that they felt as though they had very little influence on decanal search processes and yet comments from other search committee members suggested otherwise. Search committee members from both within and outside of the academy commented on looking to and/or deferring to faculty members when it came to knowledge of the discipline(s), what constituted academic prowess in the discipline(s) and knowledge of the

college itself. By virtue of this expertise faculty wielded significant influence which impacted decisions on whom to short list and which candidates to rank in what order.

Comments from faculty also revealed their perceptions of status and power within the search committee. One faculty participant commented that the status of faculty on search committees was just barely above that of the students who were viewed as minor players in decanal search processes—essentially there to "tick a box." Faculty were also keenly aware of the power differential within the search committee. One faculty member recalled that they did not share views on a candidate they believed were contrary to one of the senior administrators because they did not feel the need to get on the bad side of that particular individual. So while faculty certainly had influence they did not necessarily have status. And while they had power to influence it was not in combination with status and was therefore "less than" those who also had status.

Regardless of search committee members' perception of search consultants, the data suggested that members of the search committee imbued search consultants with legitimacy. Hallett (2003) suggested legitimacy is attributed to an individual when others convey deference to them—that is they show appreciation and respect for a particular individual's practices (p. 133). This is not always a conscious process and people do not necessarily realize if and when they are attributing legitimacy and symbolic power to an individual. There was clear evidence that some members of decanal search committees appreciated and respected the knowledge and expertise search consultants had about the actual practices used to operationalize search processes, but not all members felt this way. Some participants talked about the learning curve they experienced and appreciated the information provided by the search consultant about how they could expect the search to proceed. Other participants were far more critical of practices the

search consultant suggested were “best” and suggested that their “best” practices were actually a conflict of interest (e.g., conducting reference checks when it was in the best interest of the search consultant to have one of the candidates appointed).

The legitimacy attributed to the search consultant might have been tempered except for the appreciation and respect the chair had for the expertise of the search consultant. Different chairs deferred more or less to the search consultant and chairs who conveyed greater deference actually contributed to the attribution of legitimacy and symbolic power of the search consultant.

The combination of formal and symbolic power of the chair and symbolic power of the consultant in the context of the relationship between the chair and the consultant located a great deal of power in the hands of these two players. Faculty also had influence and power not only by virtue of the knowledge of the discipline(s) and/or the college, but also by virtue of sheer numbers. Faculty members held three or four positions on a decanal search committee which represented up to one-third of the membership (n=11 or 12). However, the extent of their influence and power depended to the extent to which they were all aligned which was not always the case.

The final point to be made in terms of social systems in decanal search processes is to acknowledge that there are players outside of the search committee who have influence, status and power. In particular, the president who has a great deal of influence, status and power, makes the final decision on which candidate to recommend to the board of governors who holds the ultimate authority for the decision on whom to appoint.

Structural System

The structural system included the more visible aspects of culture. Again, scholars differed on how they spoke to these more visible aspects, but they all spoke to some kind of

structural system. Schein (2004) referred to artifacts, Trice and Beyer (1993) referred to cultural forms, Hallett (2003) referred to specifically to practices and Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) referred to structures, strategies, policies and processes. The structural system is where we find those aspects of culture that show up as "how we do things." These structures, routines, forms, and practices are maintained if they produce the desired outcomes and are seen "to work" and/or help individuals "make sense" of the situations in which they find themselves.

Schein (2004) suggested if the behaviour of the group leads to success "in the sense that the group accomplishes its task and the members feel good about their relationships to each other" (p.16) this leads to "*shared* recognition that the founder had it right" (p. 16). Unfortunately, in decanal search processes, there was evidence that while the group may have accomplished its task, members did not feel good about their relationships to each other and there was no evidence of shared recognition that the founder of the group, likely the chair, had it right. In fact, the frustration expressed by research participants suggested quite the opposite.

One research participant observed there were actually two outcomes from decanal search processes; one was the recommendation of a candidate(s) for the decanal role, but the other was the extent to which the processes brought people together or divided them. This participant's perception of the search in which they participated was that while a dean was ultimately appointed, the processes were actually quite divisive. A participant from another search commented on relationships among search committee members from a previous search being destroyed vis-à-vis the search processes. Again, the processes resulted in a dean, but did nothing positive for relationships among the various constituencies represented by members of the search committee.

Of course, sometimes these processes do not even result in an appointment; however, this was not the case in any of the searches included in this research. Research participants did note that there seemed to be a reluctance to declare a failed search and so search committees proceeded with recommendations for appointment simply hoping for the best. The data suggested that perhaps we do not "have it right" and yet we keep employing the same search processes over and over again and are just as surprised by good outcomes as bad outcomes.

Trice and Beyer (1993) suggested, "[cultural] forms provide a concrete anchoring point, even if the meanings they carry are vague and only imperfectly transmitted" (p. 85). Recall that forms can take the shape of symbols, language, narratives and practices with each succeeding form being more complex than the one before; practices being the most complex. In a way, if the meanings of cultural forms are vague that opens the door for the players to influence the meaning that is interpreted vis-à-vis cultural forms. The commentary on the social system suggested that the chair of the search committee, the search consultant, and the faculty were in fact able to influence interpretation of various forms—specifically, those forms that were unique to the academy such as the language in academic CVs and assessment practices that favoured transparency over confidentiality.

Decanal search processes are part of a structural system that includes artifacts and forms which contributed to how the group accomplished the task of identifying and recruiting a dean and how individual actors made sense of how the task was accomplished.

Creating Harmony

What started as an exploration of culture in decanal search processes turned out to be an exploration of decanal search processes in the organizational culture of one academy vis-à-vis the multiple systems that influence organizational culture. This is a far more sophisticated and

complex exploration as it was not only an exploration of the systems themselves, but also the relationships and connections among these systems. The culture, social and structural systems are capable of a wide range of modes of integration and the extent to which these systems are integrated will result in congruency and harmony or disparency and discord (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984, pp. 210-211). What the findings reflected was disparency and discord which suggested less integration due, in part, to pressure(s) on one or more of these systems to change.

Assumptions Relevant to Harmony and Integration

Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) identified three assumptions that are relevant to the discussion of harmony and integration. The first is that "an organization may have 'culture' that is different from the culture of the ambient society in which it operates" (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984, p. 210). The second is that organizations are "made up of a 'social system' and a conceptually separate, ideation 'cultural system' capable for a wide range of modes of integration with one another" (Geertz, 2000, p. 157). The third is that "it is plausible to conceive of multiple modes of integration and relationship between the culture of an organization and the actor's personal construing and use of these meaningful materials" (Allaire & Firsirotu, p. 212). I reframe these assumptions in the context of this research.

Assumption #1. Universities can and do have culture that is different from the culture of the society in which they operate. I often hear administrative colleagues, and those from outside of the university, refer to organizational life in "the real world" which is intended to suggest that organizational life in universities is somehow different from "the real world" and, perhaps, should be more like "the real world". This manifested as tension between corporate culture, which is perceived to be more like "the real world" and academic culture which is perceived to be less like "the real world."

Assumption #2. Organizations are made up of conceptually separate systems that are capable of wide modes of integration. Different scholars have referred to these two systems by different names, but essentially one system references the organization's formal, structural dimensions and the other system references the organization's symbolic, culture dimensions (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984, p. 21). I refer to these two systems as the structural system and the cultural system, respectively.

When these two systems are more versus less integrated they tend to be mutually supportive and reinforcing. However, the extent to which these two systems are more or less integrated depends on the amount of stability or change that the organization experiences over time. As noted in chapter one, much has changed in our context, in universities, and in the academic deanship which would suggest that these two systems have become less integrated over time and therefore do not necessarily support or reinforce one another. This was perhaps most evident in the outcomes of the search processes which, at the University of Saskatchewan, were characterized by unusually high turnover. Maybe this is part of the reason why, for all the processes we put around decanal searches, we do not always get the outcomes we desire; and why a whole committee can reach consensus around a candidate who flames out before the end of their first time.

Assumption #3. There are multiple modes of integration of the social system and the cultural system or the actor's personal interpretation of the symbols in the cultural system. Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) referred to these modes of integration as *cultural competence* (p. 213). Cultural competence also falls on a spectrum. At one end, there is almost total integration between an individual actor's identity and the cultural system of the organization. For example, an individual's identity as a faculty member is based, in part, on being part of the collegium and

embracing collegial (aka academic) beliefs and values. At the other end of the spectrum, an individual actor understands the cultural system, but they are not necessarily even part of the organization. This is often the domain of consultants. Cultural competence was evident in how search committee members individually, and collectively, understood decanal search processes.

The cultural, social and structural systems do not exist in isolation and are influenced by other systems, such as larger social systems, which can create pressure for change or maintain equilibrium in the organizational culture—equilibrium being the favored state. Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) suggested the larger social systems creating pressure on organizational culture included the surrounding society, the history of the organization, and contingency factors such as the impact of new technology (p. 214). The literature is clear that the societal context in which universities operate has changed and continues to change (Berman & Korsten, 2010; de Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009). Installation addresses of ten University of Saskatchewan presidents painted a picture of the history of the institution and it was easy to see how the university has changed over time under the influence of these various leaders; particularly the leadership of Peter MacKinnon who introduced the concepts of competition and greater research intensity. And there is no doubt, especially in the midst of a global pandemic, of the impact of technology on 'how we do things'. While equilibrium might be the favoured state of systems, in general, change is the constant. A look at the past and the present provided insight into a future that creates integration and harmony.

Organizational Culture: Systems Past

As universities were established in the United States and Canada, the president was often the sole officer of the university (Dibden, 1968; McGrath, 1936/1999). The cultural system was far more homogenous—that is universities still had much in common their twelfth-century

ancestors and were focused on educating the elite (Yielder & Codling, 2007). Within the social system, power was concentrated in the president as the sole officer of the university. In the structural system the process for hiring deans was simple appointment of a senior faculty member by the president. The accountability of deans was limited to supervision of students and administrative tasks that were beneath the president.

Organizational Culture: Systems Present

Over time, things changed as universities transitioned from elite to mass education and differentiation among universities based on specialization took place (Alajoutsijärvi & Kettenun, 2016; de Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009). The cultural system became more heterogeneous as faculty and student bodies became more diverse and specialization of universities introduced more diverse beliefs and values. Within the social system power began to become more diffuse—the president had to share power with boards and increasingly faculty (with or without the support of unions) who wanted more input into hiring deans and women and people of colour wanted to see themselves represented in decanal hires (Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez & Nies, 2001). The decanal search processes found in the structural system began to reflect input from faculty including, but not limited to their participation on decanal search committees and the desire for open search processes. These processes also began to mirror practices found in the corporate sector as the role of the dean morphed to include accountabilities more reflective of a CEO; processes such as competition for decanal roles as well as formal and standardized interviews of candidates with the search committee.

Organizational Culture: Systems Future

What's next? Increased pressure from external sources—governments, significant individual and corporate donors as well as internal sources—boards of governors, faculty all put

pressure on the cultural, social and structural systems. Symbols and meanings in the cultural system diversify once again. Status and power in the social system potentially becomes concentrated in presidents and boards reflecting a more corporate model. The structural systems change again—perhaps searches become less public—the need for confidentiality outweighing transparency as candidate pools continue to shrink; leadership of the institution becomes primary as more and more academic leaders are stewarding institutional resources; professionalization of candidates becomes desirable—as opposed to academic prowess, perhaps management prowess becomes most important and the ability to lead change becomes critical.

But perhaps it is still possible to consciously design a different future state. If the exploration of culture is multi-faceted and considers the relationship among and inter-connection of multiple systems then we can consciously adapt to changes and perhaps even initiative some of our own. We can consider status and power in the social systems and consider what is a good balance and/or what is required at this point in time—perhaps we can even agree to share power and engage in a more collective view of status and power. Processes can be consciously redesigned to reinforce what we treasure in the cultural system and acknowledge that many cultures can co-exist within a cultural system. The goal is to bring the cultural, social and structural systems into harmony—if such a thing is even possible. I think they can be more harmonious than they are right now and I close this discussion by offering thoughts on how we might create harmony and integration.

Creating Harmony: Cultural Systems

Given that the cultural system is the meaning system of the organization the acknowledgement and resolution of tension between the corporate and academic culture is a key driver of harmony.

Robert Fritz (2011) suggested that one way to resolve tension is to decide which beliefs, values, ideologies are primary and then act in accordance with those beliefs, values, and ideologies. As stated earlier, the tension between the corporate and academic culture is well-documented. The question in the cultural system is which beliefs, values and ideologies do we actually want to be primary? This speaks to the fundamental role of the dean—if the dean must be a strong academic that suggests academic beliefs, values, and ideologies are primary. If the dean is the CEO of the college that suggests that corporate beliefs, values and ideologies are primary. In trying to accommodate both we create tension before the search even begins.

Alternatively, in their discussion of the six cultures of the academy Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) noted, "what is required most is not a set of recommendations about how to change or mold a culture to meet one's own needs; rather, we must determine how to work with and use the strengths and resources of the existing organizational culture to accomplish our goals. We must, in other words, learn to appreciate rather than annihilate cultures" (p. x). Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) might ask the question, what strengths can we appreciate and leverage from the collegial and managerial cultures, among others? From this perspective, the fundamental role of the dean is not "either/or", but rather "and" and the tension is resolved from this perspective.

Both possibilities have merit. I believe the real challenge is to be conscious of our choices and the potential impact of said choices on the structural and social systems.

Creating Harmony: Social System

Expertise, status and power, in addition to each individual's own life experience, influenced how search committee members interpreted events and actions.

The social system needs to contemplate the who has what influence and who should have what influence. This may help determine the future composition of search

committees—eliminating those members who have little or no influence on the processes. Alternatively, as opposed to eliminating those who have little or no influence it is also possible to look for ways to increase knowledge and expertise of search processes for all committee members so that more members are positioned to influence interpretations of events and actions. Those with formal status need to be aware of the power they wield in search committees and govern themselves accordingly. There needs to be greater awareness of the influence that expertise, status and power have on interpretation of meaning.

Search committee members, as individuals, used the cultural forms with which they were already familiar to make sense of decanal search processes. Unfortunately, there was little evidence that search committee members engaged collectively to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity that presented in decanal search committees. In order to resolve uncertainty and ambiguity in a harmonious way would require that members of search committees have the opportunity to create a shared history and accumulate shared learning (Schein, 2004). There is simply not enough time or opportunity for this to happen over the course of a handful of meeting spread over an extended period of time.

Creating Harmony: Structural System

The structural system is the most visible system and includes the events and processes that move us toward desired ends.

Each one of the searches explored as part of this study resulted in an appointment vis-à-vis a set of processes that looked more or less the same. However, the meanings attributed to these processes varied. At one end of the spectrum the processes were seen simply as a means to an end—a predetermined decision with a process under it. The meanings attributed with these processes were emotionally charged as people felt there were going to be part of something

important that turned out to be a waste of time. At the other end of the spectrum the more collegial nature of decanal search processes were seen quite favourably although not without challenges. The meanings attributed with these processes at this end of the spectrum reflected a lack of trust in the process and, by extension, the members of the search committees.

Perhaps because processes within the structural system are most visible they appear to be the easiest to change and changing the culture often focuses on changing "how we do things." However, without the concomitant changes to the social and cultural systems, changes to the structural system, in isolation from the cultural and social system, cannot result in lasting change.

Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for practice, for theory and for research. In the following sections I explore these implications.

Implications for Practice

In this section, I highlight implications for the practice of decanal search—that is the enactment or carrying out of the decanal search processes. The process intelligence in chapter four highlighted practices that do not occur that perhaps should as well as practices that do occur that perhaps should not.

Practices That Do Not Occur That Should

There are a number of practices that do not necessarily occur as part of a decanal search, or at the very least, they do not consistently occur. Consciously deciding to search, clearly articulating leadership requirements, engaging the President's Executive Committee, training search committee members, supporting incoming deans and debriefing searches are examples of practices that do not occur that should. I expand on each of these in the following pages and note that the cost to implement these practices would be minimal.

Consciously decide to search. Consciously deciding whether to initiate a search when a decanal position becomes vacant should be the very first practice adopted by the provost. The default practice seems to be to initiate a search even if we know the environment is not conducive to a successful search, for whatever reason. As opposed to initiating a search for a "permanent" dean, the provost might consider the emerging practice of actually sourcing a candidate interested in an "interim assignment." Candidates interested in "interim assignments" often bring experience(s) and/or specific skill sets needed to mitigate the risks that could contribute to either declaring a failed search or settling on a less-than-desirable candidate.

In considering whether to initiate a search, the provost should also consider whether or not there is a "high-potential" internal candidate. Universities do not engage in succession planning and, in fact, "grooming" a successor is generally avoided. When succession planning has occurred, either intentionally or unintentionally, it has backfired via campaigns against the individual seen as the natural successor. Given the scope and complexity of universities there should be deliberate efforts to identify individuals who may aspire to a decanal role and/or encourage those who have expressed interest in aspiring to such a role. Current leaders would then work with these individuals to create development plans that would help them prepare for future leadership roles. Succession planning is simply a good practice that helps expand the talent pipeline.

Even when a strong internal candidate is identified search processes continue to proceed unchanged. The rationale for this is that the internal candidate needs to be "legitimized" and the search processes somehow provide this legitimization. There are other ways in which strong internal candidates could be endorsed and engaging in a "fake" search is not good practice.

Clearly articulate leadership requirements. Once a decision to initiate a search has been made the next decision is to determine the type of leader for which we should be searching. Consultation within the college is built into the search processes; however, what is missing is engagement of the most senior leaders in the organization, which at the University of Saskatchewan is the President's Executive Committee (PEC). There is currently no consultation with the PEC in decanal search processes. The dual nature of the role of the dean as both a leader for the college and a leader for the university requires both a college perspective and an institutional perspective on the type of leader for which we should be searching. The PEC also has an institutional perspective on leadership for the college given it is comprised of individuals who have insight into both the academic and administrative functions of the college. If there is going to be consultations about leadership they should include consultation with the PEC.

Engage the PEC. There is no role for the PEC beyond the provost and vice-president academic being named as chair of the decanal search committee and the vice-president research being appointed as a member of all decanal search committees. However, both of these roles can be, and often are, delegated depending on the number of searches underway at any one time and/or other extenuating circumstances. The delegation is most often to vice-provost or associate vice-president roles as opposed to another member of the PEC. When this happens the PEC is essentially shut out of the search and information members receive about the search is mostly second-hand. There is no role at all for the vice-president finance and resources or the vice-president university relations. If there is no consultation with the PEC these two senior leaders have no input at all into decanal search processes beyond brief one-on-one meetings with short-listed candidates.

Train search committee members. The experience with decanal searches among search committee members varies greatly and most have little or no experience. At the first meeting of the search committee, the external search consultant and the chair provide information related to the rules and logistics of the search but this is insufficient. While it is good to know the rules and logistics this does not facilitate shared or collective understanding about the search processes. An orientation should be developed in which everyone who finds themselves on a decanal search committee is required to participate. This would not only facilitate sharing information beyond rules and logistics, but also provide an opportunity for search committee members to meet and get to know one another in advance of the search. The orientation should be designed and delivered internally and include conversations about culture and the connection of culture and the practices we incorporate into our search processes and why.

Support incoming deans. Once appointed, deans are often left to their own devices to sink or swim and areas for development identified in the search are rarely addressed beyond the search. Without meaningful supports in place for incoming deans, regardless of whether they are internal or not, deans struggle. This struggle is at least partly responsible for the turnover. To mitigate this risk every incoming dean should have an onboarding plan that is co-created with the provost. Aspects of such a plan, such as priorities or developmental goals, might even be shared with faculty and staff in the college demonstrating openness and humility. Incoming deans should have coaches and mentors who can help them navigate their first year at the very least. Ongoing feedback, from the provost, as well as point-in-time feedback from faculty and staff in the college is important so that deans know whether they are meeting expectations and have opportunities to course correct if they are not.

Debrief every search. One definition of insanity is engaging in the same activity over and over again and expecting different outcomes. This is decanal search processes. While *The Procedures* (2011) make provision for debriefing and learning from each search, this does not happen. We do not stop and take the time to learn from our failures or our successes. Success is often, as one participant put it, a "happy coincidence" and we are lulled into thinking that "how we do things" works just fine. A mechanism for reflecting on every search immediately following and at some point in the future should be built into decanal search processes. For example, a good time to look back on the search might be 12-18 months post-search which is when deans are encouraged to engage in a 360 feedback processes. The 360 feedback provides the dean with some assessment of how things are going and is supposed to result in a development plan, but there is rarely any follow up.

Practices That Occur That Should Not

"Informal" or "optional" practices that have become part of the search processes should be discouraged. Such practices included dinners with candidates and the public presentations. The dinners, in particular, while seen by some as a perk of being on a search committee were viewed by others as completely inappropriate. As one participant observed, the potential for the conversation to stray into "protected areas" was high and search committee members could stray into such areas intentionally or unintentionally. What was learned over dinner inevitably played into search committee members' assessment of candidates including the final decision of which candidate(s) to recommend in what order.

As well, because elements like the dinners and the public presentations were optional not all search committee members participated. This resulted in an "unevenness" in information each search committee member had about each candidate(s). While feedback is solicited from those

who attended the public presentation, this feedback may have more influence on those who did not attend the presentation.

Implications for Theory

The most important theoretical implication for this study is related to the study of culture in general. There is a need to position culture as an object of study. This may be particularly important given that there is still no consensus among scholars on a definition of culture, what the concept of culture should and should not include, or the best method(s) for assessing culture (Bellot, 2011, p. 30). There was no one view of organizational culture that accounted for the findings of this study, but considering them from a framework broadly based on the symbolic concept of culture helped me present a coherent view of culture in decanal search processes—a view that considered multiple systems of meaning, multiple interpretations of meaning, and the influence of expertise, status and power on the interpretation of meaning.

The other important theoretical implication was highlighted by Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) who noted, the "symbolic dimension of organizational life is *not necessarily* coordinated, consonant, synchronized or isomorphic with the organization's formal structures, goals and management processes, albeit the treatment of that issue in the M/O [management/organizational] literature is very scanty" (p. 209). There is an opportunity to consider this statement and determine what, if any, literature has appeared in the last 37 years and what might be contributed to further advance understanding of this limitation.

Implications for Research

This study revealed a number of areas that might be considered for future research. These areas span the literature related to academic searches processes, the search processes themselves,

a foray into a cultural exploration of decanal review processes, exploration of other factors that may contribute to decanal turnover, and potential replication of this study at another university.

Address Shortcomings in the Literature

Part of the significance of this research was to address two shortcomings in the literature articulated by Twombly (1992). Twombly (1992) reported that "despite the importance of searches, the process is not well understood" (p. 653). Twombly further stated, "the academic search process has received little scholarly attention" (p. 653). This study has unpacked decanal search processes and contributed to understanding what we think happens in a search process and what actually happens. This study has also focused at least my scholarly attention on the academic search process. However, one study by one junior scholar is insufficient and understanding decanal search processes deserves more scholarly attention.

To this end, I have identified a number of areas for future research. I highlight three particular areas: 1) research into specific aspect of search processes themselves including: the efficacy and influence of external search consultants; the assessment of candidates both on paper and in person; and, the composition of search committees 2) exploration of culture in decanal review committees 3) replication of this study at another university.

Research into Specific Aspects of Search Processes

There are three specific aspects of search processes that are worthy of future research. The first is to study the efficacy and influence of external search consultants on the search processes themselves. The second is to explore the ways in which candidates are assessed, the effectiveness of each assessment practice, and whether there might be different practices that might be more effective. The third is to consider the composition of decanal search committees.

Efficacy and influence of external search consultants. While engagement with external search consultants has become standard operating procedure there is virtually no research that assesses their effectiveness and whether engaging a search consultant produces better outcomes. A question that arises is would organizations would get the same or perhaps even better outcomes if they developed internal search consulting expertise?

The findings in this study highlighted the importance of the relationship between the chair and the external search consultant, as evidenced, in part by the desire of chairs to work with external search consultants with whom they are familiar. These relationships could be developed just, if not more, easily internally; however, the real benefit of developing internal search consulting expertise is to enhance cultural competence.

While I did not ask a direct question about search consultants in the focus groups or interviews, the topic of search consultants came up in almost every conversation. External search consultants clearly have some influence on the search—the questions are how much influence do they have and is it appropriate?

Assessment of candidates. A consistent theme expressed by participants was dissatisfaction with the ways in which candidates are assessed—both on paper and in person. The dissatisfaction extended, but was not limited to: assessing the academic credentials of applicants; the efficacy of the formal interview, in particular, whether the questions surfaced information about the most important skills and attributes and differentiated candidates; the value of reference checks if referees are determined solely by the candidate; who is best positioned to do reference checks—the external search consultant or members of the search committee; and finally, the validity of informal practices.

There was a desire expressed for more rigour in the assessment of candidates, but that may simply be a knee-jerk reaction to the dissatisfaction with current practices. I am not sure we need more rigour or whether we need more understanding and clarity about the skills and attributes for which we are searching and a determination of what practices are well-suited to assess those skills and attributes.

The "one-size fits all" approach to assessing candidates in and of itself is no longer appropriate. This approach may be fair and equitable, but it does not consider diversity of candidates and the likelihood is high that this approach introduces and/or reinforces bias towards those candidates who are "most like us".

The question most salient to assessment of candidates is whether the current practices do what they are intended to do—which is provide information on which the committee can confidently base a decision. Current practices provide information, but as one participant stated, they do not provide the information that is most important to the final decision.

Research into how candidates are assessed—both on paper and in person—has the potential to improve the assessment processes which presumably would improve outcomes.

Composition of decanal search committees. Is the best way to represent constituents via a seat on the search committee? And does this practice ultimately result in better outcomes? In the *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011) there is a stated desire to balance the size of the committee with constituent representation; however, this study suggested that search committees were simply too big and that not all search committee members were created equal. An exploration into the size and composition of search committees is warranted and instead of broad representation, one research participant suggested "critical" representation might be more appropriate.

Exploration of Culture in Decanal Review Committees

The procedures that govern searches at the University of Saskatchewan also govern reviews and the committee structure is identical. There is broad acknowledgement among senior administrators that the review processes at the university are problematic and seem to come with a significant amount of vitriol. In particular, there has been some suggestion that female deans are more negatively impacted than their male counterparts in the review processes. Requests for research into review processes came up in this study. A number of participants asked if reviews were part of my exploration, which they were not, but the comments pointed to need for scholarly attention in this space as well.

Exploration of Other Factors Contributing to Decanal Turnover

In the delimitations placed on this study, I acknowledged that decanal turnover is a problem to which I suspected there were many contributing factors and solutions. I acknowledged that asking deans themselves about what other factors may have contributed to a decision to leave a role earlier than perhaps expected was outside the scope of this research. However, this would be a worthwhile investigation. Adding the voices of deans who left these roles would complement the findings of this research and help paint a more fulsome picture of decanal turnover.

Replication of this Study at Another University.

Do other universities experience similar turnover in decanal positions? And what might be learned from universities that either do experience similar turnover or experience more or less turnover. In particular, I would be interested in what might be learned about decanal search processes at a university that experienced less turnover? What similarities and differences in

processes might be observed? What might be learned from an exploration of culture of decanal search processes at other universities?

What could be learned from a university that experiences less turnover? What is the composition of their search committees? What are their processes? Are the search committees and processes more aligned to the cultural system of the organization? That is, do processes and committees more or less reflect collegial/managerial, academic/corporate cultures? All questions worthy of exploration.

Impact of Bias on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Goals

There was one area that might be considered for future research that, perhaps surprisingly, was not revealed. This area is bias and how bias in search processes might impact equity, diversity and inclusion goals of the institution. Other than commentary on the diversity (or lack thereof) of the search committee and bias that seemed inherent in the "rule of three" there was little discussion of bias and/or the impact of bias on search processes. I am not overly familiar with the literature in this space, but my experience would suggest this is an important area for future research.

Summary of Implications

Over the course of this study, I identified implications for practice, theory and research. Implications for practice, in particular, could provide "quick wins" or things that could be done within the boundaries of the *University of Saskatchewan Search and Review Procedures for Senior Administrators* (2011). What is required is the desire for and will to change. I hope that the findings from this study will bring awareness to the challenges inherent in decanal search processes and be a catalyst for change. Implications for theory and future research may or may not be taken up by myself or other scholars interested in academic leadership. Again, I hope that

I have articulated these implications in such a way that there is a clear path forward for those interested in further exploration of theory and research.

Reflections

While I had assumed that the relationships I had established over my 25 years at the University of Saskatchewan would facilitate my access to research participants, I was pleased by the positive responses I received to my invitations to participate in this study. I was also grateful that in addition to being generous with their time, research participants seemed to trust me with their information. I found all of the research participants to be open and honest and they willingly shared with me, and in the case of the focus groups, with one another.

On occasion, a participant would ask about the steps I was taking to protect confidentiality. I took great care to protect the identity and confidentiality of the research participants. I did not identify the searches that were selected for this study nor did I identify the transcripts from which quotations were drawn. Only one research participants did not consent to the use of their information as they felt they had been too forthcoming with me in the interview; however, this participant did agree to consider consent for the use of any particularly relevant material on a case-by-case basis. I did not seek consent to use any of this research participant's information.

I felt that the questions posed to research participants facilitated sharing information. I have been told I am an attentive listener and on more than one occasion a research participant expressed surprise at just how much information they had shared with me. The only part of the protocol that seemed to stump participants was when they were asked to provide a provocative statement that described the culture of decanal search processes. But, even this questions generated insights that I found useful in the analysis of the data.

I enjoyed the data collection phase of this study immensely which is not surprising. However, it was almost derailed at the start as one individual who had been invited to participate suggested that I could not proceed with the conversations I had outlined because of the confidentiality of the search committee discussions. This caused me to revisit the invitation to research participants and clarify that my discussions would focus exclusively on those aspects of search processes that would not be considered confidential. I also added more detail, on the advice of my committee, about the role of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board to ensure proper confidentiality can occur within a study. No concerns were raised by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board who approved this research, including the interview and focus group protocols.

I did not do the Delphi as originally planned, but rather focused on the interviews and focus group discussions which were generating very rich, and copious amounts of, data. While I was sad to hear so much frustration and learn of so many negative experiences with decanal search processes, this also served to motivate me. It underscored the importance of this research and only made me more determined to see this work come to completion. The data analysis was my least favourite part; however, I believe all the time and effort I put into the analysis served to truly honour the voices of participants which was the goal.

Concluding Comments

I have often described this dissertation as a "labour of love." I did not pursue it to advance my career or to change the direction of my career, but rather, I pursued it because I wanted better for the University of Saskatchewan. I wanted better for those who lead our University and I wanted better for those who work and study at the University of Saskatchewan. I have witnessed the best and worst of those appointed to decanal roles and I could not

understand how the same search processes could result in appointing leaders who did great things and leaders who were terribly destructive. I felt great angst witnessing the cost of those leaders who were destructive—costs to the university, the academic unit, and the people left behind. And, I believed that that my eclectic professional and educational background situated me such that I was uniquely positioned to engage in this pursuit of knowledge related to decanal search processes. In fact, try as I might to find another "big question" for this study, I kept coming back to an exploration of decanal search processes. It was simply meant to be.

It is now up to others who have perhaps had similar wonderings to pick up what I have laid down. As stated earlier, the good news from this research is that change is possible, but must be considered from a much broader perspective of culture than just tweaking "how we do things" or the structural system of organizational culture. We need to broaden our view of culture to include the cultures of the academy (cultural systems) and the agency of individuals within these systems. From this broader view of organizational culture, creating harmony among the systems has the potential to bring lasting and positive change.

This is my hope. The roadmap for change is here. As one research participant stated after reconceptualizing decanal search processes as they would like them to be: Let's just do it!

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Appendix A: Univeristy of Saskatchewan Colleges and Schools

Agiculture

Arts & Science

Business

Dentistry

Education

Engineering

Graduate & Post-doctoral Studies

Kinesiology

Law

Libraries

Medicine

Nursing

Pharmacy & Nutrition

Public Health

Public Policy

Sustainability and Environmental Studies

Veterinary Medicine

Appendix B: Focus Group Communication

Invitation to Participate

Good morning [Name of Research Participant],

Happy New Year! I hope that this note finds you well. I happy to be writing to you this morning with an invitation to participate in my research – I am finally at the point of gathering data which is very exciting! In the information that follows I outline the purpose of my research, address confidentiality of the search and focus group processes, provide a sense of the questions I will and will not ask in the focus groups, inform you of the approval and support I have received for this research, and give you details about the focus groups and the subsequent Delphi.

Purpose

The purpose of my research is to explore the culture of decanal search processes in one traditional research university. The literature has suggested there is high turnover in decanal positions which is consistent with my own experience. Various scholars have acknowledged the importance of the decanal role within the organization and high turnover in these positions is cause for concern. In addition to costs to morale and productivity associated with high turnover of deans the monetary costs to identify and recruit an academic leader can also be significant. Given the unique position of the academic dean in the organization and the costs associated with high turnover, this research will explore what works well and what, if anything, we can do differently to ensure the way in which academic deans are identified and selected reflect the reality of the external context, the changing nature of universities, and the evolution of the academic deanship.

Confidentiality

The Behavioural Research Ethics Board approved this research on October 18, 2018. The role of the Board is to ensure that proper confidentiality can occur within a study. As part of this process, I made a commitment to safeguard the confidentiality of the focus group discussions and to ask that members of the focus groups commit to do the same. While I cannot offer within-group anonymity I will not be identifying who participated in each focus group nor the college or school associated with particular decanal search focus group data. Data from each focus group will be aggregated without individual participant attribution.

The questions that I intend to pursue in the focus groups were also vetted as part of the approval process.

Having participated in several selection committees myself, I understand and appreciate that when a search committee engages in search processes, there are certain aspects of these processes that are confidential. Please be assured that my discussions with participants will focus exclusively on those aspects of search processes that would not be considered confidential.

Focus Group Questions
During the focus groups we will explore a tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes. Focus group participants will be asked to engage in a retrospective reconstruction and future focused reconceptualization of the search processes.

The retrospective reconstruction will ask you to bring to mind how you experienced the search processes: what you were thinking and feeling as you moved through the various processes; what challenges you recall; what you recall working well. The focus group discussion is a retrospective of your experience of the processes of the committee and will not require you to comment on or cite specific incidents. I will not ask any questions that may reveal the identity of candidates and I will not ask any questions about what may have been shared in deliberations.

The reconceptualization will ask you to bring forward what worked well and the best of your experience and imagine a redo of the processes of the search exactly as you would like them to be and what would need to shift in order to create the processes as you would like them to be.

Approval and Support
In addition to receiving ethics approval, my research proposal was also approved by my committee members (Dr. Ernie Barber, Dr. Chad London, Dr. Jing Xiao, Dr. Michael Cottrell as Chair, and Dr. Keith Walker, as Supervisor) on September 4, 2018. This research is further supported by my employer, Cheryl Carver, Associate Vice-President People & Resources. The President, Dr. Peter Stoicheff, the Provost, Dr. Anthony Vannelli, and the University Secretary, Dr. Beth Bilson have also been apprised of this research.

Search committee chairs have agreed to one-on-one interviews following each focus group deliberation.

Focus Group and Delphi Details
I will personally facilitate the focus group which I expect to last 90 – 120 minutes (1 ½ - 2 hours). The focus group will be audio-recorded and transcripts will be generated from the recording. Once the focus groups with search committee members and one-on-one interviews with search committee chairs are complete, an interpretive panel will be convened to participate in a Delphi process. The questions posed in the Delphi will emerge from the data gathered in the focus groups and interviews. These questions will be posed to a network of informants which will include focus group and interview participants. The responses to the questions are analyzed and a new set of questions are posed to the network. This is an iterative process and typically includes three cycles of question and response. The intent of this process is to provide another opportunity for research participants to have their voices heard. The Delphi will be done electronically and will not require any further face-to-face meetings.

Please advise if you agree to participate in this research by replying to this e-mail invitation with an affirmative response. I request an indication of your interest by **[Date]**. I will work with those

who agree to participate to find a mutually agreeable date and time for the focus group. My intent is to convene the focus group the end of January.

In the event that you have any concerns or would like additional information, you may contact my Supervisor, Dr. Keith Walker (e-mail: keith.walker@usask.ca or phone: 306-220-0614) or myself (e-mail: kelly.mcinnes@usask.ca or phone: 306-227-8805).

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Sincerely,
Kelly McInnes, Ph.D. (c)

Confirmation Email

Good day [Name of Participant],

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in my research. I write today with information that I hope will help you prepare and participate most effectively on [Day]. If the following information leaves you with any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at kelly.mcinnes@usask.ca or 306-227-8805.

Logistics

The focus group will take place on [Day, Calendar Date] from [Time] in [Location].

Focus Group Preparation

In the invitation to participate in this research, I stated that during the focus group we would explore a tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes. Attached you will find *A Tentative Conceptualization of Culture in Decanal Search Processes* which represents the academic literature and my tentative musings about how culture might influence the way in which these processes are understood. While the search processes are depicted as linear and only one cultural approach is associated with each stage of the search, I know that aspects of the search can be, and perhaps typically are, iterative. I also appreciate that cultural approaches may overlap and/or weave together in interesting ways. This however, is what I am hoping to explore in my research which is why I kept this tentative framework simple.

During the focus group discussion you will be asked to engage in a retrospective reconstruction and future focused reconceptualization of the College of Arts and Science decanal search processes. It might be helpful to reflect on that particular search and the tentative framework in advance of the focus group. In particular, how do you recall your experience with the search processes: what were you thinking and feeling as you moved through the various processes; what challenges do you recall; what do you recall working well?

Consent Form

Finally, attached is the *Research Participant Consent Form*. I will review the consent form prior to engaging in any formal discussions and require that it be signed and returned to me prior to proceeding.

I look forward to our conversation!

Sincerely,
Kelly McInnes, PhD(c)

Focus Group Protocol

Introductory Comments

1. Thank the research participants for accepting my invitation to participate in the research project.
2. Provide an overview of the purpose of the research.
3. Remind research participants of the length of the focus group.
4. Assure research participants that I will safeguard confidentiality of the discussion and that they are asked to do the same.
5. Remind research participants that they can withdraw at any time without any questions or negative consequences.
6. Go through the Consent Form. Have Consent Form signed and returned to me.
7. Encourage and answer any questions the research participants may have prior to beginning the focus group.

Ice breaker

Ask participants to provide two pieces of information: how long they have been in their current role at the University of Saskatchewan [or how long they were in their previous role at the university] AND whether or not they have participated in other searches inside or outside the university.

Discussion starter

In the e-mail invitation you were provided with a tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes and asked to think about the search in which you participated with respect to this model. I invite each of you to share one or two things about that search that stood out for you.

Retrospective

I would like to unpack, with you, the elements of the search process in which you participated. Recall I identified nine phases in the search process which represent the following stages: launching the search; creating the narrative for the search; iterative process of assessing candidates and determining who moves on to the next phase; and, ranking and recommending the top candidate or candidates to the Board.

In recalling these phases and stages, I ask you to pool your memories of that search and walk me through the processes. In doing so, bring to mind what you were thinking as you moved through the various processes. What discussions and conversations were you having? What emotions did these conversations bring forth for you? What were you feeling? How did you come to decisions on processes?

Are there any elements in this model that were deterministic; mind changing; fateful; or significant in some way?

Are there elements of your experience that are missing from the model?

What challenges do you recall?

What do you recall working well?

Reconceptualization
Picking up on what worked well and taking the best of your experience on this search committee, imagine a redo of that search exactly as you would like it to be. Imagine out loud how that would look.

What discussions and conversations would you be having? How would you be feeling? How would you be coming to decisions on processes?

What do you think it would take to bring more of these experiences into the search processes?

What would need to happen; change; shift in order to create the search exactly as you would like it to be?

Insight
Take a moment to think about any insight you have gained form this retrospective reconstruction and reconceptualization. Please be prepared to share any insight with the group.

Provocative Statement
As a group, we have recreated the narrative or story of this particular search process and we have created a new narrative or story of that search. You have also shared, with one another, insight gained from this collective conversation. As a final activity, I invite you to try and translate all of this into a provocative statement that describes the culture of decanal search processes.

Closing comments
1. Thank the research participants for participating in the focus group.
2. Advise research participants that they may contact me if they wish to engage in a 1:1 interview; I may also reach out to them to request a 1:1 interview.
3. Advise research participants the transcripts from the focus group will be transcribed and sent to them for verification within one week of the interview (approximately).
4. Encourage and answer any questions research participants may have.

Research Participant Consent Form: Focus Groups

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled: *Exploring the Culture of Decanal Search Processes: A Search for Excellence*. Please read this Consent Form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

Researcher: Kelly McInnes, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan
Phone: 306-227-8805, Email: kelly.mcinnes@usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Keith Walker, Professor
Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan
Phone: 306-220-0614, Email: keith.walker@usask.ca

Purpose and Objectives of the Research: The purpose of this study is to explore the culture of decanal search processes in one traditional research university. To do so, I will draw on three different approaches to organizational culture. In employing a cultural lens, I move beyond "best practice" approaches and literature to try and deeply understand decanal search processes and offer critical and constructive insight into the ways in which these processes may be informed and refined as we hire the next generation of academic leaders.

Procedures: The research will be conducted within a qualitative paradigm. Data will be gathered via individual interviews, focus groups, direct observation, and use of an interpretive panel. The research participants are purposefully selected and include members of decanal search committees (subject to delimitations), those that provide advice and guidance to search committees, and executive sponsors of search committees. The research participants will be drawn from searches that took place from 2014 – 2017 (inclusive). It is anticipated that there will be approximately 100 research participants.

Focus groups will be conducted with research participants identified as members of decanal search committees (subject to delimitations) excluding the chair. Individuals who wish to comment on some aspect of the focus group's discussion or offer information they feel is of a confidential nature, yet may be meaningful to this research project, can arrange for a 1:1 interview with me or provide me with written comments. Any 1:1 interview will require completion of a similar, but separate, Consent Form at the time of the interview.

I will personally facilitate the focus groups which I expect to last 90 – 120 minutes. The focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcripts will be generated from the recording. Research participants do not have to answer a question if they do not wish and they can leave at any time. Research participants will be afforded the opportunity to review the transcript of the focus group in which they participated and provide clarity to their comments.

During the focus group, we will explore a tentative construction of decanal search processes provided to research participants in advance of the focus group. In particular, I will ask research

participants to engage in a retrospective reconstruction and reconceptualization of the search processes.

During the Delphi, which will be done electronically, research participants will be asked to respond to questions that arise from the interviews and focus groups. Responses will be analyzed and a second round of questions will be posed. There are typically two or three rounds in a Delphi process. Responses will be aggregated to ensure participant confidentiality.

Where agreed and/or where there is consent, written communication received by the research from research participants will be included in the analysis.

The research will take place on the U of S campus.

Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures of the study or my role.

Potential Risks: The research will be carried out in a spirit of mutual respect and trust. There are no foreseeable risks or harm to research participants and there will be no deception. While most of the participants will know and be known to the researcher, as a 25-year U of S employee, and one another, relationships will be kept on a researcher-participant level and it is expected that any professional relationships among participants will be maintained following the research study.

Potential Benefits: While benefits are not necessarily guaranteed, participants may expect to benefit from participating in this research study in the following ways: their own constructions of the culture of the decanal search process may become more informed and/or sophisticated as a result of their participation in this research and/or they may gain new understanding of or appreciation for the issues relevant to the decanal search process; their understanding and appreciation for the construction of *others* may be enhanced; they may gain insight that can be used to inform other search processes in which they may be involved. Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to these benefits as ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, and catalytic authenticity, respectively.

Confidentiality: I will undertake to safeguard the confidentiality of the focus group discussion, but cannot guarantee that other members of the group will do so. Focus group participants will be asked to respect the confidentiality of the group by not disclosing the contents of the discussion outside of the group, but I cannot guarantee that others will respect your confidentiality. Direct quotations will be reported without attribution, but because the participants for this research project are a small group of people, some of whom are known to each other, it is possible that research participants may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what they have said and/or by their position.

The data collected and the results of this research will be used primarily for the researcher's doctoral dissertation. The data from the research may also be published in journal articles or other scholarly works and presented at conferences.

Please be assured that accepting or declining this invitation to participate in my research will not have any impact on our professional relationship.

Storage of Data: Throughout the data collection and analysis period, data will be transported on a personal laptop, backed up on a memory stick, and stored on the University of Saskatchewan secure Cabinet on PAWS. At the end of the study period, data collected will be transferred to Dr. Keith Walker. The data will be stored and held in accordance with the *Procedures for Stewardship of Research Records at the University of Saskatchewan* and applicable privacy legislation. Electronic data will be erased and removed from computers via an appropriate application that does not permit its recovery.
Upon receipt of each participant's e-mail response to the Delphi, their e-mail will be removed from their responses to the questions. E-mail addresses will be saved in a separate file. Consent forms will be stored separately from the data itself.

Right to Withdraw: Participation in this research study is voluntary and research participants can answer only those questions with which they are comfortable. Research participants do not have to answer a question if they do not wish and can leave at any time. Should a research participant leave, data gathered up to the point of leaving will be included in the analysis.

Questions: Questions concerning the research study are invited at any point; research participants are also free to contact the researcher and/or the supervisor at the email and phone numbers provided at the top of page one if questions or concerns arise. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca or (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Follow-up: Research participants will be informed when the dissertation is complete and provided with an executive summary of results. Upon request, the researcher will provide an electronic copy of the document and/or procedures for accessing the document from the University of Saskatchewan library.

Consent to Participate: Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided.
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Signature	Date
_____	_____	
Researcher's signature	Date	

Exploring the culture of decanal search processes: A search for excellence

Data/Transcript Release Form: Focus Group

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of the focus group in which I participated as part of this research, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete **my** information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in the focus group with Kelly McInnes. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Kelly McInnes to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Signature	Date
_____	_____	
Researcher's signature	Date	

Appendix C: Search Committee Chair Communication

Invitation to Participate

Good morning [Name of Chair],

I write to you this morning with a request in my capacity as a doctoral candidate in Educational Administration. You might recall that I began my doctoral studies in September 2015 and I am excited to finally be at the point of gathering my data! My research proposal was approved by my committee members (Ernie Barber, Chad London, Jing Xiao, Michael Cottrell as Chair, and Keith Walker as Supervisor) on September 4, 2018 and I received Ethics approval on October 18, 2018.

The purpose of my research is to explore the culture of decanal search processes at the University of Saskatchewan. To this end, I am planning focus groups with select members of five different search committees and one-on-one interviews with the chairs of these search committees. One of the search committees that I have identified for my research is [Name of College].

My request is for one hour of your time between now [January 2019] and the end of March 2019. I would use this time to conduct a one-hour interview after the focus group and any interviews with participants who were unwilling and/or unable to participate in the focus group which will conclude [date].

Should you be amenable to this request, I will follow up in due course with an official email invitation which provides more details about my research. I am also happy to meet and answer any questions you may have about this request.

Please let me know what would be easiest for you in terms of scheduling, [Name of Chair]. I am thinking that if you could offer some dates/times beginning any time after [date focus groups and interviews conclude], I can adjust my calendar to accommodate your availability. If there is another way to do this that would be easier, please just let me know.

Once we have dates and times confirmed, I will send along information that I hope will help you prepare for the interviews as well as a consent form.

I appreciate your willingness to participate in my research [Name of Chair] and am looking forward to our conversation.

Sincerely,
Kelly McInnes, PhD(c)

Confirmation Email

Hello [Name of Chair],

I write today in preparation for our interview on [Day, Calendar Date] from [Time]. I will meet you, as planned, at [Location].

Interview Preparation

During the interview we will explore a tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes. Attached you will find *A Tentative Conceptualization of Culture in Decanal Search Processes* which represents the academic literature and my tentative musings about hos culture might influence the way in which these processes are understood. While the search processes are depicted as linear and only one cultural approach is associated with each state of the search, I know that aspects of the search can be, and perhaps typically are, iterative. I also appreciate that cultural approaches may overlap and/or weave together in interesting ways. This however, is what I am hoping to explore in my research which is why I have kept this tentative framework simple.

During our discussion I will ask you to engage in a retrospective reconstruction and future focused reconceptualization of the College of [Name] decanal search processes. It might be particularly helpful to reflect on that particular search and the tentative framework in advance of our interview. In particular, how do you recall the experience with the search processes; what challenges do you recall; what do you recall working well?

Consent Form

A participant consent form is attached for your perusal. I will review the consent form prior to engaging in any formal discussion and require that it be signed and returned to me prior to proceeding.

In the event that you have any concerns in advance of our meeting please contact me directly at kelly.mcinnes@usask.ca or 306-227-8805.

I look forward to our conversation on [Day]!

Sincerely,
Kelly McInnes, PhD(c)

Search Committee Chair Interview Protocol

Introductory Comments

1. Thank the research participant for accepting my invitation to participate in the research project.
2. Provide an overview of the purpose of the research.
3. Remind research participant of the length of the interview.
4. Assure research participant that I will safeguard confidentiality of the discussion and that they are asked to do the same.
5. Remind research participant that they can withdraw at any time without any questions or negative consequences.
6. Go through the Consent Form. Have Consent Form signed and returned to me.
7. Encourage and answer any questions the research participant may have prior to beginning the interview.

Ice breaker

Ask participant to provide two pieces of information: how long have you spent in roles that would "normally" see you chair a decanal search committee AND how many decanal search committee have you chaired?

Discussion starter

In the e-mail invitation you were provided with a tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes and asked to think about the search in which you participated with respect to this model. I invite you to share one or two things about that search that stood out for you.

Retrospective

I would like to unpack, with you, the elements of the search process in which you participated. Recall I identified nine phases in the search process which represent the following stages: launching the search; creating the narrative for the search; iterative process of assessing candidates and determining who moves on to the next phase; and, ranking and recommending the top candidate or candidates to the Board.

In recalling these phases and stages, please walk me through the processes of the search as you recall them. In doing so, bring to mind what you were thinking as you moved through the various processes. What discussions and conversations were you having? What emotions did these conversations bring forth for you? What were you feeling? How did you come to decisions on processes?

Are there any elements in this model that were deterministic; mind changing; fateful; or significant in some way?

Are there elements of your experience that are missing from the model?

What challenges do you recall?

What do you recall working well?

Reconceptualization
Picking up on what worked well and taking the best of your experience on this search committee, imagine a redo of that search exactly as you would like it to be. Imagine out loud how that would look.

What discussions and conversations would you be having? How would you be feeling? How would you be coming to decisions on processes?

What do you think it would take to bring more of these experiences into the search processes?

What would need to happen; change; shift in order to create the search exactly as you would like it to be?

Insight
Take a moment to think about any insight you have gained form this retrospective reconstruction and reconceptualization. Please be prepared to share any insight you have gained with me.

Provocative Statement
Over the course of this interview we have recreated the narrative or story of this particular search process and we have created a new narrative or story of that search. Please try and translate all of this into a provocative statement that describes the culture of decanal search processes.

Closing comments
1. Thank the research participant for participating in the interview.
2. Advise research participant the transcripts from the interview will be transcribed and sent to them for verification within one week of the interview (approximately).
3. Encourage and answer any questions research participant may have.

Research Participant Consent Form: Interview

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled: *Exploring the Culture of Decanal Search Processes: A Search for Excellence*. Please read this Consent Form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

Researcher: Kelly McInnes, Graduate Student (Doctoral Candidate)
Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan
Phone: 306-227-8805, Email: kelly.mcinnes@usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Keith Walker, Professor
Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan
Phone: 306-220-0614, Email: keith.walker@usask.ca

Purpose and Objectives of the Research: The purpose of this study is to explore the culture of decanal search processes in one traditional research university. To do so, I will draw on three different approaches to organizational culture. In employing a cultural lens, I move beyond "best practice" approaches and literature to try and deeply understand decanal search processes and offer critical and constructive insight into the ways in which these processes may be informed and refined as we hire the next generation of academic leaders.

Procedures: The research will be conducted within a qualitative paradigm. Data will be gathered via individual interviews, focus groups, direct observation, and use of an interpretive panel. The research participants are purposefully selected and include members of decanal search committees (subject to delimitations), those that provide advice and guidance to search committees, and executive sponsors of search committees. The research participants will be drawn from searches that took place from 2014 – 2017 (inclusive). It is anticipated that there will be approximately 100 research participants.

Interviews will be conducted with research participants identified as advice-givers to the decanal search process (external search consultants and internal recruitment specialists), research participants who chaired decanal search committees, and executive sponsors of decanal search committees. Individuals from the focus groups who request an interview will be accommodated. As well, individuals from the focus groups who I identify as having something more to offer in terms of experience or perspective will be invited to engage in an interview.

I will personally conduct the interviews which I expect to last 60 – 90 minutes. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcripts will be generated from the recording. Research participants may request that the recording device be turned off at any time without giving a reason for the request. Research participants will be afforded the right to clarify, add, alter, or remove any or all of the information from the transcript of the interview.

During the interview, we will explore a tentative construction of decanal search processes provided to research participants in the e-mail invitation. In particular, I will ask research

participants to engage in a retrospective reconstruction and reconceptualization of the search processes.

During the Delphi, which will be done electronically, research participants will be asked to respond to questions that arise from the interviews and focus groups. Responses will be analyzed and a second round of questions will be posed. There are typically two or three rounds in a Delphi process. Responses will be aggregated to ensure participant confidentiality.

Where agreed and/or where there is consent, written communication received by the research from research participants will be included in the analysis.

The research will take place on the U of S campus or at a location of the interviewees choosing.

Please feel free to ask any questions about the procedures of this study or my role.

Potential Risks: The research will be carried out in a spirit of mutual respect and trust. There are no foreseeable risks or harm to research participants and there will be no deception. While most of the participants will know and be known to the researcher as a 25-year U of S employee, relationships will be kept on a researcher-participant level and it is expected that any professional relationships will be maintained following the research study.

Potential Benefits: While benefits are not necessarily guaranteed, participants may expect to benefit from participating in this research study in the following ways: their own constructions of the culture of the decanal search process may become more informed and/or sophisticated as a result of their participation in this research and/or they may gain new understanding of or appreciation for the issues relevant to the decanal search process; their understanding and appreciation for the construction of *others* may be enhanced; they may gain insight that can be used to inform other search processes in which they may be involved. Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to these benefits as ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, and catalytic authenticity, respectively.

Confidentiality: I will guarantee the confidentiality of the individual interview and ask that research participants do the same. Direct quotations will be reported without attribution, but because the participants for this research study are a small group of people, some of whom are known to each other, it is possible that they may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what they have said and/or by their position. After the interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, research participants will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as they see fit.

The data collected and the results of this research will be used primarily for the researcher's doctoral dissertation. The data from the research may also be published in journal articles or other scholarly works and presented at conferences.

Please be assured that accepting or declining this invitation to participate in my research will not have any impact on our professional relationship.

Storage of Data: Throughout the data collection and analysis period, data will be transported on a personal laptop, backed up on a memory stick, and storied on the University of Saskatchewan secure Cabinet on PAWS. At the end of the study period, data collected will be transferred to Dr. Keith Walker. The data will be stored and held in accordance with the *Procedures for Stewardship of Research Records at the University of Saskatchewan* and applicable privacy legislation. Electronic data will be erased and removed from computers via an appropriate application that does not permit its recovery.
Upon receipt of each participant's e-mail response to the Delphi, their e-mail will be removed from their responses to the questions. E-mail addresses will be saved in a separate file. Consent forms will be stored separately from the data itself.

Right to Withdraw: Participation in this research study is voluntary and research participants can answer only those questions with which they are comfortable. Research participants may request that the recording device be turned off and/or withdraw from the research study without giving a reason, at any time, without any repercussion. Should a participant withdraw, they may request that their data be deleted from the research and destroyed. This request must be made within one month of the data being collected.

Questions: Questions concerning the research study are invited at any point; research participants are also free to contact the researcher and/or the supervisor at the email and phone numbers provided at the top of page one if questions or concerns arise. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca or (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Follow-up: Research participants will be informed when the dissertation is complete and provided with an executive summary of results. Upon request, the researcher will provide an electronic copy of the document and/or procedures for accessing the document from the University of Saskatchewan library.

Consent to Participate: Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided.
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of participant	Signature	Date
Researcher's signature	Date	

Exploring the Culture of Decanal Search Processes: A Search for Excellence

Data/Transcript Release Form: Interview

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcripts of my personal interviews in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcripts as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcripts accurately reflect what I said in my personal interviews with Kelly McInnes. I hereby authorize the release of these transcripts to Kelly McInnes to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Signature	Date
_____	_____	
Researcher's signature	Date	

Appendix D: Search Consultant Communication

Invitation to Participate

Hello [Name of Search Consultant],

I write to you this today with a request in my capacity as a doctoral candidate in Educational Administration. I began my doctoral studies in September 2015 and I am excited to finally be at the point of gathering my data! My request is for 60 – 90 minutes of your time within the next few weeks. I appreciate that you may or may not be physically on campus during this time; however, I am prepared to do the interview over the telephone. The interviews would be scheduled at your convenience.

During the interview we will explore a tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes which I will send to you in advance. You will be asked to engage in how your experiences with search processes at the U of S. I will not be asking you to speak to any particular search in which you have participated at the University of Saskatchewan, but rather to speak to search processes more generally. You will also be asked to bring forward learnings from the best of your experiences as a search consultant.

The purpose of my research is to explore the culture of decanal search processes at the University of Saskatchewan. To this end, I have conducted focus groups and interviews with select members of five different search committees and one-on-one interviews with the chairs of these search committees. One-on-one interviews with search consultants who have supported decanal and/or other senior administrator searches at the U of S is an important part of my data collection; however, these interview will not be specific to a particular search.

In terms of my own due diligence, please know that my research proposal was approved by my committee members (Drs. Ernie Barber, Chad London, Jing Xiao, Michael Cottrell as Chair, and Keith Walker as Supervisor) on September 4, 2018 and I received Ethics Approval on October 18, 2018. This research is further supported by my employer, Cheryl Carver, Associate Vice-President People & Resources. The President, Dr. Peter Stoicheff, the Provost, Dr. Anthony Vannelli, and the University Secretary, Dr. Beth Bilson have also been apprised of this research.

Part of the role of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board is to ensure that proper confidentiality can occur within a study. As part of the ethics process, I made a commitment to safeguard the confidentiality of the focus groups and interviews and to ask that participants do the same. The questions I intend to pursue with participants were also vetted as part of the approval process. Please be assured that my questions focus exclusively on those aspects of search processes that would be not considered confidential and I will not ask any questions that might identify particular searches.

Should you be amenable to this request, I will follow up in due course with an official e-mail invitation which provides more detail about my research. I am also happy to respond to any questions you may have about this request.

I appreciate your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,
Kelly McInnes, PhD(c)

Confirmation Email

Hello [Name of Search Consultant],

I write today to confirm our interview on [Day, Calendar Date] from [Time].

Logistics
If you would provide me with a number at which I can reach you, I will initiative the telephone call at [Time]. I anticipate the interview will last 60 – 90 minutes.

Interview Preparation
During the interview we will explore a tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes. Attached you will find *A Tentative Conceptualization of Culture in Decanal Search Processes* which represents the academic literature and my tentative musings about hos culture might influence the way in which these processes are understood. While the search processes are depicted as linear and only one cultural approach is associated with each state of the search, I know that aspects of the search can be, and perhaps typically are, iterative. I also appreciate that cultural approaches may overlap and/or weave together in interesting ways. This however, is what I am hoping to explore in my research which is why I have kept this tentative framework simple.

During our discussion I will ask you to engage in a discussion about your experiences with decanal search processes at the University of Saskatchewan. I will not be asking you to speak to any particular search in which you have participated, but rather, to speak to search processes more generally. You will also be asked to bring forward learnings from the best of your experiences as a search consultant.

Consent Form
A participant consent form is attached for your perusal. I will review the consent form prior to engaging in any formal discussion and require that it be signed and returned to me prior to proceeding with the interview. I will request verbal confirmation that the consent form has been signed and ask that you scan and email it to me at the conclusion of the interview.

In the event that you have any concerns in advance of our meeting please contact me directly at kelly.mcinnes@usask.ca or 306-227-8805.

I look forward to our conversation on [Day]!

Sincerely,
Kelly McInnes, PhD(c)

Search Consultant Interview Protocol

Introductory Comments

1. Thank the research participant for accepting my invitation to participate in the research project.
2. Provide an overview of the purpose of the research.
3. Remind research participant of the length of the interview.
4. Assure research participant that I will safeguard confidentiality of the discussion and that they are asked to do the same.
5. Remind research participant that they can withdraw at any time without any questions or negative consequences.
6. Go through the Consent Form. Confirm Consent Form is signed and will be returned to me.
7. Encourage and answer any questions the research participant may have prior to beginning the interview.

Ice breaker

Ask participant how long you have been engaged in the work of providing advice to search committees, in general, and how long you have been engaged in this work at the University of Saskatchewan. How many decanal and/or other senior administrator searches have you supported at the university? What would you say has been a highlight of this work?

Discussion starter

In the e-mail invitation you were provided with a tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes and asked to think about decanal and/or other senior administrator searches in which you have participated at the University of Saskatchewan with respect to this model. What are one or two things that stand out for you about how the university engages in these search processes? What are your thoughts on how this engagement might be improved?

Retrospective

I would like to unpack, with you, the elements of the search process. In the tentative conceptualization of culture in decanal search processes, I identified nine phases in the search process which represent the following stages: launching the search; creating the narrative for the search; iterative process of assessing candidates and determining who moves on to the next phase; and, ranking and recommending the top candidate or candidates to the Board.

In considering these phases and stages think of a time when you were particularly engaged and/or energized in a search. What was happening? What did you notice about the engagement of search committee members? When they were most engaged, what was happening? How do your capabilities and strengths as a search consultant play a role in the success of these processes?

Are there any elements of the model that you would consider mission critical or significant in some way to decanal and/or other senior administrator searches?

Are there elements of your experience that are missing from the model?

Reconceptualization
Bring to mind a decanal or other senior administrator search (could be U of S specific or not) that you would consider to be the very best in terms of processes and outcomes. Reflecting on that search, tell me a story or convey an incident about how the search processes played out that made it memorable. What learnings might be applied from that experience to the model?

What do you think it would take to bring more of these experiences into the search processes?

Insight
What insight have you gained from this interview? What wisdom might you share with me?

Provocative Statement
Over the course of this interview we have looked back at U of S search processes in comparison to search processes in other post-secondary institutions and we have considered the future of decanal and/or other senior administrator search processes. Please translate all of this into a provocative statement that describes the culture of decanal search processes.

Closing comments
1. Thank the research participant for participating in the interview.
2. Advise research participant the transcripts from the interview will be transcribed and sent to them for verification within one week of the interview (approximately).
3. Encourage and answer any questions research participant may have.

Research Participant Consent Form: Interview

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled: *Exploring the Culture of Decanal Search Processes: A Search for Excellence*. Please read this Consent Form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

Researcher: Kelly McInnes, Graduate Student (Doctoral Candidate)
Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan
Phone: 306-227-8805, Email: kelly.mcinnes@usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Keith Walker, Professor
Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan
Phone: 306-220-0614, Email: keith.walker@usask.ca

Purpose and Objectives of the Research: The purpose of this study is to explore the culture of decanal search processes in one traditional research university. To do so, I will draw on three different approaches to organizational culture. In employing a cultural lens, I move beyond "best practice" approaches and literature to try and deeply understand decanal search processes and offer critical and constructive insight into the ways in which these processes may be informed and refined as we hire the next generation of academic leaders.

Procedures: The research will be conducted within a qualitative paradigm. Data will be gathered via individual interviews, focus groups, direct observation, and use of an interpretive panel. The research participants are purposefully selected and include members of decanal search committees (subject to delimitations), those that provide advice and guidance to search committees, and executive sponsors of search committees. The research participants will be drawn from searches that took place from 2014 – 2017 (inclusive). It is anticipated that there will be approximately 100 research participants.

Interviews will be conducted with research participants identified as advice-givers to the decanal search process (external search consultants and internal recruitment specialists), research participants who chaired decanal search committees, and executive sponsors of decanal search committees. Individuals from the focus groups who request an interview will be accommodated. As well, individuals from the focus groups who I identify as having something more to offer in terms of experience or perspective will be invited to engage in an interview.

I will personally conduct the interviews which I expect to last 60 – 90 minutes. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcripts will be generated from the recording. Research participants may request that the recording device be turned off at any time without giving a reason for the request. Research participants will be afforded the right to clarify, add, alter, or remove any or all of the information from the transcript of the interview.

During the interview, we will explore a tentative construction of decanal search processes provided to research participants in the e-mail invitation. In particular, I will ask research

participants to engage in a retrospective reconstruction and reconceptualization of the search processes.

During the Delphi, which will be done electronically, research participants will be asked to respond to questions that arise from the interviews and focus groups. Responses will be analyzed and a second round of questions will be posed. There are typically two or three rounds in a Delphi process. Responses will be aggregated to ensure participant confidentiality.

Where agreed and/or where there is consent, written communication received by the research from research participants will be included in the analysis.

The research will take place on the U of S campus or at a location of the interviewees choosing.

Please feel free to ask any questions about the procedures of this study or my role.

Potential Risks: The research will be carried out in a spirit of mutual respect and trust. There are no foreseeable risks or harm to research participants and there will be no deception. While most of the participants will know and be known to the researcher as a 25-year U of S employee, relationships will be kept on a researcher-participant level and it is expected that any professional relationships will be maintained following the research study.

Potential Benefits: While benefits are not necessarily guaranteed, participants may expect to benefit from participating in this research study in the following ways: their own constructions of the culture of the decanal search process may become more informed and/or sophisticated as a result of their participation in this research and/or they may gain new understanding of or appreciation for the issues relevant to the decanal search process; their understanding and appreciation for the construction of *others* may be enhanced; they may gain insight that can be used to inform other search processes in which they may be involved. Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to these benefits as ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, and catalytic authenticity, respectively.

Confidentiality: I will guarantee the confidentiality of the individual interview and ask that research participants do the same. Direct quotations will be reported without attribution, but because the participants for this research study are a small group of people, some of whom are known to each other, it is possible that they may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what they have said and/or by their position. After the interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, research participants will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as they see fit.

The data collected and the results of this research will be used primarily for the researcher's doctoral dissertation. The data from the research may also be published in journal articles or other scholarly works and presented at conferences.

Please be assured that accepting or declining this invitation to participate in my research will not have any impact on our professional relationship.

Storage of Data: Throughout the data collection and analysis period, data will be transported on a personal laptop, backed up on a memory stick, and storied on the University of Saskatchewan secure Cabinet on PAWS. At the end of the study period, data collected will be transferred to Dr. Keith Walker. The data will be stored and held in accordance with the *Procedures for Stewardship of Research Records at the University of Saskatchewan* and applicable privacy legislation. Electronic data will be erased and removed from computers via an appropriate application that does not permit its recovery.
Upon receipt of each participant's e-mail response to the Delphi, their e-mail will be removed from their responses to the questions. E-mail addresses will be saved in a separate file. Consent forms will be stored separately from the data itself.

Right to Withdraw: Participation in this research study is voluntary and research participants can answer only those questions with which they are comfortable. Research participants may request that the recording device be turned off and/or withdraw from the research study without giving a reason, at any time, without any repercussion. Should a participant withdraw, they may request that their data be deleted from the research and destroyed. This request must be made within one month of the data being collected.

Questions: Questions concerning the research study are invited at any point; research participants are also free to contact the researcher and/or the supervisor at the email and phone numbers provided at the top of page one if questions or concerns arise. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca or (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Follow-up: Research participants will be informed when the dissertation is complete and provided with an executive summary of results. Upon request, the researcher will provide an electronic copy of the document and/or procedures for accessing the document from the University of Saskatchewan library.

Consent to Participate: Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided.
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of participant	Signature	Date
Researcher's signature	Date	

Exploring the Culture of Decanal Search Processes: A Search for Excellence

Data/Transcript Release Form: Interview

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcripts of my personal interviews in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcripts as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcripts accurately reflect what I said in my personal interviews with Kelly McInnes. I hereby authorize the release of these transcripts to Kelly McInnes to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Signature	Date
_____	_____	
Researcher's signature	Date	

Appendix E: Interview Communication

Invitation to Participate: Only search committee chairs and search consultants were invited to participate in a one-on-one interview. All other interviews were at the request of research participants who were unwilling and/or unable to participate in a focus group discussion.

Confirmation Email: The confirmation email that was created for interviews with search committee chairs was used for one-on-one interviews with research participants who were unwilling and/or unable to participate in a focus group discussion.

Protocol: The protocol that was created for interviews with search committee chairs was used for one-on-one interviews with research participants who were unwilling and/or unable to participate in a focus group discussion.

Consent Form: The consent form that was created for interviews with search committee chairs was used for one-on-one interviews with research participants who were unwilling and/or unable to participate in a focus group discussion.

Transcript Release: The transcript release form that was created for interviews with search committee chairs was used for one-on-one interviews with research participants who were unwilling and/or unable to participate in a focus group discussion.

Appendix F: Certificate of Re-Approval

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) 12-Oct-2021

Certificate of Re-Approval

Application ID: 199

Principal Investigator: Keith Walker Department: Department of Educational Administration

Locations Where Research Activities are Conducted: University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, Canada, Canada

Student(s): Kelly McInnes

Funder(s):

Sponsor:

Title: Exploring the Culture of Decanal Search Processes: A Search for Excellence

Approval Effective Date: 21-Oct-2021

Expiry Date: 21-Oct-2022

Acknowledgment Of: N/A

Review Type: Delegated Review

* This study, inclusive of all previously approved documents, has been re-approved until the expiry date noted above

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: ´Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2 2014). The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named project. ´The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. ´The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this project, and for ensuring that the authorized project is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month prior to the current expiry date each year the project remains open, and upon project completion. ´Please refer to the following website for further instructions: https://vpresearch.usask.ca/researchers/forms.php.

Digitally Approved by Diane Martz
Chair, Behavioural Research Ethics Board
University of Saskatchewan

Appendix G: Ethics Course Certificate of Completion

PANEL ON
RESEARCH ETHICS

Navigating the ethics of human research

TCPS 2: CORE

Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Kelly McInnes

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement:
Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

Date of Issue: **9 September, 2018**