

Team Culture: A Qualitative Analysis of Coaches' Perceptions of Team Culture in Lacrosse

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Research has indicated that culture has an impact on organizational performance (Kotter & Heskett, 1992), employee behavior (Kilman, Saxton & Serpa, 1985), cohesion (Gagliardi, 1986), employee turnover (Sheridan, 1992), job satisfaction (Lok & Crawford, 2003) and self-esteem (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994). Because sport teams are a type of organization, it seems important to examine cultural phenomena in the context of sport. This qualitative study set out to explore coaches' perceptions of team culture by examining the thoughts of six coaches who have coached at the international level, and amassed impressive professional careers coaching high school and collegiate lacrosse. Through semi-structured interviews, coaches were asked about their expectations for forming and sustaining their team culture. Subjects shared a number of insights, and two models emerged from the data. The first model identifies the building blocks to create an ideal team culture, including *selection*, *intra team unity*, and a *familial approach*. The second model focuses on the necessary elements to maintain a culture once it has been formed. These elements include *honesty*, *expectations*, and *rule enforcement*. This research is intended to spark further analysis of team culture, as it would seem that coaches have clear and sincere views regarding culture, and may benefit from further understanding its development, sustainability, and impact. Additionally, sport psychology consultants may provide further assistance to their clients with a solid understanding of cultural formation and maintenance in the context of athletic teams.