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HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN THE INTERCOLLEGIATE
WORKPLACE: THE INTERSECTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL
POLITICS, POLITICAL SKILL, JOB DESIGN,
AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Logan John Schuetz

College of Natural and Health Sciences
School of Sport and Exercise Science

August 2022

This Dissertation by: Logan John Schuetz

Entitled: *Human Resource Development in the Intercollegiate Workplace: The Intersection of Organizational Politics, Political Skill, Job Design, and Employee Engagement.*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Natural and Health Sciences in the Department of Sport and Exercise Science, Program of Sport Administration.

Accepted by the Doctoral Committee

Alan L. Morse, Ph.D., Research Advisor

Brent D. Oja, Ph.D., Committee Member

James Kole, Ph.D., Committee Member

Vish Iyer, Ph.D., Faculty Representative

Date of Dissertation Defense _____

Accepted by the Graduate School

Jeri-Anne Lyons, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School
Associate Vice President for Research

ABSTRACT

Schuetz, Logan, John. *Human Resource Development in the Intercollegiate Workplace: The Intersection of Organizational Politics, Political Skill, Job Design, and Employee Engagement*. Published Doctor of Philosophy dissertation Unpublished, University of Northern Colorado, 2022.

This project is expected to help explain how workplace competencies affect employee development, performance, and decision-making in the sport industry. This study utilized an in-depth qualitative examination of the lived experiences of employees in intercollegiate athletics departments. To do so, the researcher embedded himself into an ordinarily restrictive environment (i.e., intercollegiate sport organizations) which offered unique data regarding the intersection of organizational politics, job design/crafting, and employee engagement in the sport workplace. This study utilized the framework of Human Resource Development (HRD) to explore how job crafting and design can enable sport employees' understandings of engagement and performance. Sport employees are an essential element of their respective organizations, and the success or failure of these organizations are contingent on employee performance, which can be enhanced through HRD practices.

The researcher conducted observations and semi-structured interviews at multiple NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics departments in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. A total of 29 participants provided results for the current research. The data obtained from this project supported sport organizations by improving the understanding of how sport employee growth and skill development is enabled, thus fostering an enhanced experience for employees, and signifying a channel to organizational growth and performance. The key

variables identified within the study accentuated how sport employee development impacts employee and organizational performance. The findings of this project add to the literature concerning HRD in sport with nuanced interpretations of organizational politics, job design/crafting, and employee engagement within the sport workplace by focusing on the experiences of sport employees. The benefits of analyzing HRD practices in an effort to determine antecedents for employee development in the workplace offer a sustained competitive advantage for sport organizations via improved organizational functionality. Enhancing organizational functionality is shown to have positive implications for sport participants and consumers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first acknowledge the members of my dissertation committee who guided me throughout this project and during my time as a doctoral student. To both of my academic advisors and committee chairs, Dr. Alan L. Morse and Dr. Brent D. Oja, thank you. I am grateful that you both accepted me into this program and provided me with this amazing opportunity. I would not be here today without the leadership, encouragement, and support that both of you provided me over the past three years. You both have had such a profound impact on my academic development. I cannot thank you both enough. To my two other committee members, Dr. James Kole and Dr. Vish Iyer, your time and feedback have been instrumental to the success of this project, and I am grateful to have learned from each of you. The amount of time and effort both of you have given to my dissertation is so appreciated and I am thankful you took interest in my project.

I would also like to thank all the individuals involved with the University of Northern Colorado Sport Management department for providing an excellent program and balanced emphasis on research and practice. To my colleagues during my time at the University of Northern Colorado: Tyler Hajek, Alicia Romano, Yohan Lee, Kyle Brannigan, Bomin Paek, and the rest of the doctoral team over the years, thank you. You all inspired me to become the best educator and researcher that I could, and I want to thank each of you for that. All of the support over the past three years has been greatly appreciated. Each of you have provided so much of your time and effort to work alongside me during our doctoral seminars, conference presentations, and manuscript submissions, so thank you.

Finally, to my amazing wife, Carlee, what a ride it has been. From Bloomington, to South Bend to Madison, to Fort Collins, you have been my rock the entire way. You are my best friend and I thank you so much for everything you have done for me during these past few years. Thank you for believing in me, I without a doubt could not have accomplished this without you. Also, thank you for giving me our crazy and loving dogs, Bella, Mack, and David. These three spent countless nights staying up with me until 3:00 a.m. as I wrote away on my studies and this project. I absolutely have to credit these three for keeping my sane and on-track to complete this project. To everyone above and all of you that I may have forgotten, thank you for supporting me in this academic endeavor.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the core of organizations is something of great value: human resources. Increasingly, organizations are investing in human resources as a strategy to help increase their competitiveness (Kareem, 2019). As such, human resources, and the potential they have are important factors for the success or failure of an organization (Haslinda, 2009). With the constantly fluctuating business and economic environments confronting sport organizations, there is a need to adapt and develop innovative human resource strategies to ensure organizational growth and survival (Girginov et al., 2015; Hoeber & Hoeber, 2012). One of these innovative human resource strategies is Human Resource Development (HRD). Human Resource Development is also one of the fastest developing areas of literature within organizational behavior due to the positive effects on organizational performance. Successful HRD utilization is even more crucial with the intense competition today's organizations face (Kareem, 2019). Wang et al. (2017) defined HRD as "a mechanism in shaping individual and group values and beliefs through learning-related activities to support the desired performance of the host system" (p. 1175). Human Resource Development practices also provide a foundation for an emerging research area within sport as HRD supports the forming of innovative management strategies for sport organizations (Svensson et al., 2021). As the concept of employee growth continues to flourish as an important aspect for the management strategies of sport organizations (Kim et al., 2019), HRD practices can also contribute to employee development, which in turn contributes to improving sport organizational performance.

The rapid expansion and broadening of HRD research and practices is appealing for organizational behavior scholars as well as sport organizations, as both are interested in improving organizational social systems through human resources activities. Thus, as sport organizations continue to seek improvement in their performance acumen (Winand et al., 2010, 2013), HRD can be a new tactic in the sport setting to increase employee growth and development (Kim et al., 2019). Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) noted that “sport-based workers have a double burden: they must offer successful athletic activities as well as operate sophisticated, self-conscious development programming” (p. 290). While human resources have been recognized as an essential dynamic for sport organizations to achieve in order to improve their employee management strategies (e.g., Kim et al., 2017, 2019; Oja et al., 2019; Svensson et al., 2021; Taylor & McGraw, 2006), little is known about what specific human resources strategies can drive performance within sport organizations as well as sport employees (Whitley et al., 2019). The alignment of HRD strategies with organization principles has shown to enhance organizational performance through the strategic management of human capital and employee-focused development in organizations (Svensson et al., 2021).

Sport employees are a key element of their respective organizations, and the success or failure of these organizations are contingent on employee performance. Human Resource Development practices such as human resources training, recognition, performance appraisal, and career development (Khan et al., 2012) can enhance employee performance (Svensson et al., 2021). Thus, the subsequent elongated literature review is expected to further the understanding of how fundamental organizational and employee competencies, development, and performance can be influenced by the inclusion of HRD practices in the sport industry. Strengthening the knowledge, skills, and workforce quality is an essential component to any organization’s

sustainability. Therefore, focusing on Human Resource Development practices to improve sport employee competencies could be advantageous as organizational effectiveness could be achieved (Schuetz et al., 2021; Svensson et al., 2021). The benefits of analyzing HRD practices in an effort to determine its role on sport employee development in the workplace could offer a sustained competitive advantage for sport organizations via improved organizational functionality (Schuetz et al., 2021; Svensson et al., 2021). Furthermore, enhancing sport employee and organizational performance could have positive implications for both sport participants and consumers as well.

As the perspective, evolution, and emergence of HRD continues, Luthans and Peterson (2002) noted the need for broaden HRD research as they called for “the study of positively orientated human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today’s workplace” (p. 59). Furthermore, with the academic and practical flexibility of HRD and its emphasis concerning individual and organizational growth and performance, several researchers have recently turned their focus toward understanding the relationships between various employee competencies such as job engagement (Shuck et al., 2014), political skill (Holden & Griggs, 2010), job design (Lee & Lee, 2018), and Human Resource Development. The relation between job engagement for HRD centers on the intersection between performance improvement and the individual experience of work (Shuck et al., 2011). The unique influence of HRD on organizations is that it not only involves how performance can be enhanced, but also how the individual performance of employees can be developed through experiences that enhance the meaning of one’s work (e.g., job engagement; Shuck & Rocco, 2013). However, job engagement can be of little use if HRD

scholars and practitioners are unable to harness the potential of the emerging construct (Shuck et al., 2014); thus, the qualitative nature of this dissertation will be central in addressing this issue.

As the research on sport organizations expands, it is clear that there are political arenas that remain full of competition on several levels, thus demanding that employees require some necessary skills and environmental understanding in order to survive and flourish from within (Magnusen & Todd, 2016). As a larger academic focus develops on the HRD processes that continue to change and enhance sport organizations (Svensson et al., 2021), as well as their overall designs and managerial strategies, a constant feature of such efforts is the influence of organizational politics (Magnusen & Todd, 2016; Perrewé & Ferris, 2016) on HRD.

Organizational politics, defined as “actions by individuals that are directed toward the goal of furthering their own self-interests without regard for the well-being of others within the organization” (Kacmar & Baron, 1999, p. 4), have emerged to be a constant element of organization life, and is therefore a central element when considering HRD. Organizational politics is centered on influence, the individuals who partake in influencing, and the manner in which the influencing is implemented (Ferris et al., 1989, 2019). As such, organizational members who have the capabilities to influence others in order to accomplish a desired objective are said to possess political skill (Ferris et al., 2019; Perrewé & Ferris, 2016).

Political skill requires possessing the abilities to truly understand others in the workplace, and to use that knowledge to influence others to behave in ways that enhance one’s personal and organizational objectives (Ahearn et al., 2004). Political skill offers an individual (i.e., organizational leaders and managers) with the ability to understand others and use that knowledge to effectively influence situations (Kacmar et al., 2013; Perrewé et al., 2000). Individuals higher in political skill will achieve more positive images from others when

managing organizational behaviors in comparison to their less politically-skilled counterparts (Harris et al., 2007; Perrewé et al., 2000). Sport organizations are seen as dynamic social systems as organizations tend to be seen as political due to employees having to compete for limited resources in order to achieve work and personal objectives (Magnusen & Todd, 2016; Perrewé & Ferris, 2016). Thus, from collegiate athletic departments to professional sport organizations, organizational politics and political skill are an “entrenched component” of HRD and nearly all sport workplace environments (Magnusen & Todd, 2016, p. 1). Additionally, when considering HRD, employees can be concerned about how they are viewed by others in the workplace (Shuck et al., 2014; Todd et al., 2009); therefore, one tactic to triumph over this concern is for one to engage in political behaviors (i.e., leader political skill) with the purpose of positioning oneself as an influential and essential person to an organization (Ellen, 2014). Scholars have viewed working in an organization to that of a political environment, where negotiation, persuasion, power, and politics are utilized on a consistent basis, and an individual’s ability to effectively participate in the political processes is referred to as political skill (e.g., Ferris et al., 2005; Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1981). However, few scholars to date have focused on exploring how organizational politics and leader political skill interact with HRD to function in the sport industry, even though the sport industry provides an excellent opportunity for research (Magnusen & Todd, 2016; Perrewé & Ferris, 2016; Robinson et al., 2021).

Furthermore, scholars (e.g., Cacciattolo, 2015; Landells & Albrecht, 2017) have called for the need to develop a more balanced understanding of organizational politics and political skill within HRD (Lee & Lee, 2018), as previous research fluctuates between either primarily positive or negative perspectives. Within providing a more balanced approach (e.g., HRD), scholars (e.g., Hochwarter et al., 2020; McFarland et al., 2012) have also suggested that

qualitative research focusing on organizational politics could offer an improved and more in-depth understanding, as well as “lead to new insights that may not be recognized in existing theoretical work” (McFarland et al., 2012, p. 116). Even as the literature on the organizational politics paradigm has experienced extensive growth in recent years (Ferris et al., 2019), qualitative research regarding organizational politics, political skill, and HRD remains quite rare, especially in sport management literature. While organizational politics and political skill has been found to show influences upon several individual and organizational outcomes (e.g., work commitment, employee performance, career success, turnover intention, and personal reputation in organizations), much less is known about the relationships between these two constructs and HRD. Therefore, this qualitative study also examines the various assessments of organizational politics and leader political skill behaviors in collegiate athletic departments from an HRD perspective.

Lastly, this study studies job and design crafting through HRD. As mentioned throughout the introduction, HRD is a key component for organizational performance and continued development via the improvement of employees’ expertise (Swanson et al., 2001). As such, job design has become one of the most important frameworks for the application of HRD. Although job design has been shown to be a meaningful theoretical foundation of HRD, it has received minimal consideration from researchers in HRD (Lee & Lee, 2018) as well as the field of sport management. To help advance the understanding of this relationship, this study explores the relationship between HRD and job design and job crafting.

Theoretical Framework

With the constantly fluctuating business and economic environments confronting sport organizations, there is a need to adapt and develop innovative managerial strategies to ensure

organizational survival and growth (Girginov et al., 2015; Hoeber & Hoeber, 2012). As sport organizations continue to pursue improvement in their performance acumen with the value of the services they offer to consumers and participants (Winand et al., 2010, 2013), an emerging approach in the sport setting is through employee growth and development (Kim et al., 2019). The Human Resource Development paradigm was chosen as the theoretical framework for this dissertation as it can improve sport employees' professional aptitudes through organizational, career, and professional development. Additionally, this framework helps examine the current state of HRD as well as how future roles and practices might advance within the sport industry. The alignment of HRD strategies with organizational values have shown to enhance organizational performance through the strategic management of human capital and employee focused development in organizations (Svensson et al., 2021). Thus, this dissertation utilizes the framework of HRD to explore how organizational politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement can enable sport employees' growth, development, and performance. Specifically, employee job engagement is a necessary component within HRD (Shuck & Wollard, 2010; Svensson et al., 2021), and occurs when an employee achieves a positive, fulfilled state of mind that is characterized by enthusiasm, pleasure, and immersion in the workplace (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Sport employees are a key element of their respective organizations, and the success or failure of these organizations are contingent on employee performance, which can be enhanced through HRD practices such as human resource training, recognition, performance appraisal, and career development (Khan et al., 2012; Svensson et al., 2021).

The positive practices of employee development paradigms (e.g., HRD) signify the importance of continual innovative management strategies for sport organizations. What is less

understood are the organizational structures, and processes and experiences employees utilize to experience growth in the sport industry. Thus, to improve such employee development paradigms, a better understanding of the psychological experiences and perceptions of employees is needed. Therefore, this dissertation aims to explore the collegiate sport workplace environment in an effort to improve sport employee growth and development through an enhanced understanding of the intersection of organizational politics, job design/crafting, and employee engagement in the challenging environment of sport organizations (Kim et al., 2019). In summation, this dissertation will utilize the framework of HRD to explore how job design (i.e., the structure and responsibilities of one's work role) and job crafting (i.e., employees' physical and cognitive work boundary modifications) interact with the mobilization of leader political skill within sport organizations to enable sport employee engagement and performance.

Statement of the Problem

As sport organizations continue to strive to improve the services offered to consumers and participants, human resources remain an important consideration. Within the field of sport management, scholars have been able to productively determine the importance of Human Resource Management to the sport industry (Chelladurai & Kerwin, 2018; Cuskelly et al., 2006; Dixon et al., 2008; Doherty, 1998; Goslin, 1996; Miltiadis et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2015; Taylor & McGraw, 2006; Wolsey et al., 2011). However, there has been a shortage in building off of the Human Resource Management sport-based literature in continuing it within a Human Resource Development perspective in sport. In recent years within the field of sport management, a limited number of scholars have started to explore the intricacies of HRD and its role within sport (Hosainpour & Ghorbani Paji, 2017; Miryousefi et al., 2021; Schuetz et al., 2021; Svensson et al., 2021). Yet, even as HRD practices can contribute to positive employee

development, which in turn contributes to improving sport organizational performance, there remains a dearth in the literature pertaining to HRD in sport and the interactional influence between HRD and organizational politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement.

Human Resource Development practices offer a foundation for an emerging research area that can create innovative management strategies for sport organizations (Svensson et al., 2021). Human Resource Development can be a mechanism for organizations in shaping the individual and group values and beliefs through learning-related activities to support desired performance (Wang et al., 2017). In relation to HRD, the concept of employee growth has become an important consideration for the management of sport organizations (Kim et al., 2019), particularly within improving sport organizational performance. This dissertation is expected to further the understanding of how fundamental workplace competencies effect employee development, performance, and decision-making in the sport industry. This dissertation utilizes an in-depth qualitative examination of the lived experiences of employees in intercollegiate athletics departments. To do so, the researcher embedded himself into a normally restrictive environment (i.e., intercollegiate sport organizations), which offered unique data regarding the intersection of organizational politics, job design and crafting, and employee job engagement in the sport workplace.

Furthermore, this dissertation explored how the HRD framework can be applied within the college sport industry and to examine its influence on employee and organizational performance. This study gathered unique and normally restricted data from the often-closed world of sport organizations. In doing so, this study enabled many practical implications, such as the beginning of a training program for how HRD practices and strategies could be incorporated successfully in the sport industry. Another potential advancement of this study is the discovery

of methods to better support employees in the workplace. This process is meaningful as it addresses the elevated quantities of staff burnout and stress found in sport (Svensson et al., 2021); thus, this dissertation's analysis of HRD practices and organizational functionality via the lived experiences of employees greatly assists in those efforts. The results of this project included providing a better understanding for improved employee growth, organization performance, and a better understanding of HRD's potential for transforming sport organizations. The findings of this dissertation can assist sport organizations and managers that desire to proactively observe and contribute to the re-shaping of the work environment to provide their sport organization with a competitive advantage. Additionally, this dissertation supports academic sport management programs as they prepare future sport employees (e.g., students) for working in the sport industry.

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to apply the HRD paradigm to advance the literature pertaining to sport employees' and organizations' growth and development to understand how HRD develops within sport organizations and the interactional process HRD has with organizational politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement. In order to focus the qualitative research efforts, to investigate the phenomenon of interest, and to address some of the obvious gaps within the academic sport management literature, this paper aimed to answer six research questions. Thus, the following research questions guided the inquiry:

- Q1 What is meant by HRD in the context of the modern sport organization?
- Q2 To what extent can HRD be interpreted and applied by sport organizations in order to create innovative management strategies?
- Q3 What is the environment of the interactions between the variables (e.g., organization politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement) that are influencing HRD practices in sport organizations?

- Q4 How can the interaction between the variables (e.g., organization politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement) be strengthened in order to increase the probability of sport organizations to utilize HRD as an organizational mechanism?
- Q5 What are the features underlying the HRD strategies of sport organizations?
- Q6 What is the role and perspective of HRD in sport organization and do the variables (e.g., organization politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement) support the need and development of a HRD as a strategy in sport?

In summation, the HRD paradigm is an organizational behavior-based approach that can be applied to observe the development of individuals, departments, and organizations within sport. Furthermore, HRD develops as organizations place more focus on continued growth. Human Resource Development is the cultivation of an organization's employees (Swanson et al., 2001), thus offering their workforce with newfound skills and knowledge that can enhance the workplace experience. To date, sport management researchers have noted the importance of human resources within the sport workplace (Chelladurai & Kerwin, 2018; Cuskelly et al., 2006; Dixon et al., 2008; Doherty, 1998; Goslin, 1996; Miltiadis et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2015; Taylor & McGraw, 2006; Wolsey et al., 2011), but have yet to establish how HRD develops and is integrated within and across sport organizations. The purpose of this research was to apply the HRD paradigm to the growth and continued development of employees and organizations in the sport industry, specifically employees and athletics departments at the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I level. The current research intends to fulfill a dearth in the sport management literature relating to human resources and further advance the knowledge of HRD processes that transpire in intercollegiate athletics.

Definition of Terms

The following are definitions that are referenced throughout this dissertation:

Human Resource Development – an integrated process that utilizes training, organization, and career development efforts to continuously increase individual, group, and organizational effectiveness (Swanson et al., 2001).

Organizational Politics – the activities taken within organizations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty or dissensus about choices (Pfeffer, 1981).

Political Skill – the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives (Ahearn et al., 2004).

Job Design – the process of establishing employees' roles and responsibilities and the systems and procedures that they should use or follow (Oldham & Fried, 2016).

Job Crafting – the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Job Engagement – a multi-dimensional motivational concept reflecting the simultaneous investment of an individual's physical, cognitive, and emotional energy in active, full work performance (Rich et al., 2010).

Phenomenology – the study of phenomena as they manifest in our experience, of the way we perceive and understand phenomena, and of the meaning phenomena have in our subjective experience (Neubauer et al., 2019).

Trustworthiness – the rigor of a study that indicates to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Shenton, 2004).

Semi-structured Interviews – an interview method that involves using guiding questions that are supplemented by follow-up and probing questions that are dependent on the interviewee's responses (Kallio et al., 2016).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Resource Development Theory

While the purpose of Human Resource Management literature centers on improving the efficiency of employees, the Human Resource Development (HRD) paradigm focuses on the growth and development of not only employees, but the entirety of the organization (Werner, 2014). In contrast to the process-based nature of Human Resource Management practices, HRD is a series of activities that support behavioral change and learning opportunities for employees (Haslinda, 2009). The purpose of HRD activities is to develop employee skills and performance to the current and future demands of the organization. HRD as the amalgamated usage of training, organization, and career development efforts advances individual, group, and organizational effectiveness (Hamlin & Stewart, 2011). Human Resource Development also incorporates developing fundamental employee competencies, which enable individuals in organizations to perform existing and potential job tasks through planned HRD learning activities. Human Resource Development originated within employee training and development; however, it has since expanded into an organizational strategic application that provides reasonable, ethical, and innovative practices (McGuire, 2014; Sheehan et al., 2014). Harbison and Myers (1964) provide a framework for understanding how HRD acts as an integral part of human resources by defining it as the following:

The process of increasing the knowledge, the skills, and the capacities of all the people in a society. In economic terms, it could be described as the accumulation of human capital

and its effective investment in the development of an economy. In political terms, human resource development prepares people for adult participation in political processes, particularly as citizens in a democracy. From the social and cultural points of view, the development of human resources helps people to lead fuller and richer lives, less bound by tradition. In short, the processes of human resource development unlock the door to modernization (p. 95).

Thus, HRD flourishes as a central area of organizational behavior research and practice as it encompasses the economic, political, social, and cultural facets of an organization. The following sections will highlight the historical context and evolution of HRD literature, the dimensions of HRD, and the relationships existing between HRD, innovation management, employee competencies, and organization performance.

Historical Context of Human Resource Development

Human Resource Development as a subfield of human resources scholarship has faced a challenging past trying to define itself (Lee, 2001, 2014; Wang, 2018; Werner, 2014). While there have been many efforts to define Human Resource Development (e.g., Abdullah, 2009; Hamlin & Stewart, 2011; Simonds & Pederson, 2006), a consensus has yet to emerge. In fact, there has been disagreements among prominent HRD scholars about whether or not a single definition should be the goal or if several disputing definitions should all be recognized (Lee, 2001). As such, Lee (2001) argued that “although at times it is necessary to define HRD for political reasons, there is a strong case that HRD should not be defined on philosophical, theoretical and practical grounds” (p. 327). Thus, the historical context behind HRD and the process of a unified definition has been one of constant uncertainty and fluctuation. However, researchers have started to accept the notion that HRD scholarship is dynamic in nature, thus the

definition will continue to evolve to reflect the contemporary practices of society, organizations, and employees (McLean & Jiantreerangkoo, 2020; Wang, 2018; Wang et al., 2017). Still, to truly understand the HRD construct, it is important to be able to comprehend the evolution of HRD literature over the past century.

Within the United States, the late 1800s is recognized as the motivating influence behind the initial conceptualization of HRD (Haslinda, 2009). As automobile production processes began to shape workplace environments, there was a newfound mindset based on maximizing the competencies of employees. Furthermore, the evolution of the organizational assembly line in the early 1900s provided a notable contribution to organizational structures, employee job design, and the management practices that are still present in organizational functions of today (Haslinda, 2009). By the 1930s, organizational development surfaced as one of the first recognized theories within human resources literature. As the beliefs that originally formed organizational development literature began to advance, scholars became more focused on the workplace opportunities and the training that employees received (Haslinda, 2009; Lynham et al., 2004; Stewart & Sambrook, 2012). With the expansion of organization development literature, HRD was theorized as it too draws from an abundant number of disciplines to form its theory base (Lynham et al., 2004). Harbison and Myers (1964) are recognized as the originators of the term HRD and initially defined HRD as “the process of increasing the knowledge, the skills, and the capacities of all the people in a society” (Chalofsky, 1992, p. 355). Thus, the early HRD researchers in the 1960s and 1970s focused on the aspects that caused them to deviate from organizational development, which were the organizational practices and behaviors that contributed to individual growth and advancement.

The subsequent descriptions of Human Resource Development proposed by HRD scholars (e.g., Bell, 1977; Nadler, 1974; Nadler & Nadler, 1970) suggested that the primary concentration of HRD is the learning methods of employees (e.g., individuals) in organizations. Nadler and Nadler's (1970) definition of HRD, "a series of organized activities conducted within a specific time and designed to produce behavioral change" (p. 3), accentuated the individual learning characteristics. However, the mindsets of researchers in the 1980s and 1990s also progressed into one that considered HRD to not only be an individual process, but also one that should be based on organizational learning (Abdullah, 2009). In the 1900s, leadership training (Smith, 1990) and organizational management strategies (Garavan, 1991) were added as foundational pieces to HRD literature and application.

The driving force behind organizational development's rise ahead of individual learning was Swanson (1995) when he defined HRD as "a process of developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance" (p. 208). As one can tell, the intellectual interest in HRD constantly advances from dated ideas to innovative promising ones due to the fluctuating challenges, opportunities, and trends confronting the state of society, employees, and organizations at that period of time (Wang, 2018; Wang et al., 2017). Continuing into the 2000s, researchers (e.g., Haslinda, 2009; Swanson et al., 2001) determined that increasing individual and organizational performance is truly the primary purpose of HRD. Within the added performance paradigm of HRD, the strategic functionality of HRD developed and thus provided an approach for organizations to increase the value, growth, and performance of their employees (Khan et al., 2012; McGuire, 2014). Furthermore, performance-based researchers have backed

the notion that the alignment of organizational goals with the performance of individuals, groups, and entire organizations is the core result of HRD (Swanson, 1995; Swanson et al., 2001).

Traditionally, the development of HRD started solely within instructional design, then progressed into trainings, then to a narrower approach of employee development, and then to the present view of HRD, which includes a holistic practice that encompasses organizational learning and development as well as individual learning (Jacobs, 2000; Mehralian et al., 2020). Recent HRD literature (Mehralian et al., 2020; Potnuru & Sahoo, 2016; Potnuru et al., in press; Richman, 2015; Seo et al., 2019; Turner & Baker, 2018) has again shifted to now applying HRD as an innovative management strategy within organizations. When organization management effectively implements HRD strategies, employee expertise and organizational productivity is enhanced (Potnuru & Sahoo, 2016; Potnuru et al., in press). Furthermore, as organizations successfully utilize innovation management through HRD practices, the organization, in turn, develops a positive competitive advantage in their respective markets (Potnuru & Sahoo, 2016; Potnuru et al., in press; Sheehan et al., 2014). Sheehan et al. (2014) also suggested that organizations can create and retain competitive advantages by leveraging the proficiency of HRD practices to offer a variety of developmental and change-orientated interventions to increase the skills of both managers and employees.

The Dimensionality of Human Resource Development

Organizations utilize an array of Human Resource Development practices (e.g., human resource training, recognition, performance appraisal, and career development; Khan et al., 2012), as important strategic tools to stimulate positive behaviors among their employee base (Chen et al., 2020; McGuire, 2014). These strategies and trainings have been regarded as the foundation of organizational HRD application (McGuire, 2014) by allowing organizations to

positively influence their employees' knowledge, skills, and capabilities, which in turn increases individual and organizational efficiency and performance (Potnuru et al., in press). However, as the literature on HRD evolved, strategic Human Resource Management scholars acknowledged that there was a lack of common understanding on the various forms of HRD (Sung & Choi, 2014). The primary reason for this lack of understanding was due to the mixed outcomes of preceding research encompassing the relationship between HRD and organizational performance. Generally, it was evident that there was a need for an agreement within the Human Resource Management literature on the HRD construct and its conceptualization and operationalization.

Human Resource Development cannot be defined by a single notion or training practice as it is fundamentally a multifaceted construct (Tharenou et al., 2007). Thus, there was a call to investigate and compare the multidimensional nature of HRD to the wide-ranging strategic approaches of HRD to form a unified understanding. In turn, Sung and Choi (2014) recommended a method that classifies HRD into four independent dimensions based on two defining features: (a) research viewpoints (e.g., quantitative and qualitative) and (b) managerial and employee perspectives. Within these two defining features of HRD, the four subsequent dimensions were (a) resource investment in HRD (quantitative dimension focusing on management), which is regarded as the amount of actual monetary or other forms of expenditure for HRD; (b) employee exposure to HRD (quantitative dimension focusing on employees), which is regarded as the amount employees are exposed to training and development activities; (c) management support for HRD (qualitative dimension focusing on management), which is regarded as an organization's commitment to and support of HRD; and (d) perceived benefits of HRD (qualitative dimension focusing on employees), which is regarded as the extent employees

perceive HRD activities as task relevant and beneficial (Sung & Choi, 2014). The four HRD dimensions have shown to clearly signify the relationship between HRD employee competencies and organizational performance (Judge et al., 2017; Potnuru & Sahoo, 2016; Potnuru et al., in press; Sung & Choi, 2014).

Sung and Choi (2014) determined that to effectively conceptualize HRD, it must first be viewed in either a quantitative or qualitative position. Organizations spend an extensive number of resources and capital for the training and development of their employees (Chen et al., 2020; Sung & Choi, 2014). Thus, the measurable (e.g., quantitative) approach of HRD concentrates on the calculable elements, such as training costs, number of trainings, and the percentage of employees trained (Nguyen & Truong, 2011). Additionally, this quantitative approach measures the success of HRD through indicators involving training attendance, expenditures, and the amount of HRD organization and employee utilization (Nguyen & Truong, 2011). Human Resource Development programs are constructed and applied within an organization to enhance numerous employee competencies with the eventual goal of employees improving their own job tasks efficiency and meeting the performance expectations set forth by the organization (Chen et al., 2020). With the aforementioned wide array of HRD strategies, employees who are offered HRD programs and partake in them are more likely to improve their various job tasks and responsibilities (Judge et al., 2017). As organizations increase their number of available HRD practices, it also signifies the importance that an organization places on continual innovative management strategies.

In contrast to the quantitative perspective of HRD is the qualitative dimension that focuses more on employee growth and development, the social aspects for developing employees, the perceived benefits of HRD training, and an organization's long-term outlook on

HRD implementation (Bartlett, 2001; Potnuru et al., in press). This qualitative approach to HRD effectiveness is based on the personal support of HRD by management or on employees' engagement and fulfillment with the HRD training (Potnuru et al., in press). This perspective emphasizes that employees give humanlike qualities to their organization and construct a sense of commitment to fulfilling responsibilities for their organizations (Glaveli & Karassavidou, 2011), essentially stating that through HRD, employees progress their organizational relationship toward one of trust, which in turn produces positive and wanted employee attitudes (e.g., innovative mindsets, organizational commitment, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities; Judge et al., 2017; Potnuru et al., in press; Sung & Choi, 2014). Furthermore, in a qualitative consideration, employees trained under HRD practices can "promote employee outcomes to the extent that employees believe that management support for HRD is genuine and HRD activities are beneficial for them" (Sung & Choi, 2014, p. 856). Sung and Choi (2014) confirmed that the qualitative dimensions of HRD "unleash" the achievable dimensions of quantitative HRD through employee commitment and proficiency by symbolizing the advantages of the quantitative dimensions (p. 856).

The remaining two of the four dimensions of Human Resource Development also include either a managerial perspective (Hughes, 2018; Watson & Maxwell, 2007) or an employee perspective (Bartlett, 2001; Shuck et al., 2011; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). The managerial perspective of HRD focuses on the characteristics of HRD as implemented by organizational management (Sung & Choi, 2014), as human resource activities and training "have always been a part of a manager's job" (Papalexandris & Panayotopoulou, 2005, p. 282). While managers regularly support an organizational environment that encourages HRD immersion, manager perspectives are mostly motivated by the perceived benefit that their subordinates develop from

participating in HRD activities (Watson & Maxwell, 2007). A subordinate's motivation for absorbing HRD practices can be increased by managerial support, which in turn emphasizes to the employee that managers care about their development. In addition, when managers support HRD, it also stimulates an employee's trust that the organization values their developmental efforts (Watson & Maxwell, 2007).

Comparably, the employee perspective is based on the employee's evaluation of HRD through their own personal experiences (Shuck et al., 2011). Employees who positively evaluate HRD as germane, and therefore advantageous, are more passionate in utilizing the HRD training programs that are offered. In addition, employees that are supported by genuine managers and high-quality HRD activities, view developmental efforts led by the organization as meaningful and not routine actions (Chen et al., 2020; Shuck et al., 2011). Therefore, in order for organizations to achieve the intended benefits of HRD, employees should perceive an authentic care for growth from their organization's management and then need to "buy-in" on the value of the HRD programs that are established (Hughes, 2018; Potnuru et al., in press; Shuck et al., 2011; Sung & Choi, 2014).

Human Resource Development Through Creativity and Innovation

As organizations face an increase in the complexity, span, and change of pace that engulfs their everyday practices, there has been more pressure than ever on organizations to be more creative and innovative in the workplace (Joo et al., 2013; Matsuo, 2020). Furthermore, challenging organizational environments and industries, such as intercollegiate and professional sport, are appealing conditions for creativity and innovation practices to be developed (Hoeber et al., 2015; Hoeber & Hoeber, 2012; Paek et al., 2020). Creativity and innovation are seen as

fundamental components of organizations that are essential to creating and sustaining competitive organizational advantages and survival (Sheehan et al., 2014; Williams & Yang, 1999). Within the bounds of this dissertation, creativity is defined as “the process of generating original ideas appropriate for the intended purpose and innovation as the implementation or exploitation of creative ideas” (Amabile, 1988, p. 126). While innovation is defined as “the implementation of new organizational concepts that serve as an indicator for the intrafirm diffusion of different organizational practices” (Armbruster et al., 2008, p. 646).

For organizations to be innovative in dynamic environments, creative organizational practices such as HRD are required (Joo et al., 2013; Loewenberger, 2013; Waight, 2005) as creativity is “the seed of innovation” (Amabile et al., 1996, p. 1155) and remains important throughout the innovation process. Additionally, it has been suggested that HRD “as a discipline and a profession seeks to identify, support, and lead the creative revolutions of the 21st century workforce and workplace.” (Loewenberger, 2013, p. 423). Human Resource Development is becoming highly regarded as an essential strategic approach to encountering organizational transformation and change (Nolan & Garavan, 2019; Potnuru et al., in press; Sheehan et al., 2014) as it is able to stimulate, support, and sustain creativity and innovation.

The previous literature of Loewenberger (2013) and Sheehan et al. (2014) focused on how organizations can create innovation management strategies has suggested plenty of difficulties. One of those potential difficulties resides in individuals lacking the potential for creative idea generation. This is not an uncommon aspect within organizational literature, as most individuals need an innovative organizational climate to spawn creativity.

Organizational climates can develop a sense of innovativeness through HRD practices such as trainings and rewards as it emphasizes that the organization values innovation which, in

turn, solidifies a climate for innovation (Sheehan et al., 2014). Furthermore, HRD plays a central role in promoting innovation through building a creative organizational environment where new ideas are given a chance to grow. However, the effective utilization of new ideas should overcome the social and organizational obstacles in the work environment; but this is a difficulty that HRD is able to successfully address (Loewenberger, 2013).

Innovation research has previously focused on the individual level, turning later to team and organizational levels; a multi-level approach that has modeled that of HRD research (Walker & Derbyshire, 2020). The utilization of HRD practices can ultimately turn out to be more rewarding for managers and human resource professionals as HRD supports more creative and innovative thinking in comparison to managing trainings center on the task-orientation of routine jobs (Loewenberger, 2013). This is due not only because these HRD practices emphasize the value of successful human capital management, but also because HRD constructs a setting where creative abilities prosper, which in turn can lead to greater employee engagement, motivation, and performance (Loewenberger, 2013; Schramm, 2007).

The aforementioned literature on creativity (e.g., Hoeber et al., 2015; Hoeber & Hoeber, 2012; Joo et al., 2013; Loewenberger, 2013; Schramm, 2007; Waight, 2005; Walker & Derbyshire, 2020) implies that all individuals in an organizational possess the potential to be creative regardless of their role, level, and function. Also, as discussed earlier, creativity and innovation are multifaceted dynamic concepts that accentuate the interaction of individual, group, and organizational characteristics (Amabile, 1988; Amabile et al., 1996). However, as these academic works have shown, the problem that organizations encounter consists of how to develop the potential of their workforce (e.g., employees) who are naturally less creative so that the untapped potential of the entire workforce can be unleashed (Loewenberger, 2013).

This problem can be addressed through the integration of HRD with creativity and innovation. As Waight (2005) stated, “creativity and HRD are connected through performance-related variables such as learning, motivation, goal setting, leadership, and job characteristics.” (p. 156). Employee and organizational creativity are not something that occurs in a vacuum. Thus, workplace creativity and innovation are essential for successful HRD application, as HRD can effectively stimulate capability and commitment across multiple levels of the organizational system (Joo et al., 2013; Matsuo, 2020; Walker & Derbyshire, 2020). The application of creative practices and techniques in HRD, specifically with employee training, can benefit both the organization and the employee in that it enhances the workplace and personal endeavors of those who pursue the development (Walker & Derbyshire, 2020).

Human Resource Development on Employee Competencies and Organizational Effectiveness

The role of HRD practices has become an important area of research within employee and organizational performance as it has been shown to structure the overall competencies of the employee, which in turn shape organizational effectiveness (Kareem, 2019; Potnuru & Sahoo, 2016; Potnuru et al., in press). Kareem (2019) noted that “the integrated use of HRD practices such as training and development, organizational development, talent development, and career development play a key role in creating new competencies, capabilities, and attitudes that influence an employee’s performance to achieve organizational goals” (p. 30). Employee competencies are the collection of an individual’s knowledge, traits, abilities, and skills that combine into how an employee performs their job (Ledford, 1995). Employee competencies are intangible resources that vary from individual to individual within an organization, thus competencies are difficult to impersonate and simply replicate (Malik et al., 2019). Furthermore,

employee competencies serve a valuable purpose for both the employee and the organization and are resources that should be produced and retained for elevated performance (Wuim-Pam, 2014). Employee competencies are also resources that when utilized effectively can support an organization in maintaining and enhancing its competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness (Diaz-Fernandez et al., 2009; Kareem, 2019).

Employees who participate in HRD practices can absorb newly-developed competencies from the trainings into their day-to-day work as well as further establish the abilities that are needed for their job tasks (Otoo & Mishra, 2018; Potnuru & Sahoo, 2016; Potnuru et al., in press; Turner & Baker, 2018). Human Resource Development trainings directly benefit employees by improving their employee competencies such as creative potential, emotional intelligence, contextual knowledge, technological skills, self-management skills, and organizational adaptation (Otoo, 2019; Otoo & Mishra, 2018; Torraco & Lundgren, 2020). As noted, effective HRD implementation through trainings and development activities within an organization can have a beneficial influence on the skills and performance of employees, but only if an organization's environment supports the sharing and use of newfound knowledge between employees (Otoo & Mishra, 2018; Potnuru & Sahoo, 2016; Salas et al., 2009). Therefore, organizations that encourage employees to participate in developmental activities (e.g., HRD) can significantly enhance an employee's capacity to obtain and retain suitable workplace knowledge that increases employee competencies and, in turn, organizational performance (Sung & Choi, 2014).

Application of Human Resource Development in Sport

Within the field of sport management, academics have been able to successfully establish the importance of Human Resource Management to the sport industry (Chelladurai & Kerwin,

2018; Cuskelly et al., 2006; Dixon et al., 2008; Doherty, 1998; Goslin, 1996; Miltiadis et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2015; Taylor & McGraw, 2006; Wolsey et al., 2011). For example, Dixon et al. (2008) conducted a case study centered on Human Resource Management to evaluate the relationship of Human Resource Management systems on the effectiveness of non-profit sports organizations. The Dixon et al. (2008) study confirmed a positive relationship to exist between effective Human Resource Management practices and organizational competitive advantages for sport organizations. Additionally, these previously mentioned scholars have put forth that successful Human Resource Management applications lead to improvements in factors such as organizational citizenship behaviors (Miltiadis et al., 2016), organizational growth (Taylor & McGraw, 2006), sport volunteer retention (Cuskelly et al., 2006), and suitable managing practices (Taylor et al., 2015). The scholarly works above serve as the foundational pillars of Human Resource Management in the sport management literature; however, these studies adhered to the overall theoretical perspective of Human Resource Management and not HRD. As aforementioned, Human Resource Management contrasts with HRD in a sense where Human Resource Management is supplementary to the management of human resources for an organization (e.g., mostly formal, routine, and administrative processes), whereas HRD is interconnected to the development of employees (e.g., mostly informal, and continuous processes; Haslinda, 2009). Thus, while Human Resource Management has an extensive history of application in the broader sport management literature, the application of HRD in sport contexts has been minimal.

An inaugural attempt at incorporating HRD in sport management literature was conducted by Hosainpour and Ghorbani Paji (2017). The study investigated the effect of HRD on organizational effectiveness through the mediating function of mutual employee trust and job

satisfaction at a youth sport organization in Iran. Hosainpour and Ghorbani Paji (2017) found that HRD processes (e.g., staff training, competency development, information sharing, employee empowerment) had a positive impact on organizational effectiveness. Additionally, by establishing suitable HRD strategies, the youth sport organization was able to improve the mutual trust and job satisfaction of employees, which enabled the youth sport organization to achieve their organizational goals. An ensuing effort at incorporating HRD into the sport management literature was a study based on good governance indicators through HRD by Miryousefi et al. (2021). The study investigated the role of good governance indicators in explaining the HRD processes of youth and sport offices in Iran. Miryousefi et al. (2021) found that six dimensions of good governance (conclusion, effectiveness of roles and tasks, promotion of values, transparency, capacity building, and accountability) had a significant impact on the HRD of youth and sport offices.

Human Resource Development has begun to be examined in sport organizations based within the United States. Originally, Svensson et al. (2021) aimed at determining the antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement in sport for development organizations within an HRD framework. The findings for the Svensson et al. (2021) study indicated that employee engagement through the lens of HRD provided a meaningful framework for understanding the work experiences of sport employees. Moreover, Schuetz et al. (2021) built off the findings of Svensson et al. (2021) by constructing a model that is grounded in the HRD paradigm to examine the impact of sport employee pride and path-goal leadership on job engagement, and then flourishing. The HRD framework and model hypothesized by Schuetz et al. (2021) indicated that improved employee functioning contributes to greater organizational performance for sport organizations (e.g., intercollegiate athletic departments). The findings of Schuetz et al.

(2021) added to the HRD literature in sport by focusing on employees' workplace experiences and generating pathways to improved job engagement and highlighting the ensuing impact on sport employees' ability to flourish. Both Svensson et al. (2021) and Schuetz et al. (2021) were able to extend the HRD literature in sport and validate the effect HRD has on positive performance outcomes in American sport organizations; however, HRD remains an understudied paradigm in sport management.

Organizational Politics

The prevalence of organizational politics defines a need for HRD programs to minimize dysfunctional politics (Jain, 2011). Organizational politics has long served as an additional focus of social observation and theoretical analysis in organizational behavior research. The literature on organizational environments has come to an understanding that organizations continuously revolve around politics (Hochwarter, 2012; Mintzberg, 1983). Organizational politics is often considered as the presence of multiple competing interests within an organization's environment and the influences of diverse agents and organizational practices recognized in an effort to manage them (Ferris et al., 1989). Furthermore, Pfeffer (1981) described organizational politics as "the activities taken within organizations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty or dissensus about choices" (p. 7). From a political perspective, organizations are coalitions of individuals and units where decisions are made concerning the allocation of scarce resources through negotiation among contributors (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The existence of politics within organizations is "simply a fact of life" (Ferris et al., 1989, p. 143), thus inferring that organizational human resources decision-making and resource distribution is affected by competing political behaviors and agendas (Ferris & Judge, 1991). Politics remain as an essential

component of organizational life because organizations are a combination of diverse individual interests that need to be aligned for enhanced organization performance (Ferris et al., 2019).

Throughout the years, conflicting perceptions on the state of organizational politics have materialized. Several researchers have stated that organizational politics is just an intense social phenomenon (Bies & Tripp, 1995; Pfeffer, 1992), while others have labeled it as a workplace phenomenon that characterizes an organization's political environment (Cropanzano et al., 1995; Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). Furthermore, additional researchers have also argued that organizational politics is simply a distasteful attempt of employees to manipulate organizational benefits in the effort to achieve their own personal benefits (Beehr & Gilmore, 1995; Ferris et al., 2000). However, recent literature (e.g., Ferris et al., 2019; Landells & Albrecht, 2017) has acknowledged that organizational politics encompasses all the preceding beliefs, and therefore combines these perspectives into a general viewpoint that organizational politics are social influences that are focused on providing rewards that will help enhance or shield the self-interests of the actor, subgroup, or organization (Ferris et al., 2019). Within organizational politics, research scholars have outlined two primary areas of concentration: (a) the perception and utilization of organizational politics, and (b) the level of the organization in which it exists and operates.

Perceptions of Organizational Politics

Due to organizational politics frequently producing strong emotions in either a positive or negative manner, organizational politics has been a primary topic of research in the field of organizational sciences. Within the negative lens of research, organizational politics has been described as the “activities that are illegitimate, self-serving, and often harmful to the organization or its members” (Rosen et al., 2009, p. 203). As such, the organizational behavior

research on politics in this approach has considered it as a predominantly self-centered, self-serving, and deceptive negative construct (Ferris & Treadway, 2012). For politics to occur within an organization, competition must exist between actors, consequently indicating that political behavior is naturally a self-centered action (i.e., exploiting others; Burns, 1961). Mintzberg (1983) as well as Mintzberg and Waters (1985) initially began this course of inquiry as he observed organizational politics as characteristically disruptive and dishonest in nature but remaining as a facet of organizational life that must be traversed by employees (Mintzberg, 1983). The negative organizational politics perception is that an organization's performance is affected in a negative way due to employee behaviors such as backstabbing, self-promotion, and ingratiation (Cacciattolo, 2015; Ferris et al., 2002; Rosen et al., 2009). Therefore, political organizational settings can lead to employees feeling susceptible by the ambiguous nature and the self-interest engagements of other individuals in the organization (Cacciattolo, 2015; Harris et al., 2009).

However, other organizational researchers have viewed politics in a more positive manner (e.g., Cacciattolo, 2015; Ellen, 2014; Vredenburg & Shea-VanFossen, 2010), maintaining that politics is an instrument in which organizational integrity can be restored, negative behavior evaded, and a basis for positive change (Ellen, 2014). Organizational politics is much more than manipulation, backstabbing, and hidden individual agendas. Organizational politics can be purposeful and beneficial for all members of an organizations, not just for the few who are politically driven and capable (Vredenburg & Shea-VanFossen, 2010). Positive organizational politics can provide a foundation for advantageous opportunities, especially when individuals understand how to utilize their political skills. Previous scholars have shown that managers who understand an organization's politics are able to successfully maintain their

workplace environments, even when that environment is under stress (Cacciattolo, 2015). Furthermore, individuals who can positively navigate an organization's politics have the ability to provide feelings of reassurance, conviction, and sincerity from others in the workplace (Vredenburg & Shea-VanFossen, 2010). Positive political organizational behavior can also be valuable to attaining improved organizational equality as long as it functions within an organization's vision and goals, thus promoting teamwork, confidence, and enhanced ethics throughout (Cacciattolo, 2015).

More recently, scholars have expanded the belief of organizational politics to a more impartial and nonaligned perspective (e.g., Ferris et al., 2019; Ferris & Hochwarter, 2011; Landells & Albrecht, 2017), contesting that politics are an essential part of organizations, and one that is essential to organizational performance and survival (Ferris et al., 2019). Furthermore, the organizational politics construct is neutral due to the management strategies of organizations fluctuating so significantly from one to the next (Ferris et al., 2019). This neutral approach to organizational politics focuses on "the subjective evaluations and interpretations of meaning, rather than the view that meanings are inherent, objective properties of situations" (Ferris et al., 1994, p. 4). Organizational actors want to elicit their own desired outcomes; therefore, these individuals manage situations in a way that is favorable to the situational conditions (Ferris et al., 2019; Landells & Albrecht, 2017). Thus, the neutral understanding of organizational politics is constructed on the idea that an individual inherently has the power to control his or her own goals, environment, actions, and fate (Ferris et al., 2019).

Levels of Organizational Politics

Organizational politics have long been recognized to function at different levels within organizations (Buchanan, 2008; Ferris et al., 1989, 2019; Hochwarter et al., 2020; Kacmar &

Baron, 1999). Previous research initially proposed that organizational politics occurs and develops at the individual activity (Farrell & Peterson, 1982). Political dynamics regularly begin with an individual actor and their political environment understandings and skills (Farrell & Peterson, 1982). However, researchers (e.g., Ferris et al., 1989; Lucas, 1987) began to argue that organizational subgroups instead of individual actors should be the principal component for organizational politics analysis, thereby insinuating that these individual understandings and skills progress into group-level behaviors and eventually into organizational-level actions, which creates two distinct and significant levels of examination. This mentality caused subsequent researchers (Buchanan, 2008; Hochwarter et al., 2020) to note that organizational politics can be roughly categorized into either a micro-perspective (e.g., individual, subgroup, group) or macro-perspective (e.g., organizational). The micro-perspective of organizational politics centers on the individual level by assessing the actions, responses, skills, and interpersonal dynamics associated with one's political environment (Buchanan, 2008). The micro-perspective has been shown to be essential to understanding organizational politics as the business settings of organizations have succumbed to political ideals (e.g., distorted organizational structures, prompt organizational transformations, the flattening of organizational hierarchies, increased significance placed on cooperation; Zanzi & O'Neill, 2001). Within the micro-perspective, individuals must be conscious of an organization's political environment and either develop or have an elevated level of political skill to negotiate and reconcile the challenging requests of different organizational constituencies (e.g., subgroups; Kacmar & Baron, 1999; Zanzi & O'Neill, 2001).

As such, researchers have progressively begun to concentrate the micro-perspective organizational politics literature on the political behavior in managerial and leadership positions (Maslyn et al., 2017). Previous researchers have claimed that the presence of politics is rather

standard in managerial roles due to the nature of managerial work (Madison et al., 1980). The political nature of managerial work is grounded in the numerous roles (e.g., spokesperson, leader, figurehead, liaison, negotiator) that managers must utilize to be effective in the workplace (Madison et al., 1980). Thus, to ensure individual and organizational performance, a leader should engage and excel in political behavior as it is considerably influential in decreasing organizational uncertainty and supports crafting a sense of shared meaning and cohesion within individuals in the workplace (Buchanan, 2008). Furthermore, within an individual's own performance, the successful use of political behavior in an organization has shown to be a significant indicator between effective and ineffective managers, thus contributing to a sharp contrast between an individual's promotability and value (Ferris et al., 1994; Hochwarter et al., 2020; Luthans, 1988). Managers who are deemed more successful within organizations devote noticeably more time and energy on organizational networking behaviors and spend less time and energy focusing on common managerial responsibilities (e.g., planning, organizing, staffing; Ferris et al., 1994). Ewen et al. (2013) established that leader political behaviors are an antecedent to a leader's effectiveness, while Ewen et al. (2014) in addition to this found that a leader's political behavior was able to positively influence organizational effectiveness and subordinate satisfaction. Additionally, micro-levels of political engagement were discovered to contribute positively to an employee's career growth even if they had a non-managerial position (Liu et al., 2010). From a micro-perspective of organizational politics, researchers collectively and broadly suggest that one's ability to navigate politics is critical not only to fulfill their job responsibilities, but also in order to advance their standing within the organization (Ferris et al., 1994, 2019; Hochwarter et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2010).

In contrast, the less considered macro-perspective of organizational politics centers on the organizational level and explores the interaction between power and politics. The macro-level includes the different populations of organizations and multi-organizational environments or subdivisions (Buchanan, 2008; Hochwarter et al., 2020). The macro-perspective focuses on the structural factors of organizations that prompt them to function as political systems. Initially, researchers examining the political behaviors at the organizational level noted that the behaviors varied based on multiple political structuring systems: signification, legitimation, and dominance (Riley, 1983; Zahra, 1987). Thus, employees throughout an organizational hierarchy have conflicting feelings toward how organizational politics are viewed, received, and implemented. It is common throughout an organization for a subgroup to classify as a nonpolitical unit, while others need it to function effectively and subsist (Hochwarter et al., 2020; Zahra, 1987). The degree in which an organizational subunit is influenced by political behaviors is determined by the strategies applied by an organization and the political astuteness of the subgroup's employees (Kacmar & Baron, 1999). Within this macro-perspective, the dynamics that influence the level of political behavior in an organization's subgroup include subgroup ambiguity, employment size, collectiveness, and the organizational setting in which the subgroup works (Hochwarter et al., 2020; Kacmar & Baron, 1999).

Organizational policies and procedures are also included within the macro-perspective of organizational politics. Previous research (e.g., Kacmar & Baron, 1999; Madison et al., 1980) in this area has mainly focused on the presence of political forces within the human resources policies and procedures of organizations. Primarily, organizational political behavior is seen in the promotions and transfers of employees, the delegation of subgroup authority, reorganization changes, and subgroup or organization budget allocations (Madison et al., 1980). These decisions

should be characterized by the clear established policies and procedures set by an organization; however, it is when these decisions are made outside of the organizational framework that political behavior plays the predominate role in influencing them (Kacmar & Baron, 1999).

Impression Management

Impression management is regarded as one form of political behavior individuals use to obtain a desired outcome in an organizational environment. Goffman (1959) conceptualized the phenomenon of impression management in an effort to define the social interactions in which individuals become “actors” and thus “perform” accordingly depending upon the setting and the audience (Chen & Fang, 2008). Furthermore, within the organizational sciences, organizational behavior researchers have defined impression management in organizations as the behaviors that employees (e.g., actors) utilize to form how they are viewed by potential organizational targets (e.g., supervisors, coworkers, subordinates, and customers) in the workplace (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997; Fandt & Ferris, 1990). Broadly, the foundation of organizational impression management is based on the notion that employees consciously create a persona (e.g., workplace personality) to achieve their own personal agendas contingent on the situation. The persona that is consciously created encompasses an individual attempting to create either a new preferred appearance or continuing and defending an existing appearance (Bolino et al., 2008, 2016; Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997).

Furthermore, this process can allow for employees to intentionally pursue to develop a specific image that best fits the situation (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997). When employees aim to receive the acceptance from other authoritative and influential organizational actors, it becomes advantageous to cast the behavioral practices that will provide the most favorable responses (Bolino et al., 2016; Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997). Thus, impression management is usually

regarded as purposeful and goal-oriented behavior. Liden and Mitchell (1988) noted that impression management can be used for either short or long-term purposes. However, even though most impression management researchers have focused on the deliberate and strategic nature of impression management (e.g., Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997; Rosenfeldt et al., 1995), it can also occur through some individuals unconsciously through personality norms (Chen & Fang, 2008; Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 2013). For example, some individuals can have instinctive personality traits that reflect well on others (e.g., ambition, consideration, logicalness, loyalty, impartiality; Bolino et al., 2016; Chen & Fang, 2008) without being deliberate in nature.

Researchers have determined that individuals utilize one of the two opposing strategies within impression management: defensive and assertive (Bolino et al., 2016; Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997). Defensive strategies in an organizational context are used when individuals encounter and react to poor performance actions (e.g., excuses, apologies, self-deprecation; Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997). In contrast, assertive strategies are dynamically used to establish a particular reputation with a specific target audience and are not merely a reaction to situational demands (Liden & Mitchell, 1988). Within the scope of organization politics, assertive strategies have shown to contribute to individual performance, standing, and development (Chen & Fang, 2008).

Political Skill

The individuals who are best equipped to manage organizational and political environments are those who have political skill (Kacmar et al., 2013). Political skill is defined as “an interpersonal style construct that combines social perceptiveness or astuteness with the capacity to adjust one’s behavior to different and changing situational demands in a manner that inspires trust, confidence, and genuineness, and effectively influences and controls the responses

of others” (Ferris et al., 2002, p. 111). While political actions represent acceptable behaviors (e.g., organizational politics), the proficiencies needed to perform such actions are viewed as political skill (Treadway et al., 2014). Broadly, one’s political skill is a set of abilities that allows an individual to be effective in the workplace by productively managing and navigating their organization as a political environment (Perrewé et al., 2000; Pfeffer, 1992). Additionally, if organizations are the political arenas they have been described as (Mintzberg, 1983; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985), then political skill is essential to be successful in persisting and thriving in the organizational environment. Politically skilled individuals are able to present information to others, and while doing so are able to construct and communicate relevant and sometimes challenging qualities and information to others. Such individuals can do so by employing a genuine and convincing style, that is also unassuming, to achieve effective execution of situationally appropriate behaviors that they desire at that moment (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

The foundational research of politics in organizations has established that individuals behave politically when they implement the types of strategies and tactics to maneuver throughout the workplace (Ferris et al., 2005). Individuals who are regarded as having political skill recognize themselves and others in social interactions, and through this they show the capability and mental capacity to modify their own behavior to best fit their present situation (Ferris et al., 2007). Those who are politically skilled “combine social astuteness with the capacity to adjust their behavior to different and changing situational demands in a manner that appears to be sincere, inspires support and trust, and effectively influences and controls the responses of others” (Ferris et al., 2007, p. 291). Politically skilled individuals display an alluring sense of self-confidence and humility in a calming manner that sways how others observe that individual’s trustworthiness and competence (Treadway et al., 2014). Moreover, those with high

levels of political skill have the social competencies that let them understand and influence others in order to accomplish both organizational and personal goals (Ferris et al., 2005).

Ferris et al. (2005) identified four essential elements of political skill: interpersonal influence, networking ability, apparent sincerity, and social astuteness. Individuals who possess high levels of interpersonal influence have the capability to regulate their behaviors to the fluctuating environmental strains they are faced with to achieve the goal of producing desired reactions from others. Politically skilled individuals possess an inconspicuous and persuasive individual style due to the interpersonal influence component of political skill, which helps in employing a commanding influence on individuals around them (Ferris et al., 2005, 2007). The interpersonal influence facet symbolizes what Pfeffer (1992) suggested as “flexibility,” which encompasses modifying one’s behavior depending on the directed individual of influence to achieve one’s goals (Ferris et al., 2005).

Networking ability signifies the proficiency of developing “friendships and build strong beneficial alliances and coalitions” (Ferris et al., 2005, p. 129). Individuals with political skill are proficient at classifying and developing numerous wide-ranging connections within their own personal networks. Politically skilled individuals who ingeniously construct their networks as individuals in these personal networks are often seen as in control of resources that are valuable and needed for successful personal and organizational advances (Andrews et al., 2009; Ferris et al., 2005). Individuals with political skill have an elusively refined personality, thus developing relationships and constructing strong advantageous alliances easier than those without political skill. Also, individuals with higher networking ability can create and benefit from different organizational opportunities due to their proficient negotiation tactics and conflict management strategies (Ferris et al., 2005; Pfeffer, 1992).

Apparent sincerity is the aptitude to seem authentic, genuine, trustworthy, and sincere in order to circumvent the suspicion by others of an ulterior motive. Individuals high in apparent sincerity are, or at least seem to be, authentic and straightforward by the person being persuaded. Influence attempts in an organizational setting will be deemed as positive when individuals notice no ulterior motives by the actor performing the influence (Jones, 1990). Of the four dimensions of political skill, apparent sincerity best shows the potential for effective influence onto others (Ferris et al., 2005).

Social astuteness refers to the ability to “comprehend social interactions, and accurately interpret their behavior, as well as that of others, in social settings” (Ferris et al., 2005, p. 129). Individuals high in social astuteness comprehend social interactions strategically and can correctly construe their own behavior with the behaviors of others. They are strongly familiarized to various social settings and encounters, while having high self-awareness (Ferris et al., 2005). Additionally, social astuteness has been proven to be the clearest predictor of supervisor ratings and leader effectiveness (Ferris et al., 2005). The four dimensions of political skill, interpersonal influence, networking ability, apparent sincerity, and social astuteness, are not mutually exclusive to one another and are used concurrently, while existing as their own dynamics to encapsulate an individual’s political skill capabilities.

Political Skill in Sport

The construct of political skill has shown that when utilized effectively, it can enhance positive employee job competencies, career development, and organizational performance (Ahearn et al., 2004; Cullen et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2017). Therefore, the proficiency of sport supervisors to use their political skill in the effort to support employees’ human capital has the potential to be beneficial in forming a maintainable competitive advantage for sport

organizations (Kim et al., 2017). This consideration is meaningful as politically skilled leaders can support their own job and career success. Politically skilled leaders can also positively influence the career development of their subordinates, the human capital of organizations, and the forms of individual social and nonfinancial capital (Ferris et al., 2000). While political skill has been researched in sport mostly through coaching and recruiting (Kim et al., 2016; Magnusen & Kim, 2016; Treadway et al., 2014), future sport management research should focus on advancing the worth and application of political skill in sport to build sport organizations' aptitude to offer better services. This can be achieved through the increased usage of political skill with managerial sport employees. To date, the importance of leader political skill in sport has been highlighted through several ways (e.g., coaching, recruiting, student-athlete influence; Treadway et al., 2014). Successfully applying political skills in intercollegiate coaching has indicated which persuading strategies of political skill are most valuable in attracting high-level recruits (Magnusen et al., 2011; Treadway et al., 2014), as well as the ability to effectively maneuver through organizational politics and realize career achievements in the sport industry (Magnusen & Kim, 2016).

Human Resources Engagement

Human resources engagement is broadly described as a paradigm that represents the level of interest and devotion an employee feels toward their specific workplace and job responsibilities (Shuck et al., 2014). More specifically, human resource engagement has been defined as "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes" (Shuck & Wollard, 2010, p. 103). Engagement within human resources has developed into one of the more established theories within the management field (Albrecht, 2010; Saks, 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2014) and has also found pertinence within the

sport management literature (Allen & Bartle, 2014; Paek et al., 2020; Schuetz et al., 2021; Svensson et al., 2021). From the practitioner's standpoint, a growing number of organizations as well as sport organizations, consider the engagement levels of their employees to be a leading factor for achieving a competitive advantage and, thus, have recognized the ability of engagement to address demanding organizational tribulations such as how to increase workplace performance and productivity (Paek et al., 2020; Schuetz et al., 2021; Shuck et al., 2011; Svensson et al., 2021).

Previous academic works have consistently deemed engagement to be a unique concept that has its own theoretical framework (Saks, 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck et al., 2014; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Human resource engagement contains a sequence of functional and positive psychological states (e.g., cognitive, emotional, and behavioral), which do operate independently from existing constructs based within the engagement, even though many similarities exist. Broadly, human resource engagement encompasses the different forms of engagement (e.g., job engagement, work engagement, organizational engagement) to provide a wider view of engagement as a whole within the human resource behaviors within an organization and its workforce.

Shuck et al. (2017) helped characterize human resource engagement by stating that “engagement describes an active motivational state encapsulating the full working experience” (p. 958), which not only emphasizes one's intent to act purposefully, but also accentuates one's drive for engaging (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Schaufeli, 2014; Shuck et al., 2014). Engagement within human resources is supported as a personally driven concept, meaning individuals choose the degree of their engagement (Harter et al., 2002; Wagner & Harter, 2006). Grounded within previous engagement literature, Saks (2006) identified that

engagement originates in three distinct areas: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral (Harter et al., 2002; Kahn, 1990; Maslach et al., 2001). Shuck and Reio (2014) confirmed the work done by Saks (2006) and proposed that all three facets (e.g., cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) work collectively to form one's state of engagement.

Moving forward in the literature review and throughout this dissertation, engagement and human resource engagement will be discussed through the premise of job engagement. Each of the three subdomains of engagement will be reviewed more in-depth in the subsequent section based on the conceptualization of engagement (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2006) in one's job. As previously mentioned, even though human resource engagement is sustained in the literature as a singular construct, the similarities with job engagement are prevalent as it exists as an extension of human resource engagement (Schaufeli, 2014). Similar to human resource engagement, job engagement also retains cognitive, emotional, and physical facets that allow individuals to psychologically move past the emphasis of a job's content to a superior sense of commitment to its overall purpose (Daley, 2017).

Job Engagement

Maslach et al. (2001) explained job engagement as a “persistent, positive, affective-motivational state of fulfillment” (p. 417). When engaged in their job, employees can achieve their full and complete selves in the workplace through actively fulfilling job tasks by utilizing their personal energy into the unique labor aspects of their role. Engaged employees are described as being observant, connected, psychologically present, integrated, cognizant, and focused on their job tasks (Saks, 2006). Similarly, Rich et al. (2010) also identified job engagement as an applicable workplace construct, defining it as “a multi-dimensional motivational concept reflecting the simultaneous investment of an individual's physical,

cognitive, and emotional energy in active, full work performance” (p. 619). An employee’s job activity is the central aspect accentuated within job engagement as it demands that the individual understand the level to which they engage with their jobs (Rich et al., 2010). When one is highly engaged and in turn vigorous in their job activity, they are easily accessible to coworkers, connected to their job, and bring their complete and best self to perform the responsibilities of the position (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010).

The cognitive component of job engagement focuses on the investment of mental energy that one places into their work (Saks, 2006). Kahn (1990) suggested that achieving an elevated state of cognitive job engagement is done through mentally immersing one’s self into their work, which in turn allows employees to be attentive, dedicated, and focused. Therefore, cognitively-engaged employees are more focused regarding work-related job tasks, especially when these employees take their given or chosen tasks as meaningful (Rich et al., 2010; Shuck et al., 2014). This includes all job-related experiences one confronts in their workplace day-to-day lives, such as the execution of job duties or the functioning role one has while working (Shuck et al., 2017).

Furthermore, it is important for organizations (e.g., sport organizations, intercollegiate athletic departments) to understand how different antecedents impact each of the three engagement subdomains for employee (Saks, 2006). In order to successfully understand the cognitive state, organizations, and their leadership (e.g., sport managers, athletic directors, athletic administrators) should attempt to comprehend what influences their employees to be cognitively engaged in their jobs. Thus, it is important to note that the cognitive job engagement process is the key factor that forefronts an individual’s decision-making that ultimately affects one’s willingness to engage (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2006; Shuck et al., 2014). As a result, the cognitive state is commonly analyzed first rather than one’s emotional or behavioral

engagement, when there is an organizational focus on implementing development (e.g., HRD) activities (e.g., training sessions, career planning, mentoring; Shuck & Rocco, 2013; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). By mentally absorbing themselves into their job role, cognitively-engaged employees view themselves as a contributor of value for their organization and find importance and significance in their everyday job tasks (Maslach et al., 2001; Shuck et al., 2017; Shuck & Reio, 2014).

The next subdomain, emotional job engagement, is regarded as one's willingness to devote themselves emotionally (e.g., passionately) into their job, and, as such, close in on positive organizational outcomes (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2006; Shuck & Rocco, 2013; Shuck et al., 2014, 2017). Emotional engagement represents one's feelings and beliefs that therefore influence one's level of engagement (Harter et al., 2002; Kahn, 1990). When employees have an increased state of emotional engagement, they expend personal resources into meaningful evaluation and experiences (e.g., achieving personal meaning, the feeling of self-value, connectedness to one's job role; Shuck et al., 2017; Shuck & Reio, 2014). Therefore, employees with elevated levels of emotional engagement feel a stronger association to their organization and connect on an innate level with organizational tasks and decisions (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck et al., 2014). Being emotionally engaged also contributes to employees experiencing stronger workplace emotions such as joy, care, and love (Macey & Schneider, 2008). These emotional experiences are continuously in motion and can waver depending on the cognitive job engagement antecedents that can impact one's workplace intensity and willingness. For example, individuals can become emotionally engaged when they receive a job task that is personally meaningful to them (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck et al., 2014). Emotionally engaged employees are also more likely to support and believe in their organization's overall

purpose, mission, and values (Shuck et al., 2014). At the same time, it is important to note that when an employee is emotionally disengaged with their organization and does not connect to an organization's purpose, negative outcomes can occur such as losing passion and energy toward job tasks, as well as discharging from one's job responsibilities (Kahn, 1990). Even though job engagement is first developed in the cognitive phase, the level of one's job engagement is stimulated through their own emotional manifestation (Shuck et al., 2014, 2017).

The third and final state of job engagement is behavioral. Behavioral engagement is regarded as an elevated psychological state one reaches in their job, which increases workplace performance (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Rich et al., 2010; Shuck et al., 2017). Macey and Schneider (2008) regard behavioral job engagement as a "proactive behavior" (p. 19) that contributes to employees becoming more eager in their job roles. Additionally, this type of engaged employee invests an extra effort into their daily tasks for the betterment of themselves and their organization (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Rich et al., 2010). Within the day-to-day operations of an organization, behavioral engagement encompasses extra-role behaviors, which generates several positive organizational behaviors such as organizational citizenship behaviors, proactive and personal initiatives, job role growth, and adaptive behaviors (Macey & Schneider, 2008). However, behavioral job engagement focuses on an employee's psychological willingness to invest extra effort into their work role instead of focusing on the action-based behaviors of the employee (Shuck et al., 2014). Thus, behavioral job engagement is fundamentally different than actual workplace employee behaviors. Behavioral job engagement is grounded within one's psychological state, and therefore it is linked to one's psychological purpose which acts as the central factor in resulting behaviors (Macey & Schneider, 2008). As organizations and organizational leaders come to understand the behavioral component of job engagement in a

practical sense, it is noteworthy that even though an employee may decide on working harder, it does not guarantee they are acting so due to higher levels of behavior engagement (Rich et al., 2010). Behaviorally-engaged employees decide on working harder and directing more of their energy on jobs tasks due to their psychological willingness, which essentially drives them internally to give more.

Shuck et al. (2017) noted that job engagement “is not only identity focused, but also a present-focused state looking toward the future encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects” (p. 958). The process of job engagement is dynamic, whereby the phases of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement are constantly being monitored, assessed, and adjusted by one’s own self, even inadvertently at times (Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2006). Shuck et al. (2017) emphasized that the job engagement process “continues through a cumulative building and a reciprocal effect which guide the experience of an employee being engaged” (p. 268). The overall implications and definitions of job engagement accentuate the significance for all organizations to better recognize the purposes for why employees choose to be engaged in the workplace (Saks, 2006). Thus, within the academic literature on organizations, job engagement has been distinctly and consistently classified as its own separate concept in comparison to work engagement and organizational engagement (Daley, 2017; Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006; Shuck et al., 2014, 2017). From this, previous literature has been skewed toward the concentration of job engagement from an organizational perspective (Czarnowsky, 2008; Maslach et al., 2001). As mentioned previously, job engagement is an individually focused facet of one’s own level of engagement, and therefore understanding this concept could allow for the creating of improved organizational work climates related to attitude, purposes, and behavior (Harter et al., 2002; Kahn, 1990; Wagner & Harter, 2006). Organizations have benefited from an enhanced

understanding of their employees' level of job engagement and, in turn, are developing high performing work climates that offer opportunities to be successful in attaining organizational goals and objectives (Parent & Lovelace, 2018).

Moreover, job engagement is rooted in the scholarship of meaningfulness and focusing on the value of the work (Daley, 2017), and achieving a sense of purpose in the workplace (Kahn, 1990). Job engagement goes beyond the saturated scholarship of job satisfaction for employees in an organizational setting. Even though there are minor similarities, job satisfaction and job engagement are different constructs. An employee can be engaged in a job, but not be satisfied with it, as well as be satisfied with a job, but not engaged in it; the two are not mutually exclusive (Daley, 2017; Warr & Inceoglu, 2012). It has been noted that mere satisfaction is normally regarded as sufficient to retain employees in their roles within an organization, although it is not adequate to guarantee productivity at a high level or even at all (Harter et al., 2002; Saks, 2006). Greater levels of job engagement by employees fuel increased productivity and lead to a more meaningful workplace environment (Glavas, 2016). As organizational leaders embrace the importance of the job engagement of employees, these leaders are increasingly utilizing HRD practices to develop and support the organizational strategies that enable productive, creative, and innovative engagement-encouraging environments (Shuck & Rocco, 2013; Shuck et al., 2011).

Job Design

At its most basic level, job design refers to the actual structure of jobs that employees perform. Thus, job design focuses squarely on the work itself such as the tasks or activities that employees complete for their organizations daily (Oldham & Fried, 2016). The earliest academic work on the topic of job design (Smith, 1850; Taylor, 1911) concentrated on how to structure

jobs to be specialized and simplified to the greatest extent possible. Therefore, employees would be able to hone their job-related skills and devote their full attention to very few tasks (Smith, 1850; Taylor, 1911). These initial attempts at reforming the design of jobs enhanced the skillsets of employees and revealed to organizations the importance of improving employee efficiency in the workplace.

As both the practice and scholarship of job design theory grew, a number of counter-productive behaviors developed (i.e., tardiness and decreased productivity due to oversimplified jobs; Oldham & Fried, 2016). Consequently, job design began to be re-examined by academics so that employees could achieve high levels of performance without experiencing the negative factors related to oversimplified work (Davis & Taylor, 1972; Herzberg, 1966, 1976). Herzberg (1966, 1976) noted that jobs should be developed so that employees become driven to do assigned job tasks, which ultimately enhances organizational and employee performance. From this, organizations began designing jobs based on helping their employees enhance their growth in competence, self-achievement, development, and accountability (Davis & Taylor, 1972; Herzberg, 1966, 1976).

Recently, an employee's level of job engagement has become a very important dynamic within the job design theory. For example, when employees are engaged within their job's design, they are instinctively motivated to do their best when performing any assigned job tasks (Oldham & Fried, 2016). The more positively engaged employees are about the work that is assigned to them, the more likely they are to exert their best effort to achieve the tasks. Within an engagement lens, job design plays a fundamental part in organizations and employees reaching their goals (Oldham & Fried, 2016). Therefore, for job design to be successfully implemented, the contents or descriptions of any organizational job must be set so the duties of the job holder

can be effectively completed and measured (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The job design theory features a top-down approach whereby behavioral and motivational responses are thought to be resulting from the job itself. Job design features transforming inputs (e.g., tasks, motivation, organizational resource allocation, compensation system) to outputs (e.g., improved productivity, quality of work, job engagement) and it also takes into consideration the human factors and organizational factors that contribute to desired performance (Ahmed et al., 2014). For example, when employees get involved and are familiar with the job design process and implementation, they become more inspired to achieve organizational goals, and thereby the performance of employees increases which positively impacts the previously mentioned outcomes of job design (Oldham & Fried, 2016).

Lastly, an essential feature of job design theory is the role of the manager in that it is the manager who designs, coordinates, and assigns the duties, tasks, and objectives of a given job (Ahmed et al., 2014; Tims et al., 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). For instance, according to Ahmed et al. (2014), job design optimization depends significantly on managerial expertise and the organization's human resources rather than an individual's own abilities. Several managerial and human resource-based approaches to construct an effective job design are job rotation, job enrichment, and job enlargement, which all can be utilized to engage, support, and fulfill employees in their daily tasks (Ahmed et al., 2014; Tims et al., 2016). Effective job design application can lead to improved performance, job satisfaction, creativity, organizational citizenship behaviors, and employee well-being (Oldham & Fried, 2016; Tims et al., 2016). However, despite these previously-noted positive benefits, few initiatives have been taken to explore the impact of job design in the sport industry (Neufeind et al., 2013).

Job Crafting

Parker et al. (2001) suggested that individual factors could be an important influence within organizational job design choices; therefore, a recent addition to job design theory is the concept of job crafting (Berg et al., 2010, 2013; Tims et al., 2016; Tims & Parker, 2020; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). With a primary focus on organizational and individual creativity and improved performance, job crafting (Berg et al., 2013; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) has emerged at the forefront of recent job design literature (Gordon et al., 2018; Lee & Lee, 2018; Tims & Parker, 2020). Job crafting, in contrast to job design, is emblematic of employee initiative and proactiveness. Additionally, while both concepts have comparable purposes (i.e., to improve and optimize job roles), job design tends to place more importance on the organization, while job crafting focuses more on the employee (Berg et al., 2010, 2013; Lee & Lee, 2018; Tims & Parker, 2020).

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) first defined job crafting as “the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work” (p. 179). To put simply, job crafting features employees proactively altering how they perceive their jobs from their daily tasks and understand their social interactions with other employees. The job crafting perspective is that attitudinal and motivational responses are a consequence of the employee changing their task and relational boundaries (Berg et al., 2013; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). As such, job crafting is an individual process or action that is born from a bottom-up philosophy emphasizing employee growth, meaningfulness, and creativity (Berg et al., 2013; Tims et al., 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). In today’s organizations, employees are commonly expected to be proactive and exceed the work that is required of them in their job descriptions (Lee & Lee, 2018; Tims & Parker, 2020). This has become common due to top-down job (e.g.,

job design) descriptions not fully addressing the unique and fluctuating job conditions that today's employees face (Demerouti, 2014).

Furthermore, successful job crafting requires employees' initiative, willingness, and self-belief to effectively craft their jobs in a way that instills positive qualities. Job crafting is not a process that can be transferred from manager to employee and is not a passive endeavor. Instead, job crafting results from an employee initiating the modification of their overall job responsibilities, tasks, and social boundaries to better suit their personal values, interests, and strengths (Berg et al., 2013; Tims et al., 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). As a concept that reflects the individual-level of job design, job crafting represents employees' immediate and deliberate adjustment to changes at work, and it is thus considered one strategy for organizational development (Lee & Lee, 2018).

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) reasoned that job crafting is a double-edged sword which is not fundamentally good or bad for organizations as it all depends on the implementation. Most of the previous literature on job crafting (e.g., Berg et al., 2013; Delshab et al., 2020; Lee & Lee, 2018; Swanson et al., 2001; Tims et al., 2016) argued that it is generally thought to create favorable working conditions and leads to better employee and organizational performance. However, when job crafting is executed poorly, employees may follow their own self-interest without considering organizational goals, which results in performing less organizational work. As such, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) described three techniques that job crafters typically utilize to ensure positive outcomes. The first technique is task crafting, which constitutes an employee altering their own job tasks by transforming the degree, scope, or form of their official job tasks by doing more, less, or other tasks than what is specified by their formal job description (Tims et al., 2016). For example, task crafting could include an employee

offering to mentor a new employee or an employee creating a new social platform for the organization. The second technique is relational crafting, which focuses on altering who employees interact with in their job (Tims et al., 2016). This form of job crafting consists of altering the quality or quantity of interactions with fellow coworkers, such as forging new interdepartmental relationships or task forces that are outside the social network indicated by their formal job role. The third technique is cognitive crafting, which describes how employees change the way they understand and elevate their job's tasks and essential relationships (Tims et al., 2016). Simply put, cognitive crafting focuses on how employees change the way in which they interpret the required tasks they are responsible for, such as shifting how their work can help make customers' lives easier or by altering their contributions to fit the bigger picture of the organization's mission.

A valuable feature of job crafting is its relationship with employee developmental growth, as well as organizational and individual performance (Berg et al., 2010, 2013; Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014; Tims et al., 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). For example, job crafting has the potential to complement organizational innovation (Berg et al., 2013), which is an increasingly popular topic in sport management literature (Delshab et al., 2020; Hoeber & Hoeber, 2012; Winand & Hoeber, 2017). By allowing employees to craft their jobs to come into alignment with their values and strengths, an organization can experience innovative advancements that could lead to improved organizational performance (Berg et al., 2013; Delshab et al., 2020). Job crafting was initially developed to foster an enhanced employee perspective of meaningfulness in their work (Berg et al., 2013; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). This is accomplished by allowing employees to utilize their intimate knowledge of their tasks

and relationships to integrate their strengths and interests to create enriched meaningfulness (Berg et al., 2013).

Lastly, an understudied facet of job crafting theory is its relationship with HRD. As aforementioned, HRD is responsible for improving organizational performance and sustainable development through the growth of employees' capabilities (Swanson et al., 2001); thus, job crafting is one of the substantial frameworks that HRD can be applied through (Lee & Lee, 2018). Job crafting has also been shown to have a positive relationship with both employee and organizational performance (Lee & Lee, 2018), and therefore it's easy to understand why there has been a call by researchers and practitioners to extend the understanding and application of job crafting within the HRD paradigm. Organizations, employees, and researchers can all benefit from this advancement as a better understanding of job crafting within the job design theory, and HRD can augment employees' well-being and performance through the successful crafting of their jobs (Lee & Lee, 2018).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study employed in-depth qualitative methods to examine the phenomenon of HRD processes and the ensuing effects through the lived experiences of employees in intercollegiate athletics departments. The researcher focused on the interactions collegiate sport leaders have with subordinate collegiate sport employees to better understand the social structures within collegiate sport organizations and the implications for HRD practices. To further investigate the HRD processes of collegiate athletic departments and to help better explain how workplace competencies affect employee development, performance, and decision-making in the sport industry (e.g., job design, employee engagements, political skill), the research used multiple qualitative methods, which specifically focused on investigation through a phenomenological method and social constructivism approach. The qualitative methods are utilized to answer the study's research questions and to provide a detailed description of the study's phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As previously mentioned, a social constructivism (Creswell, 2014) approach was applied as an interpretive framework for this study. There are two guiding principles for social constructivism: (a) knowledge is constructed through human activity, and (b) individuals create meaning through their interactions. Put simply, social constructivism is the act of learning about the world, or a specific phenomenon of interest, through the support of others within a specifically targeted group (Creswell, 2014). When conducting research by employing social constructivism epistemology, Adams (2006) suggested that learning is based on real-life

experiences; whereby social and cultural interaction and immersion is vital for researcher learning to take place. While conducting this study, the researcher adhered to the social constructivist epistemology because under this particular epistemology, meanings and understandings grow out of social encounters (Adams, 2006).

Furthermore, the study used a phenomenological framework whereby “the researcher collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon and develops a composite decryption of the essence of the experience for all individuals” (Creswell, 2014, p. 76).

Qualitative phenomenology-based studies are most successful when the research is formed using the researcher’s own observations, descriptions, interpretations, and analysis of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The phenomenology approach allowed for the researcher to not only better understand and explain the HRD phenomenon to readers of this study, but also granted the researcher the opportunity to immerse themselves within it (Creswell, 2014). The current study was also strengthened by the phenomenological framework as the phenomenon is conveyed through the experiences of the participants (van Manen, 1990). In doing so, the researcher incorporated their existing knowledge of the phenomenon and their interpretation of participants’ details concerning the phenomenon to structure the findings and to determine research conclusions (van Manen, 1990).

Researcher Positionality

Equality, mutual respect, and a common understanding are fundamental to the rapport between the researcher and the participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). Additionally, when one is conducting qualitative research, it is necessary to explain the philosophical assumptions and prior experiences that support the development of a study’s research questions and shape the theoretical framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016). As Crotty (1998) explained, there is a need when conducting qualitative research to explain the methodology and procedures that are undertaken in the research process in order for the research to be deemed essential and to establish the consistency. The aforementioned social constructivist approach permitted participants to be active contributors in the creation of their own knowledge and understanding (Adams, 2006; Schreiber & Valle, 2013), as the research focus took place predominantly in organizational settings (e.g., social, cultural), rather than solely within the individual (Schreiber & Valle, 2013).

In order to structure this study, it is necessary that the work is highly contextualized and the positionality of the researcher within the research process be considered (Kerwin & Hoeber, 2015). With respect to researcher positionality, scholars have warned that biases are always present in the research process and should be stated within the research framework (Kerwin & Hoeber, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, scholars have noted that one's own biases can be valuable during the research process, "for it is the basis of the researchers making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 18). Thus, the researcher's relevant background as a former sport employee in multiple competition-focused sport organizations (e.g., NCAA Division I athletic departments) was noted and added further depth to the study (Giardina & Newman, 2011; Rich & Misener, 2017). The researcher's germane work experiences supported the "critical representation of ourselves within our research" (Misener & Doherty, 2009, p. 466). Therefore, the researcher's relevant background as a former collegiate sport employee was highlighted, which also contributed to providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Giardina & Newman, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The researcher in this study does have strong connections to the collegiate sport industry as an athletic department employee in multiple departments, including ticket operations, marketing, and event and facility management. As a former collegiate sport employee, the researcher was able to use a personal voice when conducting the study's interviews, which established the "position of equality and mutual respect that is central to the relationship between the researcher and participant" (Doody & Noonan, 2013, p. 31). As a collegiate sport employee, the researcher has exclusive knowledge of the innerworkings of multiple Division I athletic departments and the organizational processes and procedures that manage midlevel athletics managers, entry level athletic department employees, and athletics administrators. The researcher understands that these prior working experiences and beliefs may cause biases to occur; nevertheless, these experiences have shaped the researchers view that HRD practices shape the job design, organizational politics, and job engagement that exist within the organizational environment of collegiate athletics.

Overall, the researcher's previous work experience in collegiate athletics and ability to use a personal voice "further informs the credibility and trustworthiness of the data analysis" (Kerwin & Hoeber, 2015, p. 500). The researcher's prior work experiences as a former college sport employee further supported the overall study by offering participants an opportunity to engage in their past work histories. Furthermore, the researcher's positionality helped establish commonalities with the participants (Giles & Williams, 2007). This positionality reinforced the researcher's ability to reflect on the overall research, while also considering the personal and professional perspectives of participants (Giles & Williams, 2007). Lastly, the positionality of the researcher has led to the identification and focus of the research on how HRD processes

influence the intersection of organizational politics, political skill, job design, and employee engagement in collegiate athletic departments.

Participants

The researcher examined the interactions athletic administrators have with subordinate athletic department employees to better understand the HRD practices and social structures within intercollegiate athletic departments. From this, the researcher observed and studied the organizational politics, job crafting, job design, leader political skill, and job engagement of the study's participants. To do so, daily and event-day observations of some study participants took place in an "event management and facility operations" sub-department of a collegiate athletics department, as well as the utilization of semi-structured interviews with athletic administrators, mid-level athletic department managers, and entry-level athletic department employees. The interview and observation process are discussed further in the succeeding Procedures section. A total of 29 participants were interviewed and provided results for the current research.

For the purposes of the research, entry-level athletic department employees are classified as coordinators or assistants working within an athletics department who do not have supervisor responsibilities or significant decision-making capabilities and usually directly report to a mid-level athletic department manager. In these entry-level athletic department positions, employees work under direct supervision and on routine tasks. Entry-level athletic department employees' positions include but are not limited to: (a) Ticket Office Coordinator, (b) Marketing Assistant, (c) Coordinator of Development, (d) Equipment Coordinator, (e) Compliance Assistant. A mid-level athletic department manager will be categorized as a manager or director working within an athletics department who does not have senior administrative decision-making capabilities. Mid-level athletic department manager positions include but are not limited to: (a) Director of

Marketing, (b) Ticket Manager, (c) Equipment Director, (d) Director of Compliance or (e) Director of Sports Information. The concluding level is the athletic administrator. The athletic administrator will be defined as a senior-level individual working within an NCAA intercollegiate department who is responsible for supervising multiple employees, being the primarily decision-maker for their department, and/or making decisions for the entire athletic department. Athletics administrator positions include but are not limited to: (a) Athletic Director, (b) Associate Athletic Director, (c) Assistant Athletic Directors, and (d) department-specific Associate or Assistant Athletic Director (e.g., Associate Athletic Director of Compliance, Assistant Athletic Director of Marketing, Assistant Athletic Director of Equipment, etc.).

To establish these three levels for participants, the researcher applied previous relevant scholarly works (Kent & Chelladurai, 2001; Martyn, 2020; Oja et al., 2015; Schuetz et al., 2021; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012) which collectively helped indicate the clear division and hierarchal separation of duties, responsibilities, and job roles within NCAA athletics departments. As mentioned in total, the participants work within one of the three levels (e.g., entry-level athletic department employee, mid-level athletic department manager, athletics administrator) and are diversly employed in a variety of departments within collegiate athletics, which include ticket sales/operations, marketing, fundraising/development, event management, equipment, and business office operations. Additional participant demographics and pseudonyms are provided throughout the Results section.

The participants in this study were obtained by the combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Some of the participants for this study were selected purposefully as these individuals will be “especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest” (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 534). As well, this segment of the study’s participants was

selected purposively based on their full-time work status in the sport industry (Jones, 2015). The researcher utilized their industry contacts to purposely select participants who meet the inclusion criteria (e.g., 18 years or older and a full-time sport employee) and align with the study's focus on HRD, organizational politics, job design, and the several employee competencies. Potential interviewees were contacted with the aforementioned inclusion criteria and study parameters to determine their willingness to participate in the study. The purposive sampling technique offers the best opportunity to obtain deep, rich, and descriptive data (Jones, 2015). Specifically, the researcher used purposeful sampling to "highlight what is typical, normal, or average" (Patton, 2015, p. 268) and to confirm that all participants have also experienced the study's phenomenon. For example, sport organizations and sport employees who do not operate or work within NCAA Division I athletics were not selected for inclusion of this study (e.g., NCAA Division II, NCAA Division III, NAIA, professional sport).

Furthermore, snowball sampling was also used to gather participants for the study's interviews. Snowball sampling is the process "by asking the number of people who else to talk with, as the snowball gets bigger and bigger you accumulate new information-rich cases" (Patton, 2015, p. 298) whereby the researcher creates a larger network of participants who have experienced the phenomenon of interest. By utilizing both techniques to gather participants, data collection for this study realized a point where data saturation was met. Gratton and Jones (2014) defined data saturation in qualitative research as the point "where any further data collection will not provide any different information from that you already have, that is you are not learning anything new" (p. 153).

Moreover, some participants were personally well-known by the researcher as previous co-workers (i.e., an "insider"); however, other participants were not known by the researcher on

a close level (i.e., an “outsider”). Utilizing insiders for this study allowed for the “quicker establishment of rapport and trust between researcher and participants; and more open and readily accessible lines of communication between researchers and informants due to the researcher’s continuing contact with the field” (Taylor, 2011, p. 6), thus strengthening the data that was collected due to the researcher’s prior relationships with the participants (Taylor, 2011). The use of outsiders in this study acted as a “checking mechanism” (Taylor, 2011, p. 21) and also assisted in preventing a biased collection and interpretation of the data.

Procedures

This study received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. This study applied four methodological techniques to collect data and reach saturation: participant observations, field notes, a reflective journal, and semi-structured interviews. The researcher conducted this study through scholarly curiosity (Wagstaff et al., 2012); thus, the researcher entered the organizational environments and participant interviews with an unbiased mentality about the paths the research could develop into. The data collection methods of this study parallels many of the data collection techniques in previous observation and interview-based sport organization studies (e.g., Darcy et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2021; Numerato & Baglioni, 2012; Oja et al., 2018). Event-day observations occurred alongside an “event management and facility operations” sub-department within two separate collegiate athletics departments. The two universities compete at the NCAA Division I level and agreed to allow the researcher to conduct on-site event-day observations as well as observing both athletic department’s daily operations. Therefore, the procedures process of this study includes an abundance of interactions over a six-month period in both the office and event settings.

The departments of event and facility management were purposefully chosen as the population to be embedded within for observations due to their dual roles in supporting daily athletics department functions as well as maintaining and attending sporting events with responsibilities across multiple departments (e.g., marketing, ticketing, coaching, development, media relations). The observation schedule for this study called for frequent visits among the two universities (i.e., approximately four days a week to experience the daily workplace environment of the entire athletics department, one to two trips a week to work and document a game/event) in order to gain an in-depth understanding of how HRD practices are applied in the collegiate sport workplace. Furthermore, it was agreed upon by both universities' athletics departments, that the researcher have extensive access to the interpersonal activities (e.g., verbal communication, non-verbal communication, problem-solving, cooperation, and decision-making) of employees for each of the two respective organization. The participant observations encompassed multiple direct observations, interviews, reflections, and analysis (Oja et al., 2018). The researcher conducted the observations through the positioning of a participant (Merriam, 1998). This entailed participant being aware that they were being observed and provided the researcher with a familiarity that showcased the participants' values, beliefs, and working environment (Merriam, 1998). The researcher observed the collegiate athletic department employees while they performed their official job activities (Oja et al., 2018) and when participants were "off the clock" but were still within a work setting. Observational data provided a "firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest" (p. 94) while attempting to collect the natural behaviors of the collegiate athletic department employees despite their knowledge of being observed by the researcher (Merriam, 1998).

The use of field notes and an audio reflective journal also further assisted the researcher in summarizing practical opinions and evolving issues for later reflection, thought, and action (Jackson, 1990; Makagon & Neumann, 2008). Field notes are commonly defined as written records of observational data produced by fieldwork (Jackson, 1990; Makagon & Neumann, 2008). Field notes were taken during the observation sessions and were expanded on at the end of each observation. Jackson (1990) stated the importance of field notes as they capture “the attachment, the identification, the uncertainty, the mystique, and perhaps above all, the ambivalence” (p. 33) of being in the field. The written field notes for this study include data regarding items such as the setting, employee experiences, direct quotations, the researcher’s reactions, and the unfolding of difficult or complex situations (Jackson, 1990).

In addition to written field notes, a reflective journal was also employed for this study. As a researcher, recording one’s thoughts through a reflective journal can be a valuable technique as one can record their own observations and note significant happenings before they forget them (Makagon & Neumann, 2008; Nicol & Dosser, 2016). Additionally, it is crucial to record the thoughts of the researcher in the reflective journal consistently and as soon as possible after an event or observation while the experiences are still clear in the researcher’s mind (Nicol & Dosser, 2016). Utilizing a reflective journal is a way to reflect on the research process (e.g., noting any bias or issues with data collection) and rationalize about whether the research methods are appropriate and useful (Nicol & Dosser, 2016). For this study, the reflective journal assisted in recording patterns in participant behavior as well as served as a reminder for follow-up questions with participants. Nicol and Dosser (2016) noted that the reflective process should begin with recording brief summaries under the focuses of: (a) What happened? (b) How did I feel? (c) What are the main points? (d) What do I need to explore further? (e) What are my initial

thoughts were this to happen again? (p. 7). The use of an audio reflective journal helped the researcher in summarizing constructive opinions, inquiries, and surfacing issues for later reflection, thought, or action (Makagon & Neumann, 2008; Nicol & Dosser, 2016).

Additionally, semi-structured interviews functioned as a further method of acquiring data for the study, and thus triangulation was enabled (Carter et al., 2014). Participant interviews are the most used data collection method in qualitative research, and the semi-structured design is the most commonly employed interview technique (Kallio et al., 2016). Kallio et al. (2016) noted that one of the main benefits for the semi-structured interview method is that it “has been found to be successful in enabling reciprocity between the interviewer and participant, enabling the interviewer to improvise follow-up questions based on participants’ responses, and allowing space for participants’ individual verbal expressions” (p. 2955). Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews required that the researcher have an elevated level of understanding in the research area as the interview questions were based on previous knowledge (Kallio et al., 2016). For this study, the in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted via in-person and Zoom video conferencing. Interview participants provided verbal consent prior to the conducting of the semi-structured interviews, and the interviews lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. The interviews were then audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. This allowed for the collection of thorough, genuine, and quality data (Kvale, 1996). Additionally, during observations for this study, informal interviews occurred. Fontana and Frey (1998) note that most of the data collected through participant observations is assembled from informal interviews (e.g., conversations) while in the field. Informal interviews are based on an unplanned set of questions that are generated promptly during conversations that happen during observations with participants (Fontana & Frey, 1998).

An initial interview guide was produced based on prior literature concerning HRD (Haslinda, 2009; Khan et al., 2012; Swanson, 1995; Werner, 2014), organizational politics (e.g., Ferris & Judge, 1991; Hochwarter et al., 2020; Mintzberg, 1983), political skill (e.g., Ferris et al., 2002; Perrewé et al., 2000; Treadway et al., 2014), job design (Ahmed et al., 2014; Oldham & Fried, 2016; Tims et al., 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and employee job engagement (Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck et al., 2014; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Preliminary questions were open-ended in order to allow the participants to expand upon their answers and provide rich, in-depth data (Clifford et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Follow-up probes were utilized when more context of a given response was needed during the interview session. At the end of each interview, the researcher also asked questions pertaining to the demographic information of the interviewee. Interview-based data collection was stopped after data saturation was achieved (i.e., each new interview and observation contributed less to the understanding of athletics department employees' perceptions and experiences; Guest et al., 2006).

Instruments

As mentioned in the previous section, this study used semi-structured interviews and observations as methods to collect data. For the semi-structured interviews, the researcher first built rapport with the participants by asking general questions about their association with the university's athletics department and background in the sport industry. Additionally, in this initial rapport, the researcher asked participants general demographic questions such as: job title, gender, ethnicity, education level, and years of work experience. The researcher then asked interviewees a series of open-ended questions that started a conversation about their experiences, perspectives, and opinions working within their respective sport organizations. These open-

ended questions stemmed from the initial interview guide that was produced based on prior seminal literature concerning HRD (Haslinda, 2009; Swanson, 1995), organizational politics (e.g., Hochwarter et al., 2020; Mintzberg, 1983), political skill (e.g., Ferris et al., 2002; Treadway et al., 2014), job design (Oldham & Fried, 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and employee job engagement (Rich et al., 2010; Shuck et al., 2014). In total, these open-ended questions helped the researcher understand how participants view, support, and understand the intersection of organizational politics, job design/crafting, and employee job engagement through an HRD perspective. The researcher also looked to understand the lived experiences of employees within their roles working at an intercollegiate athletic department. Example questions include: (a) Can you recall a time where you had to use your understanding of the politics of your organization to push an idea through? (b) Can you describe a time you had to maneuver around potential organizational barricades in order to bring a project to completion successfully? (c) Has your job changed since you first started here? If so, how has it changed and in what ways, if any, have you made your job your own? (d) Have you altered your job responsibilities on your own initiative? If so, how? (e) Can you describe the organizational hierarchy of your sport organization and how it impacts your work experiences?

Participant observation for this study refers to the research in which the researcher observes and documents actions while actively participating in the organization under investigation in a range of ways (Merriam, 1998). The researcher combined the role of researcher with other social roles (e.g., volunteer, friend, employee, etc.; Merriam, 1998). In this workplace setting, the researcher was able to pretend he was as much of an employee as the other employees are, while also trying to appear natural and convincing during the data collection process (Merriam, 1998). Participants who consented to observations (found in the consent form)

were observed during work periods and occurred in public and private settings. Furthermore, private setting observations only occurred when informed consent was provided. During observations, routine conversations among the researcher and consenting participants that are germane to the study were recorded (Merriam, 1998). In addition, the researcher revisited consent throughout the conducting of the research by reminding and/or discussing the research with informants as new situations arose or new kinds of informants were encountered. No direct identifies of participants during the observations were recorded. The information that is recorded from participant observations was related to the environment (Merriam, 1998).

Additional observations of those who are not consenting participants of the study also occurred. These observations only transpired during publicly held games and events and observations were only recorded when the researcher was out in the open or in a public domain when there was no expectation of privacy. These observations are meant to provide context for interactions and the responses of consenting participants (Merriam, 1998). Examples of descriptions of non-consenting participants included, for instance, “Fans began to yell and scream at the employees to make sure the floor was clean so the game could continue,” or, “An athletics department employee engaged in a heated argument with Participant 8.”

Analysis

To analyze all the data for this study, the researcher used the thematic analysis procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) described thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). Researchers who utilize thematic analysis can use lesser samples with the intent of giving a truly in-depth analysis of shared meanings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Furthermore, Braun and Clarke

(2021) concluded that “data saturation can be achieved in similarly smaller samples of interviews/focus groups” (p. 204).

By applying the proposed Braun and Clarke (2006) method, the researcher immersed himself in the data with several readings of the interview transcripts in combination with the field notes, participant observations, and a reflective journal in order to develop an initial set of codes. Moreover, thematic analysis requires a continual process that follows a set of six techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis followed the six methods as the researcher familiarized himself with the data, generated initial codes, examined the interview data for themes, evaluated the generated themes, defined and named the themes from the data, and produced a report and selected representative quotes.

The interview guide was primarily developed from HRD, organizational politics, political skill, job design, and employee job engagement literature; however, a thematic analysis applies parts of both inductive and deductive perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2012). During the thematic analysis, the codes were mostly inductively generated as the data was used to form the codes as opposed to predominately generating themes from a theoretical perspective (Miles et al., 2020). While the interview guide could have possibly influenced the data analysis, the process was regarded as mostly inductive since the researcher relied on the raw data to form the codes (Miles et al., 2020). Additionally, the researcher identified “vivid, compelling extract examples” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87) to further construct the meaning of the themes. The researcher continuously returned to all the previously mentioned elements of the thematic analysis to review and refine the analysis and repeated as necessary in order to provide an accurate, thick, and rich description of the data. (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Trustworthiness

Previous scholars have agreed that in a qualitative research study, rigorous data collection procedures are the main factors that influence quality and trustworthiness (Guba, 1981; Kitto et al., 2008; Shenton, 2004), which ultimately critically influence the results of the study (Kitto et al., 2008) and safeguard quality (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, Guba's (1981) constructs regarding trustworthiness and Shenton's (2004) work on strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research have earned considerable support from academics and practitioners alike. Both Guba (1981) and Shenton (2004) state that four specific criteria need to be met in order to ensure the trustworthiness of a study's qualitative methods: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. For qualitative credibility, researchers need to establish that a true representation of the study's phenomenon is being presented (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). For qualitative transferability, the researcher needs to present ample detail of the "context of the fieldwork for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which they are familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting" (Shenton, 2004, p. 63). For qualitative dependability, the researcher should structure their study in a way that ensures future investigators are able to repeat the study (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). For qualitative confirmability, researchers need to prove that their findings emerged from the data itself and not their own biases or predispositions (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). Each of the four criteria will be discussed further in the following sections.

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) reasoned that ensuring credibility is one of most important aspects in establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative research; therefore, it is the first criteria that must be proven. Establishing credibility in qualitative research requires the researcher to

clearly connect the research study's findings with reality in order to prove the accuracy of the research study's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When considering the credibility of qualitative research, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) added that credibility encompasses the congruency among the findings of the research study and reality through the demonstration of the data. Credibility also has the greatest number of processes to help establish it, in comparison to the other three aspects of trustworthiness (e.g., transferability, dependability, and confirmability). To ensure the credibility of the research, the researcher used a number of the credibility processes that were defined by Shenton (2004), such as: (a) the adoption of well-established research methods, (b) development of an early familiarity with the culture of participating organizations, (c) triangulation, (d) tactics to help ensure honesty in informants, (e) frequent debriefing sessions, (f) the researcher's "reflective commentary", (g) background and qualifications of the researcher, (h) member checks, (i) thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny, and (j) examination of previous research findings.

To ensure the adoption of well-established research methods for this study, the researcher utilized segments of the methodological approaches that were adopted in previous analogous research (i.e., previous observation or interview-based sport organization research; Darcy et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2021; Numerato & Baglioni, 2012; Oja et al., 2018). These previous observation and interview-based sport organization research studies all applied qualitative analysis; thus, the research methods from these studies were employed for this study. While the previously mentioned research (Darcy et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2021; Numerato & Baglioni, 2012; Oja et al., 2018) examined several similar employee and organizational constructs, the overall basis of this study differs slightly, so the researcher also included similar methods that were used by scholars in the areas of HRD (Haslinda, 2009; Khan et al., 2012; Swanson, 1995;

Werner, 2014), organizational politics (e.g., Ferris & Judge, 1991; Hochwarter et al., 2020; Mintzberg, 1983), political skill (e.g., Ferris et al., 2002; Perrewé et al., 2000; Treadway et al., 2014), job design (Ahmed et al., 2014; Oldham & Fried, 2016; Tims et al., 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and employee job engagement (Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2006; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck et al., 2014; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). By doing so, the researcher was able to establish credibility in investigating the aforementioned paradigms.

To establish the development of an early familiarity with the culture of participating organizations, the researcher conducted a preliminary study with the same methodological approach and sampling frame as well as made initial visits to the athletic departments themselves. By performing this process, the researcher produced a significant amount of data and knowledge through the preliminary research and visitation, which also helped in establishing a familiarity with the participants as the research advanced. Consequently, the credibility requirements of this subset were satisfied as put forth by Shenton (2004). For Shenton's (2004) approach to triangulation within trustworthiness, triangulation refers to the "use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena" (Carter et al., 2014, p. 545). Furthermore, triangulation is also regarded as a qualitative research technique that tests the credibility of the research through the merging of data from different sources. In an effort to achieve triangulation for this research, the researcher collected interview data from an extensive hierarchal range of informants (e.g., entry-level athletic department employee, mid-level athletic department manager, athletics administrator) that came from an assortment of NCAA Division I collegiate athletic departments. Triangulation was also established in this research as participants came from "several different organizations so as to reduce the effect on the study of particular local factors peculiar to one institution"

(Shenton, 2004, p. 66). Additionally, the use of four distinct but supportive methodological techniques were applied to collect data and reach saturation: (a) participant observations, (b) field notes, (c) reflective journal, and (d) semi-structured interviews throughout multiple time periods (i.e., peak competitive season and off-season), further established the triangulation of this research.

To help ensure honesty from the informants, this study used several tactics that are supported by the work of Shenton (2004). First, to safeguard the honesty of participants in the study, participants confirmed that they were freely and willingly participating in the study (i.e., through verbal and written consent forms) and their identities would remain confidential. Also, following fundamental qualitative research principles (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), participants were able to withdraw from this study whenever they wanted to. As mentioned in the earlier researcher positionality section, there is the possibility of biases in the findings of this study as the researcher is the main instrument of data collection and analysis (Peshkin, 1988; Shenton, 2004). Thus, to ensure the credibility of the findings without undesirable biases, the researcher applied two separate techniques supported by Taylor (2011) and Shenton (2004): (a) using insiders and outsiders in the sampling frame and (b) having several debriefing sessions with the different members of the dissertation committee. While using insiders in the sampling frame helped the researcher to develop a quicker credible rapport with the participants, using outsiders as participants acted as a “checking mechanism” (Taylor, 2011, p. 21) that helped in avoiding a biased collection and understanding of the data. Furthermore, the debriefing sessions with the different members of the dissertation committee facilitated in widening the researcher’s vision (Shenton, 2004) and served as “a sounding board for the investigator to test his or her developing

ideas and interpretations and the probing from others may help the researcher to recognize his or her own biases and preferences” (Shenton, 2004, p. 67).

The researcher’s “reflective commentary” is essential to protecting the credibility of the research (Shenton, 2004, p. 68). The researcher evaluated the study again and again as it continued to develop. To fulfill Shenton’s (2004) stance on reflective commentary, the research evaluated the study continuously during data collection through the use of a reflective journal (i.e., as soon as possible after an event or observation while the experiences are still clear in the mind; Makagon & Neumann, 2008) and through data analysis with the thematical analysis techniques of Braun and Clarke (2006). As Shenton (2004) notes, the reflective commentary process “may also be used to record the researcher’s initial impressions of each data collection session, patterns appearing to emerge in the data collected and theories generated” (p. 68). As mentioned previously in this dissertation and also described by Patton (1999) and Shenton (2004), the credibility of the researcher is particularly significant in qualitative research as the researcher is the major instrument of data collection and analysis. Therefore, is it required that the researcher note their biographical background and positionality to the study’s participants and readers for credibility to be established (Shenton, 2004). Based on the works of Peshkin (1988), Patton (1999), and Shenton (2004), the researcher formally announced their own personal background, qualifications, and experiences in the researcher positionality section of this dissertation, which merits the credibility of this research.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered member checks to be the single most important provision that can be made to support a study’s credibility and trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004). For this study, participants were asked to read any transcripts of interviews in which they participated. During the study’s member checking, the emphasis was on whether the participants

considered their words to match what they actually intended to articulate and that they have been accurately represented (Shenton, 2004). Another element of member checking involves the confirmation of the researcher's emerging theories and findings as they are formed during any observations and interviews (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, since the study also used observations as a data collection technique, participants at times were also asked if they can offer reasons for particular patterns observed by the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Thick and rich description of the data was applied to the findings of this study, which additionally supported the overall credibility. By using a thick and rich description of the data, the actual situations and experiences of the study's participants were depicted accurately (Kvale, 1996). If the researcher is unable to accurately depict the findings through a thick and rich description of the data, it can be "difficult for the reader of the final account to determine the extent to which the overall findings ring true" (Shenton, 2004, p. 69). Thus, the aim for this dissertation is that all the results are able to be depicted as accurate and genuine.

By examining the previous research findings of similarly theoretically and methodologically structured studies, a researcher can assess the degree to which their study's findings are consistent with those of past studies (Shenton, 2004). To ensure the credibility of this research, the researcher examined numerous previous studies' findings and linked the results in the literature review section of this dissertation. Additionally, the findings of this study are connected to the existing bodies of knowledge in the Discussion section of this dissertation. As Shenton (2004) noted, the review and association of previous studies staged in similar organizations and addressing comparable subjects to this research can be an invaluable source for establishing credibility.

Transferability

An often-noted concern with qualitative research is based on the ability to demonstrate that the findings of a study can be applied to a wider population (Shenton, 2004). However, since the findings of a qualitative study are usually specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is essential that the researcher demonstrates that the findings and conclusions are applicable to the specific situations and populations that are at hand (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, to ensure that the findings of this study can be transferable to comparable sampling frames and environments, the researcher has fully detailed all the contexts of the study in the previous participants, procedures, instruments, and analysis sections.

As discussed in the credibility section of this study, it is again important that the researcher provides a sufficient thick and rich description of the phenomenon under investigation so that future researchers can then compare and potentially transfer into their own research (Shenton, 2004). Generalizing or transferring the findings of a qualitative study to similar settings and similar groups is an essentially aspect of transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). The transferability of a study's findings relies upon the judgment of readers and future researchers on if the findings can be transferred to similar environments or settings (Shenton, 2004). As Shenton (2004) specified for appropriate transferability of findings in qualitative research, the author must present: (a) the number of organizations taking part in the research and where they are based, (b) the restrictions on the people who contributed data, (c) the number of participants included in the research, (d) the data collection methods employed, (e) the number and length of the data collection sessions, and (f) the time period when data was collected (p. 70). The researcher has fulfilled these aspects throughout Chapter III of this dissertation. Lastly, although the researcher has presented accurate experiences, actual contexts,

and perceptions of participants, the “understanding of a phenomenon is gained gradually through several studies rather than one major project conducted in isolation” (Shenton, p. 71). Thus, to satisfy the overall goal of transferability as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), it is important that the researcher explained that the aim of this study is to provide a specific context in which the findings can be transferred to similar populations in similar environments.

Dependability

Lincoln and Guba (19885) noted the close ties between credibility and dependability, and that by properly demonstrating the credibility of one’s research, one’s research is also closer to ensuring dependability. The common practice of achieving dependability is through the use of “overlapping methods” which could include, but is not limited to, using two or more of the following: (a) individual interviews, (b) observations, (c) focus groups, (d) maintaining a reflective journal (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, to address the concerns of dependability, the researcher should highlight the methodological processes that a study undertakes in great detail (Shenton, 2004). By doing so, a dependable research study enables future researchers to conduct similar studies and achieve similar results (Shenton, 2004). In regard to ensuring the dependability of a research study’s findings, Shenton (2004) noted that scholars should include sections devoted to: (a) describing what was planned and executed on a strategic level, (b) addressing the minutiae of what was done in the field, and (c) evaluating the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken.

To ensure that the findings of this study are dependable, the researcher has clearly described the participants, procedures, methodological framework, and processes that were undertaken for this study in the preceding sections of Chapter III. As previously noted, the researcher also maintained a reflective journal and detailed field notes describing the findings

and processes that were used throughout the study, thereby ensuring the dependability of the study, and allowing for the possibility of future researchers to conduct similar studies. With the use of a reflective journal, detailed observation field notes, and an established interview guide, the researcher will be able to describe in-depth the study's scholarly processes as well as the successes and failures, which could offer insight to future scholarly endeavors (Shenton, 2004). The aforementioned processes and measures of this study were used to safeguard the dependability of the scholarly process.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the last criterion of trustworthiness that a qualitative researcher must establish as set forth by Guba (1981) and Shenton (2004). Confirmability is based on the level of confidence that a research study's findings are truly constructed on the accounts, actions, and descriptions of participants rather than potential researcher biases (Shenton, 2004). As such, Shenton (2004) advised that certain steps must be taken to help ensure confirmability and that "the work's findings are the results of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher" (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). Furthermore, both Patton (1999) and Shenton (2004) note that in regard to confirmability, the role of triangulation in one's research should be promoted again, thus emphasizing the confirmability and reducing any negative effects of researcher bias. In this research, the researcher has acknowledged their own predispositions, any decisions that needed to be made, the methods that were adopted, the rationale for favoring the current approach, and the sampling frame, all to ensure the study has confirmability. In addition, the researcher has outlined their own predispositions in the researcher positionality section of this dissertation.

Since ensuring confirmability in one's research is essential (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004), the researcher used the inclusion of triangulation, reflective journaling, and an audit trail in the research process. The most critical of the three is the audit trail, as the process allows for any reader or future research to trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and procedures described (Shenton, 2004). Thus, for this research, the audit trail included the detailing of the processes for data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the data. In addition, Shenton (2004) noted that "the manner in which the concepts inherent in the research question gave rise to the work to follow may be tracked" (p. 72). For this research, the manner of research question development is described in great depth within Chapter I.

Summary

In summation, this study employed qualitative methods utilizing the social constructivist epistemology to examine the phenomenon of HRD processes and the ensuing effects through the lived experiences of employees in intercollegiate athletics departments. As such, the study applied a phenomenological framework whereby "the researcher collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon and develops a composite decryption of the essence of the experience for all individuals" (Creswell, 2014, p. 76). This researcher applied four methodological techniques to collect data and reach saturation for this study: (a) participant observations, (b) field notes, (c) a reflective journal, and (d) semi-structured interviews. It is important to note that the researcher has strong ties to the collegiate sport industry as a former athletic department employee in multiple departments, including ticket operations, marketing, and event and facility management. However, as a former collegiate sport employee, the researcher was able to use a personal voice and in-depth understanding when conducting the study's interviews and observations, which established the "position of equality and mutual

respect that is central to the relationship between the researcher and participant” (Doody & Noonan, 2013, p. 31).

Participants for the research were acquired by the combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling. A portion of the participants in this study was selected purposefully, and as insiders and outsiders due to these sets of individuals being “especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest” (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 534). Participants for this study include NCAA Division I entry-level athletics department employees, mid-level athletics department managers, and athletics administrators, and are employed in a variety of departments within collegiate athletics such as ticket sales/operations, marketing, fundraising/development, event management, equipment, and business office operations. All participants in this study were interviewed individually by the researcher and their experiences and descriptions were recorded and transcribed verbatim. All interview transcripts adhered to the thematic analysis process as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as the researcher thematically coded the data through a combination of inductive and deductive analysis. For further data collection, the researcher conducted observations alongside an “event management and facility operations” sub-department within two separate collegiate athletics departments. The two universities compete at the NCAA Division I level and agreed to allow the researcher to conduct on-site event-day observations as well as observing both athletic department’s daily operations.

To ensure academic trustworthiness, the researcher followed precisely to the qualitative guidelines established by Guba (1981) and Shenton (2004) which includes: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. In closing, the current applied comprehensive qualitative methodologies have all been supported by previous seminal

qualitative researchers and therefore ensures the trustworthiness and academic rigor of this research.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results gained from this study that studied the relationship between HRD and several employee competencies in the intercollegiate sport employee domain. As previously stated in Chapter III, semi-structured interviews, field notes, reflective audio diary, and on-site observations were utilized to expand the data collection process and allowed for in-depth analysis. Thus, the central focus of this study was to apply the HRD paradigm to advance the literature pertaining to sport employees' and organizations' growth and development. This was done to comprehend how HRD is interpreted within the sport sector and how it develops within sport organizations and their employees. Thus, an important element of this dissertation is the interactional process HRD has with organizational and employee competency that have been thoroughly researched in sport management literature. Therefore, organizational politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement were the variables of interest in the data collection (e.g., observations, semi-structured interviews) of this study. Additionally, a total of 29 participants provided results for the current research.

In the following section, the findings are organized according to overarching themes and subthemes. Themes will include direct verbatim quotes from participants of the study as well as the interpretation of the researcher's on-site observations. In brief, the analysis revealed (a) the need for the continued learning of HRD's value, (b) the importance of understanding organizational politics and power, (c) that job design is rigid in intercollegiate athletics, (d) that job crafting is an essential for the modern sport employee, and (e) that job engagement has

become a key factor in determining happiness and retainment in sport. Collectively, HRD was found to be an active force at the intercollegiate level that has significantly close ties to organizational politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement.

The outcomes relating to the discovered interrelationships of organizational politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement within the HRD paradigm in intercollegiate athletic departments are presented. These overarching beliefs emerged from the data analysis across all interviews and observations. Accordingly, the findings unfolding from the conducted thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021) are presented, and specific themes are offered. Representative quotations are presented verbatim to further illustrate emergent themes.

Human Resource Development

To examine the HRD process, evaluate how HRD is interpreted, and how HRD is defined at the Division I level, nine athletics administrators, nine athletics department mid-level managers, and eleven athletics department entry-level employees were interviewed. Additionally, observations were conducted by the researcher as he was embedded within two Event Management departments in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. Participants' job title and Power 5 or Non-Power 5 affiliation are listed for the Division I athletics administrators, mid-level managers, and entry-level employees to ensure confidentiality of the participants. Themes will initially be discussed through data collected during the semi-structured interviews followed by the observational data that was collected by the research during on-site, office, and event-based observations.

Defining Human Resource Development in Sport

The current study took a great effort to further define HRD within the sport domain. After the demographic and background information of participants for the study was collected, the

researcher began all interviews for this study by providing the participants with a quick definition of HRD by Swanson (1995). The provided definition of HRD was, “Human resource development is a process of developing and/or unleashing human expertise through organizational development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance” (Swanson, 1995, p. 208). Participant responses in this study resulted in the researcher forming the decision that, comparable to many other fields of study and, as Lee (2001) notes, HRD may not be able to be defined in one simple manner. All participants ranging from the highest at the athletics administrator level to the lowest at the entry-level employee provide their own thoughts regarding what HRD meant to them in the context of intercollegiate athletics. Table 4.1 showcases participant responses defining HRD at the intercollegiate athletic department employee level.

Table 4.1*Defining Human Resource Development*

Participant	Response
Director – Ticketing <i>Power 5 University</i>	Human resource development is the use of trainings to make your employees better. It is how can we better ourselves and our organization. It is making an investment in your employees... but the thing is... who makes this call? I have no say over this here at [university]. So, you hope that your school values this...
Assistant Director – Marketing <i>Non-Power 5 University</i>	[Laughter]... I have no clue. I mean... I guess I think of the onboarding process here, but after that... I can't say there's a lot of things offered to HR wise. Except what I thought of when you mentioned what it is was "how do I becoming a better marketer". So, to me... that's attending PACNET, NACMA, conferences like that. Those are a minimum for someone like me.
Director – Development <i>Non-Power 5 University</i>	I think HRD in college athletics... it varies school by school. Some universities definitely make it a priority, but I know that also means some schools don't make it a priority. Institutions that value human resource development, see a higher return on their employees, they see a greater ROI... an investment back into the department. So I see it as how are we going to grow and how are we going to succeed into the future. I think the departments that find themselves lacking success and sustained success are the one that don't invest in HRD. I can tell you from firsthand experience that I've worked at both types. From my time here, I feel as though that this institution hasn't invested as much into my career development as my previous institution did.
Associate Director – Equipment <i>Power 5 University</i>	It means having some sort of structure from a very broad perspective...having some sort of structure in place within an athletic department, that helps mold and develop younger talent or younger personnel. It's a quid pro quo situation where you need to help them develop skills, put them in situations where they can gain experience or leadership skills, and in turn, you're also grooming them to be a better employee. To be something you see as being more valuable down the road within your own athletic department.

Participants at all employment ranks expressed their initial concerns of not knowing exactly what HRD was. However, the researcher expressed that it was acceptable to not know the exact contexts of HRD, thus why the definition of HRD by Swanson (1995) was used. From there, employees of all employment rank were able to express what HRD meant to them within the context of sport and more specifically intercollegiate athletics. Participants spoke on their own memories experiencing HRD in their careers and current institutions. Additionally, almost all participants noted the importance of HRD in the workplace and further provided rationale for it to be a cornerstone to becoming a better and more productive employee. Specifically, participants at the athletic administrator level spoke to the extent that their HRD experiences were more focused on how to better develop the employees specifically within their department or the entire athletic department. Mid-level athletic department managers mentioned the existence of HRD in how they have been able to progress to their current states in their careers in intercollegiate athletics. Lastly, entry-level employees were hesitant in how they defined HRD, wanting to ensure they were defining it correctly. Furthermore, these entry-level employees noted the importance of receiving HRD opportunities in order to excel in their career development.

These findings regarding the initial attempt of practitioners defining HRD, supports the viewpoint provided by Lee (2001). As Lee (2001) noted, “there is a strong case that HRD should not be defined on philosophical, theoretical and practical grounds” (p. 327). Therefore, even though there is a set standard definition of what HRD is within the context of intercollegiate sport, the findings of this study can advance the current understanding of what HRD actually is in the sport domain. Additionally, the findings indicate that sport practitioners actually have a desire to want to learn more about HRD and how it can benefit their work lives. Furthermore,

interviews with participants indicated that many entry-level employees noted that they need to focus on the HRD initiative moving forward in their careers. Particularly, a Business Office Coordinator for a Group of 5 university stated, “Honestly, I haven’t thought much about how I can develop here. I’ve been more concerned with learning my job, but I know I’ll need to figure out how to advance and move up in my career.” Additionally, an Assistant Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university insinuated that they have had opportunities to partake in HRD practices but have declined due to uncertainty in department expectations. This participant stated, “I’ve been in this role less than a year, so I feel like I need to show that I know what I’m doing before I start going to these big conferences.” Similar beliefs were reinforced by many other entry-level employees, whereas they felt pressure from managers within their departments to show their skillset for the current position before pursuing professional development opportunities. The statements by these participants, as well as other entry-level employees not listed above, imply that professional development opportunities are not commonly welcomed for entry-level employees.

Furthermore, the findings regarding how HRD is understood within sport, from the researcher’s observations as an embedded employee of the two athletic departments, will be covered. Rocky University is a non-Power 5 institution in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. Rocky University has roughly 50 employees in their athletic department. This athletic department appeared to have a sense of closeness across all levels of employees. Additionally, this athletics department presented an environment where continuous learning and relationship building was welcomed. This could have been related to the organizational structure, number of employees, and the circumstance that all employees had offices together within the same building. Through conversations during events and office hours, the researcher was able to

document numerous occasions where employees were promoted to new roles and employees felt as though they had suitable opportunities for developing their workplace performance and attending university-supported professional development workshops. Again, similar to the findings in the semi-structured interviews, employees still did not fully comprehend what HRD was, but were recipients of the athletics department's considerable focus on promoting a positive HRD environment.

Meanwhile, Mountain University is also a non-Power 5 institution in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. Mountain University has roughly 110 employees in their athletic department. From the researcher's experience working within Mountain University, athletic department employees at Mountain University seemed encouraged by the athletics administrators there to take responsibility for their own learning and career growth. Essentially, displaying that Mountain University promotes an environment where HRD practices should begin from a bottom-up approach, whereby the employee themselves create their own routes of professional career development.

Thus, the researcher was able to examine an informal HRD practice through mentorship. Numerous employees at Mountain University seemed to create their own off-the-record mentoring program. Through further conversations with employees at Mountain University, it appeared that career and professional development opportunities were only available for the highest-ranked employees of each specific department (e.g., ticketing, development, marketing, etc.) with the athletics department. Employees there noted that they were usually informed that due to budgeting constraints, there were not enough financial resources available to allow all of the employees of the department to attend professional development opportunities. Thus, department directors (i.e., mid-level manager or athletics administrator) were deemed

responsible for who was able to attend professional development opportunities and who was not. Lastly, these employees were not prevented from all professional development opportunities. Most entry-level employees, and even some mid-level managers, depending on if there was a highest-ranked employee in their respective department, at Mountain University were pushed toward HRD-based trainings that were provided university-wide and were free of charge for the employee and the department. Most athletic department employees at Mountain University felt as though these university-wide professional development trainings were not beneficial as they could not address the development growth strategies that they needed specifically for their respective role in the athletics department.

Rewarding Human Resource Development Strategies in Sport

To determine an initial foundation of the presence and role of HRD in collegiate athletics departments, participants were asked, “How would you describe HRD in collegiate athletic departments?” Interestingly, these participants were able to state quite well the existence of HRD in their organizations, even after not being completely sure of the innerworkings of the concept. The importance of learning about how HRD and how it is incorporated in employee and organizational growth will only continue to grow as the field is advancing and evolving rapidly (Hughes, 2018). Therefore, the remainder of this section will highlight and provide in-depth analysis on the rewarding HRD strategies in sport.

The subsequent directing question of participant interviews for this study was, “What HRD activities is your athletic department or specific department engaged in?” Several themes emerged from participants’ answers to this question. To participants, HRD in the intercollegiate athletics space involved both formal trainings set by superiors or the athletics department as well

as informal trainings that were taken up by the employees themselves. The athletics departments that focused on the value of HRD were able to help their increase the workplace performance of their employees and the athletics department as a whole. Generally, the HRD initiatives discussed in this study's findings involved training and career development agendas that were put in place to support employees acquiring new job skills, improving current job skills, and staying engaged in their jobs. Specifically, the HRD programs that were discussed in the study's data promoted the personal and professional growth of employees. Furthermore, HRD initiatives were seen to participants as an investment the athletics department was making in them, and this sense of installed value helped promote a positive workplace environment. Within the data of the study, when done right, the HRD programs that were discussed by participants benefited not only the individual employees, but also made the entire athletics department more successful.

The first theme was the significant role of informal HRD learning strategies within athletics departments. While discussing the HRD strategies of intercollegiate athletics departments, many of the participants spoke about informal practices such as mentoring, networking, and training from others, usually supervisors or superiors. Oftentimes, these informal practices are recommended by leaders in the athletics department; however, there is not an official HRD strategy put forth by organizational leaders. Thus, it is commonly placed on the employee themselves to track down and facilitate the informal HRD processes. An Associate Director of Development at a Non-Power 5 university reiterated this: "I think it's important to have an off-the-record mentor of some kind... especially one in your athletic department." This participant spoke further on the importance for them to grow in their professional careers from the informal mentorship process.

Furthermore, this individual noted the benefits of having an informal mentorship in comparison to a formalized one. The Associate Director of Development at a Non-Power 5 university noted that, “I was a part of a mentorship program at my last university and honestly it didn’t work... I think mentoring happens naturally.” An importance of the informal mentoring process that occurs is that it is based on the chemistry between the mentor and mentee. In many cases that were noted by participants, the informal learning practices of HRD (e.g., mentoring, coaching) materialized without either of the employees (e.g., mentee, mentor) recognizing it. Without having the pressures that can develop from formalized mentorships, mentees could have valuable discussions with their mentors without the pressures of established goals and measurable outcomes. Another noted aspect of the informal mentorship process that was frequently taking place within intercollegiate athletics department was that participants noted that the informal mentorship process was regarded as being long-term, while the formalized mentorship was seen as more of a short-term exercise. This represents the value that informal mentorships have in potentially providing lifetime guidance for career development and progression within the sport industry.

However, while the mentorship process was seen as being more advantageous in the informal setting, there were multiple examples provided of effective formalized practices set forth by intercollegiate athletics administrators and departments. One of these formalized HRD processes commonly mentioned by participants of the study was having built-in professional development days into the calendar. It’s important to note that these built-in professional development days was not common among the participants in the study; however, there was a significance, value, and satisfaction of having them for employees’ growth and development. These built-in professional development days in intercollegiate athletics took on many forms and

designs. Participants that had predetermined scheduled professional development days categorized their professional development in three ways: (a) outsourced to a professional development focused company (e.g., Leo Learning, TrainingPros), (b) athletic department wide professional development relating to organizational objectives, and (c) job-specific professional development. Participants who stated that their athletics department had professional development days was usually regarded as a one-to-four-hour block of time that was set aside for participating in the professional development training. Some of the participants even noted that entire workdays would be set aside for professional development opportunities; however, that was an atypical aspect throughout the entire participant group.

The first approach focused on having intercollegiate athletics employees participate in professional development opportunities provided through an outsourced specialized company. Outsourcing professional development opportunities were described as “broad” and “customizable” by participants. A Senior Associate Athletics Director at a Power 5 university described that their outsourced professional development included completing online modules on the outsourcing company’s website. Furthermore, this participant informed that their specific trainings were usually focused on leadership trainings; however, other opportunities from the outsourcing company included strategic learning, risk management, and increased performance trainings. These trainings were also geared toward developing employees in a broad sense and not specifically within the intercollegiate athletics industry. A Director of Equipment at a Non-Power 5 university highlighted the formalized outsourced professional development trainings as a representation of the devotion their athletics department has on growing and developing their employees. When discussing their professional development training, this participant stated, “It's

not exactly fun, right? [laughter] But, to me, it shows that we value developing our staff while they're here.”

Subsequently, the next method of professional development included athletic department-wide professional development concerning organization-specific objectives. Trainings in this subset were labeled by participants as having a wide range of concentrations such as diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), NCAA compliance, sport gambling, and leadership/supervising. These professional development trainings were generally geared toward receiving a certification or completion status that was required or needed by the athletics department for their employees. Thus, these trainings were largely seen as less career development focused, but still rewarding to the employee due to the certification aspects of the trainings. Additionally, a few of the employees in the athletics administrator level of the study discussed partaking and valuing the professional development and leadership training courses provided by the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA).

The last type of professional development training in which participants participated was job-specific professional development. Training opportunities in this section were quite general and depended on the specific department that the employee was working in (e.g., ticketing, development, event management, marketing, sports information, equipment, etc.). Thus, the job-specific professional development opportunities were not planned as much by the athletic department, but more through each department's respective supervisor. Trainings in this space were almost exclusively required by the athletics department employees of this study. As one Assistant Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university explained,

It is absolutely a focus in our office. We have multiple trainings offered by Paciolan and NAATSO (National Association of Athletic Ticket Sales & Operations) every month...

usually someone in our office has to be in one of those and my boss talks about how it looks good for our department, but they're also pretty informative. For me, I use it as a chance to network, too.

Consequently, trainings were also noted as being an avenue for networking within the industry, which was a constant feature of importance for participants. Simply put, through these job-specific professional development trainings, employees were able to further their career development by developing relationships with others in their specific division of college athletics and by improving their specific job responsibilities (e.g., better ticket manager, equipment manager, marketing manager). Table 4.2 presents a few general participant responses defining rewarding examples of HRD in intercollegiate athletics departments.

Table 4.2*Rewarding Human Resource Development Examples*

Participant	Response
Associate Director – Equipment Power 5 University	We have a lot of continued education opportunities that are pushed to us. I know back in the day, because [colleague] did it. Our HR director had a list of all athletic department employees that didn't have their master's yet and there was a program where you could go get your master's and the athletic department would pick up the tab for it. It was only one or two programs that you could sign up for, but there was at least something where someone could get a master's, and it was held paid for by the university and you're developing people that way.
Assistant Director – Marketing Non-Power 5 University	I was a part of a career development institute at my previous institution that was not only just for individuals in the athletic department administration, but also involved support staff, interns, and coaches. We were tasked with putting together a mental health program that supported our student-athletes, the 300 student athletes that we had. I felt like that was a great program that really invested in how we're going to make mental health a priority, but also allowed me to do something outside of development for the better of our university.
Associate Athletics Director – Administrative Operations Non-Power 5 University	We have a partnership with a career development or professional development company where they'll do team trainings or provide courses on a ton of different things. That really just make you a better employee. And, for me, I look a lot at some of the leadership trainings and leadership courses that they offer. It kind of shows you the investment that our athletic department is making because this company also partners with a lot of big-time organizations, so it's not cheap. You know, it makes you want to participate because obviously the department's putting an investment into us to become better...I really do find it to be valuable. I've learned a lot of things that you wouldn't in the college athletic space...there's not always time, we're always so busy. There's not a ton of opportunities for just sitting down and learning. So, that has been a really good example of what we do here.
Associate Director – Equipment Power 5 University	It means having some sort of structure from a very broad perspective...having some sort of structure in place within an athletic department, that helps mold and develop younger talent or younger personnel. It's a quid pro quo situation where you need to help them develop skills, put them in situations where they can gain experience or leadership skills, and in turn, you're also grooming them to be a better employee. To be something you see as being more valuable down the road within your own athletic department.

In conclusion, it appeared that many of the participants did in fact feel that they were developing and growing as employees and in their careers through the HRD-based trainings. The HRD trainings that took place for the intercollegiate athletics department employee participants involved formal and informal HRD trainings. Moreover, these formal and informal trainings, included mentorship, online courses, and other development methods were put in place by either the employee or their respective organization in an effort to build and enhance their career development and job abilities. HRD within intercollegiate athletics was shown to encourage employee participants with the possibility of gaining advanced workplace comprehension, networking opportunities, and perspectives. By being provided HRD opportunities for personal development, participants felt more valued and appreciated as an employee. Within this study, HRD was shown to be not only the responsibility of athletics administrators, but also that of supervising managers and even the employee themselves.

Damaging Human Resource Development Strategies in Sport

This study also showed that there were plenty of participants where there was an organizational failure in not offering effective HRD programs. Due to non-existent or limited professional development opportunities, participants developed a negative impression on the employee development principles utilized by their respective athletics department. Some participant's athletics departments were described as needing a complete overhaul in terms of HRD and professional development. Several participants noted the need for more insights into HRD by their athletics departments and more understandings into how to develop workplace behaviors that are successful for employees. Thus, it was straightforward to identify from the data that more intercollegiate athletics departments should invest in HRD, especially at the

individual employee level. By failing in terms of effective HRD strategies and professional development, several participants noted that the dearth and ineffectiveness would serve as significant factors as reason in which they decided to leave their current job.

To determine if there were issues or concerns regarding the lack of the role of HRD/professional development in collegiate athletics departments, participants were asked, “How would you describe the professional development opportunities, or lack thereof, in your collegiate athletic departments?” Remarkably, while there were beneficial aspects that were covered in the previous section of findings, several participants noted that the current state of HRD and professional development in the intercollegiate athletics space requires vast improvements. To this point, some employees even suggested that they would look to pursue other career opportunities if improvements were not shown.

This major theme of needed improvement in HRD initiatives in the data indicated that although most athletics departments offered some format of professional development, there were significant factors that existed that resulted in such developments to be regarded as ineffective. Participants desired to be “pushed” and “challenged” in an effort to grow in their abilities; but many of the HRD conditions were unable to challenge participants’ abilities to grow in their jobs and careers. First off, the data revealed that participants at all levels of employment faced working in an organization that did not value professional development in their workforce. A number of participants described conditions in which they had to be the one in the driving seat regarding professional development in their organizations. Since these organizations did not place a focus on professional development, these employees had to be willing to personally locate professional development opportunities so that they could invest in their skill and career development. At the organizational level, one participant described the professional development

opportunities within their athletics department as “nonexistent”, consequently requiring this employee to search online, on-campus, and within their professional job association (e.g., National Association of Athletic Development Directors, National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics) to find career, professional, and networking growth opportunities.

Similarly, some participants described the difficulties of attending professional development opportunities if they were offered by their athletics department or university due to the lack of time available in their roles working substantial hours in college athletics. Participants explained that due to small office sizes (i.e., number of employees), constantly working events, and not having professional development as an emphasis in their department, they were unable to attend trainings that would help them grow and development.

Lastly, participants in this frame described trainings that were ineffective due to being “too broad” and “not relevant”. Participants were hoping for professional development and HRD workshops that would help them become better in their current roles. However, they were often provided trainings opportunities that were too inclusive and could not help them develop further within their current job duties. Table 4.3 presents a few general participant responses defining damaging examples of HRD in intercollegiate athletics departments.

Table 4.3*Damaging Human Resource Development Examples*

Participant	Response
Assistant Director – Development <i>Non-Power 5 University</i>	At my current institution there needs to be a better effort made to make professional development more of a priority... really that's based on the lack of professional development for younger employees. There's a mess that's sweeping across college athletics right now where young professionals in college athletics are moving out of college athletics based on the lack of professional development. I think that one thing that they could do better is provide more opportunities. Just anything really... it could end up being sending young professionals to development conferences, really investing in professional development. Also, could have support groups that you meet with, to discuss how to develop as young professionals. I think that there's different ways to at least try and invest and do a better job with professional development.
Director – Development <i>Non-Power 5 University</i>	It's [professional development] nonexistent. Anything that I want to do, professional development wise, I have to figure out myself. I mean there's a lot of things that I can do on my own... I can look at things online, find things to watch, but there's nothing in place right now in my current job. No opportunities to develop professionally. When I got hired, you do the basic university onboarding and they talk about how important it is to continue to get better in your job, but I've been here for three years now and I don't think I've seen any effort made, at least not in athletics. I'll get the occasional university email, but I don't have the time to go to that... I can't just leave in the middle of the day and go to some building on campus for a three-hour training. So yeah, I don't know, it needs to get better, but there's almost zero focus on it right now.
Director – Marketing <i>Non-Power 5 University</i>	I'd say we have a good number of trainings through the university and in the professional development program that we have on campus. But really, I wish they were more practical. What I want to know is how do I become a better marketer? But the trainings on-campus aren't that focused. I just want to meet with the marketing teams around campus and talk. But the ones that are offered are just too broad and a lot of the topics are, I would say are basic... what I want is more in-depth training. More to what I'm doing every single day and that's comparable to what other people are doing on campus to what I'm doing for athletics, right? That's where I would like to see our athletic department going... You'd think we would have better training for the young talent here, but if there's not an effort shown to make us better employees, I think that's where we can lose some people.

In conclusion, it appeared that several participants felt that there were not enough development opportunities or relevant trainings at their athletics department. Participants desired HRD-based trainings that would help grow as employees and in their careers. Since participants worked in a variety of roles in collegiate athletics (e.g., ticketing, development, marketing, compliance, sports information) that require them to have a diverse knowledge base, participants desired in-depth trainings that would enhance their professional abilities and qualifications. However, a barrier that was regularly highlighted was the inconsistent and not valued perceptions of HRD-based trainings in participants' athletics departments. Notably, the previous section's finding on having relevant and consistent HRD-based trainings provided a better environment of maintaining and advancing professional standards for employees in intercollegiate athletics. Thus, having access to significant and meaningful HRD-based development opportunities and trainings emphasized the integral role of growth for intercollegiate athletics employees.

Organizational Politics

To examine the intersection of organizational politics through HRD, evaluate how organizational politics is perceived, and determine how organizational political behaviors are used at the Division I level, nine athletics administrators, nine athletics department mid-level managers, and eleven athletics department entry-level employees were interviewed. Additionally, observations were conducted by the researcher as he was embedded within two Event Management departments at both Rocky University and Mountain University in the Rocky Mountain geographical region of the United States. The participants' job title and Power 5 Non-Power 5 affiliation are listed for the Division I athletics administrators, mid-level managers, and entry-level employees to ensure confidentiality of the participants. Themes will initially be

discussed through data collected during the semi-structured interviews, followed by the observational data that was collected by the research during on-site, office, and event-based observations.

An important factor to consider when discussing the organizational politics results of this study is that the range of perspectives on organizational politics conveyed by participants, through both interviews and observations, is the work done by Cohen and Vigoda (1998). Cohen and Vigoda (1998) stated that “When you ask someone to clearly define organizational politics, it is likely you will not get two similar or even close answers” (p. 60). As such, at times during the current study, participants, and even the researcher, had difficulty describing and shaping the politic environment of the organization. However, other employees were able to explain and provide solid examples of workplace behaviors that significantly defined and impacted their organization’s politics standing. Participants noted their expectations related to their perspective of organizational politics. The interview responses often signified those perceptions of organizational politics and were mostly varied and were sometimes challenging to characterize (e.g., positive, negative, neutral) clearly. When asked to describe their initial assumptions regarding organizational politics in collegiate athletic departments, a Marketing Director at a Non-Power 5 university, commented, “Initially my mind wants to go negative. But I think it's good and bad, it can be positive or negative, I guess it just depends on how you see it.” Meanwhile, an Associate Athletics Director of Event Management at a Power 5 university was clearer on their perspective of organizational politics, expressing,

College athletics... it's all hierarchy, it's all about who you know. That's how I've got every job I've had in the industry; you have to be in that type of good positioning to progress in your career. I don't agree with it at all, but it is what it is. If not, you're going

to be stuck where you're currently at... kind of like a totem pole is the best way I can describe it.

Contrastingly, some participants viewed organizational politics and outcomes in a positive manner. This is shown through an Assistant Director of Sports Information at a Non-Power 5 university's response to organizational politics: "I see it as a way of networking, you know, building those relationships in-house. Getting to really know everyone and how they operate. I try to do that... I can promise you that's what they [athletics administrators] think as well."

Whether viewing through a positive, negative, or neutral lens, almost all participants described that they understood the impact of organizational politics in intercollegiate athletics departments and agreed that politics have a substantial influence on individual and organizational outcomes. Sub-themes under this primary theme include "positive perspectives and outcomes of organizational politics", "negative perspectives and outcomes of organizational politics", and "neutral perspectives and outcomes of organizational politics". Participants were mainly grouped under one of the three perspective subthemes. Roughly a third of the participants defined organizational politics and subsequent outcomes as positive. Another third of participants defined organizational politics and subsequent outcomes as negative. While the last third of participants viewed organizational politics and subsequent outcomes through a neutral lens, they could each grasp both the positive and negative sides. Overall, the impacts of organizational politics were described according to the lens through which participants viewed organizational politics.

Positive Perceptions and Outcomes

As mentioned, roughly a third of the participants described organizational politics and consequent outcomes as positive. These participants, specifically an Assistant Athletics Director

of Marketing at a Power 5 university regarded organizational politics as just a means in which intercollegiate athletics departments operate. Broadly, this grouping of participants regarded organizational politics as fundamental and necessary to the performance of the athletics department and its employees. These participants viewed organizational politics as not only a positive facet of everyday organizational life, but also crucial to their growth and capabilities while in the workplace. An Assistant Athletics Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university echoed the responses of many positive perception participants by saying, “I see it as a positive. With my job [ticketing], I need to be able to communicate across departments. It’s not always just to get something either. Sometimes it’s me just making sure I have a channel [department] there when I need it down the line.”

Participants in this positive perception often noticed how they or other co-workers have engaged in organizational politics to receive beneficial outcomes. The Assistant Athletics Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university also spoke on how a co-worker was able to quickly “climb the ladder” in their athletic department, by stating, “She clearly used the political side to her benefit, you know, to move up to that role. That was the first-time where I realized that a lot of politics was going on here.” These participants comprehended what abilities were required to get items accomplished, as well as the capacity organizational politics possess to powerfully influence others.

Furthermore, these positive perception employees noticed the advantageous aspects of functionally maneuvering their organization’s political environment as an essential strategy. These employees noted the need of copiously understanding their political environment so that they could utilize their strategies within socially-specific situations with their co-workers, supervisors, and subordinates. An Assistant Athletics Director of Development at a Non-Power 5

university compared organizational politics to relationship building within their organization. This participant stated, “I absolutely use the relationships with my co-workers to my advantage. It would be ridiculous not to.” Thus, participants within the positive perception suggested that in order to be performing efficiently, athletic department employees need to use both formal and informal relationships to complete their job responsibilities. Possessing a positive perception of the political environment provided these intercollegiate athletic employees with a workplace flexibility. This flexibility was discussed further by participants as they suggested that it allowed them the ability to complete difficult tasks or tasks with difficult co-workers. Table 4.4 lists the participants that were regarded as having a positive perception of organizational politics.

Table 4.4

Participants with Positive Perceptions of Organizational Politics

Job Level	Department	School Level	Category
Sr. Associate A.D.	Event Management	Power 5	Athletics Admin.
Sr. Associate A.D.	Development	Non-Power 5	Athletics Admin.
Assistant A.D.	Marketing	Power 5	Athletics Admin.
Assistant A.D.	Ticketing	Power 5	Athletics Admin.
Assistant A.D.	Development	Non-Power 5	Athletics Admin.
Director	Development	Non-Power 5	Mid-level
Director	Event Management	Power 5	Mid-level
Director	Equipment	Non-Power 5	Mid-level
Assistant Director	Sports Information	Non-Power 5	Entry-level
Assistant Director	Compliance	Power 5	Entry-level
Coordinator	Marketing	Non-Power 5	Entry-level

In the remainder of this section, the researcher’s observational findings regarding the employees who perceive organizational politics in a positive manner will be covered. The researcher recalls an experience working with the Director of Event Management at Mountain University regarding the perceiving organizational politics in a positive way. While preparing for a women’s volleyball game, the researcher started an informal conversation concerning the political environment at Mountain University. The Director of Event Management had a broad

interpretation of organizational politics, but consistently emphasized that organizational politics are central and meaningful to the organizational functioning in the athletics department at Mountain University. For examples, the Director of Event Management noted their positive perception of organizational politics helped them form workplace relationships, control their department's decision-making, and decide how their department's resources were used. This individual had been at Mountain University for several years now and emphasized how organizational politics affects how they approach their daily work schedule and the long hours that are required of their position. Since this individual understood the political environment that they worked within and was willing to positively engage in politics, they felt as though they knew the complete innerworkings of the athletics department. How decisions were made and who truly held the power within the athletics department were continuously discussed between the Director of Event Management and the researcher.

Another example of positive perceptions and outcomes of organizational politics through the researcher's observation data was one centered on accelerated career progression. An Associate Director of Development at Mountain University was able to partially utilize his positive perceptions of organizational environment to receive a promotion. Internal promotions at Mountain University were quite rare, especially for younger employees in the athletics department; but through understanding the political environment that they were working in and by applying positive political behaviors in social situations, this employee contributed a portion of their promotion to organizational politics. This employee was a very nice person, but also as one who is extremely strategic. The individual was able to leverage his political environment and understanding for his promotion as they put pressure on their supervisor to give them a promotion or they would leave to pursue other professional opportunities in intercollegiate

athletics. This employee knew that due to their elevated standing within their political environment that they had the power to request this promotion. Even as a younger employee who did not have the same tenure as his co-workers, it was initially going to be a difficult ask; however, due to his organizational political power that promotion ask was received positively by the supervisor and granted.

The researcher noticed throughout the athletics department, there were plenty of positive consequences for individuals who positively perceived organizational politics. Some examples include elevated levels of happiness, elevated levels of engagement, and elevated levels of motivation. More specifically, the researcher noticed how the positive perception of organizational politics could lead to positive outcomes for a sport organization, as well as for employee themselves. As noted above, an employee's willingness to positively engage in organizational politics could contribute to a promotion in the workplace.

Negative Perceptions and Outcomes

As previously discussed, roughly another third of the participants described organizational politics and consequent outcomes as negative. These participants held a view of organizational politics that was predominantly negative and based their perceptions on manipulation and the confusing nature of other's self-interests. These participants also reported that organizational politics either caused themselves or their co-workers to challenge organizational changes. Additionally, participants highlighted that organizational politics in intercollegiate athletics departments can isolate employees that can eventually force employee turnover or stall career progression. An Associate Athletics Director of Administrative Operations at a Non-Power 5 university, when describing their experiences with organizational politics, offered:

I think it's an unhealthy aspect of working in sport. College athletics is a relatively small field. We all know what jobs are open and who takes what. So, I feel like if you don't play along, you can kind of become an outcast. It'll prevent you from moving up internally, or elsewhere, because it's likely someone will know someone else that you worked with.

This grouping of participants mostly viewed organizational politics in a similar negative manner. Most participants described negative outcomes such as the mistreatment of power and generally devious behavior.

Similarly, participants with a negative perception of organizational politics regarded it as a constant environment where employees throughout the athletics department are acting independently and in their own self-interests. Employees in this perspective wanted to remain far away from the political behaviors that they ruined the functionality of the athletics department. Thus, these employees wanted to go throughout their workdays with minimal to no association in the political environment of their department or even recognizing the presence of organizational politics in the background. An Associate Director of Equipment at a Power 5 university echoed this viewpoint by stating, "Working in college athletics can be a political nightmare. Everyone has their own agendas. Thankfully, I leave that to my co-workers to deal with and I try to distance myself from it as much as I can." Table 4.5 lists the participants who were regarded as having a negative perception of organizational politics.

Table 4.5*Participants with Negative Perceptions of Organizational Politics*

Job Level	Department	School Level	Category
Associate A.D.	Event Management	Power 5	Athletics Admin.
Associate A.D.	Admin. Operations	Non-Power 5	Athletics Admin.
Associate Director	Equipment	Power 5	Mid-level
Associate Director	Development	Power 5	Mid-level
Associate Director	Development	Non-Power 5	Mid-level
Assistant Director	Development	Non-Power 5	Entry-level
Assistant Director	Event Management	Non-Power 5	Entry-level
Assistant Director	Marketing	Non-Power 5	Entry-level
Coordinator	Business Office	Non-Power 5	Entry-level
Coordinator	Event Management	Non-Power 5	Entry-level

The employees who held a negative perception of organizational politics oftentimes felt that even being in a highly political environment was hard to deal with. For example, some of the negative perceptions of organizational politics included exploiting workplace relationships and dominating department-based decisions. Even if they were not on the receiving end of their co-worker's political behavior tactics, it was difficult for them to even work within that type of work setting. For example, an Assistant Director of Marketing at a Non-Power 5 university commented, "I'm not going to just give in and change my personality, you know? I know that I'm a good marketer. I know the in-game presentations that I run for [sport] are great, why should I have to pander for no reason?" These participants did not feel as though they were losing ground within the workplace hierarchy for their reluctance to engage in organizational politics.

In the remainder of this section, the researcher's observational findings regarding the employees who perceive organizational politics in a negative manner will be covered. While working an event at Mountain University, the researcher had the opportunity to sit pre-game before a women's basketball game with an Assistant Director of Marketing. At Mountain University. There were three entry-level marketing employees who were each given marketing

duties for specific sports. The researcher over the course of a few months was able to determine that each of these entry-level marketing employees desired the role of in-game director for the more desirable sports (e.g., men's basketball, football). During this pre-game discussion, the researcher was able to discuss this topic with one of the Assistant Directors of Marketing. Additionally, this employee was regarded as having a negative perspective of organizational politics. The conversation that was covered included the Assistant Director of Marketing's concerns about not being able to have in-game marketing responsibilities for either football or men's basketball. This employee believed that they were not given the opportunity due to their co-worker essentially "sucking-up" to their department head for this role. The employee alleged that they missed out on this opportunity because they were not willing to manipulate their supervisor and was hoping they were going to be given the opportunity based on their merit and previous working experience (i.e., being the in-game marketing director at another university). Outside of this specific occasion, the researcher recalls multiple informal conversations where athletics department employees at both Rocky University and Mountain University felt as though they were bypassed for workplace opportunities due to their disinclination to engage in organizational politics.

Furthermore, the researcher observed where organizational politics were perceived negatively, which lead to negative employee and organizational outcomes. Concerning the employee level, the researcher in their observational data classified negative outcomes of organizational politics such as elevated levels of employee annoyance, unhappiness, pressure, and anxiety. These employees who negatively perceived organizational politics were regarded as employees opposed departmental changes and contributed organizational politics as a major factor in their slowed or delayed career progressions. Through one experience at Rocky

University, the researcher shared a conversation with the Assistant Director of Event Management before a weekend long volleyball tournament. Even though the individual was a younger employee in the athletics department and had just been in their current role for less than two years, the employee had felt that due to organizational politics, their career progression had stalled. The athletics department had recently denied his request for a promotion, citing that he had only been there in the current role for less than two years. From thereafter, this employee seemed frequently disturbed and aggravated with his workplace environment and some departmental processes. Citing organizational politics as a reason for the promotion denial, the employee expressed that being in an organizational political environment that does not welcome change is going to lead to amplified tension and anger among entry to mid-level employees.

Lastly, at the organizational level, the negative consequences of organizational politics that were identified by the researcher in the observational data included lower levels of employee productivity, elevated levels of conflicts, an increase in unprofessional behavior, and higher employee turnover. One example of negative outcomes at the organizational level due to politics could be seen at Mountain University. During the months being embedded in the athletics department at Mountain University, the research noticed a significant amount of employee turnover throughout multiple departments. Through numerous informal conversations with staff members throughout the athletics department, the political environment was occasionally noted as a reason. For example, there had been constant turnover within the Development office at Mountain University. More than six individuals had left their position in the office within the last two years, which was quite high for an office that employs roughly six individuals in total. During these discussions with Development office staff members, several employees noted a potential cause for the high turnover being the political environment of their respective office.

Thus, individuals throughout the entire athletics department at Mountain University that decided to leave, may have decided to due to some of the negative aspects of organizational politics that have been discussed (e.g., tension, low morale, poor office environments).

Neutral Perceptions and Outcomes

Concludingly, approximately another third of participants held a primarily neutral perspective on organizational politics in their athletic department. As mentioned previously, the neutral perspective emphasizes the “subjective evaluations and interpretations of meaning, rather than the view that meanings are inherent, objective properties of situations” (Ferris et al., 1994, p. 4). Thus, the participants who viewed organizational politics in a neutral manner were fully capable of evaluating their political environment, but rather than view it as positive or negative, their feelings remained nonaligned. This group of employees noted that it was important for their co-workers to alter themselves to adapt to social situations to be effective in the workplace, but still chose not to partake. The researcher recognizes that even though an individual in the neutral perspective grouping can state that they do not engage in organizational politics, it would be quite difficult to never use political behaviors in the environment of an intercollegiate athletics department. Furthermore, the participants that were regarded as observing organizational politics in a more neutral manner, often times noted that this was because they recognized that organizational politics is a fundamental part of intercollegiate athletics departments. This was best summarized by an Associate Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university,

People can have selfish motivations, but things can't always be categorized into one hundred percent right or wrong. So, what I mean is, this is a competitive field, if you want to be an AD [Athletics Director] you have to be focused on your own career at all times. I don't have goals to be an AD so maybe that's why I don't really care about it.

This was also supported by a Senior Associate Athletics Director of Administrative Operations at a Power 5 university's statement, "Honestly, I don't really get into the politics here. Trust me, I can see what's going on, but there's honestly no reason for me to. Maybe that's because I'm just content right now." Being comfortable in one's job role and career situation was a common topic among all of the neutrally perception participants. Each of the participants related their political perception to how driven, or lack thereof, they were to "climb the ladder". Individuals that appeared likely to remain in their current positions for the foreseeable future, did not feel the need to engage in organizational politics.

Additionally, participants based their view of organizational politics as neutral due to their desire of just wanting to focus on their specific job. For example, a Director of Ticketing at a Non-Power 5 university, a relatively newer employee at their respective university, noted that their job was already complex enough and that they did not need to make things harder for themselves by engaging or even acknowledging the politics of the organization. A Marketing Coordinator at a Non-Power 5 university also elaborated on their thoughts of the unnecessary but strategic presence of organizational politics, "It's not for me and it's usually manipulative, I think. But everyone's looking for that next step up and I can see why people do it. In that way it makes sense, just a way to advance." Table 4.6 lists the participants that were regarded as having a neutral perception of organizational politics.

Table 4.6*Participants with Neutral Perceptions of Organizational Politics*

Job Level	Department	School Level	Category
Sr. Associate A.D.	Admin. Operations	Power 5	Athletics Admin.
Sr. Associate A.D.	Admin. Operations	Non-Power 5	Athletics Admin.
Director	Marketing	Non-Power 5	Mid-level
Director	Ticketing	Non-Power 5	Mid-level
Associate Director	Ticketing	Power 5	Mid-level
Assistant Director	Ticketing	Non-Power 5	Entry-level
Assistant Director	Marketing	Non-Power 5	Entry-level
Coordinator	Marketing	Non-Power 5	Entry-level

While working an event at Mountain University, the researcher can recall an informal dialogue with a Director of Development. This individual had been in their current role as the Director (i.e., mid-level manager) for more than seven years and seemed content with his current responsibilities and job title. Through this dialogue and other conversations with this Director of Development, the researcher was under the impression that this individual would stay in their current role for the extended future as they had mentioned that they do not plan on ever leaving the athletics department at Mountain University. Further, several other long-tenured employees at Mountain University appeared to have similar mindsets, which was a common theme with employees who had extensively served within their current roles and job titles. The current research was able to categorize the employees as ones that also had a neutral perspective of organizational politics.

Political Skill

As discussed in the previous section of findings relating to organizational politics, some participants struggled defining and providing examples of organizational politics; however, almost all of the study's participants were able to describe political behaviors used by themselves and their co-workers. Collectively, what these participants were describing was the concept of political skill. Each of Ferris et al. (2005)'s dimension of political skill (i.e., interpersonal

influence, networking ability, apparent sincerity, and social astuteness) were discussed by participants and observed by the researcher during the time spent at both Rocky University and Mountain University.

In this section, each of Ferris et al. (2005)'s dimensions of political skill will be covered through participant quotes from interviews as well as the observational data. To begin, the most common theme expressed by the study's participants was the importance of building and strategically using relationships to start their careers and have continued success in intercollegiate athletics. Thus, this theme falls seamlessly within the networking ability dimension of political skill. Since most interviews began with a brief background description of participant's workplace employment, networking ability was consistently highlighted. The importance of participants to use their networks to obtain employment within intercollegiate athletics was discussed by almost all participants of the study. These individuals noted the importance of building key relationships to use for their own futures. One Associate Athletics Director of Event Management at a Power 5 university echoed this statement by saying, "Every job I've had in sport is because of the relationships that I've built." Thus, whether or not these employees of intercollegiate athletics knew it or not, they were already engaging in a pivotal aspect of political skill in just the initial stages of their careers. The need of having a minimal level of political skill just to enter into the industry of intercollegiate athletics was shown throughout the study's interviews.

Another common theme of the networking ability of political skill that was commonly discussed by participants was controlling relationships to get things done in the workplace. A majority of these participants were either older in age or had a higher ranked position in the athletics department (e.g., mid-level manager, athletics administrator). These participants were

those who also perceived organizational politics positively and as vital to an athletics department's daily operations. Similarly, these participants detailed that their approach in how to act in the office was based on how they were working with and through others. These participants were regarded as being highly politically skilled due to this focus on utilizing workplace relationships as a strategy.

The next dimension of political skill that was highlighted extensively during participant interviews and observations was apparent sincerity. As noted by Ferris et al. (2005), it's important to consider that when discussing apparent sincerity, it is not the process of pretending to be sincere. Apparent sincerity is actually the social behaviors that are "to others as possessing high levels of integrity, authenticity, sincerity, and genuineness. They are, or appear to be, honest, open, and forthright" (Ferris et al., 2005, p. 129). Thus, in some participant interviews there was discussion regarding individuals in the workplace faking sincerity and that would imply that those individuals did not have political skill as the ulterior motives were detected by the interviewing participants. Therefore, that data was not developed into the current findings.

During the time leading up to a men's basketball game at Mountain University, the researcher was working within a team of event management employees. This team was led by the Director of Event Management. During multiple team meetings, the researcher was able to acknowledge the apparent sincerity of this Director. In meetings leading up to the event, the Director was able to seem genuine and sincere during discussions of individual job responsibilities and during a question-and-answer portion of the meeting that was composed of the entire Event Management team. This event took place in the winter months and many employees were tasked with roles that would require them to be outside in the cold. Many individuals had concerns with roles that would be outside and the Director was able to

successfully address each concern with a genuineness that was very noticeable. After the meeting took place and in a “lay low” period before the game the researcher generated conversation based around the concept of political skill. After some initial discussion regarding the concept of political skill and with the researcher providing insight to the Director on political skill the Director shared some of their thoughts on its importance. The Director noted that they thought political skill was valuable working in an athletics department because it can help showcase the flow of information and power in the department. Obviously, he had many individuals under him in the events department, but he noted that if he was able to showcase good political skill strategies the information that he was providing would be taken and received positively. Further, he acknowledged the power he had in his role, but his overall goal was to have his team believe that he wants them to complete their tasks, where many are very undesirable, without fear. The Director truly wanted their employees to be able to detect their genuineness so that tasks would be completed due to the close relations they were able to have with their subordinates.

Next, the significance of the social astuteness dimension will be discussed. Social astuteness was shown through the participant interviews and observations by the major theme of understanding the organizational decision-making processes. This behavior was noted in the data by individuals shaping their social behaviors in a way that best fits the social environment that they are in rather than what may feel most comfortable. To understand the decision-process of their respective organizations, participants noted the importance of consistently interacting and understand their social environment. Furthermore, these participants were able to present their social astuteness abilities or experiences by noting that within the workplace, successful employees should have appropriate awareness around what is socially occurring, this was

presented by a Senior Associate Athletics Director of Administrative Operations at a Power 5 university as they stated,

I'm not always the most bubbly person...but I know the importance of every meeting I have... every quick pop in. So, I make sure that at least for those few moments a day, I'm on. I know I'm not going to be everyone's cup of tea, but for some I really need to be.

This employee was able to further highlight the importance of understating social situations. They discussed that even though everyone may not like them, they need the important few (i.e., athletics administrators, decision makers) to genuinely like them. They are able to develop this likeability through understanding how they should act to best please others in almost every situation. Therefore, this Senior Associate Athletics Director of Administrative Operations at a Power 5 university has a very high level of knowledge and ability concerning the social astuteness aspect of political skill.

Another example of participants of the study having or experiencing social astuteness was emphasized in their understanding of waiting for the right opportunities in their workplaces. This came in many forms ranging from when to pursue a promotion opportunity to when to share news with others in the workplace. Individuals that were categorized as correctly understanding social astuteness provided examples of being able to interpret others' potential behaviors and intentions. An Assistant Athletics Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university provided a great example of this when explaining how and when they share news to their supervisor (i.e., athletics administrator) and subordinates (e.g., entry-level employees). This participant stated, "It's hard to know when to correctly share news, but I absolutely think about that... maybe to a fault". This statement showcases the level of thinking that goes into determining when opportunity is right to share information. Further, this participant shared about the processes that go into figuring out

when the opportunity is right to share bad news. An Assistant Athletics Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university noted that they might not share some bad news to their subordinates or supervisors if the department is going into an event heavy weekend.

Lastly, examples and experiences of political skill interpersonal influence in the study will be discussed. Since interpersonal influence is the political skill dimension that is based on changing the attitudes or behaviors of others, it can be the hardest dimension to detect (Ferris et al., 2005). In the intercollegiate workplace setting, interpersonal influences were perceived through employees' efforts of using power, persuasion, and assertiveness an effort to get desired behaviors or actions. During researcher's time embedded at both Rocky University and Mountain University, the presence of power was very apparent when examining the interactions and relations between employees. Before follow-up conversations with employees, it was difficult to identify the presence of power between employees. For example, during one men's basketball game at Mountain University, the researcher was able to be present for a conversation between the Director of Event Management and an Assistant Athletics Director that was not within the Event Management department. The Assistant Athletics Director was asking for credentials for individuals, who had not registered for them beforehand, just a few hours before the event. The Assistant Athletics Director was utilizing aspects of power and persuasion heavily during the conversation and essentially pressured the Director of Event Manager to provide the credentials even though that was against the athletics department's policy. Thus, the Assistant Athletics Director even though he was not a supervisor of the Event Director. The researcher compared this instance to one of a "get in line" mentality. As noted previously, the environment of an intercollegiate athletics department can be very hierarchical, therefore resistance by employees can be quite rare.

In more a positive representation of political skill, interpersonal influence was observed by the researcher through politically skilled employees leading by example. These individuals used leading by example to empower some desired behaviors and outcomes such as developing leadership behaviors of subordinates. One athletics administrator at Rocky University, when having a conversation with the researcher, talked about the importance of leading by example. This participant discussed how in order for subordinate employees to develop leadership capabilities of their own, they need to see it in action. This individual focused on doing whatever it takes to get the job done in hopes that their subordinates would do the same. Thus, this athletics administrator was able to utilize interpersonal influence through their leading by example ideology.

Experiencing Leader Political Skill: “Playing the Game”

Participants’ workplace experiences and relationships were supported by utilization of political skill by their direct supervisors as well as other organizational leaders. In the current study, successful sport employees (i.e., entry-level, mid-level, and athletics administrators) used political skill for personal and career advancements. Political skill also contributed to their base of power and influence over others in the organization. When these politically skilled sport employees interacted with other sport employees on a daily basis, they incorporated politically skilled behaviors to influence social situations in which they had a precise goal in mind.

These employees also were able to cordially interact with all levels of the organization, thus conveying their networking and influencing powers. The importance of networking ability was emphasized by an Associate Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university stating, “My boss, well he’s rarely in his office. Always has to be talking to someone. But that’s his personality, absolutely. Maybe that’s saying something, I’m 43, probably 10 years older than him, and he’s,

my boss.” In an organizational environment like collegiate athletic departments, that are based on constant activities and routines, going out of one’s way to resourcefully construct and utilize their own organizational and personal networks can be advantageous, both personally and within one’s career development.

Interviews with the employees who either reported directly to or fell beneath in the organizational chart, as well as the researcher’s on-site observations during the events at both universities, suggested that organizational leaders in collegiate athletic departments had an immense influence over subordinate employees. When athletics administrators and occasionally mid-level managers utilized their political skill, it was conducted in a manner that was subtle, unassuming, and relied heavily on each of the four dimensions of political skill. For example, during on-site observations at Rocky University, the researcher did not observe or receive any information that the athletics administrators at the respective intercollegiate athletics department attempted to use any of the negative tactics of political skill, such as fear, obvious power, or the threat of punishment (Ferris et al., 2007). Rather, the researcher through the combination of observations and interviews, noticed that politically skilled athletics administrators made no mention or actions of negative power (i.e., failed political skill behaviors) and were able to be effective through at minimum appearing to be genuine and sincere. Thus, these athletics administrators were successfully able to comprehend social interactions correctly and adjust their own behavior to best fit the behaviors of others. A Director of Event Management at a Power 5 university stated, “There’s a few people [athletics administrators] that I’d run through a brick wall for. That’s just the way it is here. Most times people just like to be talked to, or waved at, recognized, you know. It’s not hard.” Further, an Assistant Director of Sports Information at a

non-Power university, when discussing an organizational leader in their athletic department detailed,

He just sees everyone as a human being, you know, which can be rare sometimes. He'll talk to you, and he'll acknowledge you. He'll make me feel special, and heck I don't even work under him. He just has that personality to where he's perfect for playing the game in college athletics. He'll be an AD that's for sure.

Instances like this, where athletics administrators and organizational leaders were able to install strong feelings of motivation into others was mentioned heavily throughout the interviews.

Usually, the employees on the receiving end were entry-level or mid-level employees that were looking for organizational advancement or had a solid personal drive that was seen in their desire to succeed. In the interviews with athletics administrators, who were most often the individuals with the ability to utilize leader political skill, described themselves as the ones in the athletics department that needed to bring the energy as their mood affected the dynamics of the department. Further, the researcher was regarded the individuals who appeared to have aspects of leader political skill as being competitive, driven, and successful in their athletics department.

Additionally, leader political skill was noticed between individuals who were both categorized as athletics administrators or organizational leaders. An Associate Director of Development at a non-Power 5 university noted how they have encountered an athletic department leader at their university applying political skill strategies,

One of the best examples I can give you is [athletic department administrator]. He'll make you feel like you are the only person that matters. And I think for a lot of people, just starting off in their career, they'll eat that up, and they'll love it. And they'll think that they're really important and he's there for them from there on out.

Thus, participants experienced the combination of political skill and sport leaders' unobtrusive abilities which appeared to have helped those organizational leaders achieve positive outcomes within their career paths as well. In discussions with the participants at the athletics administrator level, leader political skill was framed in a very strategic sense. Another participant, a Senior Associate Athletics Director of Administrative Operations at a Power 5 University, discussed the importance of being overly observant in conversations with other athletics administrators and organizational leaders. This participant noted that they constantly think why an individual decides to say something to them or a colleague. Also, they expressed that they're constantly examining why some employees decide to do something or not when in meetings or interacting in the department setting. Consequently, these athletics administrators noticed the significance of leader political skill and emphasized its practicality as a strategy to obtain goals, desired behaviors, self-interests, and organizational interests.

Lastly, interview participants were asked to address the leader political skills that they use in order to accomplish desired objectives with other athletics administrators. These participants noted that they rely most frequently on the "common goal" approach. An Assistant Athletics Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university stated:

It's important that I say we're all working towards a common goal. We'll [department leaders] get so tied up on what's best for our office that we forget it's pretty much the same for them too... So, I really focus on being upfront. Really show how we have common goals that fit both of our visions.

Further, another participant, an Associate Athletics Director of Event Management at a Power 5 university, shared that they really focus on producing as many "win/win" situations as possible when working with other athletics administrators and departments. This individual even noted

that these win/win situations are critical for them to be successful in their role as they have to interact with almost every specific department in the athletics department every single day.

These politically skilled leaders were able to successfully utilize the interpersonal influence and social astuteness aspects of political skill in the common goal and win/win approaches they took.

Job Design and Job Crafting

In the following section, the findings of the study within the domain of job design and its contribution to job crafting in relation to HRD are presented. The findings of the study in relation to job design and job crafting are presented with three themes: (a) job design's influence on desired autonomy, (b) cognitive and relational job crafting for development, and (c) improving job design for the future sport workplace. These themes hold specific meanings of phenomenon as experienced by the participants (Braun et al., 2016). Representative quotations are presented verbatim to further illustrate the themes.

Autonomy's Influence on Job Design and Crafting Abilities

Participants' perceptions of the autonomy of their jobs were fairly consistent when reflecting on the design of their jobs, which includes working in a hierarchical, fast-paced, and highly collaborative workplace. Findings from this section mostly stemmed from the following interview questions that participants were asked, "Can you decide how to go about getting your job done? If so, how?" and "Considering what your job requires you to do in general, how much opportunity is there for you to make your own decisions?" The resulting theme from this study's findings of the importance of autonomy within one's evaluation of their job design mirrors that of previous findings in job design research by Bakker and Demerouti (2014).

Additionally, the current study's finding regarding how importantly employees value autonomy in the nature of their job's design is the academic conclusions by Hackman and

Oldham (1976). Hackman and Oldham (1976) stated that autonomy is ‘the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out’ (p. 258). Thus, participants wanted to have the opportunity to decide when, where, and how their job was executed. For example, expounded on their thoughts of autonomy within their job,

I would love to take control and be my own boss, at least at times. We're [athletics departments] like small businesses, a bunch of small businesses focused on completely different things, but we're all under one roof, right, like it's a bunch of small businesses doing different things, but we're grouped together because we're athletic employees, right. Like my boss, my direct boss, he oversees five, four or five different departments. Like he's got a lot on his plate, right? I mean, he's a great guy, but he doesn't know the inner workings of sports information. He has marketing and ticketing under him too, like we're so different. We're all external but what I do and what they do are so different... I just wished I had more autonomy in this role. I feel like I know what's best, I'll ask for guidance when needed but, I think I know how to best do my job.

This belief was needing aspects of independence within the design of their jobs was also shared by several other participants. An Assistant Athletics Director of Development at a Non-Power 5 university provided a representative quotation, “It took years, but I’d say I have full autonomy here...It [autonomy] is absolutely one of the most important things to me in a job.”

Furthermore, a prominent feature of the data regarding participants wanting to add more autonomy within their job design was the belief that more autonomy leads to improved task-completion efficiency for participants. Several participants felt as though they were able to thoroughly identify the jobs tasks that need completed and how to most efficiently complete

these tasks in comparison to their supervisors. This perspective was exemplified by an Assistant Director of Compliance at a Power 5 university, “My boss gives me a lot of freedom. I can decide how I should tackle parts of my job and she is there when I have questions.” The autonomy that was granted to this participant, even in an entry-level position, provided them with the freedom and ability to independently plan and implement their own best practices in completing job tasks.

While the need for wanting more autonomy in one’s role is not surprising, what is distinctive is how participants, specifically at the entry-level and mid-level, described the obstructions that were sometimes present in their athletics departments that prevent more autonomy from occurring. Therefore, it can be determined from the findings that collectively, participants craved to have features of “freedom” and “independence” to make their own decision regarding daily job responsibilities, work schedules, and how job tasks should be completed. Thus, the findings show that athletics administrators and supervisors should provide more autonomy through supporting employee independence. This increase in personal responsibility for the day-to-day activities that shape one’s job design would greatly contribute to the growth of HRD initiatives in modern athletics departments. In conclusion, if athletics department administrators and supervisors that are accustomed to the “traditional” aspects of athletics departments, and “run a tight ship” should consider providing more features of job design autonomy as it would support employees feeling more driven and productive.

Cognitive and Relational Job Crafting for Development

As mentioned in the previous section, the increase in autonomy was favorable to many of the participants. While experiences of elevated autonomy were not always consistently experienced by participants, abilities to engage in job crafting were. Features of cognitive and

relational job crafting were regularly expressed by participants. The findings from this section mostly resulted from the following interview questions that participants were asked, “Has your job changed since you first started it? If so, how has it changed?”, “In what ways do you go about getting your job done?” and “Have you ever had to change how you go about your job so that it best fits you? If so, how?” When available, participants explained how having the agency and independence to craft their jobs to fit their cognitive and social wants enabled opportunities to experience traits of development and personal growth.

Valuing the aspects of growth and personal development helped participants use cognitive crafting to reframe their workplace activities and job task. Several participants, especially those within the entry-level positions, who described a significant portion of their day-to-day activities as “busywork” expressed how they make efforts of shifting the perspectives of what their job tasks actually mean. Thus, participants were trying to cognitively change the meanings of their job responsibilities in the hope that it would contribute more value to it. For example, an Assistant Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university, shared an experience from earlier in their career, where they had to shift their mindsets in order to see the value in their daily tasks of communicating with fans and customers,

When I was an intern at [another Power 5 university], I had a coworker talk about how important it is to see it from the fan’s perspective... and this stays with me today. I was answering all these calls, like all day... I’m talking getting nonstop, inbound calls all day, every day, every single day, nonstop. 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and being an intern, I had to answer those phone calls. Couldn’t even work on my main stuff until after 5:00 p.m., it was crazy. But they told me that when I’m answering these calls, and speaking to all of these people, you have to change your mindset, so you don’t get burnt out... He said look

at it from their point of view, these people are paying so much money to come to these games and they're just really invested in it. It means so much to them, just try to consider that and don't get too worked up. So, I had to change my mindset to reflect that, you know, so I try to take that with me today. Obviously, I'm not answering calls all day anymore, but I take it with a grain of salt, right? I can't always be super happy or be super positive when doing some of the shitty parts of my job. But I try to at least look at it from the other side, right? So, that just helps me try to have a positive mindset in some of the things that I don't like about my job.

Thus, this participant was cognitively crafting their job to become more meaningful and advantageous than it truly was. By shifting how they perceived some of the less appealing characteristics of their jobs, participants were able to focus on more positive aspects such as making the fan experience more meaningful and memorable. This was also seen through other participants examples of shifting their mindset to that of their co-workers. A Director of Marketing at a Non-Power 5 university shared how it is easy to get “frustrated” when co-workers ask for help on projects or ask for them to assist with tasks outside of their job design, but they still make wholehearted efforts to see it from the co-worker’s point of view. This participant shared, “I help out on more stuff here than I should, but I try to take that as a positive. Like they’re not asking me so it's easier for them, but they’re asking because they value my insights”, therefore, by crafting their job activities to fit a more positive cognitive attitude, this individual was able to create more meaning in their job and workplace environment with co-workers.

Furthermore, several participants shared facets of cognitive job crafting through trying to see the “bigger picture” of what their job tasks produce. An Associate Athletics Director at a Non-Power 5 university provided an example,

I always look bigger picture... The day-to-day stuff can get old quick. So, we're building a new volleyball, wrestling facility on-campus, I'm leading that effort. The day-to-day on it can be tough. It's constantly dealing with our contractors and construction and individuals on-campus. It's a headache. And I don't enjoy it sometimes. But when I look at the bigger picture, we're creating this amazing facility on-campus for two sports that we've had a lot of success with, that don't have great facilities. So, I'm looking at it from the point of view, the future, and how great that can be and how great this facility will be for so many people. I look at that in that way. And that really helps me because I'll get down on myself or I'll get down on this job and maybe it's not what I want to do. Then I realize, we're building projects three to five years from now, always. So, when you kind of have that long term approach. You know, it really helps me out.

Individual creativity and exploration with new mechanisms of thinking and learning apparatuses were viewed as especially important. Participants experienced newfound fulfillment and purpose by taking initiative and altering their tasks and developing new of mindset to better service co-workers, consumers, and participants.

Improving Job Design for the Future Sport Workplace

The findings of the study, in which participant's reexamined their experiences of working in intercollegiate athletics has many impacts for how job designs can positively change the future sport workplace. Findings from this section mostly stemmed from the following interview question that participants were asked, "In what ways would you change your job's design so that it is better in the future?" First off, several participants noted the desire to be involved in the restructuring of their job's design and responsibilities when they felt "ready to advance" within their careers. This desire stemmed from the desire of participants to grow and advance within

their respective job and athletics department without having to move to another position within intercollegiate athletics at another university. When discussing ideas regarding the future of job design, an Associate Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university shared their thoughts,

I just want to be asked, what would you like to change, what's good, what's bad, what can be included into your position? So, in my situation, I'm not big on the analytics side of ticketing, but my coworker is... we have the same job though, same title, pretty much the same responsibilities, we just split it up, whatever we prefer to do. But I'd like to make it more official, you know, having that be in my title so that my role is more externally focused. I want to help our sales team generate revenue, provide more strategies and ideas, moving my job more that way. While the individual that I work with can move their job more into an internal focus and looking at the business revenue reporting, incorporating analytics and focusing more that way... I think a lot of times we have these generalized titles, right, we're both Associate Directors of Ticket Operations. But just making our jobs more specific, more individualized. That way, we're not looking for more specific roles somewhere else and in two years we can stay here, I want to stay here. I love everything about this place, but my job needs to evolve as I evolve.

Participants' awareness of the constant changes in college athletics employment helped shape their ideas for the future sport workplace. Rather than having to re-locate for a new position, within the same industry and usually same department, they desired that their roles also have the possibility to constantly change to best fit their abilities and needs. Regardless of the participants level of employment, participants acknowledged that by having yearly or biyearly evaluations of their job's design with their supervisors could lead to a better future sport workplace that is

focused on improving organizational capacity through the autonomy, learning, and flexibility of employees' job design.

Furthermore, as discussed throughout the study and specifically within this section of the findings, the environment of the athletics department workplace has been regarded as being rigid and outdated. The Director of Marketing at a Non-Power 5 university, who also has experience working for organizations outside of sport and college athletics, described their current athletics department as “way too old fashioned”. This participant also explained how there are too many “roadblocks” in the way for the growth of employees in regard to their job’s design and responsibilities. This participant as well as several others, discussed how aspects such as the hours required in the office, tasks below their employment level, inability to incorporate simple ideas are seen as “just normal parts of working in college athletics”. Additionally, these aspects were regarded as being “unproductive” and “reasons to move on” for participants. In another example, an Assistant Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university explained how they have encountered these issues currently and, in the past:

Honestly, it has been way, way too complicated to get things done. I'm talking the most simple things and ideas. Like we've talked about the idea of working closer to 40 hours a week, like it states in our job descriptions [laughter] for years now. We've talked about on heavy game weekends, coming in later on Monday, or taking a Wednesday off for years, and it's never changed. It's honestly laughable, we have the same meetings every year, and nothing changes. So that's just one thing that really frustrates me. You know, there's just these old school ideas, that we have to be overworked as part of the industry for way too long now. I think that comes from the top down, that a lot of our athletic department leaders, you know, they were working 60, 70, 80 hours a week for 20, 30, 40 years. And

they don't want it to change. And to me, that's just frustrating. Because we have the structures in place to do this, it's so simple. You see everywhere but college athletics doing this. Yeah, it's just really frustrating. I hope it changes. I would love for it to change. But I don't know if anywhere [in college athletics] will do that. I haven't heard of any schools doing that. So, until someone does, and it catches on, we're going to be stuck like this.

Thus, participants have been able to share their experiences battling the inefficiencies of working in college athletics in regard to aspects tied to job design management. The participants noted a desire to change the environment around working in college athletics but felt pessimistic about future opportunities for growth and development in the job design of college athletics employees. participants observed several weaknesses that could easily be fixed in the foreseeable future; however, due to the longstanding athletics department-based roadblocks and outdated job design ideologies, participants were concerned about the future possibilities of advancements. Nevertheless, several participants were optimistic and hopeful for the future of working within college athletics as long as their athletics departments and supervisors would be willing to consider redesigning their jobs in an effort to better support, maintain, and enhance their professional and career development moving forward.

Job Engagement

The findings of the study showed that within intercollegiate athletics departments, the job engagement of sport employees can contribute to establishing successful personal development and HRD initiatives. While job engagement has been researched within the general management literature and deemed an important concept to better understand organizations and their employees, it has not fully been investigated from the athletics department in sport perspective.

Thus, although the job engagement literature within the sport management discipline is scarce (e.g., Kim et al., 2017; Paek et al., 2020; Svensson et al., 2021), the findings of this study show the importance of the construct within the sport industry, specifically within intercollegiate athletics departments.

To examine the role and presence of job engagement within the HRD practices of athletics departments, nine athletics administrators, nine athletics department mid-level managers, and eleven athletics department entry-level employees were interviewed. Furthermore, observations were conducted by the researcher as he was embedded within two Event Management departments at both Rocky University and Mountain University in the Rocky Mountain geographical region of the United States. Participant's job title and Power 5 Non-Power 5 affiliation are listed for the Division I athletics administrators, mid-level managers, and entry-level employees to ensure confidentiality of the participants. Themes will initially be discussed through data collected during the semi-structured interviews followed by the observational data that was collected by the research during on-site, office, and event-based observations.

The data showed that participants were able to experience elevated levels of job engagement in their roles in the athletics department when there was successful: (a) leadership and communication, (b) flexible job design and willingness to job craft, and (c) connection to athletics department initiatives. Thus, findings for the study suggest that the most prominent strategies that organizations, athletics administrators, and employees used to enrich the job engagement for employees to fall under themes of effective leadership, communication, job design management, and sense of connection to organizational initiatives. The themes that were identified in the data were all supported by previous findings in job engagement research,

leadership, and communication (Walden et al., 2017), job design management (Chen et al., 2014), and connection to organizational initiatives (Rich et al., 2010).

Leadership and Communication

To establish a primary understanding of how individuals are engaged in their jobs in collegiate athletics departments, participants were asked, “In your role within college athletics, what keeps you fully engaged in your tasks?” Interestingly, directly from the first question, several of the participants described how organizational leadership (e.g., athletics administrators, supervisors) played a significant role in their job engagement status. Thus, a common follow up to this question was, “How would you describe the role of leadership in the department on your engagement?” From these two questions, the primary responses emphasized how effective communication from athletics administrators and supervisors contributed to individuals feeling more engaged in their jobs. Participants’ job engagement experiences were supported by having positive relations with their direct supervisors as well as other organizational leaders. In the study, sport employees (e.g., entry-level, mid-level, and athletics administrators) had higher levels of engagement when there were effective supervisor-employee relations, and open and honest communication, and a feeling of connection to organizational leaders.

For example, one Assistant Director of Development at a Power 5 university described how they were practically apprehensive to ensure that they had a meaningful connection with their athletics department leaders. Therefore, in order to become engaged in their own job, this participant felt that they needed to have a meaningful connection to the athletics administrators who were in charge of running the athletics department. After describing the timeframe leading up to these developed connections, the participant explained how they become more invested into their role and job responsibilities. The Assistant Director of Development at a Power 5

university described how having a connection to organizational leaders created more excitement and commitment toward their job, by stating, “Leadership plays a huge role in my engagement, if our admin knows who I am and knows what I do... it just feels like my job means more.”

Furthermore, this mindset was echoed by several other participants revealing that once there is a connection to athletics department leadership employees become more engaged, there, in turn, leads to greater productivity and performance.

Another interesting finding for the connection between leadership and employees’ engagement was through the relationship among employees and their direct supervisor. How employees perceived their supervisor’s abilities and how they viewed their relationship significantly affected their level of job engagement. The relationship participants had with their supervisor seemed to be an indicator for their engagement as one Director of Ticketing at a Non-Power 5 university stated, “I’ve had really good bosses and really bad bosses. I can honestly say my engagement was determined by that.” Additional participants were also able to summarize the importance for effective relationships to be developed between supervisors and their employee in order for employees to feel engaged and for supervisors to achieve their desired outcomes. Thus, the findings from participant interviews determined that one avenue to achieve greater levels of employee job engagement is top quality management behaviors.

The researcher’s observational findings also supported the importance of meaningful relationships between supervisor and employee. While working an event at Mountain University, the researcher recalls an experience between the Director of Event Management and their supervisor who was the Associate Athletics Director of Event Management. The men’s basketball game was a difficult one for the event management staff as students had caused numerous issues throughout the event (e.g., throwing promotional items on the court, entering

unauthorized areas of the stadium, chanting expletives). Obviously, this caused for a stressful few hours for the Director of Event Management and the researcher could notice the behavioral changes of this individual. Even though the Director of Event Management remained engaged in the event, their behaviors had become tense. The Director of Event Management and the Associate Athletics Director of Event Management had remained in constant communication via headset radios throughout the event.

After the men's basketball game had concluded, the researcher was invited to attend a local bar with the entire event management staff. Once there, the researcher was able to examine the close bond between the Associate Athletics Director of Event Management and the Director of Event Management. Even though there had been numerous issues that occurred, where a supervisor could be irritated with their subordinate employee, these two individuals talked through the event issues together in a comical and considerate manner. The researcher was able to observe the mutual respect that existed between the supervisor and the employee. Furthermore, this communal partnership that these two shared was a formed bond that helped them both be successful in their job responsibilities and to achieve the shared goals of the Event Management department. Thus, the Associate Athletics Director of Event Management was highly effective in their role as a leader and the Director of Event Management was unquestionably more engaged in their job because of it. Throughout further event observations working alongside the Associate Athletics Director of Event Management and the Director of Event Management, the researcher concluded that the favorable relationship that existed between these two was a critical element in the developing of job engagement within the workplace.

Several participants also noted the importance of open and honest communication when asked, "In your role within college athletics, what keeps you fully engaged in your tasks?"

Participants expressed open and honest communication as an essential antecedent when trying to become fully engaged in their job responsibilities. Rather than from co-workers, this specifically mentioned form of communication was regarded as the shared dialogue between the participant and their supervisor. Participants sought communication with their supervisors that was accessible, straightforward, and frequent. One Assistant Director of Development at a Power 5 university echoed this finding as they stated,

In order for me to do my job right, I have to know what's going on... good, bad, doesn't matter... When I'm not in certain meetings, I need to know what happened, what the plans are...my boss is pretty great at passing all of that along.

Therefore, participants didn't want to be safeguarded from bad news by their supervisors, they felt as though that information needed to be communicated to them effectively for them to be engaged in their job responsibilities. Another participant, a Senior Associate Athletics Director of Event Management at a Power 5 university, described the importance of open communication between themselves and their supervisor, "I have my own department that I'm focused on, but really all I need to know are the end-goals. Where do you [Athletics Director] want us to be and I'll make sure we get there. So good communication between him and I is key." Thus, the data showed that it was important for athletics department supervisors at all levels to ensure that there were clearest and concise lines of communication in place between themselves and their employees. In doing so, these positive lines of communication helped specify employee, department, and organizational goals, which in turn helped enrich the job engagement of participants. Further, the findings of the participant interviews recommended that organizational leaders and supervisors endorse open, honest, clear, and direct lines of communication established with all levels of employees. When this process was performed effectively,

participants even suggested that it would also help their supervisors know that they were engaged and fulfilled with their job responsibilities.

Engaging through Job Design and Job Crafting

To establish a primary understanding of how individuals are engaged in their jobs in collegiate athletics departments, participants were asked, “In your role within college athletics, what keeps you fully engaged in your tasks?” A resulting theme that emerged from the data as an indicator for how employees engaged in their jobs included aspects of job design and job crafting. The findings of this section followed that of previous academic works (e.g., Christian et al., 2011; Humphrey et al., 2007) which showed that the design of an employee’s job was critical as it greatly affected how engaged employees were in their job. Thus, participants of the study described their own job designs and how it related to their engagement levels.

First off, several participants described a workplace setting in which they had little to no ability to shift their job designs. The participants who had these rigid job designs explained how this contributed to them being less engaged in the workplace. For example, a Business Office Coordinator at a Non-Power 5 university, highlighted how the rigid nature of their job design made their daily job responsibilities repetitive and unchallenging. This rigid job design set by the participants athletics department made them experienced diminished levels of engagement almost daily as they stated, “What I do every day is pretty much set in stone. I would love to do more, but in this position I just can’t. It’s the same thing [expense reports] over and over.” Further, an Assistant Director of Ticketing at a Power 5 university echoed the monotonous nature of their position due to an inflexible job design as well. This Assistant Director of Ticketing described their job design as only changing in respect to the sport they were focusing on in the moment, but the daily responsibilities never changed, “The only thing that changes are

the sports. It's football, volleyball, straight into the basketballs then baseball and softball...Other than that, I'm helping answer the phones, answering our email account, filling orders." Thus, a main concern from the participants employed in entry-level positions in athletics departments was disengagement due to poorly designed jobs. In follow-up questions, the researcher probed the participants categorized as having poor job designs to determine what factors were causing this problem. Several of the participants placed the blame of their disengagement due to the rigidity on their direct supervisors and department leaders. One participant explained that they did not feel comfortable sharing these issues with their direct supervisor but expressed that their direct supervisor should easily be able to notice their concerns with the daily job responsibilities. Ultimately, the poorly designed jobs for many entry-level participants emphasized a lack of purpose which eventually caused increased disengagement. Participants noted potential simple fixes to these concerning issues. Primarily, these participants explained that they actually did have clear daily responsibilities, but they desired more interesting tasks and meaningful work activities. Lastly, due to hierarchical nature of their athletics departments these individuals did not possess the autonomy in their roles to engage in any nature of job crafting behaviors.

However, the data provided many examples of positive engagement within the job design management of mid-level and athletics administrator participants. When participants had adequately designed job they felt as though their daily job tasks were stimulating, challenging, and meaningful. Thus, due to the well-structured nature of their jobs, these individuals experienced elevated levels of job engagement, whereas they felt driven and invested to bring their "best-self" to work each day. One Associate Athletics Director of Event Management at a Power 5 university noted how their job "challenged" them each day, but that those challenges were the reason they woke up motivated to come to work. Further, not knowing "what lies

ahead” was another factor that the Associate Athletics Director of Event Management at a Power 5 university loved about their job. This participant concluded this idea by sharing, “My job changes every day and I love that...I welcome that. If it didn’t, I’d be bored within a week.” Thus, a key finding was the presence of autonomy within some of the participants’ jobs. These employees held a massive amount of discretion in the design of their jobs and were able to craft it as they desired in the goal of remaining as engaged as possible in their roles and athletics departments. In conclusion, the findings of this section imply that becoming engaged in one’s job through job design and job crafting will be highly dependent on level of employment, the athletics department setting, and day-by-day job responsibilities. Some participants, such as athletics administrators and mid-level employees, experience higher levels of engagement due to the autonomy provided by their job design, while other participants, mostly entry-level employees, have difficulty reaching elevated levels of job engagement due to the rigid nature of their job design and inability to job craft.

Finding Engagement through Athletics Department Initiatives

Lastly, the findings from the interviews with the study’s participants highlighted that relationship between an employee’s level of engagement and their athletics department’s goals and initiatives. As numerous academic works have previously shown (Chen et al., 2014; Rich et al., 2010), employees can experience enhanced levels of job engagement when they perceive daily job tasks as significant and meaningfully contributing to the initiatives of the organization. The findings of this study reiterated these same aspects within job engagement in intercollegiate athletics departments. Thus, participants desired to have job activities that proved to be significant in the overall scheme of the athletics department. This was shown in a response by an

Associate Director of Development at a Non-Power 5 university as they stated, “I want to see that what I do each day fits into the bigger picture... if I can see that so can others... it's all about working on things that truly matter and I'm lucky enough to say that I do right now.”

Additionally, another participant shared that they felt as though they were at their most engaged when working on job tasks directly tied to internal beneficiaries (e.g., student-athletes, teams, athletics administrators) rather than external (e.g., fans, other teams, outside organizations). This was best shown through a response by a Director of Marketing at a Non-Power 5 university,

It's like I have two jobs. One is focused on marketing for the teams and our student-athletes, and all the games and the other is focused on our fans and trying to help bring as many people as we can to games. Like working with local organizations, putting in orders, things like that. I always joke that they couldn't be more different. But, talking about engagement...I'm most engaged when I'm working with our teams, whether it's a photoshoot or we're working on some campaign that involves the players and the coaches. When I'm working with them on a daily basis, that I find to be the most important. Not emailing a group about coming to do a halftime show and doing group tickets. Yeah, it's my job, it is really interesting in that way, but yeah, I'm definitely at my best when I'm working with people within the athletic department.

These feelings of being engaged in one's job as long as it fits into the “bigger picture” of the athletics department were also shared by numerous other participants. The findings showed that having a job that makes one feel as though they are making significant contributions that can be seen by others and help achieve organizational initiatives helped generate high levels of engagement. Furthermore, these participants were able to become further engaged in their jobs

when they felt like their job responsibilities were not only valued by the athletics department, but also when those job tasks supported the goals and initiatives of the athletics department.

To conclude, the findings of this section indicate that participants were becoming more engaged in their jobs when they felt a connection to the initiatives and goals of their athletic department. Several participants, especially entry-level and mid-level employees, noted having strong and positive connections with their athletics departments that caused them to experience instances of being highly engaged in their work. There were a number of potential reasons for this phenomenon that were discussed. Broadly, employees who identify strongly with the initiatives of their athletic department have high job engagement and may also absorb themselves strongly into the daily responsibilities of their job.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The current chapter features a discussion of the study's findings, the theoretical and practical implications of the study, the limitations, the opportunities for future researchers, and a conclusion. To restate, the purpose of this study was to apply the HRD paradigm to advance the literature pertaining to sport employees' and organizations' growth and development to understand how HRD develops within sport organizations and the interactional process HRD has with organizational politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement. Thus, an exploration of how participants (e.g., intercollegiate athletics employees) defined, embraced, and experienced HRD and the resulting variables in the sport workplace will be covered in this chapter. From a comprehensive outlook, the results of the current study illustrated how fundamental components of HRD (i.e., organizational politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement) are experienced, manifested, transformed, and supported by the employees and organizations of college athletics.

Until now, the few sport management scholars that have explored HRD in sport have either done so from a very generalized approach or not at all within the context of intercollegiate athletics. Therefore, despite how it has been shown that HRD practices can provide enhanced employee development, which in turn promotes improved sport organizational performance (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2016; Svensson et al., 2021) there exists a shortage of literature concerning HRD in sport and the interactional influence between HRD and organizational politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement. Previous researchers have shown the

existence of HRD within sport organizations (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2016; Sato et al., 2021; Svensson et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 2015); however, these researchers have not yet provided an analysis on how HRD is experienced, established, altered, and maintained in the context of sport. Providing further understanding of to what extent HRD practices can create innovative management strategies for sport organizations (Svensson et al., 2021) and act as a mechanism for improved organizational and individual performance (Sato et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2017) were the intentions of this study.

As such, this dissertation was aimed at exploring how the HRD framework can be utilized within the collegiate sport industry and to examine its influence on employee and organizational performance. The researcher was able to collect unique and normally restricted data from the often-closed world of intercollegiate athletics departments, which provided many advantages findings, practical implications, and theoretical contributions. The findings of this dissertation include showing how sport organizations, specifically collegiate athletics departments, can rebuild their human resources initiatives in order to create competitive advantages in the industry.

Human Resource Development

The purpose of this study was to explore how participants (e.g., intercollegiate athletics employees) defined, embraced, and experienced HRD in the sport workplace. A representation of HRD's role in sport was shown through the three prominent themes that were identified in the data: (a) defining HRD in sport, (b), rewarding HRD strategies in sport, and (c) damaging HRD strategies in sport. The findings that developed from the data accentuate that HRD strategies that are utilized by organizations and employees within intercollegiate athletics were shown to be multidimensional and everchanging in effectiveness. All manners of HRD strategies were

encountered by participants within the study's sample. Undoubtedly the most prominent HRD strategies used by intercollegiate athletics departments in this study was through facilitating individual professional development. This was supported in the findings of the study through examples such as the delegation of accountability for one's own development in athletics department employees. However, focuses of ensuring development and growth and molding HRD practices to best fit individual needs and preferences, were all seen in this study. Athletics department administrators, in the hope of being more HRD-minded, should attempt to create better connections with their employees, supervisors, and managers in order to promote HRD in their workforces.

Unfortunately, the underlying problems experienced by this study's participants highlight that understanding HRD and implementing successful HRD processes can be one of the most challenging and demanding aspects in the job of athletics administrators. Further, finding, having the time, and following through on HRD opportunities was seen as a demanding aspect in the job of entry-level and mid-level athletics department employees. However, there were also several unique and meaningful findings that showed how these participants (i.e., athletics department employees and administrators) were able to advance their abilities, through HRD-based trainings and processes to better learn their athletics department's environment, job abilities, and professional development, which helped showcase how HRD is making intercollegiate athletics departments a better workplace. Collaboration through all levels of employees in collegiate athletics departments also improved the understanding for how HRD strategies are taking place within this domain. Employees were able to see themselves as significant factors in improving not only their own abilities concerning their professional development and growth, but also that of the organizations they were working for in college athletics.

Defining Human Resource Development in Sport

The findings of this study regarding attempts at defining HRD in the context of sport (e.g., intercollegiate athletics) offers valuable insight into not only how HRD is regarded in the modern college sport workplace, but also the potential for an improved workplace environment and practices due to having a better understanding of HRD, that could benefit college sport employees and organizations alike. An importance of this study was to make advancements in how HRD is and can be defined within sport. Other industries outside of sport have faced significant challenges in the past attempting to define HRD within a specific field (Lee, 2001, 2014; Wang, 2018; Werner, 2014). Thus, even with numerous studies being conducted, the current study included an agreement on an exact range of definition has yet to emerge. However, although other researchers have viewed not having a single distinct definition of HRD as a liability for the field (Abdullah, 2009; Hamlin & Stewart, 2011; Simonds & Pederson, 2006), the current study perceives this as an acceptable component of how extensive HRD is. Therefore, the findings of the current study support the conclusions of Lee (2001) and Lee (2014) in that a general description of HRD should suffice for a suitable understanding of its existence, rather than an established definition. Further, within the sport domain this is understandable as the industry as long been regarded as constantly changing and evolving (Kim et al., 2017; Oja et al., 2015, 2019; Paek et al., 2020; Schuetz et al., 2021). Thus, if a definition was set for how to define HRD in the industry of sport, it too would need to be continuously altered.

Additionally, this study follows in the paths of previous studies (e.g., Lee, 2001, 2014; Wang et al., 2017) in noting the importance of needing to retreat from focusing on trying to find the “right” definition of HRD and instead, focus on better understanding and improving the paradigms, perspectives, and practices of HRD. Even as it may have been seen as an expected

finding of this study, the researcher believes that demonstrating the sport industry as dynamic in nature, thus a specific definition is not needed is a unique contribution to the HRD literature. Furthermore, continuous studies of HRD in sport, specifically within intercollegiate athletics, should attempt to continue evolving the HRD understandings of modern practices of organizations in sport. Still, to truly understand the HRD construct, it is important to be able to comprehend the evolution of HRD literature over the past century.

Although the researcher agrees that a specific definition of HRD in sport is not needed, as HRD is diffused and combined into a broad range of experiences, it is still valuable to highlight an innovative and unique finding from the data and how it can help better understand the context of HRD in sport. Thus, if efforts are to be made defining HRD in sport, it should encompass a “bottom-up approach”. Participants used their own understandings of HRD should operate in sport (i.e., “make it a priority”, “regard as a return on investment”) to continue to assist sport employee and organization growth and development. Although theoretically the implications of HRD are usually regarded from the viewpoints of organizational leaders and executives (Turner & Baker, 2018), a bottom-up approach to defining HRD can contextualize how HRD processes are influenced by the participants’ engagement with the HRD activities enacted by organizational leaders and executives. By allowing entry and mid-level employees’ experiences in sport to mold the definition of HRD, there is a higher likelihood that the resulting outcomes better represents the increased need and appreciation of professional development for modern sport employees (i.e., intercollegiate athletics employees).

Lastly, attempting to define HRD further in sport through a bottom-up approach is a recommendation of the research. Through using a bottom-up approach, future researchers will be able to construct how HRD is experienced with entry-level employees first, the grouping that

HRD is mostly focused on advancing (Haslinda, 2009). Further, the researcher considers the best path forward from this study's findings is to utilize some aspects of HRD and how some employees value HRD so that the advancement of HRD can be done in the practical setting. Consequently, since HRD is highly circumstantial and dynamic (Haslinda, 2009; Khan et al., 2012; Swanson, 1995; Werner, 2014), there is no need to attempt to further define HRD in the context of sport. Instead, focus on analyzing and improving the processes of HRD in sport.

Rewarding and Damaging Human Resource Development Strategies in Sport

They encounter resistance to change in their athletics departments and are confronted with managers wanting to maintain their distance in professional development opportunities. Thus, in the role of management in college athletics, many participants found that their athletics departments failed to live up to their ideals concerning HRD and professional growth. This result could be the reason why many athletics administrators fail at being successful HRD professionals. These athletics administrators are unable to create learning programs that are able to utilize strategies that are associated with professional development. Hence the importance on athletics departments needing to focus on employing an HRD approach and a thorough orientation process that shows employees how to be successful in their careers and personal lives.

Strategies associated with HRD practices were nearly nonexistent from the data. This is interesting as many of the athletics departments and athletics administrators discussed the importance of using HRD strategies in the workplace. Thus, more HRD professional practices were expected to exist through the interviews and observations conducted by the researcher. Although this result has been found in previous studies (e.g., Berg et al., 2010), it still makes

academics in the field of sport management question why this is occurring. There was some evidence; however, that athletics department and athletics administrators were able to use the strategies that were preferred by employees and subordinates. Participants were able to use persuasion, adaptation, flexibility, and clarification of intent to overcome HRD limitations in the workplace. By creating their own innovative learning practices, participants were able to build upon the minimal HRD ideas and practices that were already taking place. When given an appropriate timeframe, participants in the study were able to create their own intensive learning programs. By doing so, these participants were able to work on learning their department's climate, and to develop a better HRD workplace. Collaboration with all levels of employees also helped further the HRD strategy that are taking place within intercollegiate athletics. Employees were able to see themselves as significant factors in improving the organizational learning abilities in college athletics.

Organizational Politics and Political Skill

The participants and observations utilized for this study provided various significant advancements in the understanding of how organizational politics and leader political skill are perceived in a contemporary sport organization setting (e.g., collegiate athletic departments). Thus, these findings should assist sport organizations in their human resources initiatives moving forward. The organizational politics and political skill component of this dissertation had three main purposes: (a) to present how athletics department employees perceive organizational politics in the contemporary sport organization environment, (b) to categorize whether the lived experiences of athletics department employees relating to organizational politics is described by employees in either a positive, negative, or neutral way, and (c) to explore how leader (e.g., athletics administrators, athletics department supervisors) political skill influences the views and

behaviors of subordinate athletics department employees. Thus, the interpretative (social constructivism; Creswell, 2014) phenomenological framework of this study successfully showed that by providing deep, in-depth, and rich descriptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and therefore a better understanding of how sport employees perceive organizational politics and leader political skill can be developed.

The organizational politics and leader political skill components of this study followed the calls of previous researchers (Cacciattolo, 2015; Landells & Albrecht, 2017) in an effort to offer a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of organizational politics within current organizational environments. More importantly, the organizational politics and leader political skill factors showed how they have a meaningful impact on how HRD functions. As emphasized previously, a majority of previous literature (e.g., Ferris & Treadway, 2012; Rosen et al., 2009) has framed organizational politics solely within a negative context that focuses primarily on self-seeking, self-centered, and deceiving characteristics. Therefore, there have been minimal attempts of researchers to connect organizational politics and leader political skill to the human resources of an organization, especially in the sport domain. This study also shows that the approach to understanding and utilizing organizational politics needs to be extended to include the positive and neutral perspectives in an effort to improve HRD functionality. Therefore, the results of the findings concerning HRD and organizational politics, show that HRD should be interconnected with the HRD strategic goals and objectives of intercollegiate athletics departments that are established to improve organizational performance. In doing so, the interconnections of organizational politics and HRD should cultivate the organizational political environment into one that promotes innovation, production, and performance (Jain, 2011).

The first significant finding regarding organizational politics and its relation to HRD of this study is that athletics department employees understand and perceive organizational politics in very different ways. Therefore, the data for the study formed three distinct lenses for organizational politics—positive, negative, and neutral. The precise lens (Landells & Albrecht, 2017) in which athletics department employees perceived organizational politics determined their view of political behavior, the magnitude to which athletics department employees decisively engaged in political behavior, and how athletics department employees evaluated the outcomes of organizational politics. While previous researchers (e.g., Ferris et al., 2019; Kacmar & Ferris, 1991; Landells & Albrecht, 2017; Maslyn et al., 2017) have noted that employees most often perceive organizational politics differently, the study helps advance this notion by establishing further support and evidence for the dimensions of perception (i.e., negative, positive, neutral). The findings of this study, that support the classification of perceptions, can expectantly be used to help sport organizations capture a better understanding of the dimensions of organizational politics. Thus, the findings of this study can also serve as a structure for developing better HRD-based initiatives in collegiate athletics departments that are designed to support employees in realizing a more integrated, fair, and shared perception on organizational politics.

Perceptions of Organizational Politics

In particular for the positive perceptions of organizational politics, participants discussed organizational politics as a component of everyday organizational life that was an essential factor to their own personal career growth. The findings of this study demonstrated that when employees perceive organizational politics in a positive manner, it leads to employees being able to effectively maneuver through an organization's political environment and enhance

relationship building abilities. These were two examples from the findings that show how participants used their positive perception as an essential strategy of organizational politics as a workplace growth and development strategy.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research in organizational politics (Chen & Fang, 2008; Ferris & Hochwarter, 2011; Hochwarter, 2012) which implied that employees who work in politically stimulating workplace environments are prone to engage in positive political behaviors so that they can increase their own power in the organization and acquire available opportunities and resources (Ferris et al., 2019). Specifically, participants who perceived the features of organizational political behaviors as a commitment to attaining their own professional successes rather acknowledging the behaviors as negative activities (Hochwarter, 2012). In the highly politicized working environment that the athletics department employees worked in, the findings furthered the understanding that employees are willing to characterize their political behaviors (e.g., placing importance on specific social interactions, networking, relationship building) as actions that are required in order to stay insistent on the pursuit of career goals, personal development, personal growth (Ferris et al., 2019). Consequently, similar to the results of previous studies (Hochwarter et al., 2020; Jain, 2011; Landells & Albrecht, 2017), the participants in this study, who positively perceived organizational politics were more likely to experience greater productivity, career progression, organizational advancement, improved social networks, and superior innovation while working the highly politically charged environment of collegiate athletics departments. Participants' realization that their positive perceptions of organizational politics provided impactful HRD experiences that enhanced the meaning of developing in the workplace at their organization,

which provided an improved sense of purpose and value in their athletics department careers (Chen & Fang, 2008; Hochwarter et al., 2020; Jain, 2011).

Another significant result of this study was the advancement in the understanding of the employee and organizational experiences and outcomes that are a consequence from employees perceiving organizational politics in a negative manner. These negative consequences largely echoed the consequences described in past research (Ferris et al., 2002, 2019; Hochwarter et al., 2020), although the focus on productivity, both the increase and decrease in organizational performance, has not been reflected in these previous quantitative studies. Several of the negative consequences that were highlighted in the findings of this study have not been clearly captured in existing organizational politics research. For example, individuals in the negative perception grouping regarded organizational politics and political behaviors as an isolating dynamic that ultimately contributes to employee turnover or damaged career progression.

Hence as to why Fedor and Maslyn (2002) stated, “When it comes to empirically investigating both the positive and negative sides of political behavior, we only assess one side due to the fact that currently available scales reflect a predominantly negative bias.” (p. 273). Thus, the findings of this study suggest that a more balanced measure of organizational politics may uncover further positive and negative outcomes for individuals and the organizations. Although a limited number of researchers (Fedor & Maslyn, 2002; Maslyn et al., 2017) have attempted to develop advance the understandings of both positive and negative politics perceptions, further studies similar to the current research will need to be conducted if a better understanding should be attained in the sport management literature.

Thus, this advancement highlights another significant finding of this study—that organizational politics can be perceived neutrally. The findings of this study supported the

neutral understanding of organizational politics where participants formed their own opinions that all employees of the organization essentially have the influence to decide on his or her own goals, environment, actions, and fate (Ferris et al., 2019). Only until recently did scholars expand the idea that organizational politics can be viewed from a neutral perspective by employees (Ferris et al., 2019; Landells & Albrecht, 2017), yet many have still not analyzed the neutral perspective from a qualitative position. Neutrally recognizing participants maintained that politics are just a standard norm of organizations, and are essential to organizational performance and survival, fitting within Ferris et al.'s (2019) view of neutral organizational politics.

To conclude, participants discussed organizational politics as a component of everyday organizational life that was an essential factor to their own personal career growth (e.g., positive perception), as an isolating dynamic that ultimately contributes to employee turnover or damaged career progression (e.g., negative perception), and as a nonaligned organization force, where positive and negative aspects were acknowledged, where participants thought employees should instead be focusing on their own respective job functions (e.g., neutral perception). Even as researchers (Ferris et al., 2019; Landells & Albrecht, 2017) have previously recognized that employees can all perceive organizational politics contrastingly, this research advances the understanding for the rather newer notion of employees developing a neutral perspective of organizational politics. Given the positive dimensions of organizational politics, the field of positive organizational behavior provides plenty of potentially advantageous theories, such as HRD, and models for understanding both the perceived functional and dysfunctional dimensions of organizational politics. For example, Jain (2011) suggested that paradigms such as organizational politics should be positioned within HRD frameworks, while Bakker and Demerouti (2014) emphasized organizational politics role within job design management. The

results of the current study imply that organizational politics can be regarded as a resource (e.g., career development opportunity) or as a threat (e.g., hostile work environment), depending on the organizational context and personal experience that shapes the lens (Landells & Albrecht, 2017) through which employees perceive their political climate.

In conclusion, participants that were able to successfully understand and perceive their organization's politics and resulting employee political behaviors were able to use a range of tactics that helped manage the organizational politics of their athletics department. Implementing attitudes that place organizational goals over personal self-interests and making this the basis for rewards and promotions were shown to help control the misuse of power in organizational politics. Integrating fairness through commitment and ingratiation creates positive long-term results within an organization. Thus, the findings of this study can help in leveling the playing field in intercollegiate athletics departments, which have longed been described as political arenas (Magnusen & Kim, 2016; Magnusen & Todd, 2016).

Leader Political Skill

An additional meaningful finding of this study pertaining to organizational politics is that subordinate sport employees perceived and responded productively to leader political skill and its role in influencing behaviors among sport employees. Furthermore, as identified by Ferris et al. (2019) and the findings of this study, political skill was important to the reputation of leaders and how leaders were perceived and followed by other employees in the workplace. Leader political skill in sport, was contributed by participants to having power and influence over others in the organization. When these politically skilled sport employees, whether it was described by the leader themselves or by subordinate employees, incorporated politically skilled behaviors to influence social situations in which they had a precise goal in mind. These employees also were

able to cordially interact with all levels of the organization, thus conveying their networking and influencing powers. However, this is consistent with Ferris and his colleagues who note that leaders who are high in political skill are often regarded in this way (Ferris et al., 2019).

The interviews with athletics department administrators and other participants that were regarded as “leaders”, suggested that political skill was an important individual characteristic that influences access to power and social communication (e.g., networking). This study found that politically skilled athletics administrators and leaders were very strategic in the construction of their communication channels in the workplace and always focused on positioning themselves advantageously in their social networks within the athletics departments. These politically skilled leaders were also more attentive to other workplace social networks outside of the one’s that were in place due to their job tasks. Thus, the politically skilled leaders in this study were better at influencing key employees in the athletics department and were more effective in using relationships throughout the athletics department to achieve personal and department specific goals.

Furthermore, the results of this study showed that political skill played an essential role in the overall effectiveness of athletics administrators as leaders. Politically skilled leaders, in comparison to other participants who were regarded as having less political skill, were more likely to develop established long-term social networks within the athletics department that could be strategically updated if it could assist in other goal and demanded behavioral attainment. Additionally, politically skilled leaders in collegiate athletics were better at utilizing their social networks to enhance their own workplace performance. Overall, by focusing on the politically skilled behaviors in the sport context of collegiate athletics, this study answers the calls for more

development in sport management-based political skill literature (Magnusen & Kim, 2016; Magnusen & Todd, 2016).

This study established that successful sport managers were able to be flexible in adapting their behavior (i.e., interpersonal influence.), developed relationships plus solid valuable associations (i.e., networking ability), appeared to be genuine in their actions by others (i.e., apparent sincerity), strategically approached workplace interactions (i.e., social astuteness), and were praised for their accomplishments in similar ways (i.e., career advancements, thriving in the organizational environment; Ferris et al., 2005). In particular, participants shared accounts of sport managers utilizing political skill by managing thoughtfully (Ahearn et al., 2004). Politically-skilled sport managers effectively used their organizational and interpersonal influences to develop strong relationships with subordinate sport employees. Consequently, this study showed that political skill should be a desired managerial behavior in the sport workplace setting.

Job Design and Job Crafting

The findings of this study offer valuable insight into how job design was experienced by collegiate sport employees and the functionality of both job design and job crafting. Scholars have called for more calculated HRD-based innovations in sport organizations (e.g., Chelladurai & Kerwin, 2018; Schuetz et al., 2021; Svensson et al., 2021), thus job design and job crafting were highlighted as potential avenues for achieving further innovation. Furthermore, the findings of this study support the call of these researchers as it examined how participants experienced job design and job crafting conditions in the highly political and hierarchical environments of intercollegiate athletics departments. Resultantly, the job design and job crafting findings of this study fill the gap in knowledge as well as supporting the emerging literature concerning HRD

within sport organizations (e.g., Delshab & Boroujerdi, 2018; Delshab et al., 2020; Svensson et al., 2021).

In relation to the features of job design within the domain of this study in collegiate athletics departments and for employees, the most highlighted featured was autonomy, in both a negative and a positive sense. Participants' autonomy to alter their job design and coordinate their job tasks aided their job engagement, which will be discussed further in the following section. It is important to remember that when discussing the findings of job design and job crafting autonomy, the interviews and on-site observations were performed at multiple different intercollegiate athletics departments. Thus, the while the results have several meaningful implications, the reality is that the level of autonomy that participants experienced depended on the organizational structure and behaviors that were existing in their athletics department. The participants that experienced more autonomy within their job design and day-to-day tasks, were those that were able to engage in job crafting activities.

Within HRD and job design, autonomy was commonly regarded as a factor related to power and having the role independence to engage in self-determining behaviors (Chelladurai & Kerwin, 2018; Neufeind et al., 2013; Oldham & Fried, 2016); however, most participants of this study were able to describe the importance and benefits of having the autonomy craft their job design if needed to. Although being restricted to an environment that is oftentimes regarded as “outdated” and “rigid”, many participants were able to reframe some aspects of their jobs by doing job tasks that were most meaningful to their own growth and success in their job roles. Thus, participants often times challenged the competitive collegiate sport environment (Kim et al., 2017), by crafting their day-to-day job tasks in an effort to place themselves in a better standing for success in the athletics department. The participants in the study had times of

autonomy in crafting aspects of their job designs, which allowed for more attention to be paid to professional growth and development opportunities. These job crafting processes were linked to employees making newfound efforts in trying to perceive the positive outcomes that their job tasks create. The findings of this study now provide a better understanding of how personal autonomy within one's job design acts as an important facet of HRD in sport organizations.

Further highlighting autonomy in the design of job in collegiate athletics, participants expanded their job limitations by finding pathways to achieve professional growth and engagement. The findings here highlight the complication of job design in collegiate athletics departments. In particular, the connection between job engagement behaviors and personal development opportunities were meaningful for these participants as they attempt to re-shape their job's design to better fit these aspects. This finding highlights how job engagement opportunities are a significant factor in linking HRD practices with features of job design management. Participants experienced personal growth, autonomy, and elevated levels of job engagement (Berg et al., 2010) because of their independence, sometimes self-given, in managing the design of their jobs in order to best fit their job tasks. However, collegiate athletics departments should consider the diverse perspectives of attaining personal and professional growth of its employees when offering future opportunities to engage in job design or job crafting activities. It is similarly important to recognize that at times job crafting behaviors were innate to the participant and were not necessarily recommended or offered by their athletics department leaders.

The findings also revealed how athletics department employees' self-autonomy in job design was used to support the goals and objectives of athletics administrators in the athletics department. Several participants, usually entry-level employees, experienced aspects of alarm if

they attempted to find a new sense of direction for their job tasks and engage in job crafting when not formally advised to. However, even after a few months of employment, some participants were able to shift the focus of their jobs and change roles to best fit their personal and professional growth. Thus, participants had the ability, whether formally or informally, to take ownership of their job tasks which included efficiently managing their relationships, connecting job tasks to growth strategies, and finding a newfound importance whereby there were noticeable results in improved job performance. Fundamentally, all of these factors in the findings of this study are considered aspects of the motivational job design approach (Chelladurai & Kerwin, 2018). Although, some employees were not necessarily given opportunities to engage in job crafting due to “roadblocks” within their athletic departments, formal and informal job crafting contributed to increased motivation and satisfaction for this study’s participants.

Finally, participants outlined the need of shifting their job responsibilities so that they can have positive social relationships with co-workers in the workplace. Participants desired high levels of social interaction with their co-workers and if this was not currently in place through the design of their jobs, they engaged in some type of job crafting behavior. Thus, social relationships in intercollegiate athletics departments were shown to be meaningful to participants and therefore the job design and HRD initiatives of athletics departments. By having the ability to choose their social network and resulting social interactions strategically, the participants of the study realized the importance of emphasizing job engagement and growth strategies within job design management in sport.

To conclude, participants used the opportunity to independently manage their job tasks, which augmented their personal development (i.e., opportunities that were self-initiated). To

retain the professional growth experienced by participants (e.g., task efficacy, adaptability), athletics departments need to alter their overall job designs to encourage managers to permit employees to have more control over their job tasks (Berg et al., 2013; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Once implemented, athletics department employees could then utilize personalized techniques to reconstruct their positions to best fit their capabilities and interests, as they did in the findings of this study.

Job Engagement

The purpose of this research specific section of research was to examine the details of job engagement in the domain of intercollegiate athletics departments and its potential outcomes. Past scholars have offered comprehensive descriptions of job engagement in the workplace, but due to the inclusion of the sport industry (e.g., intercollegiate athletics) and the recognized challenges that are presented with working in this context (Kim et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2019), there is a need for context specificity regarding job engagement in sport (Schuetz et al., 2021; Svensson et al., 2021). The aforementioned findings of this study concerning job engagement, reflect the exclusive context that is needed by specifically examining the job engagement experiences of athletics department employees.

The understanding of job engagement was identified through and by athletics department employees and the understanding of the components of job engagement were mostly advanced by the semi-structured interviews. Specifically, several themes were identified to offer a deeper understanding of job engagement within the sport industry. The job engagement experiences of participants encompassed workplace behaviors and mindsets that were used in order to achieve elevated states of physical, cognitive, and emotional full work performance (Rich et al., 2010). Within the presented data, sport employee job engagement is comprised of three components: (a)

enhanced job engagement when effective leadership and communication was present, (b) elevated levels of engagement when having the ability to job craft, and (c) becoming more engaged when having a sense of connection to athletics department initiatives. The aforementioned themes reflect the exclusive context of job engagement experiences within the sport industry (e.g., intercollegiate athletics).

Job engagement was seen through effective leadership and communication processes for athletics department employees and athletics administrators. Leadership and communication are fundamental elements in establishing job engagement for subordinate employees (Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2006). This was seen through the participants of this study, as effective leadership provided them with aspirational achievements that lead to feelings of being more engaged with one's job which would normally take a considerable amount of time and effort to reach without the influence of effective leadership (Daley, 2017; Walden et al., 2017). For the athletics department employees of this study, effective leadership involved supervisors valuing participants striving to feel more passionate about their jobs, committed to the organization, and put significant effort into their work (Rich et al., 2010).

Additionally, participants described how they took active steps to improve the engagement components of their job through effective communication (e.g., communication with co-workers, communication with supervisors, communication with organizational stakeholders). Moreover, being able to effectively communicate via the social networks that existed in the participants' athletics departments was also seen as an essential given the high degree of turnover and other challenges in the sport industry (Kim et al., 2017). In regard to the findings of this study, effective communication epitomizes day-to-day and interdepartmental social relationships that were used by participants in order to achieve elevated levels of job engagement (e.g.,

understand their purpose, how they fit into the functions of the organization). As such, sport employees utilized social networks, communication, and leadership related to their professional skillset as initial steps to attain job engagement. Participants detailed their paths to their engagement by noting the various aspects that would need to be experienced to reach such engagement. Setting an initial path to achieving job engagement through effective leadership and communication was particularly important because it acted as a combatant to the high-turnover facets of working in intercollegiate athletics (Kim et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2019). Thus, participants shared experiences that support the notion that if elevated levels of job engagement are experienced, there would be no need for employees to move to a new athletics department, as they seek organizations that are value-driven and focus on employees' developing mental and emotional connection toward the work they do, their athletics teams, and the entirety of the athletics department.

Given the rigid nature of participant's job designs working in collegiate athletics, which often results in a great deal of turnover in the sport industry, athletics department employees had to embrace aspects of job crafting to achieve becoming more engaged in their jobs. Job crafting behaviors were exemplified by engaged participants as they provided experiences of needing the ability to maneuver the political environment of their workplace setting when confronting challenges by adjusting the means of their job in a way that supports job engagement. For example, participants recognized the challenges before them in working in collegiate athletics (e.g., old fashion organizational structure, high turnover, rigid job designs) and therefore would adjust the aforementioned job crafting practices such as learning to create improved positions so that they can realize full engagement in their jobs. Contrastingly, a non-engaged athletics department employee would view the challenges of the collegiate athletics industry as too great

and would not be willing to take on the behaviors that are needed to become engaged in one's job. For example, several participants shared experiences of themselves or co-workers having to move to a different job within collegiate athletics in the hope of attaining engagement in their job elsewhere. However, the predominant findings of this study showed that an engaged sport employee would embrace the challenges before them set by the industry, via adjusting their job through crafting initiatives in an effort to feel engaged in their job.

Another core component of job engagement within the study participants becoming engaged through a connection to athletics department initiatives (i.e., goals). As noted above, engagement involves achieving a sensing a purpose in the workplace and within one's own job that can be facilitated through participant's feeling a sense of connection to athletics department initiatives. Specifically, this type of emotional fulfillment from job engagement supports participant experiences of wanting to be a part of "the bigger picture" and something superior to what their job tasks produce. Within the findings, this purpose or calling of athletics department employees to fit within the initiatives of the organization is regarded as realizing fulfillment through connectedness. For example, participants wanted to have job tasks and responsibilities that proved to be meaningful to the overall agenda and goals of the athletics department. This finding is similar to that of (Glavas, 2016; Harter et al., 2002), whereas employees that had elevated levels of job engagement sought that their jobs were connected to the mission, goals, and future of the organization. Several participants even described a "love" for their athletics department and how closely associated the initiatives of the athletics department were to their own engagement where participants were more likely to be inspired in their jobs and remain committed to the athletics department. In short, participants were able to face the challenges of working in collegiate athletics regarding job engagement because of the fulfillment and

emotional connection they received from working for their athletics department and being a part of the “bigger picture” in collegiate athletics.

To conclude, by explaining the composition of job engagement within the sport industry, the study offers unique advancements for the field of sport management. Also, interestingly fact that disengaged behaviors were not fully discussed with participants and did not appear to be relevant in the current study, suggests the need for further analysis of engagement in collegiate athletics department employee. The role of this element in the overall construct of job engagement should be continued to be examined by further studies conducted in sport management. As disengagement has been regarded by previous sport management scholars (Taylor et al., 2019) as an indicator for employee burnout and turnover in sport, the negative consequences of disengagement need to be balanced by the positive advancements of job engagement within the sport management literature. Yet, even more potential remains with the possible outcomes of job engagement in sport employees.

Practical Implications

The results of this study have a wide array of implications for the sport management industry as a whole. Additionally, this research has several practical implications for sport leaders, managers, and employees of sport organizations, specifically those within intercollegiate athletics. As an initial study in the domain of HRD in intercollegiate athletics, there are many findings regarding HRD that were highlighted that can be utilized as organizational and employee level strategic advantages. Moreover, HRD with the inclusion of job engagement, job design, organizational politics, and political skill proved to enhance the level of job-related skills and knowledge across an organization as well as positive employee and manager behaviors. These positive developments can ultimately increase the productivity and performance of sport

employees, managers, and organizations as shown in this study and other academic HRD works (Schuetz et al., 2021; Svensson et al., 2021). As addressed in the results section of this study, a major concern for current HRD practices is centered on no centralized methods across an organization. Thus, as Wang et al. (2017) notes, in order to establish effective HRD practices that in return produces improved employee engagement, productivity, and efficiency, organizations need to understand the organizational-wide approaches to HRD and formulate a centralized approach. By doing so, there is a reduction in the “silos” that are generated within an organization by specific departments.

Remaining within the specific HRD practical implications of this study, there was a noted desire by sport employees to consistently receive detailed performance assessments as well as specific job-related trainings and development workshops. Thus, sport managers can take this information to ensure that organizationally these items are being implemented as they greatly impact employee performance. To reiterate, performance assessments are continual and a process that informs an employee on how well an employee is performing their job responsibilities that also establishes a plan of continued success or improvement (Khan et al., 2012). Therefore, in order to implement successful HRD practices, sport leaders and managers ought to develop and offer a written performance assessment procedure that is established universally across the organization. The assessment procedures that are established also need to be comprised of performance measures that are unbiased and measurable. Furthermore, sport leaders and managers should ensure that sport employees are provided more informal performance-based feedback on a consistent basis as well as a wide array of development workshops ranging from working in collegiate athletics to the operations of the specific job that they hold. It is crucial that these sport managers and leaders consider these HRD practices as

valuable, thus safeguarding that these employee-based performance reviews and developments are constructed and implemented with the utmost quality and effort.

The communication between employees and sport managers and leaders also plays a crucial role in the success of HRD practices. Therefore, a practical implication within HRD for sport managers is to ensure that the communication of role expectations between themselves and the employees are concrete, thereby ensuring this would reduce workplace discrepancies and conflicts, in addition to enhancing the importance and success of HRD utilization. For this approach to become standardized and for organizations to truly value the practices of HRD, it is suggested the sport practitioners become deliberate regarding the selection and development of HRD practices in their sport organization.

Transitioning to the practical implications regarding organizational politics, this study further emphasizes that when sport employees understand the presence of organizational politics, it cannot be expected that they are perceiving the same positive or negative aspects of the phenomenon. Thus, this study recognizes the importance of understanding each employee's perspective on organizational politics and that not all sport employees will have the same perspective (e.g., positive, negative, neutral) on organizational politics. Also, the findings of this study signify those individuals can have evolving perspectives on organizational politics as the understanding of their organizational environment and career-based experiences develop. The implications for this study also highlight those perceptions on politics and political behaviors have had noticeably meaningful effects on employees and organizations. Damaging employee and organizational outcomes were regularly conveyed by individuals that had a more negative view of organizational politics. Yet, advantageous employee and organizational outcomes were commonly reported by individuals who had a positive lens. Thus, sport organizations could

potentially evaluate the degree to which what perspectives are dominantly existing in their own organizations. By determining the degree in which employees perceive organizational politics, sport leaders can emphasize the political environment that they themselves and their employees operate in.

Moreover, this study exemplifies the potential positive outcomes of sport leaders who utilize aspects of political skill. By doing so, sport managers can participate in meaningful behaviors with their subordinates in the workplace that eventually support political skill as an effective managing style (i.e., manipulating the emotions of their employees; Ellen, 2014). With regard to further practical implications, the findings of this study are expected to help sport managers and leaders in this specific context (e.g., intercollegiate athletics) to develop strategies that can contribute to promoting positive relationships and employee performance through political skill. One such strategy would be to integrate the career development focus of HRD with a political skill-based development workshop. Therefore, highlighting that political skill can be learned, and those who are able to learn it and harness its abilities have a greater chance of obtaining career successes (Magnusen & Kim, 2016; Todd et al., 2009).

Continuing, the results of this research emphasize the potential that job engagement has on employees and HRD practices within the sport workplace. Employees who are more engaged and, in turn, achieve elevated levels of performance, will be able to increase the overall effectiveness of an organization, which is a primary objective of HRD initiatives (Shuck & Wollard, 2010; Svensson et al., 2021). As noted throughout this research, the sport environment is one that is consistently changing and stressful (Kim et al., 2017); thus, it is important to determine how HRD interacts with job engagement as it could be specifically valuable to a sport organization. In general, it was found that job engagement in the workplace is supported by HRD

practices, employees who understand their political environment, and by sport leaders and managers who engage in political skill leadership. Consequently, sport organizations should place great importance on understanding the developing construct of job engagement in sport as a meaningful workplace competency that can improve the quality of a sport employee's work life, increase their workplace performance, and ultimately develop a competitive advantage for the organization as they continue within the sport industry. Sport management scholars have long examined how to develop competitive advantages for sport organizations via a multitude of different constructs, but this study offers a unique prospect based on HRD and job engagement initiatives. Therefore, since both HRD and political skill were noted as factors that could enhance an employee's job engagement, sport leaders and managers should consider creating political skill-based leadership trainings and establishing programs to support HRD in the workplaces. Similarly, providing HRD workplace incentives (e.g., recognition, rewards, bonuses) for engaged employees or providing opportunities to become more engaged in the workplace (e.g., choice of project, free meals, workshops) could enhance sport employees' workplace performance.

With respect to practical implications concerning the job design and job crafting components of this study, the findings should support sport managers in this specific context (e.g., intercollegiate athletics) to develop organizational strategies that contribute to strategic HRD practices, as well as positive employee competency outcomes. Additionally, the findings of this research highlight that understanding one's job design and being able to engage in job crafting can create an organizational competitive advantage by supporting organizational and employee performance. In this setting, with the primary emphasis on HRD, sport organizations that support job design flexibility can help shape paths to achieving HRD success and accentuating employee personal and career growth. Employee career development plays a crucial

role in achieving successful HRD practices (McDonald & Hite, 2008), and offering additional career development opportunities through efficient job designs and welcoming job crafting would ultimately be advantageous for sport organizations in the competitive sport industry.

Prior literature has illustrated the inflexibility that can develop in the employee/manager relationship and management procedures (Harris et al., 2009) as well as specifically within the intercollegiate sport level (Paek et al., 2020). Understandably, this rigidity in the workplace is a barrier to successful HRD in the workplace. Therefore, this study advances the understanding of ineffective HRD results relating to job designs by presenting how job designs can be an issue of concern in the employee/manager relationship if an employee is unable to job craft. Some participants in this study experienced strict job designs set by their organization and manager that resulted in negative employee performance. Yet, these employees believed that their overall job designs could be crafted to support their strengths and interests if it was recognized as a valuable aspect to their organization and/or manager. Thus, sport organizations should acknowledge and understand the importance of integrating job design and job crafting into HRD practices.

However, this research also provided examples of how HRD can be effective in the workplace through job design when the crafting of one's job is used as a pathway to transform a sport employee's job for the better, which then can enhance the sport employee's engagement and performance. Outside the results of this study, sport organizations should consider adapting attainable job crafting methods for their employees such as allowing sport employees to work remotely after a heavy day/weekend event, offering unique and desirable job tasks in the off-season, and even encouraging employees to wear less or more "hats" depending on what they desire. While job crafting is centered on an employee's ability to craft their job to best fit their strengths (Berg et al., 2013; Gordon et al., 2018), this research suggests that modernizing the

sport workplace to promote job crafting instead of impeding it would be a significant organizational competitive advantage.

Limitations

As with any empirical research, this study is not without limitations; however, the limitations of this study should be measured alongside its contributions. Overall, the study was restricted to individuals who had experienced the phenomenon of HRD and subsequently organizational politics, political skill, job design, and job engagement. Even as the researcher attempted to remain objective in the study and data analysis by utilizing Wagstaff et al.'s (2012) structure of scholarly curiosity, it is possible that any preconceptions of the researcher could have influenced the analyses. Thus, other scholars may have decided on other conclusions, found different data themes, or proposed different codes and subthemes. However, by following well-recognized qualitative processes (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021; Creswell, 2014), the researcher evaluated the data in a transparent, valid, and replicable way.

In the context of qualitative analysis, some may argue that participant number might be an insufficient sample size to support the researcher's conclusions. However, as previously stated, it is commonly accepted that a phenomenological framework (Creswell, 2014) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021) can produce rich understandings into employee perceptions of their organizational experiences with as many participants as the current study used. The quantity and quality of the study's data confirms to the utilization of thematic analysis and phenomenology as qualitative data collection and analytic techniques. However, even with the number of participants within this study, it was limited to the American collegiate sport industry. As such, the results of this study may not represent the entire population of employees in intercollegiate athletics. The qualitative nature of the research only examined the experiences

of a limited number of employees within intercollegiate athletics and the results of the data may not be generalizable to all of employees working within intercollegiate athletics. While the present study contributes to the overall knowledge of the application of HRD, job engagement, job design, leader political skill, and organizational politics within the NCAA Division I collegiate sport environment, there are further prospects for future research that encompass the study's paradigms.

Future Research Directions

The purpose of this dissertation was to provide an initial experimental inquiry of the HRD paradigm in intercollegiate athletics and to study the impact of HRD on the organizational politics, political skill, job design, job crafting, and job engagement of employees in this specific area of sport. Therefore, there are an abundance of possibilities for future research when examining the paradigm of HRD within the sport industry. HRD is encompassed within this study through the variables of political skill, job design, job crafting, and job engagement; however, future studies should not be limited to only these constructs. In the remaining part of this section, the researcher will explore the future directions of each of the study's variables (e.g., organizational politics, political skill, job engagement, job design, and job crafting) and the importance of future research in each area, before discussing the combination of each with HRD and the future possibilities there.

Future studies could examine organizational politics and leader political skill within other sport contexts such as professional sport organizations, national governing bodies (NGB), NCAA Division II and III, as well as international non-profit sport organizations. Future studies could be conducted, though, to uncover any differences concerning organizational politics and leader political skill within the countless categories of international sport. Similarly, as the sport

industry continues to endure challenging social developments, studying the political skill abilities of the sport industry's uppermost leaders (e.g., owners, general managers, commissioners, athletic directors) could be explored if leader political skill is a valuable component at the highest levels of sport organizations (Perrewé & Ferris, 2016). Moreover, this study mainly focused on the political skill of organizational supervisors (e.g., leaders) as perceived by their employees (e.g., subordinates). Whether quantitative or qualitative in nature, future studies in sport should focus on employees' insights of their own political skill abilities and the perspectives of organizational politics and influences of political skill among all levels of sport employees in a sport organization. Although impression management was highlighted in the literature review of this research, it was not regarded as a factor within the findings. Therefore, further research could be done to connect the aspects of impression management, such as the goal-directed aware or unaware efforts of individuals to influence others in the workplace by directing communication in social interactions (Bolino et al., 2016), to the career development focus of the HRD paradigm. Additionally, a minute amount of research has focused on the perceptions of impression management (Roulin et al., 2014; Rozell & Gundersen, 2003), comparably to what this study has examined in organizational politics. Thus, using a similar framework as this study, it would be valuable for future researchers to examine the perceptions employees have impressed upon management in the workplace and whether it too exists within the positive, negative, and neutral spectrums.

Future studies should aim to discover additional outcomes and antecedents associated to HRD and job engagement in the sport workplace. This study found that sport employees' job engagement behaviors are supported by HRD practices as well as the style of management by sport leaders. By expanding the knowledge of job engagement among sport employees and

discovering pathways to becoming engaged in the workplace, this study can be utilized as a catalyst to produce improved experiences for sport employees through HRD initiatives, which could lead to enhanced individual and organizational performance. The insights of sport employee outcomes related to job engagement may be assisted through a quantitative study, which can add context to the qualitative findings of this research.

Regarding the relationship between HRD and the job design and job crafting component of this dissertation, there are sections concerning job design management that were not examined in this research but would greatly benefit future opportunities. For example, knowledge management and its role within one's evaluation of job design would be beneficial to examine in the same setting in sport as this research (e.g., intercollegiate athletics) in the hopes of increasing employee performance. This is a valuable avenue as the concept of knowledge management and the capacity for sport organizations to learn and develop their own organizational strategies in order to flourish is increasing in popularity in the sport management literature (e.g., Delshab & Boroujerdi, 2018; Delshab et al., 2020). Furthermore, other aspects within job design management that are closely aligned to HRD, such as organizational learning through corporate social responsibility (Zeimers et al., 2019) and unlearning within organizational performance (e.g., Delshab et al., 2021), would be valuable pathways for future sport researchers. All of these concepts within the job design and job crafting management realm (e.g., knowledge management, organizational learning and unlearning) could provide more in-depth information on the ability to enhance sport employees' job designs and organizational performance (Delshab et al., 2020, 2021). Future studies that explore similar constructs similar to this study within the domain of HRD practices, such as job design, job crafting, knowledge management, organization learning, and unlearning will have a significant impact on how to enhance sport organization

performance and would greatly develop all of these theories' connections to HRD in sport management.

In regard to HRD, a qualitative research design was used in analyzing the data that was collected through the observations and semi-structured interviews of this study. An in-depth quantitative study that utilizes academically supported and structured questionnaires on HRD practices would not only advance the findings of this study, but it is also recommended in advancing the HRD sport management literature in future studies. Additionally, futures studies that integrate both qualitative and quantitative methodologies would provide a stronger depiction of the role of HRD in modern sport organizations. Another avenue for future research within sport management HRD would be to develop a model that incorporates the variables of this study, along with other employee competencies (e.g., meaningful work, innovativeness, flourishing), into a proposed model in future research activities. In doing so, a better visualization could be developed to showcase HRD's prominent role within employee growth and career development, thus better informing both scholars and practitioners in how sport employee growth can be developed through creatively designing and managing sport organizations and jobs in a HRD approach.

Lastly, future research should further investigate HRD practices, organizational politics, political skill, job design, job crafting, and job engagement through the basis of gender, race, and ethnicity of sport employees. The outcomes of these future studies could help produce a better understanding of the overall labor force as well as prospective strategies for creating a more diverse workforce in the sport industry. While there was an adequate sample of females represented in this study's participants, African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-American employees were somewhat underrepresented. These future studies will assist in providing a

better understanding of the workplace experiences for minority employees in the sport industry. With numerous sport management scholars (Cunningham, 2015; Huml et al., 2021; Svensson et al., 2021; Walker & Melton, 2015) calling for similar studies, it is apparent that these future research lines can be important for sport organizations as they attempt to ensure that their labor forces are representative of the teams, players, and student-athletes that they work to support.

Conclusion

To conclude, this project supports the explanation of how workplace competencies affect employee development, performance, and decision-making in a specific space of the sport industry (e.g., intercollegiate athletics). This study utilized an in-depth qualitative examination of the lived experiences of employees in intercollegiate athletics departments. The researcher embedded himself into an ordinarily restrictive environment (e.g., intercollegiate sport organizations) and performed thorough semi-structured interviews, which offered unique data regarding the intersection of organizational politics, job design/crafting, and employee engagement in the sport workplace. This study applied the framework of HRD to explore how job crafting and design can enable sport employees' and managers' understandings of engagement and performance. Sport employees are an essential element of their respective organizations, and the success or failure of the organizations are contingent on employee performance, which was shown to be enhanced through HRD practices.

The researcher conducted observations and semi-structured interviews at multiple NCAA Division I intercollegiate athletics departments in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States as well as conducted further semi-structured interviews with intercollegiate athletic employees across the country. The data obtained from this project provides a template for sport organizations to improve their understanding of how sport employee growth and skill

development is enabled, thus fostering an enhanced experience for employees, and signifying a channel for organizational growth and performance. The key variables identified within the study accentuate how sport employee development impacts employee and organizational performance.

Foremost, the present study offers an advanced understanding of the functionality of leader political skill regarding management practices in sport, as well as the critical role of employee perceptions within organizational politics. The results show that sport employees perceive organizational politics both negatively and positively. Furthermore, this study demonstrated how organizational politics can manifest into either a positive, negative, or neutral presence by how the political behavior is perceived. Positive political behaviors, which included promoting an individual's organizational standing, establishing and using relationships, and fully comprehending organizational decision-making processes, were highlighted fully in the results section. Additionally, negative political influences and perspectives on employee turnover intention, job engagement, reduced performance, and the loss of employee goal attainment were discussed. The findings of this study are impactful for sport organizations as they provide a pathway to organizational competitive advantages for sport leaders who utilize political skill and are, in turn, able to promote positive relationships and employee performance.

In another facet, this dissertation builds in a positive manner upon the previous literature in sport management highlighting the negative aspects of sport employment, such as employee burnout and stress (Huml et al., 2021; Maslach et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2019; Weight et al., 2021). Yes, it is important to note such features in the sport management literature; however, until recently, it has been rare for studies to highlight the pathways for sport organizations and employees to undertake for retained employment, success, and career development. This analysis of HRD practices and organizational functionality via the lived experiences of employees is a

primary effort to greatly assist in those efforts. To counteract the negative aspects of sport employment, a noteworthy finding was the importance of job engagement to the modern sport employee. This study found that sport employees' job engagement behaviors were supported with improved HRD practices and style of management. Although other constructs outside of the realm of this dissertation might also be predictors of job engagement, organizational HRD practices and leader political skill were mainly found to improve job engagement, which in turn supported sport employee retainment, stress, and career development. By expanding the knowledge of the presence of HRD among sport employees and organization, and discovering potential pathways to job engagement, this dissertation can be utilized as a catalyst to produce improved experiences for sport employees which could lead to enhanced individual and organizational performance.

Lastly, the results of this project include providing a better understanding for improved employee growth, organization performance, and a better understanding of HRD's potential for transforming sport organizations. The findings of this proposal assist sport organizations and managers that desire to proactively observe and contribute to the re-shaping of the work environment to provide their sport organization with a competitive advantage. Overall, the findings of this project further the literature concerning HRD in sport with nuanced interpretations of organizational politics, job design/crafting, and employee engagement within the sport workplace by focusing on the experiences of sport employees. The benefits of analyzing HRD practices to determine antecedents for employee development in the workplace offers a sustained competitive advantage for sport organizations via improved organizational functionality. Enhancing organizational functionality through HRD confirms to have positive implications for sport employees, participants, and consumers.

While this dissertation was empirical in nature, the researcher assures that the overall structure of the study will set and provide an initial framework to future studies for other sport management scholars. Additionally, this research provides a foundational groundwork for the HRD paradigm within sport management, whereas future scholars can utilize this work to investigate HRD, job design, political skill, and job engagement in greater detail.

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APPENDIX A

COMPREHENSIVE TABLE PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Table A.1*Comprehensive Table of Participant Demographics*

Job Level	Gender	Department	School Level	Ethnicity	Category
Sr. Associate A.D.	Male	Event Management	Power 5	Black	Athletics Admin.
Sr. Associate A.D.	Male	Development	Non-Power 5	White	Athletics Admin.
Sr. Associate A.D.	Female	Admin. Operations	Power 5	White	Athletics Admin.
Sr. Associate A.D.	Female	Admin. Operations	Non-Power 5	Black	Athletics Admin.
Associate A.D.	Male	Event Management	Power 5	White	Athletics Admin.
Associate A.D.	Male	Admin. Operations	Non-Power 5	White	Athletics Admin.
Assistant A.D.	Female	Marketing	Power 5	White	Athletics Admin.
Assistant A.D.	Male	Ticketing	Power 5	White	Athletics Admin.
Assistant A.D.	Male	Development	Non-Power 5	White	Athletics Admin.
Director	Male	Development	Non-Power 5	White	Mid-level
Director	Female	Marketing	Non-Power 5	White	Mid-level
Director	Male	Ticketing	Non-Power 5	White	Mid-level
Director	Male	Event Management	Power 5	White	Mid-level
Director	Male	Equipment	Non-Power 5	White	Mid-level
Associate Director	Female	Equipment	Power 5	White	Mid-level
Associate Director	Male	Development	Power 5	White	Mid-level
Associate Director	Female	Ticketing	Power 5	White	Mid-level
Associate Director	Female	Development	Non-Power 5	Black	Mid-level
Assistant Director	Male	Development	Non-Power 5	White	Entry-level
Assistant Director	Male	Sports Information	Non-Power 5	White	Entry-level
Assistant Director	Female	Marketing	Non-Power 5	Black	Entry-level
Assistant Director	Male	Event Management	Non-Power 5	Black	Entry-level
Assistant Director	Male	Ticketing	Power 5	White	Entry-level
Assistant Director	Male	Compliance	Power 5	White	Entry-level
Assistant Director	Male	Development	Power 5	White	Entry-level
Assistant Director	Male	Marketing	Power 5	White	Entry-level
Coordinator	Female	Event Management	Non-Power 5	White	Entry-level
Coordinator	Female	Business Office	Non-Power 5	Hispanic	Entry-level
Coordinator	Male	Marketing	Non-Power 5	White	Entry-level

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



Date: 03/23/2021
 Principal Investigator: Logan Schuetz
 Committee Action: **IRB EXEMPT DETERMINATION – New Protocol**
 Action Date: 03/23/2021
 Protocol Number: [2103023308](#)
 Protocol Title: From the Ground Up: Empowering Employee Decision-Making
 Expiration Date:

The University of Northern Colorado Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol and determined your project to be exempt under 45 CFR 46.104(d)(702) for research involving

Category 2 (2018): EDUCATIONAL TESTS, SURVEYS, INTERVIEWS, OR OBSERVATIONS OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR. Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by 45 CFR 46.111(a)(7).

You may begin conducting your research as outlined in your protocol. Your study does not require further review from the IRB, unless changes need to be made to your approved protocol.

APPENDIX C**PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM**



UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN
COLORADO

Participant Observation & Interview Consent Form

Researcher: Logan Schuetz logan.schuetz@unco.edu

Professor : Brent D. Oja, PhD, Sport Administration, Sport & Exercise Science, Brent.Oja@unco.edu

By verbally agreeing to this form, you are indicating the following:

You understand that the goal of the study is to explore the intersection of organizational politics, job design/crafting, and employee engagement within the sport organization setting. You are choosing to volunteer to participate in the qualitative research study conducted by Logan Schuetz and Dr. Brent Oja at the University of Northern Colorado.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You understand that you will not be paid for your participation. You may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you decline to participate or withdraw from the study, no further communication is needed. You understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. You also understand that your work behaviors will be observed throughout the study. **If, however, you feel uncomfortable in any way during the observation and/or interview sessions, you have the right to decline or pause the session, any question(s), or to end the interview/observation.**

Participation involves being interviewed and observed by the researcher from University of Northern Colorado throughout the course of the study. Formal interviews will last approximately 45 to 90 minutes. Observations will take place in both the event and office setting. Notes may be written during observations and the interviews. An audio recording of the interview/observation and subsequent dialogue can be made. Conversations between yourself and the researcher may also during observations; these conversations may be recorded (either via an audio recorder or field notes), but you have the right to pause or stop any observation/conversation at any time. Observations will be conducted during athletic events and occurrences throughout the workday inside the athletic department offices. Observational data collection will include anything associated with the athletic contest, including the venue setting, fans, staff members, and facilities. Within this setting, the researcher will act as an athletic department employee, including performing normal athletic department job duties, while attempting to appear natural and convincing during the data collection process. You understand that the researchers will have sole access to the audio files and that the audio recordings will be destroyed after the transcription process is completed. If you don't want to be taped, you will not be able to participate in the study. You understand that the researcher will not identify you by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview. We will use the best practices available to secure your confidentiality in this study. Data will be destroyed after three years.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please verbally agree to the researcher if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Nicole Morse, IRB Administrator, Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

APPENDIX D**EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS**

Hello [Participant Name],

My name is Logan Schuetz and I am a doctoral student in the Sport Administration program at the University of Northern Colorado. I am conducting a study on the lived experiences of employees in intercollegiate athletic departments. I am writing to you because I would appreciate the opportunity to sit down and talk with you via Zoom or in-person about your personal experiences as an intercollegiate athletic employee. Participation is completely voluntary, and should you choose to participate, your identity including the institution will be kept confidential in any reports or presentations.

In order to participate in the study, you must the following criteria:

1. Have a full-time staff position in an intercollegiate athletic department.

If you are interested in sharing your experiences with me or if you have any further questions, please email Logan Schuetz at logan.schuetz@unco.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Logan Schuetz
Sport Administration Ph.D. Student
GTA-Instructor
School of Sport & Exercise Science
Butler-Hancock 261H

APPENDIX E

NARRATIVE FOR INTERVIEW GUIDE AND OBSERVATIONS



Interview Guide Narrative

This study will use semi-structured interviews and observations as methods to collect data. For the semi-structured interviews, the primary investigator (PI) will first build rapport with the participants by asking general questions about their association with the university's athletics department and background in the sport industry. Additionally, in this initial rapport, the PI will ask participants general demographic questions such as: job title, gender, ethnicity, education level, and years of work experience. The PI will then ask interviewees a series of open-ended questions that will start a conversation about their experiences, perspectives, and opinions working within their respective sport organizations. The narrative will look to understand how participants view, support, and understand the intersection of organizational politics, job design/crafting, and employee engagement. The PI will also look to understand the lived experiences of employees within their roles working at an intercollegiate athletic department. Potential example questions are found below:

1. Can you recall a time where you had to use your understanding of the politics of your organization to push an idea through?
2. Can you describe a time you had to maneuver around potential organizational barricades in order to bring a project to completion successfully?
3. Has your job changed since you first started here? If so, how has it changed and in what ways, if any, have you made your job your own?
4. Have you altered your job responsibilities on your own initiative? If so, how?
5. Can you describe the organizational hierarchy of your sport organization and how it impacts your work experiences?

Participant Observations

Participant observation for this study refers to the research in which PI observes and documents actions while actively participating in the organization under investigation in a range of ways. The PI will combine the role of researcher with other social roles (such as volunteer, friend, employee, etc.). Participants who have consented to observations (found in the consent form) will be observed during work periods and will occur in public and private settings. We would like to reiterate and confirm that private setting observations will only occur when informed consent is provided. During observations, conversations among the PI and consenting participants that are germane to the study may be recorded. In addition, the PI will revisit consent throughout the conducting of research, reminding and/or discussing the research with informants

Public Observations

Additional observations of those who are not consenting participants of the study may also occur. We believe these observations are still appropriate for an exempt status as these observations will only take place in public settings and no demographic, identifiable, or descriptive information of individuals or events (i.e., time and location) will be recorded or described. These observations will only occur during publicly held games and events and observations will only be recorded when "out in the open" or in a public domain when there is no expectation of privacy. These observations are meant to provide context for interactions and the responses of consenting participants. Examples of descriptions of non-consenting participants could include "Fans began to yell and scream at the employees to make sure the floor was clean so the game could continue" or "An athletics department employee engaged in a heated argument with Participant 8 (in this fictional example participant 8 is a consenting participant)".

APPENDIX F

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Structure

The following questions are representative of the potential questions that may be asked during the study's interviews. Since the interviews are semi-structured, additional topics and questions could be covered during the interviews.

Participant Reminder: Please note that there are no right or wrong answers and that you will be provided a pseudonym so that all of your responses remain anonymous.

Questions from the following lists were utilized by the researcher. Not all questions were used during interviews.

Background Information

- Age.
- Title of current job/position.
- Time working in current organization.
- Previous employment at other organizations.
 - Can you begin by telling me a little about yourself and your role within the athletic department?
 - Can you please provide me with a progression of your career from your initial introduction to working in sport up to today?
 - How long have you been working in your current role, and how long have you been associated with the sport industry?
 - Can you tell me a little bit about your athletic department now? (Conference affiliation, number of employees, staffing structure, leadership structure, culture regarding learning, or any other information that may be pertinent).

Potential Human Resource Development Questions

Researcher will describe HRD to the participant in a brief summary.

- How would you describe HRD in collegiate athletic departments?
- What HRD activities is your athletic department or specific department engaged in?
- What contribution does yourself and your colleagues make to the development of the athletic department's strategy?
 - What factors constrain or facilitate the success of these strategies?
- What HRD training practices is your athletic department involved in?
- Who is involved in the strategy development in your athletic department?

Potential Organizational Politics & Political Skill

- Can you tell me about a time when organizational politics affected your job? How did you handle the situation and what was the outcome?
- Can you provide an example of a time when you used your knowledge of organizational politics to your advantage?
- Can you describe a time when you unknowingly made a political mistake in your role or a previous role? Were you able to resolve your mistake and how did you do it?
- Can you tell me about a time when you were able to leverage your connection with a colleague or leader of your athletic department to accomplish a goal?
- Can you describe a situation in which organizational politics delayed or prevented an initiative of yours? How did you handle this?

- Can you give an example of how your knowledge of your organization's culture helped you make a decision?
- Can you tell me what steps you took to go about learning how your current organization works?

Potential Job Engagement Questions

- How would you define job engagement?
- In your role within college athletics, what keeps you fully engaged in your tasks?
- In your role within college athletics, how and why do employees become disengaged in their task?
- How do you remain motivated in your current role? Does your schedule have any role in that?
- In your role, how does the ability to do what tasks you want when you want affect your engagement level?
- How does your engagement level affect your decision to remain with the company?
- What gives your work meaning in your role?
- How would you describe the role of leadership in the department on your engagement?

Potential Job Design and Crafting Questions

- Has your job changed since you first started it? If so, how has it changed?
- Do you plan your own work schedule and duties? If yes, how so?
- Can you choose the methods to use in carrying out your work? If so, how?
- Can you decide how to go about getting your job done? If so, how?
- Have you ever, for example, added tasks to your job, dropped tasks, or changed the way you perform tasks?
- Considering what your job requires you to do in general, how much opportunity is there for you to make your own decisions?
- In what ways, if any, have you made your job your own?
- In what ways would you change your job's design so that it is better in the future?