

Investigating “The Chant”: Leadership-as-practice and social capital-bridging influence on
members of a complex adaptive system

by

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B.S., Brigham Young University, 1994
M.A., Gonzaga University, 2014

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Abstract

This qualitative case study looks at the dynamic interplay between the influencers and the influenced when looking at Complex Adaptive Systems whose individual members are exhibiting Leadership-As-Practice to foster collective decision-making and actions. The study considers the effect of Social Capital-Bridging as a mechanism for those attempting to drive behavior change and have influence over a CAS over which they lack true power or authority. The research centers on a case study of the phenomenon of “The Chant” at Kansas State University. For 20 years, “The Chant” rang out from the student section for football and basketball games at K-State, taunting rivals at the University of Kansas, an obscene insult regardless of opponent on the field or floor. This CAS resisted all forms of outside influence regardless of standing, authority or perceived power, until a new head basketball coach changed his approach to his relationship with the crowd. With individual members of the CAS acting with L-A-P, leading in place and coming to common decisions, the study looks at how individual leaders used Social Capital-Bridging to cross the divide between the CAS outside entity to gain entry into the system and exert influence. Through qualitative interviews with 11 members of the CAS and six members of administration with the University, the research reveals the different approaches employed by administration to connect with and influence members of the CAS, ultimately using social capital to bridge the gap. It reveals the necessity that standing on the bridge is not enough to truly exert influence. To influence effective and lasting change, an outside entity must use that bridge to enter the CAS and become part of the decision-making variables each member must consider when deciding behavior and activity.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Introduction

For many years, the Kansas State University student section engaged in a collective chant during men's basketball and football games which contained profanity directed towards hated rival University of Kansas. This then evolved into the same chant being used even when the team was not playing KU, something the student section of the crowd spontaneously started doing en masse. However, that changed, also spontaneously considering the individual nature of the participants of a crowd, in 2023, when "The Chant" was curtailed at many basketball and football events. This research aims to discover through a qualitative study why "The Chant" was discontinued for a time in 2023 and 2024, by using understanding the Leadership-As-Practice (L-A-P) displayed by the body of the student section which influenced the whole to decide not to continue the practice.

The study looks at the Complex Adaptive System (CAS) of a seemingly random group of students and sports fans to see how the system itself is influenced and creates a situation where the body of the members comes to the conclusion of discontinuing "The Chant" or modifying behavior in general. This change also coincided with a new leader of the men's basketball team, Head Coach Jerome Tang, who made the effort of cessation of "The Chant" a goal. Though not in charge of or tasked with any leadership over the student section of the K-State football and basketball games, he nonetheless exhibited some influence over their actions where others have failed. In this case study, we will see whether that influence, of an individual without the stewardship of a group, can still be an influence over said group. By looking at this through the lens of Social Capital-Bridging Theory, we will also investigate whether the individual attitudes towards this practice and personal social capital had an effect and look at how members of

administration were able to bridge the gap between the students and administration to effect change within the CAS. It will also view the body through the lens of social constructionism (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010) to see if it can explain the how group acts as an amalgamation of diverse actors.

The Case

The Kansas State University student section for many years engaged in a chant during basketball and football games which contained profanity directed towards hated rival Kansas University. According to the Kansas State Collegian student newspaper, “The Chant” became more prevalent in 2008 at a game against the University of Kansas (Rogers, 2017). It started during a song played by the public address system, and members of the students’ section started to chant in time with the song “Sandstorm” by Darude, “F*** K-U” over and over on the beat. This then became a habit; whenever that song was played during a live game, the students would break into the chant regardless of who Kansas State was playing at the time. While some students opposed it, enough of the body of the students who watched the games in the arenas participated to make it a unified voice.

As time went on, and the song “Sandstorm” was taken off the public address playlist for most home games, students started finding other times for “The Chant”. Eventually, without any preplanning among students, “The Wabash Cannonball”, a beloved traditional song played at every home game for basketball and football, became where the students started “The Chant”. “The Wabash”, as it is colloquially known, was first publicly played by the K-State Marching Band on December 16, 1968, at a basketball game in the Ahern Fieldhouse just three days after an arsonist’s fire had destroyed all of the K-State Music Department’s assets at Nichols Hall on campus. The fire consumed all the sheet music, save for one piece which the

band director had taken home with him to create an arrangement specifically for the marching band. That piece was “The Wabash Cannonball” and in the days before digital music printouts and photocopiers, it was a long time before any other titles of sheet music were obtained, so it became the sole tune for the band that year. The song, originally about those who rode the trains across country, came to represent resilience and strength in the face of challenges. For more than 55 years the song has been played, along with interactive dance movements for the crowd, and revered at virtually every sporting event the band attends (“K-State Bands”, 2025). Because of the nature of the relationship with the fan-base and the song, public outcry was loud when the student section started using the rhythmic section of the beloved classic to time out their chant against their rivals up the road.

After calls to stop using “The Wabash” as a chant with vulgar lyrics by coaches (including the legendary former football coach Bill Snyder), alumni, band directors, other students and athletic directors alike, the student section was not affected. They continued to do “The Chant” during “The Wabash Cannonball” all the same, no matter who K-State’s opponent happened to be, from North Dakota State to Missouri, or the University of Kansas themselves. Even when threatened that the University band would discontinue playing the traditional song at future events, the student section continued “The Chant” through much of the 2022 football season. This practice abruptly stopped en masse in early 2023 during the men’s basketball season and the student section continued to refrain from “The Chant” during the 2023-24 men’s basketball schedule. So what conditions changed to suddenly create a different situation where each person who had previously been doing “The Chant” decided to stop? Discovering the reasons behind this phenomenon is one of the main goals of this study.

Not coincidentally, in the spring of 2022, Jerome Tang was hired as the new basketball coach for the men's basketball team. Tang came into the University immediately endearing himself to the students by doing interactive activities with the fan base. Those included giving the student body his cell phone number, giving them a chance to better know him with question-and-answer sessions called "Hang with Tang" and participating with the crowd in the "Wabash Cannonball" dance during both football and basketball games. He also was vocal about how students should conduct themselves at football and basketball games, saying they should be more focused on themselves than any opponent and cheer *for* their team, not *against* another. In particular, an incident occurred at Bramlage Coliseum in Manhattan, Kansas on January 18, 2023. During a men's basketball game, K-State hosted the University of Kansas in a hotly contested game. The game went to overtime, with the Wildcats coming out on top in what was at the time a very rare occurrence- getting a win over their rivals. Though the students did "The Chant" throughout the game to taunt the opposing team, Tang addressed the crowd after the game urging fans to replace the "F-KU" chant with "K-S-U", saying "Make it about us, not them!" (Robinett, 2023). It turned out that this incident became a turning point in this action, and along with other factors, seemed to tip when and where "The Chant" would raise its head among the students.

Purpose of the Study

The chant has not disappeared entirely. When the team plays rival University of Kansas, the crowd reverts to old form at times in both football and basketball and has on occasion revived the chant for brief periods of time (Capruso, 2024). This adaptive challenge is part of what I am looking at- how does a group of individuals, together as a single body without any organized leadership, modify a behavior? What kind of factors are included in trying to

understand why members of this group individually make a decision and transfer that decision onto a larger group without any nominal authority? In this study, we are looking at not only explaining the phenomenon but also creating a guide or roadmap for other future phenomena which have similar make-up to provide a way for behavior modification in a natural way, while at the same time being ordered so others can follow the blueprint of how to modify this behavior for the greater good. A large group of divergent people coming together during a common event or cause is very common, though knowing how to control or influence them is difficult to pinpoint. With this research we hope to provide a scaffold for understanding.

This study expands how crowds are viewed and studied to include multiple decision-making influences and ways to categorize the leadership within the crowd and the crowd itself. We are looking at the crowd as a Complex Adaptive System (CAS) which is made up of many interactive agents acting in concert (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017). By looking at the crowd as a CAS, we can track their processes and individual decision-making to find how the crowd as a whole reacts and shifts behaviorally. This viewpoint allows researchers to view the impact of individual decisions on the behavior of the whole.

With no singular authority figure who “reflects the individual actions within [the] larger group” (Dugan, 2017, p. 18), whether elected or organically followed, the behavior of the group as an entity can be considered an exercise in Leadership-as-Practice (Raelin & Robinson, 2022). Since “people do not remain static in connection” (Robinson & Renshaw, 2021, p. 17) the actions of the individuals making up a leadership structure which is neither formal nor predictable become less predictive as well. “A practice is a cooperative effort among participants who choose through their own rules to achieve a distinctive outcome” (Raelin, 2011, p. 196) and this effort from the crowd to cheer their team can be viewed in this way. L-A-P can

be used as an explanation of the practice and actions of the group and helps find out why certain phenomena exist, in this case the rise and fall of “The Chant”. As individuals exercise their own free will and exhibit leadership in their own sphere, they become part of the Complex Adaptive System, making the crowd a unified body of sorts. This research project will take the principles of L-A-P as well as complex adaptive systems and social constructionism and study how a student section becomes a group, a living organism, with behavioral expectations and patterns devoid of a singular leadership position or personality. For this research paper we will look at three questions regarding the behavioral patterns of the student section of Kansas State University to see how they relate to L-A-P and CAS to create this phenomenon.

Outside influences are not always easily identified, in particular those who have no real authority over the group being studied, but can still affect the outcome of actions. In this case, we are also looking at how those influences can infiltrate the decision-making process of the individuals within the group to change the collective behavior, in particular through using the bridge of social capital. By using Social Capital Theory as a lens to view this phenomena, we hope to find out how those bridges are built from one who has no leadership authority over a group to still find influence and control action through that influence with regard to the outside entity (Claridge, 2018).

Additionally, part of a social constructionist research lens is that the researcher must take into account his or her own social background, personal paradigm and understanding and any biases brought to the table (Fairhurst & Grant, 2011). As such, it is understood that as the primary researcher is an employee for Kansas State University, is working on an academic degree at said institution and leads a student journalism program which covers the teams involved as a subject of parts of the research. As a result, there could exist some bias towards

university policy with regards to crowd behavior and expectations. As a member of the journalistic media, the researcher's interests could be split between purely research-based and informative for journalistic value in storytelling to an audience bigger than this project itself. In going into this research project with an understanding of who the researcher is, their social background and any other circumstances which may color or influence the study or findings, the goal is to minimize those effects in the final outcome, hoping to keep an unbiased process and analysis to the phenomena in its entirety.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction to Leadership-as-Practice (L-A-P)

Leadership-as-Practice (L-A-P) is a comparatively new discipline in leadership studies to explain how leadership happens within large groups, in particular when describing how individuals who don't necessarily have a nominal leadership position can lead from their own position and responsibilities. It also differs from many traditional leadership studies in that it focuses on the process by which leadership naturally occurs within a group or organization. In 2020, Joseph Raelin described L-A-P, noting that "it can be said that in L-A-P the primary objective is to both figuratively and literally catch people immersed in their own practices" (p. 3). While individual leaders are not excluded from the idea, moving from leadership to being "leaderful" as a member of an organization is an important part of the equation (Raelin, 2020). The benefit of studying L-A-P is that "practice is lived forward whereas theory tends to be understood backwards" (Raelin, 2011, p. 198). By studying the connection to people and their processes, we move away from the focus on leadership qualities and focus on the lived practice of leadership, whether in group settings or affecting the individual.

Traditionally, leadership has been focused on the three-legged ontology of leadership, consisting of a leader, a follower and a shared purpose, with the leader prescribing the direction and dynamic of an entire group in relation to their followers (Western, 2019). This movement away from the traditional ontology has gone through a number of ideas and changes, each influencing current L-A-P views. Part of what Leadership-as-Practice moves forward is not the relationship between those legs of the tripod, but the idea that all members of a group can display leadership and leaderful qualities within their own sphere, to create a cohesion of direction,

alignment and commitment (DAC) (Drath et. al, 2008) while leading in their own space, not always needing the singular and nominal leader to be relied on for all directionality and decision making. Additionally, it is the focus on the everyday practice rather than the theory that sets this apart. It is the grouping of mundane tasks that people complete throughout their day which adds to their leadership and shows up as Leadership-As-Practice. While the theory itself is not “doing” anything, it describes the actions of people as they lead in place.

Without focusing on a singular authority figure who “reflects the individual actions within [the] larger group” (Dugan, 2017, p. 18), whether elected or organically followed, the behavior of a group as a whole can be considered an exercise in Leadership-as-Practice (Raelin & Robinson, 2022). Since “people do not remain static in connection” (Robinson & Renshaw, 2021, p. 17) the actions of the individuals making up a leadership structure which is neither formal nor predictable become less predictive as well. “A practice is a cooperative effort among participants who choose through their own rules to achieve a distinctive outcome” (Raelin, 2011, p. 196). This means that those who are exhibiting L-A-P are able to make their own decisions, effectuate change within their sphere and create leadership while constructing their own reality within the group itself.

L-A-P has some roots in social constructionism as well (Raelin, 2007). Social constructionism is a leadership lens that does not rely on a positivist structure and a singular leadership model depending upon a strong and dominant leader, instead creating influence and understanding of norms and directionality as a group (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010) and co-creating the reality of what is successful. When looking through the lens of social constructionism, we see systems exhibit characteristics of creation of a norm depended upon the reality of the participants. “Emphasis is given to leadership as a co-constructed reality, in particular, the

processes and outcomes of interaction between and among social actors” (p. 175). Those in the group are partners in constructing the reality through which they see the world or events, and those interactive outcomes are what show the leadership coming from a group. Because in the constructionist point of view the reality is built according to the views and dynamics of the group, we must take into account some of those demographics and understand the underlying reality from each of those who participate in the research to get a full view of this situation. Leadership-as-Practice studies these processes and considers the varying co-construction variables.

L-A-P can also be characterized as collaborative agency, the ability of individuals to be together, but also have their own freedom of leadership and choice of action (Robinson & Renshaw, 2022). This places the responsibility of leadership and action on the individual, encouraging them to “transcend their own embeddedness” (Raelin, 2016, p. 133). All individuals work within their system and depend on the movements and processes of others to self-actualize.

One of the leaders in L-A-P discourse has been Joseph Raelin of Northeastern University, starting with his work in management education in the mid-90s, and moving into the idea that action learning and Leadership-As-Practice is a new lens through which to view the leadership dynamic and practice thereof. Starting with his seminal work “Toward an Epistemology of Practice” in 2007, Raelin explored the idea that theory and practice are intertwined, and if we do not reflect on theory through the lens of practice, we lose the essence of that theory overall. The “practice turn” (p. 497) in social theory, looking at *praxis* as an important part of the theory understanding, has been critical to the view of L-A-P as a scaffold for leaderful behavior.

Raelin has continued to develop these ideas through articles in 2011, 2017, 2020 and 2022, continuing to develop the concept, and creating what Raelin terms a “movement” (2017, p. 215) of L-A-P, including curating new and developing ideas within the field. He has also partnered with other authors like Jenny Robinson to continue to explore the nuance of how L-A-P relates to and advances the theory of leadership (Raelin & Robinson, 2022).

Other authors have also advanced the subject, giving context to the theory. For example, Brigid Carroll et al (2007) also looked at the idea of *praxis* becoming an important part of leadership convention, in particular challenging how the competency paradigm, which is rooted in objectivism, doesn’t account for how the leadership of the individual is contained within the relational views and over-indexes on intellectual determination. Moving towards practice, the authors connected the construction of perspective to the ability of the leader and discussed leadership theory needing to be redefined into what it produces at a smaller level with everyday interests.

Key Components and Principles

One of the key components to Leadership-As-Practice is the framing of what is important within the leadership realm by looking at the process of leadership. As mentioned above, the turn to practice (Raelin, 2007) is what sets L-A-P apart from other leadership theories. The goal is not to give a rundown of specific individual characteristics one leader should have, but to view this in a more holistic manner. In using L-A-P, a researcher must see how the behavior and interactions with and between other members of the group are exhibiting leadership which connects to the practice of those values to get a full view of the constructed reality being displayed (Raelin, 2020). As Raelin (2020) describes, “it is less about what one person thinks or does and more about what people may accomplish together” (p. 2). Additionally, “praxis-

oriented scholarship looks not to historically located truths established through declarative knowledge, often subdivided into propositional bits of theory, but to evolving, embodied, everyday activities and accomplishments” (p. 6).

Another major principle within the L-A-P paradigm is “its commitment to release leadership from a role-driven, entitative influence relationship” (Raelin, 2017, p. 216) and move it towards a view at capturing the essence of leadership wherever it appears, regardless of a title or charge. As a result, L-A-P continues to change and evolve as we see these relationships evolve, creating more insights into actions and reactions depending upon the situation studied. It does not rely on a dyadic relationship or three-legged ontology because being practice-based L-A-P also does not rely on a laundry list of qualities and characteristics. It is observed within the practice of the individuals within a system in connection to the day-to-day experience and interactions of those involved.

This focus on collective interactions and social practices includes the distinction between “practice” and “practices” (Pickering, 1995; Raelin, 2017). “Practice” is a general term talking about the trends and direction of decision-making which is always transforming and moving when taking into account the interactions and relationships between the members of a specific group. It is about process and trends. “Practices” are the actions themselves by the members of the community we are viewing and are captured within a moment in time and situation. It varies by relationship and interaction dependent upon the social dynamics of a group and how they are constructing this reality together. L-A-P is concerned with both practices and practice, and takes into account the changing and individual nature of each when looking at the relationship as a whole (Raelin, 2017).

In essence, this then is translated into a co-creation of leadership within an organization since each member of the organization is practicing their own form of leadership within their own realm as part of the overall process of leadership and interaction. “The focus is not on the people as leaders or followers, but on the actions in which they are involved and on the social processes” (Vilas-Boas et. al, 2017, p. 5). These actions are translated into a communal view of leadership and social connection. When L-A-P is observed in a society or community, we see a co-construction which comes through the analyzation of both practices and practice. This co-creation of leadership within the organizational setting helps to widen the definition of what is considered leadership (Ospina, 2017) and allows an organization to see and understand the actions of their employees with regards to social and interactive dynamics. As Leadership-As-Practice is displayed, organizations can mold and change by benefiting from those actions of the individual members.

Comparison with Traditional Leadership Theories

Leadership studies and discussion have gone through many variations and iterations over time, moving from the discussion of “born vs. made” (Dugan, 2017) through to modern discourses of leadership, from the controller, the therapist, and the messiah to eco-leadership (Western, 2019). Leadership-As-Practice doesn’t exist in a vacuum but does differ from many more traditional leadership theories. In this section, I compare L-A-P to more traditional leadership theories.

The first I will look at is relational leadership theory. This theory explains how the nominal leader of an organization connects and relates to those within his or her charge. It comes from an entity perspective which maintains “that leadership cannot be reduced to what a leader does and is necessarily about the relation between the leaders and the followers” (Crevani,

2015, p. 193). In this theory, the focus is on how the leader connects with their followers and the relationship created to be able to move forward goals and objectives.

This theory is similar to L-A-P in that it is a constructionist theory, where those involved are co-constructing their reality and how they view their goals and objectives. However, it differs from L-A-P in that while it is a relational co-construction, it relies on the concept that the influence of the leader and strength of the connection within the relationship is what is going to drive the goals and actions of the collective. This relationship between leader and follower becomes the goal rather than the actual objectives they share. All views of the relationship itself as well as the results of the leadership are viewed through this lens. This includes how the relationship transforms and grows the two participants in the dyad as well as how much relational competence each member has. Those factors will be viewed as to whether or not the relationship is a success (Crevani, 2013).

When studying relational leadership, while researchers have many avenues, deciding process of relational leadership is key among them. “A big dilemma for constructionist scholars is how to clarify and translate into practical terms the research and practice implications of the fact that *individuals are derivative of relational processes* rather than the opposite and more intuitive idea that individuals create relationships” (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012, p. 8). While this constructionist viewpoint can be malleable, the underlying conceptualization is sometimes confused. The biggest difference here is the focus on the process rather than the person.

In Leadership-as-Practice, each individual is an entity who can exhibit leadership at any time in a way that is best within the practice of the organization and while relationships will influence how practice comes about, it is not the main goal of leadership. L-A-P is more interested in seeing how the practice of leadership in an everyday setting evolves and develops,

so while relationships could be a part of that practice, it is not the focus. L-A-P looks more at a totality of practices, and how each one of them separately affects the leadership results within the community (Raelin & Robinson, 2022). “In L-A-P, practice can be treated as an intra-action (rather than inter-action) among parties that at times allow people at work to move from the relational to the transpersonal- thus transcending their own immediate embeddedness” (p. 5).

With regards to specific kinds of research, L-A-P is interested in a myriad of pieces of the leadership puzzle, not just the leader-member exchange theory (Naverez et. al, 2013) and how that dynamic between the leaders and the followers affects the final results. Raelin (2011) pointed out the wide-ranging interests when viewing research opportunities and conceptualization:

“L-A-P would be quite interested, for example in understanding the interpersonal and intercultural relationships that produce varying leadership outcomes. Such a study would incorporate observation of actual practice in the making, to include the material artifacts, the language, the emotions, the technologies, the stories, the physical arrangements of work, the rituals—each brought to bear in understanding the meaning of the practice” (p. 201).

Another leadership theory which contrasts with L-A-P is the transactional theory of leadership. In this theory, leadership is seen as viewing leadership via the process of getting things done no matter what the cost and the dynamic that exists between the leader and the follower. The end goal and achievement is the ultimate qualifier as to whether or not leadership has been displayed with the leader effectuating what is necessary for the follower to be successful in a transaction- the leader gives you one thing, while the follower gives something else (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). It focuses on the hierarchy between the leader and the follower, depending on that dynamic to drive forward the common purpose and leaning on rewards and punishment to be successful (Bass, 1990). Burns (1978) talks about this relationship as a very basic leader/follower relationship, relying on some kind of exchange to be successful. The

leader is exchanging favor or something similar for performance and results, with the opposite being true if the standards are not met.

This is just one aspect of the Full-Range Model of leadership, a concept of leadership which is very different than in L-A-P, with transactional, transformational and laissez-faire leadership models. As mentioned, transactional leadership views leadership as a rigid series of trade-offs, tasks and rewards, with specific criteria to achieve a goal after prescribed process and actions, a barter system between the leader and the follower. Transformational leadership focusses on the efforts of a leader to change those around them to exceed expectations by motivating their charges or giving them vision to transform them into what the leaders want to complete various goals (Bass & Avolio, 1990). With laissez-faire leadership, the leader focuses on a hands-off approach for some followers, which can help some and impact others in a negative fashion (Choi & Lee). Within the full-range model, transactional leadership then becomes less flexible and doesn't allow the creativity of the follower or general member of the community. Without specific guidelines in place, transactional leadership cannot create the environment where the relationship between leader and follower can be productive (Yukl, 2013). The focus is on short-term goals and progress without looking at the connection between the system as a whole.

Another conceptual difference is in the structure. Transactional leadership has very clear rewards and penalties but no room for adaptability (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), while Leadership-As-Practice places the emphasis on individuality and self-actualization within the system each player is creating, and the concept that L-A-P is always occurring. Even in a transactional leadership model, all parties' actions are part of their own Leadership-As-Practice to try to achieve success in the Direction Alignment Commitment (DAC) model of leadership (Larson,

2021). This difference becomes apparent in particular when viewing the system from an aspect of defining success. The transactional leadership theory has a very narrow view of successful leadership: was the goal achieved or was it not? L-A-P however is less interested how the parties got to where they are and but the conditions and actions which created those directions within that system. The success or failure as a whole of the products produced by these relationships is not as important as looking at the process itself. This is also evident in the study of the discipline. Transactional leadership is often connected to and contrasted with transformational leadership (Bryan, 2003), whereby a leader is trying to create a situation where the follower can more readily feel empowered rather than preached to. This then colors the research being done and created within this realm.

Implications for Organizational Behavior

Leadership-as-Practice is considered akin to a collective leadership style (Ospina, 2017) with each participant of an organization given the autonomy and expectation to act on their own, creating their own value and process within the collective value and direction of the group itself. What L-A-P adds is the focus on the practice itself. It is really the focus on the mundane and ordinary acts of leadership applied by each individual in their own realm. When applied to organizational behavior, the use of L-A-P as a lens for perspective on the field as a whole, and on an organization in particular, L-A-P helps to understand the practice of the organization and how they achieve the concordance of direction, alignment and commitment.

Creating a practice perspective, we move away from the three-legged ontology of leader, follower, and shared purpose mentioned above, and more towards the individual and how they work and perform within the organization in their own sphere. Whittington (2004) says this turn towards a practice perspective “has a radically decentering effect on traditional conceptions of

the discipline's purpose" (p. 62). This practice turn, discussed above by Raelin (2007), becomes a decentering force in organizational behavior by reducing the importance and need of a centralized and forceful leader within the three-legged ontology. As we turn towards practice, we can let go of the traditional views and needs of the leadership discourses (Western, 2019) and give the power and responsibility back to the individual. By investigating and viewing an organization as a sum of its practice, we get a good idea on influence and empowerment of the participants.

This isn't to say that L-A-P advocates an egalitarian or leaderless situation. On the contrary, each person practices within their own responsibility which is still defined within the organization. Leaders and administrators then are responsible for their own tasks and outcomes, but aren't necessarily influencing and driving each action of the organization for it to be successful. These nominal leaders then are still taking responsibility for aspects of the organization and leading in their sphere but are giving autonomy and the empowerment to each member.

By viewing the process of a specific organizational style and process, a Leadership-As-Practice viewpoint can help an organization understand their practice when viewing their culture of ownership and autonomy, encouraging each member with that recognition from the organization to feel the responsibility and autonomy to lead from where they are. This has been established by many companies recently, characterized as a situation where everyone can lead. O'Malley and McBride (2023) point out that the traditional "leadership as authority model lets the rest of us off the hook. We tell ourselves that since we aren't in charge, we aren't responsible for what's wrong" (p. 9). In understanding L-A-P in an organization, the focus is less on what

we are being told and more on what we are doing. This gives us a different look at how we are creating and practicing the culture of the organization.

This attitude of self-efficacy also bleeds over to decision-making. In many traditional leadership models, production within an organization must run through the nominal leader, which includes problem-solving, planning and doling out praise or punishment (Bass, 1990). When we focus on practice and autonomy of the individual, we change the culture of decision-making within an organization to empowerment for each member. The organization becomes less concerned with what the task and rewards are, or how the leader specifically interacts with the rest of the group, and more with the practice and process by which each member achieves.

The focus then lies on how the individual practices leadership in their purvey, which evens out the power structure in an organization by creating an environment where the actions of all involved are considered part of the leadership practice. “It is less about what one person thinks or does and more about what people may accomplish together” (Raelin, 2020, p. 2). This team-building approach creates buy-in and participation in the decision-making process and gives opportunity for the organization to move forward as one rather than straggling behind a nominal leader or pointed in various directions.

Complex Adaptive Systems Theory

A student section can be viewed as a form of a Complex Adaptive System (CAS) (Holladay & Tytel, 2011) in the way in which they are connected in their system and are dependent on one another to create the system of which they are a part. A complex adaptive system is “a collection of individuals or parts that interrelate with, and mutually depend on, one another to function as a working whole” (p 18). This complexity, which includes some inherent unpredictability and can be subject to unexpected consequence when changed, can be seen in the

actions of the crowd of people as well. This kind of system has intricate parts which interact with each other, with any number of behaviors possible and no real linear way to view or predict it (Boal & Schultz, 2007). The system can be affected by many stimuli, though it is hard to predict how an individual stimulus will affect the individual parts of this system.

“Complexity is about *rich interconnectivity*. Adding the word “rich” to interconnectivity means that when things interact, they change one another in unexpected and irreversible ways” (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017, p. 9). These systems have a life of their own. Being made up of individual people in a state of heightened emotion in this case, the system can morph in reaction and drive with the whims of the contest being attended, action on the field or on the floor, and, since this group has no leader to speak of, it depends on the system itself for behavioral norms. Most of the action and interaction for an ever-changing group like this happens organically, and by expectation of behavior within the group. Uhl-Bien (2006) discusses how leadership emerges from social interactions rather than being solely top-down which brings into play more variability. This perspective enables leaders to cultivate environments where new ideas and solutions can emerge organically, fostering a culture of innovation.

When a system has such changeability and movement, it is hard to predict how the group will behave in any given setting. It contains no traditional singular entity or person (appointed or elected), but still tends to move as one in many ways, whether through vocal expression, attire or behavioral norms. Many kinds of stimuli combine to affect the behavior of the individual members and influence on one member does not necessarily mean other members will follow suit. Within the system, with so many different influences, understanding the make-up of the individual within the system becomes paramount.

In the case of the student section, the system would be considered a bounded Complex Adaptive System, which is characterized by the limited interaction with the outside influences. While a closed system does not interact at all and an open ones have no significant boundaries, the changing nature of the make-up of the members of the system means members can enter and exit the system and the variable nature of the make-up of the system means it is a bounded system (Cilliers, 2000).

Social constructionism (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010), a lens through which to see this phenomenon, is a leadership approach that rejects a singular leadership model dependent upon a strong and dominant leader, instead creating influence and understanding of norms and directionality as a group. When looking through the lens of social constructionism, we see this kind of system exhibits characteristics of creation of a norm depended upon the reality of the participants. “Emphasis is given to leadership as a co-constructed reality, in particular, the processes and outcomes of interaction between and among social actors” (p. 175). Those in the group are partners in constructing the reality through which they see the world or event, and those interactive outcomes are what show the leadership coming from a group. Because in the constructionist point of view the reality is built according to the views and dynamics of the group we must take into account some of those demographics and understand the underlying reality from each of those who participate in the research to get a full view of this situation.

Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory has gained considerable traction in leadership studies, emphasizing the role of social networks, trust, and norms in enhancing leadership effectiveness. The idea of human capital, introduced in the 1960s by Gary Becker (1962) and others, gave rise to the notion that we can count more than just physical things, or monetary concepts, as usable capital,

explaining that the attributes of people and their connections to those around them are valuable and can be used to create opportunity and can be looked at as assets rather than usable parts.

Bourdieu (1986) originally defined social capital as the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to a durable network of institutionalized relationships. In the context of leadership, this concept underscores how leaders leverage their social connections to mobilize resources and support. Bourdieu's framework suggests that effective leaders possess not only individual attributes but also the ability to cultivate and utilize their social networks strategically.

Woolcock (2001) defines social capital, explaining that "social capital refers to the norms and networks that facilitate collective action" (p. 70). These norms can be societal and are useful when looking at the relationship between leaders and followers, but in particular how that relationship is gained and subsequently changes. This facilitation can also be many-faceted and can be where leaders will exert any influence they have acquired through their social capital to effectuate any changes which may occur. Woolcock also explains that one of the biggest benefits of social capital is to bring together heterogeneous groups to benefit all parties by coordinating and merging goals and values. Though groups may be different, they still can become useful together with the use of social capital.

Putnam (1993) highlights that leadership effectiveness is often rooted in the leader's ability to enhance social capital, ultimately leading to improved organizational performance. Woolcock (1998) distinguished between bonding and bridging social capital, both of which are considered important for effective leadership, but have different roles. Bonding social capital refers to strong ties within a group. These ties can then affect how the group acts within the confines of the group and with each other. The social capital gained and exerted is in many ways relegated to the boundaries of the group, bonding those within the group together in action and

purpose. While outside influences can affect the group's individuals, how they react together then creates these social capital bonds.

“Bridging” social capital encompasses connections across diverse groups. Woolcock suggests that leaders who cultivate diverse networks can access a wider array of ideas and perspectives, which is crucial for problem-solving and innovation. When a leader is not a nominal part of an organization, their social capital can still affect those in other organizations as an influence through the bridging of social capital (Claridge, 2018). That means a leader, even without the benefit of direct influence, can use that social capital to “bridge” that gap, essentially walking across that bridge they have created to affect those who are not usually under that influence. This bridge must, however, be built, which means conscious efforts must be made if someone is planning to exert some kind of influence over a group to which they don't nominally belong.

In a study focusing on organizational leadership, Adger (2003) explored how social capital contributes to collective action. He posited that leaders can enhance collective efficacy and decision-making when they foster trust and connection through social capital. This underscores the notion that social capital is not merely a resource but a fundamental component of effective leadership that drives collective outcomes. Lin (2001) provided a theoretical framework for understanding how social capital operates in leadership contexts emphasizing that social capital facilitates access to information and opportunities, which are critical for leaders. The access to information such as dynamic and make-up of the group, knowledge of things like goals and plans, the understanding of the nature and personality of those within the collective can all aid a leader in seeing a path forward for leadership through the bridge of social capital. By knowing this information, the leader can in turn look for opportunities. Those can come in the

form of many things, including pressure points in the group, a leadership vacuum within the organization and a lack of goals and plans which creates a directional uncertainty which can be taken advantage of. Lin's work illustrates that leaders who effectively navigate their social networks can enhance their influence by taking into account all of the information and the opportunities which are found and using them to the advantage of the leader, and, one would hope, to the advantage of the group as well.

Putnam et al. (2000) highlighted the importance of social capital in educational and community leadership. Their findings indicated that leaders in educational settings who foster strong community ties significantly enhance student achievement. This emphasizes that effective leadership in education is closely linked to the leader's ability to mobilize social capital for collective benefit. Within a university setting, many divergent groups exist at the same time. These groups can benefit from each other if the bridges between them are able to share and exert social capital to the good of all involved.

Crowd Research

The field of crowd dynamics has been studied, though not very many studies have been done on the dynamic of crowd behavior and action when viewed as influenced by an outside catalyst. Exploratory work such as this study is important in particular when there is little or no parallel scientific study on a particular topic, but the researcher still feels it is worthy of the time and effort to find out more (Stebbins, 2001). "Exploration produces hypothesis, tentative generalizations about the group, process, activity, or situations being studied. These hypotheses... must eventually be verified" (p. 25). Without a large body of research in this field of crowd dynamics, particularly within L-A-P, the field has a gap in some of the literature presenting an opportunity for more research.

Sports crowd behavior which ends in violence has been studied to a greater extent, particularly in the world of professional soccer in Europe and South America in the form of hooliganism which does give a little insight into the dynamics of the crowd itself, and what makes it tick. Ramón Spaaij (2014) discussed in his synthesis of some of the previous work that more research needs to be done on sports crowd violence specifically to understand how “the social environment and wider social context influence the behaviour of the individual or collective, while at the same time the behaviour of the individual or group impacts on their environments” (p. 153). Spaaij attributes the behavior to thrill-seekers, out of control masculinity and dynamics between fans with opposing views and team support. In the case the researcher is viewing regarding the K-State situation, some of these findings may be transferable to use as context in looking at negative behaviors and why they begin in the first place.

Eric Dunning (2001), who led a 20-year study at the Leicester School to view how civilized people abandon those values for hooliganism in sporting crowds, particularly studied the sociological side of how and why people behave badly at sporting events, fueled at times by emotion. “Emotional arousal can be enhanced by spectacular presentation, emotional ‘contagion’ which drives from being part of a large, expectant crowd, and from the ‘performances’ which spectators and not just athletes put on” (p. 3). Dunning traces some of the reasons back to socio-economic inequities, unemployment and overall societal frustration by those who participate in this kind of extreme sporting event violence. While this gives insight into why those who attend events could behave badly, the question of how or why they could possibly change that behavior is not addressed.

Along a similar vein, Stott et al (2001) used hooliganism as a basis for their case study of collective disorder at the 1998 World Cup Finals in France. This case study looked at why

English crowds in particular were poorly behaved when supporting their team on foreign soil, despite the damage it was doing to the reputation of the country, the team and the fans. This qualitative study made comparisons between the cadres of English and Scottish fans, the latter of which were noted to have behaved in an exemplary manner while in France to watch their team in the World Cup.

After interviewing fans on both sides, the authors concluded that “whether individuals take part in ‘violent’ acts or not is understood to be a consequence of their predispositions, yet we only know they hold these dispositions to the extent to which they engage in, or abstain from, those very same violent activities” (p. 375). In a bit of circular research results, the authors showed how difficult it is to truly understand the mindset of the crowd itself without getting into the heads of the individuals who are participating in the activities, either good or ill, until they show their colors by their actions, making any findings anything but predictive. In this case the authors could not predict the individual reasons the fans behaved as they did, only being able to look at their actions and from there make determinations. In part, they also attributed the actions to prior behavior of those within the same fan group, with those groups which have behaved badly in a collective way being more prone to the same behaviors in the future because outside influences would be expecting the behaviors and in turn would create the situation where those behaviors would then almost become self-fulfilling prophecy.

Gap in the Research

In this case, some essential elements within this study can become an exemplar of a different kind of research on a specific subject which has not necessarily been undertaken, a gap in the research into crowd actions. By looking in particular at the dynamic of the crowd itself as an entity, we can gain a better understanding of why these crowds come together in the first

place, their make-ups and how they represent their community. In this regard, it can tell us quite a bit about the community (in this case K-State students and fans of the sports) who go to games, their make-up and their “why”- why they go, why they do what they do, why they act as they act and why they can change behavior as a group without ever having a true formal leader or communication. Despite that dynamic, not enough has been done to research how a leader or entity could indeed show some influence over the group and what circumstances would have to be for it to show actual influence.

Part of this lies in the investigation of the administrative actions when dealing with the individual members of the crowd and then the crowd. The research will also give an insight into the influence of those who are tasked with this liaison and relationship and look at how some of the leadership theories can be connected to the actions which we find. In particular, taking a look at a crowd’s Leadership-As-Practice breaks down the crowd to its smaller parts and looks at the individual decisions which make up a collective action. A goal for this research is to better understand the connection between all the stakeholders who are concerned about the collective action and how the individuals, the fans, administration, the coaches and coaching staffs who have some kind of influence can create a situation where the crowd is viewed as the sum of its parts. This understanding can then be used for future situations where an entity would want or need to modify a behavior of a group over which it has no authority. This could be used not only in a sporting event crowd situation where we are looking at an administrative question about the behavior, but in other instances where some group behavior can be influenced by a stakeholder who would benefit from a changed behavioral pattern.

This gap in the research about those kinds of dynamics could be used in the future would make for an opportunity to open a new line of research. This could be used in several other

different fields, including things like politics, protest movements and any other area where large groups of people self-select to be part of a whole which acts as one. The opportunities to extrapolate the findings to relate to other areas makes for an obvious and interesting connection when looking at next steps in the research.

Research Questions:

In considering the relationship between CAS and L-A-P and crowd dynamics, as well as the influence of Social Capital-Bridging on this phenomenon, the research questions I am investigating are as follows:

RQ1- How does the K-State student section represent a Complex Adaptive System?

RQ2- How does the process of ending or modifying the chant demonstrate Leadership-as-Practice among the individuals within the CAS?

RQ2a- How does a body of people organically “change their minds” about what is cool/appropriate/acceptable?

RQ3- What effect and influence can a leader without direct stewardship over a group have?

RQ3a- What role does social capital play in decision-making with regards to influencing groups of individual members?

Summation

Crowds are living and breathing things which seemingly have their own direction and personality in their collective behavior. However, they are, of course, made up of individuals who have self-selected to be in the group as a whole and are responsible for their own actions. The confluence of L-A-P, CAS and Social Capital-Bridging can be a natural fit when starting to break down the dynamics of large groups of people and how they are influenced. While individually each gives a view into the trends and goals of a large group, looking at them

together adds an extra level of understanding. When looking at a larger group, the tendency is to take the individual participants as a whole entity and look at the trends and results of their collective actions without considering the specific and individual decisions which go into the actions of each member of the group. These individual decisions are what show us the Leadership-As-Practice and give us a better view of the make-up of the complex adaptive system. We start to see the why behind the what and as we understand those dynamics and their relationship which means we can better understand future actions as well.

In this study, finding the connection between how the individual actions of members of a CAS are arrived at by the participants when it comes to their own personal responsibility within the group is essential to understanding the actions. When adding in the variability of social capital, we add another level of understanding to the leadership decisions the members of the group make on their own which drives collective action. The goal is for the findings in this study to advance the studies of all three paradigms and show better understanding of their confluence.

Within the research questions, we can also view and tease out other inferences and points to find more links between these theories, specifically for this phenomenon, but generalizable to other instances. The goal is to see where the research leads and as a qualitative study allow the participants to have open-ended questions to give more information and perhaps even answer questions we may not have even asked. Qualitative study also helps us to see people with more humanity to understand the why behind the actions and give people a voice. Turkle (2011) warns us against seeing others as a just parts and not as whole people. Though at times qualitative research may not be able to cut through all the options and variables, the goal of this study is to be able to create understanding of the subjects and their relationship to the

phenomenon and how they make decisions. Through this study, we hope to get a better view of these relationships and how they work.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Reprise: Study purpose and rationale

This study looks at the decision-making process of members of a Complex Adaptive System to see how they exhibit Leadership-As-Practice and to see the influences on the CAS from outside forces who have no authority over the members within the system. While influence exists, this research tries to understand what conditions must be present for someone to gain influence on a system as an outsider, regardless of responsibility for those within the system. This research looks at how individuals interact with their environment and other influences in making decisions which become group action.

As such, using a qualitative lens gives greater insight into why those studied are behaving and reacting as they do than in a quantitative study with numbers and rankings alone. The best way to find out these decision-making influences is to find out how the experiences of the members of the system are alike and differ from one another and how they interact with others within their group. By connecting on a personal level with the subjects, the research attempts to get at why they do what they do and what those results are. The study and a pilot study on a similar topic both applied for and received approval from the Kansas State Institutional Review (IRB) board before proceeding with the research.

The Case for Qualitative Research

The lived human experience is foremost at our meaning-making and understanding our world around us. One of the things learned in the thousands of stories this researcher has told over the years is that we cannot create an algorithm or scaffold on which we can hang or pattern all human behavior. The individualistic nature of experience, while bathed in similarities, is singular to each of us. This is what makes qualitative research particularly exciting: it is

unpredictable. “Qualitative researchers are interested not in prediction and control but in understanding” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 3). For this study, qualitative research in the form of a phenomenological case study by gathering data through participant interview is what was used.

Kim (2015) describes qualitative work as taking that slice of life that is relevant to your subject and shining a light on it. While we can’t tell someone’s whole story, we can at least get a part of the whole in a form of narrative inquiry. Indeed, Kim notes “narrative has a connotation for a “partial” description of a lived experience. Therefore, story is clearly a higher category than narrative as the latter constitutes the former” (p. 9). While we cannot honor every subject with their entire story, our narrative can open an insight into the window of their experience, in this case a shared experience which each person goes through a little differently.

Additionally, Kim (2015) points out the importance of the second half of narrative inquiry, the discussion and analysis. Without it, we are simply mirrors reflecting back rather than doing our diligence as the storyteller to find out the why and the how behind the story to avoid romanticism and the possibility of bending the narrative to shape whatever we want to tell. This is where the science comes in--the ability to look objectively (as far as it is possible) at the subject and ask the tough questions.

Here we are looking at phenomenological inquiry, which “offers a theoretical lens to understand people’s lived experiences of a phenomenon” (Bhattacharya, 2017, p. 98), in this case the dynamic and actions of the K-State student crowd, administration and the new basketball coach. From Van Maanen (1988):

“From a phenomenological point of view, we are less interested in the factual status of particular instances: whether something happened, how often it tends to happen, or how the occurrence of an experience is related to the prevalence of other conditions and events. For example, phenomenology does not ask,

“How do these children learn this particular material?” but it asks, “What is the nature or essence of the experience of learning (so that I can now better understand what this learning experience is like for these children)?” (p. 10)

The idea of finding the phenomenon and creating meaning, both for the subjects and with the researcher is at the base of this kind of research. In hermeneutic phenomenology, we are concerned with interpretation of all aspects of a phenomenon including tradition, dialogue, context and other parts, a very holistic look at it (Bhattacharya, 2017). In this case, analyzing the phenomenon from many different sides is an important aspect of this kind of study, and using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, where we are interpreting what has happened and why, one that will be a strong and broad view of this situation (Creswell, 2013).

In choosing a method, we also need to look at desired result- what are we studying? Qualitative research as a way to study community rose in popularity in the 1920s and ‘30s and has evolved into many kinds of ethnographic, autoethnographic and other styles of qualitative work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). As qualitative research has gained more notoriety and reputation, the case studies and phenomenological research is more widespread and accepted. In this case, we are studying a phenomenon, a lived experience, which will best be told through the process of qualitative research.

Methodological Rigor

In any piece of research, many factors must be considered when looking at the outcomes and outputs. Some of the basic measures are validity, reliability and generalizability, which work in tandem to get a good view of how well a research project has achieved what was set out to achieve, measuring the quality of measurement. When creating a study, understanding the relationship between these measures is an important part of rigor.

Reliability is the measure of whether or not the study provides a consistent result every time it is performed (Trochim et. al, 2016). In other words, if this study were to be replicated by the same or by other researchers at some point in the future following the same methodology, would they come to the same conclusion and get the same distribution of results. This repeatability, or consistency, shows that the structure and process of the research was indeed correct, and the results could be viewed as reliable. Each time a researcher measures the factor they should essentially get what amounts to the same result. In the case of qualitative work, were we to observe the same phenomenon multiple times, with the same question in mind, would we come to the same conclusion (Berg, 2009)? Of course, in the case of a phenomenon, sometimes this is not possible to see the same instance over and over, so we must be aware of the dynamic and how it plays out itself. However, by itself, reliability is not sufficient to ascertain if a study is a good one or not.

Validity is another important part of the rigor of any study. While you could get the same measurement every time you do a study, are you in fact measuring what you set out to measure? This is where validity comes in. A construct validity is “the extent to which your measure or instrument actually measures what is theoretically supposed to measure” (Trochim et. al, 2016, p. 128). While your study may reliably produce a singular result, if the result is not in fact what you were trying to measure, the results would not be considered valid. Being able to create a study which is both reliable and valid is essential in creating the rigor of a research project.

One of the goals in this realm is combining both the reliability and validity to create a result which would be considered correct. A study could be one or the other or neither, which would lead to the results not being useful. It is only when both validity and reliability come together within the results that we can have a result which ends up being generalizable.

Generalizability, sometimes called external validity, means the results of the sample we've studied can now be extrapolated to a greater and broader population from which the sample was culled (Trochim et al, 2016). Essentially, if we started over and chose a different sampling from the population we are studying, we would get the same results regardless the make-up of the sample itself. This is one of the major goals of any study: to be repeatable to get the same results.

In the case of qualitative research, in particular phenomenological case study, generalizability is a tougher thing. Each person comes from a different paradigm and so while we could repeat the same kind of research with a different population, with so many variables, generalizability would suffer. In this case, the goal would be limited to the population from which the specific sample is taken (K-State students who have attended football and men's basketball games in the last two years). The goal is to be sure any results would be generalizable to that population in particular with the possibility of some generalizable takeaways for other similar groups (fans of other teams on other issues, for example). The specificity of this study does not guarantee the results will be generalizable on a wide scale, but just that the results accurately portray what is being studied.

The rigor of method must be important to get the results we are trying to achieve. Since the population is in the thousands and varies in size and make-up, being exact in the research questions and approach were of great importance.

Focus of Study

In approaching this topic, the researcher started with a pilot study, isolating to just the phenomenon of the crowd as a complex adaptive system using Leadership-As-Practice to come to a similar decision and lead as individual members of the crowd, in particular in the cessation

of “The Chant”. The findings in that smaller study led to another variable in the equation, the arrival of a new head basketball coach and the influence he may or may not have on members of the population, as well as the possibility that social capital could be bridging the gap between the outside influence and the crowd itself. These variables seemed in some way influential for the actions being displayed for some of the participants, though not all of the participants, so this variable was added into the studied equation.

Leadership-As-Practice, as a lens through which to view the practice of a large group of individuals to see how they come to decisions by how they interact (Raelin, 2011) doesn’t necessarily exclude the fact that nominal leaders in areas or organizations exist and could have influence. The L-A-P idea allows you to see how outside and inter-connected influences give individuals the opportunity to make their own decisions regardless their station or responsibility and viewing how that practice is then achieved by those within the sample of the population. Having a change in organizational leadership, administratively or vision-based, will affect each individual differently and the L-A-P viewpoint will take that into account when looking at the practice of how they behave and lead within their own sphere.

For example, if a researcher is studying the crowd to look for generalizable behavior and it is dollar beer night, that is also an outside factor affecting how some may behave. It could cause an outlying set of data as the cheap beer then affects behavior in a socially negative way. Similarly, when another variable is introduced, like a new head coach of a team the group is watching, it can have an impact in some fashion, either positively or negatively. The new coach has no authority over the group or nominal influence, but that isn’t to say they don’t have any effect. In this case, we aren’t necessarily looking at Coach Tang as a “messiah” leader (Western,

2013), but considering the extent of the influence as it pertains to the practice of the crowd in the specific situation.

In this way for this study, the “Tang Effect” will be a factor, but not the focus. The real focus is looking at how the crowd, and those who make up the crowd, demonstrate their practice in making those decisions independent of one another, even if some of the influences may be the same from person to person in the sample. By adding in a view of social capital and how that affects the decision-making, we get a more well-rounded view of this phenomenon to increase our understanding.

Sample Make-up and selection process

Eleven students were interviewed who were self-identifying as having at some point being involved in the student sections of either football or men’s basketball (or, in overlapping areas, both) within the last two years, to collect qualitative data about the dynamic of the group as well as the process of the phenomena. The subjects were chosen through a combination process of inquiry with students at the sporting events themselves and a call for participants among qualifying students to try to get a wide variety of participants. In searching for participants, the researcher asked those who agree to the study for others who were in the crowd base as well. The researcher also used the snowball method to find new participants, asking those who have participated to suggest other members for the study who would qualify.

Participants had to have attended a Kansas State men’s basketball or football game within the last two years (pre-dating Jerome Tang) to be able to give better context and perspective on the changes observed. Because of these parameters for members of the sample, the researcher also used purposeful sampling within the selection range, asking students who were known to have attributes which would fit the study and had a knowledge base that would be useful for the

study. Students who were purposefully asked were also checked against the criteria before being admitted into the study. In an effort to find participants in their physical spaces which match criteria, the researcher also attended multiple men's basketball games and went into the student section before the beginning of the game to solicit participants who were at the game.

The original goal of the study was to interview between 10-15 student subjects to represent the student section of the K-State football and basketball sections. In interview-based qualitative research, McCracken (1988) discusses that eight interview subjects is sufficient to get a well-rounded and in-depth look at a group. After exceeding that number, the researcher started to look at the results to see if redundancies were starting to show. Rubin (2005) posits that once redundancies start to show and correlations can be made from the collected data, the research has reached a point of critical mass as to be sufficient. This emerged after the 11th interview, at which point research was completed.

The interviews were conducted between December of 2023 and December of 2024. These students are kept anonymous and numbered 1-11 in the results of the study. The reason for anonymity in this study for the students is because of revelation of activities which may be considered negative could be found in the research and no harm is intended to come to the students who participated in the study. Each student interviewed was informed of their anonymity before the interview to be sure they would feel free to answer the questions without any obstacles. The student subjects were not compensated for their participation. Students were chosen at random with just the pre-qualifications previously stated, with efforts to create a representative demographic of the student section members who attend K-State football and basketball games.

For the administrators interviewed, the researcher purposely selected members of influence and authority within the university and athletics department setting who have jurisdiction of parts of the university community and so would participate in university sanctioned efforts to influence the crowd. All parties who were asked to participate directly agreed to participate in this study and were told their participation would not be anonymous. Those selected were asked to voluntarily participate without any compensation. Those subjects are:

- Kansas State University President Dr. Richard Linton- The 15th president of Kansas State University, President Linton came to the University in February of 2022, his first position as a university president, and arrived well after the phenomenon we are studying had been well established. Linton was on staff when head basketball coach Jerome Tang was hired. Linton was selected for this study because of his relationship with the student body and long-range planning for the university.
- Kansas State University Athletics Director Gene Taylor- Taylor has been the athletics director at Kansas State University since April 2017. Taylor hires coaches and representatives of the department and has control over process of large sporting events. Taylor hired head coach Jerome Tang and continues to have supervisory authority over him and all the basketball coaches at K-State. Taylor also attends many sporting events and was active in efforts of support for Chant cessation.
- Kansas State University Men's Basketball Head Coach Jerome Tang: Tang came to K-State in April of 2022 in his first collegiate head coaching position. On the

forefront of university Chant cessation efforts, Tang was chosen for inclusion in the study for his experience in administrative efforts as well as for perspective on the connection between administration and the students who attend the games.

- Kansas State University Vice President and Dean of Students Dr. Thomas Lane: Lane has been Dean of Students at K-State since July of 2019. Dr. Lane has the administrative responsibility for students and their success at K-State and is the liaison between the administration and the Student Governing Association (SGA), involved in allocations and programs relating to student life. Dr. Lane works closely with the SGA president and senate on various initiatives and projects involving the students.
- Former SGA President Parker Vulgamore: Vulgamore was the SGA President from March 2022 to March 2023 and a student senator from March 2020-March 2022. He was also in leadership within the Greek Life system, as International Undergraduate Director, President, & VP of External Relations with the Delta Upsilon fraternity on Kansas State campus between November of 2021 to August of 2022. Vulgamore was selected for his efforts on chant cessation during his time as SGA president. He was suggested by Dr. Thomas Lane as a possible participant.

Method

Students

Students of Kansas State University were interviewed with the interview questions (see Appendix A) in groups of one or two. For subjects 1-4, students were interviewed in an isolated office on K-State campus, with the interviews being audio recorded for later transcriptions.

Interviews lasted an average of 15-20 minutes per participant. Subjects 5-11 were interviewed at K-State basketball games prior to the game, volunteering to be interviewed as asked by the researcher. Those students were interviewed in groups of one or two with the interviews being audio recorded and later transcribed. The audio recordings were stored on a password protected server and are not accessible without authorization, being kept secure and unconnected from any internet connection. Those interviews lasted approximately 10 minutes, due to the nature of the interview setting.

All students in the sample were over the age of 18 and signed participation waivers before being interviewed. The students were asked at the end of the interview if they had anything to add and if they were still comfortable with their results being used in the study, all of whom answered in the affirmative. Results of the study will be made available to all student participants who have interest.

Administration

For the administration representatives, subjects were contacted through email and in person to set interview times and schedules. Subjects Tang, Taylor and Vulgamore were interviewed over Zoom technology with the recordings connecting to the cloud Zoom server. Recordings were then downloaded after use and transferred to a secure server which does not have a permanent internet connection. They were then deleted off the cloud Zoom server to protect the data. Linton was interviewed over telephone and recorded on an independent secure computer server with the file kept on a password protected independent server. Lane was interviewed in person in his office on Kansas State University campus and recorded on a password protected recording device and held on a secure server.

In interviews with all participants, the researcher gathered data to inform the research questions, allowing subjects to discuss the questions then following up with clarifying questions for some of the participants as needed. That data was transcribed and coded for similarities and understanding after being synthesized with regard to the research questions. This information was taken and analyzed to determine the extent of the ability of the lenses mentioned to explain this phenomenon being studied.

Population Demographics

These samples and population were affected by many factors when it comes to being able to analyze the data for universality. These include the homogeneity of the fan base itself (how alike they are to each other), the homophily of the population (how people, in particular fans, will seek out those who are similar to themselves) as well as other aspects. These factors make a particular difference in how the group behaves and how similar their individual behavior is. The more alike the sample is, the less likely you will get a difference of opinion and response (Page, 2007). It can also lead to a groupthink situation where people are influenced by those around them because of their similarity (Janis, 1972). Efforts were made in particular with the student section to mirror the make-up of the group being studied, with seven men and four women being interviewed for the study.

Similarly, a sample with a high incidence of homophily will also hurt the reliability of the study since once a different kind of sample is undertaken, the lack of new information and diversity of the previous sample will make it difficult to connect (McPherson et. al, 2001). It can create a bias in the validity of the results, since it could be difficult to actually illustrate what you are trying to find if the field lacks diversity.

One of the more difficult tasks was connecting the incidence of behavior modifications within a group with any specific influence. Part of the research was to ascertain the influence of outside elements to the behavior modification being studied. We again run into the issue of generalizability to various other kinds of behavior change, whether they be for the positive or negative. By identifying the influences and characteristics of how these populations are guided from one way to another, however, we can then generalize those findings to other similar circumstances to gain insight into other situations which mirror what we find in this particular example.

The respective questions asked by the researcher to the students and administrators differed because of the different roles of the two sets of subjects. With the students, being studied directly for information, questions focused exclusively on the research questions presented to investigate the behaviors of the individual members of the student body and how their thought processes affected behavior. For the administration questions, more context was required from the participants, so more information was asked which included background on leadership philosophy and their own take on other leadership qualities (See Appendix A for interview questions).

Data analyzation

After each interview was conducted, the researcher transcribed each interview with the help of transcription software in the Zoom program. After getting a basic transcription, the researcher went through each interview with the full transcription and corrected any errors in the transcription to ensure accuracy with the copy.

Table 3.1. Sample Transcription

Student Interview:

AS (Researcher)- How do you keep that autonomy while you're in a crowd? You ever feel pressure to do something that the crowd is doing?

Student 8- I don't, because nothing really happens if you don't do it, you're just not doing it.

Student 9- yeah, it's like she said. Basically it's an option to whether you do or whether you don't and I always choose not to on it.

AS- So why do you think now, you mentioned it a little bit, that it's just kind of not been a thing pretty much since K-State beat K-U here?

Student 8- Well, I think a lot of it has to do with Tang. He came over here, and he kind of got on us. And we all, I don't know about you, but I really look up to Tang, I think, so he's a really good figure to have around-he's a good dude to look up to.

Student 9- He's a good role model.

Student 8- Yeah exactly. And I think that when he kind of got upset, I felt like I was in trouble. I just think he's a good role model and when he came in here and really instilled here like, this is supposed to be family- like there are families here and this is supposed to be family-oriented and let's keep it that way, so I think he was big.

AS- So he did something Bill Snyder couldn't do. I mean Bill Snyder said the same thing. "Hey, stop it!" And everyone's like "whatever old guy."

Student 9- To me, it's hard to control the fans at football games because there's so many more like, in here. They're only releasing like 2,300 tickets to students, whereas at football games, it's anywhere from 5,000 to 8,000 students at one game, and it's hard to like to control every single person. But if you can identify your objects like, here at basketball games and be one of the best and control them. I mean, everyone respects you. Then you'll be able to control them.

AS- Are there leaders in a crowd, or is everybody kind of their own person, you think, especially these student sections?

Student 9- I think with the student sections, it depends who you sit by, but a lot of it is the frats and sororities, so more like the frats like they always sit together so there's more like 15 of them and they're normally like always hammered, they're always drunk, and those are the

ones that normally start the chant, and I always tell them, I tell them to knock it off, like that's not cool. But it's mostly the people who sit together that are like in a frat or groups that will come together.

AS- So they are leaders in a way in that they are trying to influence people?

Student 8 Yeah, I think there is a lot of individuality, there are a lot of people that do their own thing, but there are a lot of people who are just louder and they choose to be louder and I think most of the time I think most of us are pretty.

Administration Interview: Jerome Tang

Jerome Tang: Yeah, no, that's really good right there. Well, 1st of all I had never heard of "Sandstorm". I had no clue what it was. All I knew is, they told me when they played it in this basketball stadium, the students went crazy, and it really affected the other team.

And so my thought was, if we have something that gives us a home court advantage, why wouldn't we do it? And they said they told me because of "The Chant", and it was like, "Well, why don't we just ask them to stop?" And they said, "We've tried for 10 years."

And so, it was never a doubt in my mind we were going to do it. We were going to get it done and because we've got smart students and they understand it and they want to win, and we all want to win a championship. If it's gonna help us women win a championship then why wouldn't we do it? Well, then, when it seeped its way into "The Wabash" and Dr. Tracz was gonna shut down "The Wabash", then it was like, all right, this is like crazy right, that we're gonna let the school up the road take away two of our traditions right? The things that separate us from everybody else in the country. We don't like them, but we're gonna let them take it away from us right? And then teams that win championships, programs that win championships they don't spend time thinking about somebody else. You know. I remember I did an interview with Mike Krzyzewski and Coach K. Said, "Yeah, Jerome, we went to an arena, and all the students had on beat Duke shirts right?" And he told his team. "Hey! They all got on Duke shirts up there." Like, why would you spend any time talking about like the opponent, The other team? Like, let's not show up to the game because who we're playing against. Let's show up to the game because KSU is playing. Let's not give them any credit. Let's not waste any energy on them. Let's spend all the energy on cheering for us and you know, be about us. Our students understood that. They were like, "Yeah, why would we want

to do that?” And I felt like. It was something that they understood. It was explained to them in a way they understood it, and they realized that they could have an impact in winning, and they were willing to make the change. But it wasn't just lip service, it wasn't.” Hey y'all are gonna do this otherwise we're gonna take this from you”. It was like, “This is the value you're gonna add to us winning”. And my mistake was thinking I only needed to take a flu shot one time, and it would last. This is the thing that you got to fight for your culture and last year I didn't fight for the culture of the campus. I fought for the culture of our program, and but you know I don't feel like God put me here just to fight for the culture of our program or the culture. It's about the culture of the university and student body is, you know, a big responsibility I feel to me so this year, because the chant started coming back a little bit.

Andrew Smith : You hear it?

Jerome Tang: Well, my wife hears that she tells me about it all the time. And so, you know, that's why I've been going around to the fraternities again. And I'm not just talking about, you know us winning this, I'm like, really, you know, let's fight for the culture. Let's make this thing about KSU. And in fact, after I get off with you here, I'm meeting with all the leaders of all these student organizations on campus to, you know. Fight for the culture. Make this thing about KSU.

After collecting all the interviews and data, the data was then manually coded to group together like themes and comments from the subjects. This was done with a color-coded highlighting to correspond to each of the research questions (RQ1=**yellow**, RQ2=**green** RQ3=**red**) with any information which surfaced which did not fit or support the specific research questions being coded to corresponding colors to group in themes and strings of information, with colors being used to group. Notes were then taken throughout to identify other themes which were observed by the research to correspond between interviews. See Table 3.2 below for an example of the coding process with the same interview from Table 3.1.

Table 3.2. Sample Coding

Student Interview:

AS (Researcher)- How do you keep that autonomy while you're in a crowd? You ever feel pressure to do something that the crowd is doing?

Student 8- I don't because nothing really happens if you don't do it; you're just not doing it.

Student 9- Yeah, it's like she said, **basically it's an option to whether you do or whether you don't and I always choose not to on it.**

AS- So why do you think now, you mentioned it a little bit, that it's just kind of not been a thing pretty much since K-State beat K-U here?

Student 8- **Well, I think a lot of it has to do with Tang. He came over here, and he kind of got on us and we all, I don't know about you, but I really look up to Tang. I think he's a really good figure to have around, he's a good dude to look up to so.**

Student 9- **He's a good role model.**

Student 8- Yeah exactly. **And I think that when he kind of got upset, I felt like I was in trouble. I just think he's a good role model and when he came in here and really instilled here like, this is supposed to be family- like there are families here and this is supposed to be family-oriented and let's keep it that way, so I think he was big.**

AS- So he did something Bill Snyder couldn't do. I mean Bill Snyder said the same thing. "Hey, stop it!" And everyone's like "whatever old guy."

Student 9- To me, it's hard to control the fans at football games, though, because there's so many more. In here, they're only releasing like 2,300 tickets to students, whereas at football games it's anywhere from 5,000 to 8,000 students at one game, and it's hard to like to control, every single person. **But if you can identify your objects like, here at basketball games and be one of the best and control them. I mean, everyone respects you. Then you'll be able to control them.**

AS- Are there leaders in a crowd, or is everybody kind of their own person, you think, especially these student sections?

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Jerome Tang: Well, 1st of all I had never heard of "Sandstorm". I have no clue what it was. All I knew is, they told me when they played it in this basketball stadium, the students went crazy, and it really affected the other team.

And so my thought was, if we have something that gives us a home court advantage, why wouldn't we do it? And they told me because of "The Chant", and it was like, "Well, why don't we just ask them to stop?" And they said, "We've tried for 10 years."

And so, okay. Well, it was never a doubt in my mind we were going to do it. We were going to get it done because we've got smart students and they understand it and they want to win. And we all want to win a championship. And if it's gonna help us win a championship, then why wouldn't we do it? Well, then, when it seeped its way into "The Wabash" and Dr. Tracz was gonna shut down "The Wabash", then it was like, "All right, this is like crazy right, that we're gonna let the school up the road take away two of our traditions right?", the things that separate us from everybody else in the country. We don't like them, but we're gonna let them take it away from us right? Teams that win championships, programs that win championships they don't spend time thinking about somebody else. You know, I remember I did an interview with Mike Krzyzewski and Coach K. Said, "Yeah, Jerome, we went to an arena, and all the students had on beat Duke shirts right?" And he told his team. "Hey! They all got on Duke shirts up there!" Why would you spend any time talking about the opponent, the other team, like, let's not show up to the game because who we're playing against. Let's show up to the

game because KSU is playing. Let's not give them any credit. Let's not waste any energy on them. Let's spend all the energy on cheering for us and, you know, be about us. And so our students understood that. They were like, "Yeah, why would we want to do that?" And I felt like, you know, it was something that they understood. It was explained to them in a way they understood it, and they realized that they could have an impact in winning, and they were willing to make the change. But it wasn't just lip service, wasn't. "Hey, y'all are gonna do this otherwise we're gonna take this from you". It was like, "this is the value you're gonna add to us winning". And my mistake was thinking I only needed to take a flu shot one time, and it would last. This is the thing that you got to fight for your culture and last year I didn't fight for the culture of the campus. I fought for the culture of our program, and but you know I don't feel like God put me here just to fight for the culture of our program or the culture. It's about the culture of the university and student body is, you know, a big responsibility I feel to me so this year, because the chant started coming back a little bit.

Andrew Smith : You hear it?

Jerome Tang: Well, my wife hears that she tells me about it all the time. And so, you know, that's why I've been, you know, going around to the fraternities again. And I'm not just talking about us winning this, I'm like, really, you know, "Let's fight for the culture." Let's make this thing about KSU. And in fact, after I get off with you here. I'm meeting with all the leaders of all these student organizations on campus to, you know, fight for the culture. Make this thing about KSU.

After coding the interviews, the researcher went back through all of the data to string together themed answers which gave insight into the research questions. After collecting and analyzing the data specifically answering the research questions, the researcher went back through the interviews to group together all of the outlying themes which came forward and began to analyze the results which follow.

Chapter 4 - Results: Phenomenological Case Study Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter we will discuss the results of the qualitative analysis of this phenomenon from a number of different angles. While we discuss the specific research question results, the data also produced more information about the reasons behind the modification in behavior of the crowd, the dynamics of how the crowd reacted to the various influences placed upon them, as well as the background of the efforts made to alter the crowd's behavior by those in authority within the university and student leadership administration which had not previously been made public. It also revealed quite a bit about the strength of belonging and the power of leadership as the relationship with the group increased, specifically with Coach Jerome Tang.

The research also revealed some trends in decision-making by the individuals within the crowd including specifics on reasons for certain behaviors, tipping points for decision on action and motivations to influence those around them as an actor within the system. In addition to the specific research questions, in this section we will look at what the interviews revealed about answers to unintended variables which influenced the crowd, the efforts made by the administration in trying to alter the students' behavior and the reasons why this behavior, regardless of influence, would be altered in the first place.

Each member of this complex adaptive system is his or her own individual agent acting in accordance to their own decision trajectory, though in careful concert with those around each individual. Since the stimuli which are used to make decisions can be variable for each member of the group and can vary from contest to contest where the CAS changes the make-up in some percentage, it isn't a universal answer as to why each agent made their own decision in each instance. However, the research from the interviews of the respondents from the crowd cited a

number of common factors which played on their decision of chant cessation and the modification of the behavior in addition to the answers supporting the specific research questions. Among the most prominent which will be explored in this section are:

- Feeling the effects of specific administrators (Jerome Tang in particular) who were familiar enough to warrant heeding their attempts at influencing cessation, even if members of the group were not bound to follow any of the specific advice or requests, by starting to accept this person from outside the group as a de facto member.
- Having a solution, or second choice, to participating in the offensive chant and choosing the second option instead.
- Fear of losing a tradition if they stayed on the current path of behavior (threat of “The Wabash Cannonball” not being played at events).
- Desire to protect the reputation of the “family” nature and historical reputation of the university.
- Disagreement with the overall action for personal or religious reasons.
- Influence from administrative efforts to create a situation where those who attended the games would become partners in success rather than independent entities.

Autonomy in a Crowd and Crowd as Complex Adaptive System (CAS) (RQ1)

RQ1- How does the K-State student section represent a Complex Adaptive System?

In looking at this case from the perspective of a crowd as a Complex Adaptive System, the crowd is made up of many individuals and the members of the crowds at Kansas State University felt they were still autonomous for the most part, though the subjects still responded

to what was going on around them. “I think it kind of depends on what's on what's influencing me to do the actions as well” said Subject One. This was a very common feeling for most of the subjects, as the crowd actions and emotion can induce action for the individual. Subject Eight stated: “I feel like it's a huge influence, like just what the people around you directly affects, what you're going to say on how comfortable you are saying.” This supports Holladay & Tytel (2011) who discuss the connection with members of a CAS who are connected and influence one another within their system.

Being influenced by those around them doesn't mean being controlled by them, as was pointed out by many of the subjects, because there is only minimal social and subjective pressure put on the various individual members of the whole by the rest of the body. Even with the frenzy of an emotionally reacting group of people, the crowd members in the research felt they were able to make their own determination as to what they were going to do, deciding exactly how much control the others in the crowd may or may not have over their individual actions. Some even felt there was no shading one way or the other behaviorally with regards to how the rest of the individuals within the crowd were behaving. “I'm really not influenced by other people” said Subject Five.

This goes along with the ideas of Complex Adaptive Systems, that a group of people without a nominal leader will feed off each other and organically make decisions and changes to behavior as the group collectively decides to move a different direction (Carroll et al, 2008). While the whole may have an influence on the rest, it isn't necessarily binding for those within the system. This collective action is made up of the smaller decisions by each of the members of the greater group, as individuals in the crowd decide to act in a certain way.

Additionally, each person within this student section has their own role, which they fill themselves while they try to create their own part within the system and behave in their own way (Boal & Schultz, 2007):

Subject Three: “Everyone has their own place of belonging in that crowd. I feel like there's people that stand out more. You know, they bring energy. There's others that kind of vibe off of that, and, you know, bring more along with that. So just kind of everyone has their own impact in some way shape or form.”

By looking at the crowd itself as a Complex Adaptive System, we can better see the nature of the relationship and how it works. The members feel they have an autonomy that is influenced by those around them and they in turn fall into roles within this system to create the system. This supports what we are looking at in a Complex Adaptive System where the individuals make meaning within the group and create a whole (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017). The subjects felt accepted and at times cocooned by the crowd, able to find safety and acceptance. “I feel it's a really inclusive crowd,” said Subject Eight, “K-State has the big emphasis on family, and I feel like you really feel that when you're up in the crowd.”

With “The Chant” having only limited social acceptance when it comes to decorum and civility to those outside of the CAS, many of those within the system said they refrained from it altogether because they didn't want a negative consequence that would outweigh the benefit from participation in the action in the first place. Many subjects mentioned as “The Chant” became more and more unacceptable as the penalty of losing other traditions was put into the mix. Many just stopped participating particularly when the subject of the chant, the University of Kansas, was not involved.

“I just keep with my own morals and stuff. I stick to the traditional stuff” said Subject Five. Subject Four added that when the crowd would start the chant during the traditional playing of “The Wabash” in the early part of 2023 “I would just stop Wabashing at all because I didn't like [“The Chant”]. I mean, I have family who goes to KU and like for me, I just I did not like the chant at all, and most of the reason why the chant came out started the first place, cause it's just a bunch of drunk people started to chant and everything.” As outlined above, the fear of losing this tradition was greater than the desire to fall into line with whatever the other individuals within the crowd were deciding to do.

The hardest part about trying to shape and move a Complex Adaptive System is its unpredictability (Levy, 1992). Since it is not really possible to move this kind of a group in a linear way, leading it can be a challenge. For administrators of the university, without any true control over this group, they do not look at having ability to move and lead the CAS on a group level. Boal and Shultz (2007) point out that “Dialogue aids in surfacing one's own and other's thoughts and assumptions, helps create new ideas, and initiates collective action. Because strategic leaders are central in the cognitive networks of organizations and thus the tagging processes that control contacts between organizational agents, they will have a strong influence on the exchange of information and advice and its interpretation” (p. 417). As a result, it would ideally be through this kind of dialogue with the individuals in the system where influence can be exerted and change effectuated. This is what the administration hoped to do in their efforts to connect with those at the heart of the action.

“I think peer-to-peer influence has far more power and effect than positional power in this,” Dr. Thomas Lane said, explaining that trying to get a divergent group acting as a whole to change needs individual dialogue and discussion, particularly with those who are considered part

of the CAS. In this case, the administration are not a part of the CAS in a true way; they are just trying to influence it from the outside, so unless an outsider is accepted as part of the CAS, the influence will be minimal. If the outside entity can create a situation where they become a part of the system, dialogue can begin. At Kansas State, this started with having someone who straddled the line of both administration and the student group, the student body president, begin a dialogue to influence the individual pieces of this Complex Adaptive System (see section on Administrative Efforts).

Exhibiting Leadership as Practice in action modification (RQ2 and RQ2a)

RQ2- How does the process of ending or modifying the chant demonstrate Leadership-as-Practice?

RQ2a- How does a body of people organically “change their minds” about what is cool/appropriate/acceptable?

In viewing the crowd and the individual elements making up the Complex Adaptive System, the attributes which show the subjects demonstrating Leadership-as-Practice (LAP) became apparent in this study. While the members of this set of people may not know they are demonstrating the principles of an L-A-P model, nor do they have that as a goal in mind, a collective action by a group with the lack of leadership within that same group is supported and explained (Raelin, 2020). In this instance, once enough of the crowd displayed similar actions within their own undefined or non-authoritative leadership roles, the action achieved critical mass to become a joint action. Just as each individual decided to participate in “The Chant” for many years, the individuals making up the crowds then decided not to participate. While we understand that the make-up of a university student basketball and football crowd rotates as

students pass through school (see discussion section), each member thereof has a role to play and a responsibility within this crowd to determine their actions as they relate to the system.

This demonstration of leadership in place stems from the feelings by the subjects that they can make their own decisions and be responsible for them, choosing their own path to what they feel is most harmonious or connected to the group. For those who start to act against established norms, this means leading in their role to make a different choice to go a different direction. “Basically, it’s an option to whether you do or whether you don’t (follow the crowd) and I always choose whether or not to do it” said Subject Seven. The choice of action and conscious and intentional forward movement is key to the L-A-P model of analysis. As members of the crowd exhibit these traits, we see L-A-P demonstrated in the actions as each person decides how they will fulfill their perceived role to the best of their ability. “I feel like a lot of it’s just a personality thing. But as I was taught growing up, just being and acting on my own self (and decisions),” said Subject Eight. “But a lot of that, like I said, it’s just the way I was raised.” By making their own individual choices, the members of the CAS make a de facto collective choice to stop doing a previously agreed upon action. This is done independently by each member after taking in the input from those around them.

“I kind of just make a mental note to myself,” said Subject Three, “saying like, ‘Hey, let’s not forget. You’re just one person.’ You’re not basically the whole student section, you’re not just hundreds of thousands of people that show up at the same time you do. You’re just yourself.” This individualistic decision-making is demonstrating leadership by taking control of their own realm and making it about how they contribute to the whole on an individual level. No matter the action being demonstrated here, the result is the same: as individuals make these choices, the dynamic of the system begins to shift.

Similarly, the individual subjects agreed that each has their own decision to make on what actions are socially acceptable or “cool” and that they have the leadership ability to act accordingly regardless the views of the rest of the group. “I think about it first, and if I think it’s not that cool, at all, I won’t do it,” said Subject Six. “If it’s like something that’s like somewhat bad, somewhat good I may do it, I may not do it. It just depends.”

For others subjects within the CAS, they are aware of those around them and how their decisions on how they act may affect others, a consciousness that is important in L-A-P. “I keep myself a good bit in check just because of who I am,” said Subject Two. “I am surrounded by people, so I don’t wanna lessen their experience just because I’m, y’know, screaming and being over the top.” This self-awareness also speaks to the understanding of consequence of action, which shows another form of leadership with regards to how actions affect others within a group or system. By knowing their actions could affect those around them and editing them accordingly, those within the group are demonstrating LAP. Said Subject Five: “I’d say it (The Chant) is not cool, and if you want to argue if it’s acceptable or not, go try to do that in their stadium and see if it’s acceptable.”

Exhibiting Influence and Social Capital (RQ3 and RQ3a)

RQ3- What effect and influence can a leader without direct stewardship over a group have?

RQ3a- What role does social capital play in decision-making with regards to influencing groups of individual members?

In the case of “The Chant”, we found a number of forces in play influencing the actions of the crowd. As mentioned above, each individual was making their own determination based on many factors as to whether or not they would participate in the action. Some of those factors

included their own personal feelings and ethics, the action of the crowd around them and whether or not they wanted to fit in, and the changing dynamics of the make-up of the crowd. Social capital comes into play in this case as outside influences are trying to exert influence over the group. While administration had made several efforts, those within the group needed to be affected more by those outside the group than those within if the behavior is to modify in any way. It wasn't until those efforts were successful at bridging the gap between the two groups that meaningful change could happen.

When it came to outside influences, members of the group had to feel that the influence being exerted was from someone who members of the group esteemed had social capital which could be used or even transferred to the individual members of the group for their benefit. The one influencing had to have a connection with the group that made that feel like it was a benefit to follow that person instead of any other influence. Subject Eight said an outside influencer could have all the titles, but if they don't have the perception of understanding and connection, it wouldn't work. That connection and respect has to be present for the influence to take hold and the bridge to connect. "So for me," Subject Eight said about listening to an outside influence, "it depends if it's a person that I respect personally. So like high members of the university, like executives, and then coaches and all that to me that has a big impact, but only if are they aren't just trying to change "The Chant", but also show that they care about the students." Other members of the students section agreed that unless the person in authority tried to build that bridge and create connection, it would be for naught.

Without direct stewardship and authority, the leader has to have something else which can move the needle. In particular, it needs to become important to members of the CAS to the point that those members feel they have a benefit in social capital by following. In the case of

social capital, men's basketball head coach Jerome Tang's actions were identified as bridging the gap between administration and the student section with this social capital.

Athletic director Gene Taylor: "He had social capital. He had capital with the students that felt closer to them and he made himself close to them by, like, I said, going in the crowd, going into fraternities, high-fiving. We would do the freshman orientation, or convocation, and he gives them his cell phone number. You know that one right there, with the first time he did it, I'm like, "Are you nuts?" But that just connected him so quick, and he got some text messages, and you know he's gotten a couple of calls. I don't think it's over the top stuff, but I think that one move really raised his social capital tremendously with the students, and then I think it's carried on."

For Coach Tang, while the actions were intentional to gain connection with the group, the control exerted was done in this case with larger goals in mind. "Because leadership is service," Tang said. "It's not power, control, authority, it's service. And so that's where I believe that, like last year in an effort to fight for our culture, I was too locked into just our basketball program rather than the whole big picture. It takes this whole campus to win a championship."

University President Richard Linton: "I think we engage with them. I think we listen to them. And we try to respond to what's important to them, whether it's an affiliated student group or whether it's just students in general."

Once the social capital was exerted to bridge the gap between the student section and those in administration, members of the CAS felt it became acceptable to accept the influence from the member who had bridged the gap. In this case, it was, for most of the subjects, head basketball coach Jerome Tang.

Understanding the Complex Adaptive System and impact of “The Chant”

While all these behavioral pieces work in concert to help explain some of the overall behaviors, we move now into the lenses through which to view the phenomenon to better understand the ground in which it grows. To truly understand this phenomenon is to clearly connect the complex adaptive system in which the phenomenon is happening. In interviewing the members of the group it became clear that many of those in the student section individually decided whether they would participate in the action of “The Chant” for a number of reasons which each member of the group came to on their own, as indicated above. As individual agents exhibiting Leadership-As-Practice while within the group, each member of the group had to make up their own mind about reasons for continuing the action or stopping it depending on the influence they felt from outside factors as well as their own internal dynamics.

As pointed out before, one of the characteristics of a Complex Adaptive System is the rich interconnectivity of the actions within the group which can alter the connection between each other and the actions as a whole in unpredictable fashion (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017). Members of the student section responded universally that these actions, while influenced by those around them, still were their decisions alone to make, and as such had to be taken individually by assimilating the stimuli available and acting accordingly. As this stimuli became part of the decision-making process, the individuals of the crowd started to make different individual decisions when presented with the same situations where “The Chant” would be used. After leadership efforts to alter that behavior, however, and because of those influences, the group members were making a different choice.

Individuals within the group, while exhibiting their own decisions, still feel the empowerment a group can give. Subject Nine explained that the feeling of being within the

group gives an emotional response, and that emotion is one of the influences on how they act and react. “I think yeah, it's kind of like a like a mini power trip when you're like yelling with the crowd,” Subject Nine said. “It feels like you're like, ‘This is just like on top of the world having so much fun.’ Like I don't know. It's just like feeling that excitement with all these people like it brings up your like empowerment.” That empowerment translates to a feeling of safety and collective influence, which can also make a difference in how the group reacts.

Subject Two felt the empowerment of the crowd around them as soon as they went to their first game in Bill Snyder Football Stadium on the K-State campus. “I had a little moment my first time at a game I'm like, ‘Oh, this is college! Like the packed out, Bill!’ I'm like, ‘Oh, yeah, this is it. Like I'm here. I feel a part of it.’” This feeling of belonging and empowerment in turn gave Subject Two the safety to be part of it, but also the ability and permission to make their own decisions.

Even with this group dynamic in play, however, the majority of the subjects interviewed still felt they were their own agents within this CAS. Subject One pointed out the actions are in part dictated by what variable happened to be the most influential pressure on the individual at a given moment. “I mean you, can come out and yell at, let’s just say the officials for making a bad call. If you have something in your mind, you just wanna blurt it out. And yeah, that's completely fine.”

Within this CAS, we can begin to understand how these choices become inter-related, as discussed above in the traits of a complex adaptive system. While each person is acting on their own accord, those decisions and actions are then filtered through the lens of what is happening at the moment, what the individual wants and their own value system, how they feel they are being perceived by those around them and what they want that perception to be as they are cheering on

their team. Since each action and decision connects with all the others, as these decisions are made within the crowd in real time, once the majority decided this particular action was not in the best interests of the group, the action faded away.

“The Tang Effect” and Offering an Alternative.

The student and administrative subjects were almost universal in their reasoning that the actions of new head basketball coach Jerome Tang to not only ask the students to stop chanting “The Chant” but give them a choice of another action to participate in during the same conditions was a large factor in each individual deciding against continuing that practice. After the K-State Men’s Basketball team beat the University of Kansas at Bramlage Arena in overtime on January 17, 2023, and the crowd stormed the court chanting “The Chant”, Tang took the mic and said “Hey, this is not about who we just beat, this is about us winning! I told you we were going to get you a court storming, but from here on out, expect to win” (Robinett, 2023). For the students in the study, this struck a chord of expectation and introspection as to why they were chanting in the first place. This action by the head basketball coach was mentioned by multiple subjects in the study as a turning point in how they felt about not only participating in “The Chant” as an audience member, but in the reason behind doing it at all, particularly when the team was not playing Kansas University in the first place.

Tang also gave the crowd an alternative to using “The Chant” during or after the game by telling the members of the crowd to instead focus on their own university rather than another. He led the crowd in the chant of “K-S-U”, replacing the chant that had been happening at that moment (Robinett, 2023). This act, giving the student members of the crowd a choice of something else to do, was different to the students because instead of forbidding an action,

something sure to make many want to do it regardless, it was another option which could be viewed as a partnering with the team in their success.

In telling the crowd it was about “us” (cheering for Kansas State), not “them” (cheering against the University of Kansas), the difference of cheering for something instead of cheering against something gave each individual a chance to re-think their motivation behind “The Chant” and act accordingly:

Subject Two: “I think it’s Coach Tang. At least that’s why I’ve attributed it to.”

Subject Three: “It’s like Tang said, make it about us, not about them.”

Subject Five: “I also don’t believe in hate. It’s like Tang said like, make it about us, not about them. Be uplifting of our team, not the demeaning to the other team.”

Rather than just disciplining the students in the section by withholding some of the activities during the game or issuing verbal or written discipline which could fall on deaf ears and have the opposite effect desired, the outside stimulus had changed from being one of forbidding the action to offering an alternate action during the same times during and after the contests. This alternative for the members of the system then changed from either saying “yes” or “no” to an action (either participating or not) to being a choice between two actions, which changes the dynamic of the decision-making.

Subject One said what has made a difference is not only what Tang said, but his actions as well, climbing into the student section at football games and after basketball games to chant “K-S-U” with the crowd during times of heightened emotion. “It’s Jerome Tang just with the overall message he’s made chiming in with the students’ section with “The Wabash Cannonball” dances and during several non-conference games early on,” said Subject One. “He was kinda yelling ‘K-S-U!’ while doing “The Wabash” and the student section immediately kind of

chanted ‘K-S-U!’ This was not done on a whim, or by accident. It was paired with efforts by administration to make this alternative a possibility to try to see if they could in fact shift from one behavior to another without overtly declaring a behavioral moratorium on a group over which they had no authority (see more below in “Administration Leadership Efforts to stop “The Chant”).

This connection with the head coach existing not only idealistically but also physically in the same space, paired with the choice given to the students to have something else to rally around during the times of high emotion during a game, meant more buy-in from those involved according to those interviewed, including administration. “I mean, he makes you feel like you’re part of something exciting,” Dr. Thomas Lane, Dean of Students said. “And so yeah, I think that that engenders positive regard. He's really so “one” with the students and I think that comes across because he seems to be from what I can tell pretty authentic in his approach, and he is who he is.” Even though Coach Tang had no true leadership authority over the group, this relationship was still connective because the students felt seen by the administrator.

This regard for Tang from the students superseded any lack of perceived power he may have had over the students to level some of the social playing fields for those who were in the crowds. Many student interviewees and administrators alike mentioned how Tang, who gives out his phone number to students at convocation and tries to speak to them on a personal level (Kinley, 2023), ingratiated himself with the students and members of the student section by doing what they do and being where they are. The result is students start to feel he is not only appreciating who they are, but becoming one of them, an adopted member of this Complex Adaptive System. By becoming an adopted member, the bridge between the unrelated administrative position and hierarchy of coaching the basketball team and the student base who

come to cheer, is created, allowing the influence to walk across. With these actions, the separation between the levels of power is broken down, allowing students to look at values rather than authority since now he is being accepted as some part of the system even though in reality he is not a nominal member.

Some expressed the feeling that they look up to Tang and that they didn't want to let him down. One Subject said she felt like she was in trouble when Coach Tang took the mic and told the student section not to make it about another school. "I just think he's a good role model and when he came in here and really instilled here this is supposed to be family-oriented and let's keep it that way, so I think he was big," said Subject Seven.

"I think really just the power, the overall just power of influence in regards to what we've seen with the start of the vulgar chant, where there might have been a few students or few frats or sorority girls here, and they may start at chant, and the fans started kind of following along with it, and then now yell "K-S-U"," Subject One said. "Jerome Tang has pretty much just silenced any of the vocal chant matters, except for maybe when K-State hosts KU again."

The connection to the students by the head coach is and has been from the beginning, intentional, for a number of reasons. Not only is Tang interested in students at the university as an educator and a coach, but he also wants to win basketball games, which is helped by a large contingent of dedicated fans. Part of the plan is getting to know the fans he is trying to influence. "I spend time with them and I show up at their events," Tang said. "I do the things, you know, to help them and promote them. And then they say, "Coach man, you know we're gonna listen to you here in this situation", and so on." This expression of fealty by the students who are coming to the games to cheer for the team to the basketball coach doesn't necessarily guarantee action on the part of the students but does at least give insight into how they are

forward-facing. Many of the students in the study expressed similar feelings, with Subject Eleven even remarking “He cares about us, not as a student, but also as a person, so I think that really helps us.”

Another important point brought up in the interviews was though appeals had been made by other authorities- the athletic director and former head football coach for example- this was the first time students were given an alternative, chanting “K-S-U” rather than “F*** K-U”, so they had another option. This is something other authority figures had not done: offer a different action to replace the one they were trying to stop. “It just made sense,” Tang said. “Yeah, you know, it was so simple. So a lot of solutions are very, very simple. We just make them complicated, you know we do. I mean if you can do the “F-K-U”, you could definitely do “K-S-U”. Doesn't that make sense?”

Students agreed with this idea, understanding that being asked to have an alternative rather than just being told no was a different dynamic. Subject Two looked at it in the same way. “I think (it was) Jerome Tang providing the ‘let's spin it to a positive thing’. I think because people don't want to hear ‘don't do something’ if you don't provide a solution. That's a big thing. It's like, ‘What, what? How do you want to fix it?’ Jerome Tang said ‘Here's how I want to fix it.’” This gave the students a chance to discontinue the chant and replace it so they didn't feel like it was discipline, but more of a partnership. That partnership can then be viewed as helping the team win basketball or football games by actively doing something rather than being told to refrain from doing something. Action is empowering, and having an action to perform changes the focus of the ask from someone who has no authority over this particular group of people. By partnering instead of scolding, the relationship isn't damaged and more productive discussions and actions can follow.

Additionally, as everyone is making those decisions themselves about whether or not they want to change the behavior and adopt another, they are advancing their own Leadership-As-Practice. They lead in their own sphere with their actions, maximizing what they feel is the pinnacle of their own personal and individual fandom process to assist the team in the unique way a fan base does. When presented with a choice between options, it gives the members of the system the permission to be themselves and decide which option they feel will best fulfill their role. Leaders may hope the crowd chooses a specific action, but in reality it becomes up to the collective. As a critical portion of the group individually makes a different decision, the group as a whole changes the behavior.

Losing “The Wabash Cannonball”

Another variable for deciding to curtail “The Chant” was the possibility of losing a tradition of dancing to the fight song “The Wabash Cannonball”. After “Sandstorm”, the traditional hype song during which the student section used the vulgarity, was discontinued because of “The Chant”, members of the student section, undeterred and wanting to continue to show their ire with the rival Jayhawks, started chanting during the playing of “The Wabash Cannonball”. As mentioned above, the band at one point stopped playing the song in the middle of a performance because the band director didn’t want the song used in that fashion. When students realized they could lose a song which had been part of almost 60 years of K-State athletics, it was a wake-up call as well. Some comments from the interviewees support that:

Subject Three: “(Band director) Dr. Trace cut off the band during Wabash and we were running into something so special that we’ve had for like hundreds of years at this point and then it kind of clicked in a lot of people, like ‘What are we doing?’”

Subject Five: “The reason why they stopped the chant is because K-State was actually trying to take away the Wabash. “Sandstorm” got taken away and came back because we stopped “The Chant”.

Subject Seven: “We all love doing the Wabash, like I said, when this chant started I stopped doing “The Wabash.” I didn’t want it to get taken away.”

Each person in the crowd had to decide if doing “The Chant” was more important than other long-time traditional actions. At this moment in time when the decision had to be made, for many the answer was no, “The Chant” was not more important, and so they changed their behavior in part to save the tradition. As a result, the individuals who make up the crowd each came to a similar decision to stop doing “The Chant” at sporting events during that particular part of the celebrations. In this case, it was a self-selected consequence, since using “The Chant” during “The Wabash Cannonball” was started after the other hype songs were taken away. The crowd, wanting an outlet for their new and rebellious tradition, chose to transfer the action to a tradition too dear to too many of the student body in the system who were participating, so those individuals felt the cost (cancelation of “The Wabash”) too much to continue the activity.

Personal Values and Ethics and choosing the “K-State Family”

One of the long-held values of the Kansas State University extended community, referring to both current students, alumni and all adjacent people, is that of family. “We live by the purple rule: Family comes first. For K-Staters, that means a firmly held dedication to fostering an inclusive, welcoming atmosphere in which everyone feels supported and empowered to take intellectual risks” says the masthead of the “Who We Are” page on KSU.Edu (2024). Many of the students in the research mentioned the family values and how played into some of the decision-making in changing what the felt the outside view of the student body should be to

those looking in. That feeling of family extends not just to the generalities of people who are associated with the university, but specifically with those who are members of the crowd, and they feel that connection.

Student Eight: “When you are in the student section you feel like everyone’s family. You don’t really care who is next to you.”

Student Eleven: “I feel like we’re all just like one kind of just like a family kind of I mean, you’re all rooting for the same people.”

Student Ten: “I’d say it goes with the family dynamic And like we’re all kind of like one, even if you don’t know someone like you’ll talk or like laugh at something that happens.”

For their part, Tang and other administrators tried to appeal to what they considered the better nature of the members of the crowd, hoping to make K-State’s values more important than committing to an action which was socially unacceptable to many. While some members of the group came to it on their own, others were inspired by the head coach, something the administration could see and appreciated. “I think (Coach Tang) connect(ed) behavior to higher values and being and talking about those, and (about) who we are and who we’re not,” Dean of Students Dr. Thomas Lane said. “I thought that was really impactful. There’s a strong level of affinity for Coach Tang among our students, so I think that’s important, too. I just think he was pretty consistent in his messaging, but yet he wasn’t quite heavy-handed about it. It didn’t come across as kind of scolding it was more so. ‘Hey, guys, come on, this is, we’re better. Let’s be better.’”

. This connection can happen on a number of levels, from whatever can resonate with a member of the student section to even going so far as to mirror some of the faith actions

displayed by the coach and using those for inspiration. “I mean him as a person, like he's also really big on like Christianity, and I'm really big on that, too,” Subject Ten said. “So I think it makes me respect him even more, and he's just like that every time I've talked to him. He's just such a loving person, and he cares about us, not as a student, but also as a person. So I think that really helps us. We all love him so much.” That affection from a part of the student base (not universal, but prevalent throughout the sample) created a situation which was ripe to take advantage of by to alter the behaviors.

Tang himself views his connection with his profession and his goals in life as guiding the way he connects with his players and outside elements which affect the overall team performance. He wants to treat all of the entities like family and in his leadership style and he hopes how he acts and what he promotes rubs off on outside entities over which he has no control. “I heard somebody say a long time ago, do for one what you wish you could do for all,” Tang told the researcher. “So I mean there, whenever I have a chance to impact one person's life, I want to be able to do that. I have two kids on campus, neither one of them athletes. They're interacting with people like yourself. And I'm hoping that other staff members, professors, whoever they are, on campus when they interact with my kids, they treat them like theirs and they make them feel special, and they help them when they're having a tough day. And you know, look after them. A friend of mine told me one time he said, ‘Hey, Jerome, we teach basketball, but we coach people,’ right, and that's what I like: coaching people. And that that's fun to me.”

As noted above, members of the CAS showed L-A-P by looking at the action and individually changing the behavior after deciding for themselves it was no longer tenable. While

some felt this way out of religious or ethical practice, others just felt they did not ethically agree. For those members of the crowd, this personal realization changed their tide.

Administrative Leadership Efforts to Stop “The Chant”

The research also revealed an illuminating window into the administrative actions and attitudes when dealing with the phenomenon, including the steps, and missteps, taken by current and previous administration. Starting at the beginning of “The Chant”, the administration was eager to curtail it if possible. This is in part because for those who are in university leadership, students are the lifeblood of a university, what people notice about the university first in a forward-facing way. “Well, they're the engine. They're the reason, they're the purpose that we're here,” K-State president Richard Linton said. “I mean, they're the main product that we work with and cultivate and produce every single day, and they are who we are in the world.” Linton emphasizes that getting to know the students individually is a key to understanding, but with such a large group, it is more difficult to understand or influence. Additionally, from an economic standpoint, the athletic and university administration needs the fan base for a successful program, so being too draconian in response in the early stages of cessation efforts alienated the group and harmed the K-State athletic department and University goals.

K-State Athletic Director Gene Taylor was dismayed by what he heard from the stands, but felt this was a delicate balance because of the nature of the relationship. “So I look at students and the passion that they bring and the energy they bring is being critically important,” Taylor said. “There's a couple of years where we were down in student tickets, and we felt that at the stadium, you know, seats being empty, and so now that they're back in full force both in football and basketball.”

For years the students' behavior was vexing. Many members of administration have made attempts to change the minds of the students through asking, imploring, pleading and threatening. "I didn't think it showed us well, and so we had tried various many, many ways to stop the chant, and we weren't successful," Taylor said. "Everything from you know, President [Richard B.] Myers to Coach [Bill] Snyder to [former player and offensive coordinator] Colin Klein. I mean we you know we've done it all."

But coming from a place of authority and direct influence backfired at times, with emotion driving decisions for many of the individuals in the crowd. "That's shared across everybody, and that emotion might be like a reaction against authority," former student body president Parker Vulgamore said. "Initially, what most of the time people who've tried to stop the chant or try to influence the student section have done so from a place of authority, and that, like totally gets an emotional reaction against that."

Until they truly connected with the students, these efforts were in vain, whether that be through actual physical connection or connection of purpose and ideology. Administration had exhausted all avenues of threats short of banning offenders from the premises and so turned to other methods to try to influence this crowd made up of individuals who didn't have to listen, and when students caught the vision of how they could display their own leadership in an individual sphere, those individuals started to make different decisions within the crowd setting. That means moving outside that authority circle.

For starters, understanding the nature of the students and the crowd was important, including the power dynamics from perceived authority and lack of authority. While administration has authority over students in academic settings, when those students are in the role of fans, the line blur and students hold more power. The relationship dynamic between the

students and administrative actors changes when the setting changes. As students act outside the academic setting, those power dynamics mean less.

The next step was connecting with the students and their needs. Understanding where they are coming from was important to new basketball coach Jerome Tang. “They are who I would be if I wasn't coaching,” Tang said. “I would have been the one in the stands. I wouldn't have been on the field. I wasn't good enough, you know. I'd have been in the stands, you know, just getting after it, having a great time. So I just feel like they're me at a younger age.” This connection was fostered quickly upon coming to campus. Tang often has one-on-one meetings with students in public settings (Tang's “Hang with Tang” video series created by the athletic department, bringing a purple couch around campus and talking to students individually on camera, has been very visible and popular), attends club meetings to talk about culture and even gives the incoming freshman his personal phone number at Convocation. These connection efforts break down some of the barriers and walls between students and administration which can lead to a lack of communication.

For Coach Tang it was more than culture, taste and decorum: It was also about getting back a tool for the team which led to successful basketball. When Tang came to Kansas State, he was told administration had been forced by “The Chant” to curtail the use of the hype song “Sandstorm” at key competitive times late in the second half of basketball games. For Tang, losing a tool to hype up the crowd and inspire the players simply because of the student section's behavior was worth fighting for.

“First of all I had never heard of “Sandstorm”, I had no clue what it was”, Tang said. “All I knew is, they told me when they played it in this basketball stadium, the students went crazy, and it really affected the other team. And so my thought was, if we have something that gives us

a home court advantage, why wouldn't we do it? And they said they told me because of “The Chant”, and it was like, “Well, why don't we just ask them to stop?” And they said, “We've tried for 10 years.”

Leaving a competitive advantage on the sideline was not in his Tang's nature, so he set about trying to figure out why the students were resistant to change and how he could help the program by going back to a tool linked to success and winning. He decided to try to appeal to their personal responsibilities and desire to win as he started to build relationships with the members of the system who's behavior he was hoping to modify.

“It was never a doubt in my mind we were going to do it,” Tang said. “We were going to get it done because we've got smart students, and they understand it and they want to win. We all want to win a championship and if it's gonna help us win a championship, then why wouldn't we do it? Well, then, when it seeped its way into “Wabash” and [band leader] Dr. Tracz was gonna shut down “The Wabash”, then it was like, ‘All right, this is like crazy right, that we're gonna let the school up the road (University of Kansas) take away two of our traditions right, these things that separate us from everybody else in the country.’ We don't like them, but we're gonna let them take it away from us right? Teams that win championships, programs that win championships don't spend time thinking about somebody else.”

To do so, Tang would need to appeal to a number of different kinds of variables in why “The Chant” was started in the first place. Students interviewed said they participated in “The Chant” out of a desire to fit in, a sense of tradition and connection with previous crowds, and just an attitude or desire to be disruptive and insulative to an in-state rival. To be successful in his bridging efforts, Tang would need to change individual opinions of members within the group and convince them their actions needed to change for their own good and the good of the team

they were cheering for on the field and on the court. Part of the actions employed by Tang would utilize collaboration with various other members of the student community as well as either using his social capital to bridge across and into the system or to become part of the system himself, being accepted into the Complex Adaptive System as a variable which could make change from the inside.

The administration turned to student leaders to try to partner and connect with the student body to bring them on board for chant cessation efforts. “We look at partnerships and finding partnerships to be able to help effectuate change is very important,” Lane said. “I think peer-to-peer influence has far more power and effect than positional power in this.” So, in the fall of 2022, SGA president Parker Vulgamore got together the heads of Greek houses and other student groups to give them a charge to better live the ideals the University stood for. This included inviting some of the most vocal members of the crowd when it came to participating in “The Chant”.

Vulgamore brought together about 50 student leaders for a discussion about student conduct and how to combat “The Chant”. “With that task force I kind of put together a lot of the people who were perpetuating the problem. That was what I think made the biggest difference, that combined with Coach Tang helping. He sent a message in for that, just real short that I played, like a 10 second clip in that meeting, and everybody kind of all got on board and understood they needed to change it, and they told their friends. We put together a social media push about saving ‘The Wabash.’”

By trying to connect with those who had been the perceived problem, Vulgamore was also trying to bridge the gap between student leadership and those involved by exhibiting social capital bridging. His position straddling the student/administration line meant that he could walk

in both worlds and not be pushed off into the other by either. He was respected and understood by administration but still part of the student body. That gave him the ultimate bridge to be able to cross between the two. This success in the bridging of this gap meant that his influence could be more easily accepted by both parties. Those who were in the student section would be able to feel he was one of them, breaking down one of the barriers which exists between those in administrative power and those who are making their own decisions outside of that influence.

The Power of Winning

Part of the equation for finding the right formula for influencing the CAS was something that was in Jerome Tang's control only to a particular point: winning basketball games. Bernache-Assollant et al (2016) describe how BIRG'ing (or Basking in Reflective Glory) can affect a fan base and change their behavior. When a team wins, those who follow the team feel closer on an emotional level to the team, their leaders and their ideas and precepts. If the team stands for something and is successful by winning on the field or on the court, the fans who follow the team are also emboldened and feel a part of this team by taking in that reflective glory and internalizing it, even if they have not done anything on the field of play to actually achieve the win. The authors describe how what is colloquially known as "Victory Monday" plays out in the research: "In a seminal article, Cialdini et al. (1976) indeed found that on the Mondays following a victory of the local football team, students were more likely to display the logo or name of their university on their clothes than they did following a defeat or a draw. They also used the pronoun "we" more frequently when discussing a victory than they did for a defeat" (p. 702).

When that success continues, fans are more likely to display the ideas and attributes of the team. In the case of Kansas State University, when the basketball team started winning, the fans were more likely to individually want to self-associate with the team and become more subject to influence being exerted over them by the team in an effort to help the team to win. In essence, if Coach Tang feels they need the hype song “Sandstorm” and “The Wabash Cannonball” to win, and the fans actions need to change to do it, the fans are more likely to want to if the team is winning.

“I’ve gotten great feedback,” Tang said. “I think because we’ve won, right, like those who would push back maybe are afraid to speak out because they know what the backlash is gonna be because we’ve won.” By winning, those who disagreed with the direction of the coach and his desire for influence over the behavior of those who were associated with the team (whether it is just in reflected glory or not), were not as vocal, nor did they try to stop the efforts by the coach to mold those who were watching the games into what he felt the attitudes should be around his own team.

With the “BIRG’ing” crowd, Tang saw the opportunity to create a change with “The Chant”, as long as he keeps winning. Knowing the influence may have a shelf life (if the team were to start to lose consistently, the influence would wane as well) Tang’s efforts to capitalize on that social capital afforded by the wins was critical. By making immediate use of the capital received by having a very successful first season (into the final eight teams in the post-season NCAA tournament), Tang was able to have a better and more fertile ground to affect changes he wished to see, eliminating “The Chant” among them.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

L-A-P Advancement

The qualitative information gleaned from this research supports and furthers the Leadership-as-Practice model being applied to understand the practice of members of a Complex Adaptive System. We can see that the autonomy of the individuals in the crowd to make their own decisions and continue to do what they feel is best for the group and the entire larger society shows that even without a specific leader, where the praxis of leadership is not tied to the competency of a leader, the group itself can still be important and successful (Carroll et. al, 2008).

This research also sheds light on the role of authority on CAS with regards to L-A-P. Because the individual members of this group are exhibiting Leadership-As-Practice, they are getting stimuli from outside sources of authority and processing that in how they will make decisions. Early efforts by administration, from cajoling to threats to pleading were unsuccessful in influencing the individual members in their decisions. It wasn't until the authority figure had a perceived connection with the members of the CAS that any meaningful change was able to occur. Concurrently, each member of the crowd is interacting with the rest of the CAS both before and after the games attended, bringing stimuli which will reinforce or refute the efforts by those in authority. It isn't until that authority becomes less important than the connection that it becomes influential.

This means that authority alone isn't enough to create change when working with members of a CAS when they are each making individual decisions. The authority doesn't hold sway and the individual in authority doesn't influence until they become a true or adopted member of the system. When Jerome Tang started going into the stands, he became in effect a

member of that system which superseded any perceived authority and gave him influence as a member of the group. L-A-P helps to view the practice Tang exhibited in his efforts to become part of the system and thus maximize his influence with other members of the same system to try to modify the behavior.

As a Complex Adaptive System, a crowd can display many of the qualities seen in different states of behavior. The individual nature of fandom- how dedicated the individual is, what their personality while at a game or in a large group, or even style of cheering- means it is difficult to pinpoint and generalize for every member of the group as to what they are going to say and how they are going to act. However, in this case, members of the entire system individually arrived at some of the same conclusions and the result meant the discontinuation of “The Chant”. By looking at their practice, we can see the result of the individual decisions going on by members of the crowd to create a shared action.

CAS Advancement

When looking at the results of this research, we can also see some nuance with a Complex Adaptive System which comes out, in particular with the relationship between those who are within the system and those who are without when it comes to perceived authority. When an outside influencer hopes to influence the actions of a CAS, the level of authority on the outside of the CAS does not seem to make a difference. University presidents, athletic directors, band leaders and coaches with legendary status actions to the members of the CAS were all unsuccessful, even in the short term, at modifying behavior. They had no influence on DAC (Direction, Alignment and Commitment) of the group individually or as a whole.

Additionally, the rhetoric used by those who were hoping to exert influence could vary from threats to pleading, and it still was not influential if those within the system had a plurality

of opinion and action. In fact, the more those in power tried to exert it from without the CAS, the more the members were determined to not be told what to do, almost as a principled stand against the authority. The members of the student group want autonomy and don't want to be dictated by those in authority in other areas as to what they *ought* to do. Members of the system felt that was their decision to make and did not want to bend to the influence of outside authority on this issue. This shows the difficulty of getting inside a CAS when those who are within are not in a position either by rule or by practice to allow entry. Any influencer who hopes to infiltrate a CAS has to in some way do it from the inside, and that means understand how to connect with the individuals who are showing their Leadership-As-Practice within their realm and are not interested in that outside influence.

Social Capital- Bridging Advancement

The research revealed that the bridge created by social capital is only sturdy to a certain point, and in this case was used not as a go-between, but an entry into the CAS. Here we can make some inferences about the authority of the person trying to influence the CAS. Starting from the point that this outside actor doesn't have direct authority over members of the group, as the authority of the individual trying to bridge the social gap went up, the resistance also increased from members of the CAS. While someone in authority who may be trying to change the behavior of members of the group could have high levels of social capital (in this instance someone like the legendary football coach Bill Snyder) it wasn't useful because the bridge was not strong enough to cross. In fact, as Subject Seven stated: "So because Tang's just so much like with the university, and he makes it a major goal of his to be connected with the student body. So it doesn't feel like you're being told this by some giant figure. It feels like someone who is one of you is telling you, hey? We shouldn't be doing it."

Subject 10 supported this idea of connection as well. “I think Tang's gone out of his way to show the love and support for the students rather than just the parents and the season ticket holders. I think that's really important to show students love, too, because we are only here for four years, and we only have a certain amount of games we can show up to as students. So I think it's really important to get those students to come to the games. And he's done an amazing job of like going out of his way, giving all of us his phone number, just like little stuff like that. That makes me respect him, not as a person, but also not as a coach, but also as a person too.” That respect goes a long way to deciding whether or not to accept the influence being given and act accordingly.

Subject Nine: “He's very big with the crowd, like he will come into the student section, do “The Wabash”, and I feel like that's like connected or like right now he's doing “Hanging with Tang “, like he's on a couch. He's just talking to someone like he's not trying to be like this overhead coach. He's trying to be like one with the students trying to be like, ‘Yeah, let's like, get this together.’ And I think he's definitely impacted, not only me, but like a lot of people to like, stop with “The Chant.””

This means that as bridges are attempting to be built, the authority piece became detrimental to actual connection when wielded without concern or thought to the dynamic between the person in authority and the group they are trying to influence. In fact, it seemed that until the person in authority was able to throw off the mantle of that outside capital and move to joining the system themselves, it was not useful in accomplishing any goals whereby the outside authority was trying to create influence. It was only when that authority was forfeit to a certain degree, as evidenced by Jerome Tang's efforts to be one of the crowd and establish connection

which had nothing to do with the authority wielded, but everything to do with becoming a member of the CAS.

Crowd Research Advancement

By looking at a crowd as a CAS, this opens the door to using multiple lenses through which to view their behavior. Often crowds are viewed through the lens of Groupthink, where a number of people all start to think in the same fashion and act as one. Koerber and Neck (2003), in looking at a group action from Major League Baseball umpires, identified three groupthink mistakes they made in collective bargaining: overestimating the group's collective power, being closed-minded to their negotiating partners at the MLB level and silencing and ostracizing dissenting voices within the group itself. However, from the findings here, we could look at each of those members as a part of their Complex Adaptive System and view the individual decisions which led to the group acting as one. This research points towards the Leadership-As-Practice being demonstrated by each member on an individual basis as the reason for the collective actions, with that collective action being exhibited once enough of the individuals make that decision from the influences present at the time.

By viewing each member's actions individually, we can better understand how they arrive at a collective decision. Those decisions can be influenced by those around them as by those, to a lesser extent, outside of the CAS, but each member must make their own decision and determination for action. While collective action may at times be smarter than the decisions of the few (Surowiecki, 2004), understanding that each person within the system must make up their own mind brings understanding to the beginnings of those collective actions.

Thonhauser (2020) discusses how cultural variables can influence emotion and decision-making within a group and that these codes will push behavior. At K-State, the idea of culture

and value of “family”, as discussed above, plays a part in what the members of the crowd are willing to do and what their limits can be. For those who are in the crowd, knowing the culture and how they are influenced by the “family” ideals will affect the behavior in some way within the crowd.

- Subject Seven: “It goes with the family dynamic and like we all are kind of like one, even if you don't know someone like you'll talk or like laugh at something that happens. When you are in the student section you feel like everyone's family. You don't really care who is next to you.”
- Subject Eight: “It's always felt like a family to me like there's not really anything dangerous about the crowd. I mean, there will be people who will say some mean things or do some mean things to you, but they don't actually mean it. It's like a tradition. It is like, it's called Bill Snyder Family Stadium for a reason. It's because we all treat each other like family.”

This knowledge of culture shapes the decisions made by the crowd individually, thus affecting the collective behavior of the group. By understanding the connection with culture to the decision-making of the crowd, we can separate the larger group into its basic parts, understanding that without those individual decisions, a group decision is not made.

Recidivism and Return to the Action

Just because the process worked to change the action once doesn't mean that influence will last. “My mistake was thinking I only needed to take a flu shot one time, and it would last,” Coach Tang said about “The Chant” creeping back in. “This is the thing that you got to fight for your culture and last year I didn't fight for the culture of the campus. I fought for the culture of our program, and but you know I don't feel like God put me here just to fight for the culture of

our program or the culture. It's about the culture of the university and student body is, you know, a big responsibility I feel.”

One of the questions not explicitly asked or answered in the research, but intimated with the samples, is the question of why the behavior continues to crop up from time to time. During the survey time frame, within certain conditions, “The Chant” did come back on occasion, showing it was not totally eradicated. Those instances had a few things in common, in particular with some of the outside variables brought to bear which need to be taken into account. For one, it was more evident at football games, which has larger student sections and so a larger set of individuals all deciding their own course of action, which makes the critical mass of decision-makers needed for cessation higher. Additionally, it is not the realm of Jerome Tang, who had helped in cessation efforts, but another team and coaching staff who were not as active in the efforts. However, in the majority of these cases, while the action may not be socially acceptable to many, the opponent did make it more appropriate than at other times.

The opponent in the game is a variable which is a factor in a crowd going back to participating in a previously abandoned action, specifically when Kansas State plays the University of Kansas in football or men’s basketball. During games where the fans are supporting K-State against KU and the University of Kansas team is in the home arena of K-State, the action could be viewed as more appropriate because the opponent at that time is actually the subject of the chanting. That means that some of the strategies used to change the behavior didn’t come into play. This includes the reasoning that chanting about an opponent who isn’t part of the current sporting event the student section is attending is not a logical action by the crowd. However, when playing KU, at least the opponent matched the action.

For example, specifically on October 26, 2024 the Kansas State football team hosted the University of Kansas in football at Bill Snyder Stadium. During this game, the researcher observed that despite the presence of Jerome Tang on the sideline trying to influence what the student section's actions, "The Chant" was started during "The Wabash Cannonball" at the beginning of the game. At that time, Tang was not in the stands, and so not truly part of the Complex Adaptive System of the crowd, but just outside and facing them, hoping to influence the overall actions of the large group. Though some fans were indeed chanting "K-S-U", they were drowned out by "The Chant". This return to the previous actions is something which someone like Coach Tang feels can be addressed, even though he is not attending all the games. "Well, my wife hears that and she tells me about it all the time," Tang said. "And so, you know, that's why I've been you know, going around to the fraternities again." Since the make-up of the students in those fraternities has changed by half over the last two years due to the graduation and matriculation of new students taking their places, efforts would need to be repeated to try to continue the influence.

However, when Tang is on his own home floor in Bramlage Arena where he coaches his K-State men's basketball team, he has the opportunity to insert himself once again into the CAS. "The Chant" hadn't been used during the men's basketball home season in the 2024-2025 season, but on February 8, 2025, "The Chant" was done by the student section in the men's basketball game against the University of Kansas at Bramlage coliseum (researcher observation). From "The Wabash Cannonball" to "Sandstorm", the student section reverted to previous behavior, chanting "F*** K-U" as before, even though it was in the presence of Coach Tang, who had influenced the change in behavior in the past. In these instances, however, while that action was started a number of times, it was not sustained through the entire piece of music and

often died out long before the music to which it was being accompanied completed, with one exception: When Jerome Tang himself once again became part of the crowd and in so doing became a member of the Complex Adaptive System itself.

The Power of Physical Presence

At the end of the February 8, 2025 game, as the clock ran out and K-State had won against their rival (and subject of “The Chant”) University of Kansas, the celebratory “Wabash Cannonball” started to play, to which the fans started to match “The Chant” to taunt K.U. However, as has become custom for Jerome Tang after a win, after finishing the handshake line with the opposing team and coaches, Tang ran to join the student section in the post-game celebration, going up into the stands. As Tang got to the stands, “The Chant”, which had been started seconds before, abruptly stopped. As Tang became an actual part of the student section, becoming a member of this Complex Adaptive System, doing the traditional motions and dances, the section abandoned “The Chant” and went back to the modified behavior, chanting “K-S-U” or nothing, influenced by the actual presence and participation of Jerome Tang within the group. By his mere participation and presence, he exerted his influence and social capital on the group. However, this only worked to change the behavior in the moment when he became an actual part of the group- throughout the game, even though Tang was coaching in the game and was on the court, the crowd didn’t feel his influence individually enough to change the behavior. When he purposefully physically re-inserted himself into the physical make-up of the crowd, the behavior changed. Tang’s physical presence then became the bridge of that social capital and reminded the individuals in that system of their connection, once again curtailing the action.

Changing and Evolving Membership of the Complex Adaptive System

As long as a Complex Adaptive System's members are constant, any behavior modification can be seen and followed within the individuals which make up this system. If the individual members don't change, the arc of behavior and patterns of influence can be more easily tracked, and any kind of behavioral change has a chance for a form of permanence. However, with the student section of a university, the section's make-up tends to go by the make-up of the student body itself and with matriculation and graduation, changes in the same ratio since the student section tickets are only available to current students. As such, on a year-to-year basis, the make-up of that system is most likely going to turn over up to 25% as the student body graduates and comes into the university.

With this variable in the body of the system, the result is members constantly entering and exiting the system, meaning any connections forged by other influences on the group, whether that be administration, student governments or coaches, will need to be remade. Those coming into the system will not automatically behave as those who exit the system, so any connections have to behavior or its modification would need to be re-established and the culture reinforced. Since each person within this system is acting as a leader in their own sphere, anyone new coming into the system will have to decide for themselves the actions and results they are willing to perform and be a part of. This then affects the consistency of the behavior because while one individual part of the system may have been influenced by an outside source or even their own inner values, the one replacing them (the seats in the stands are finite, so a zero-sum game when it comes to the make-up of the crowd) come in without the same history or influence. As a result, if the efforts of those who wish to influence the behavior of the system

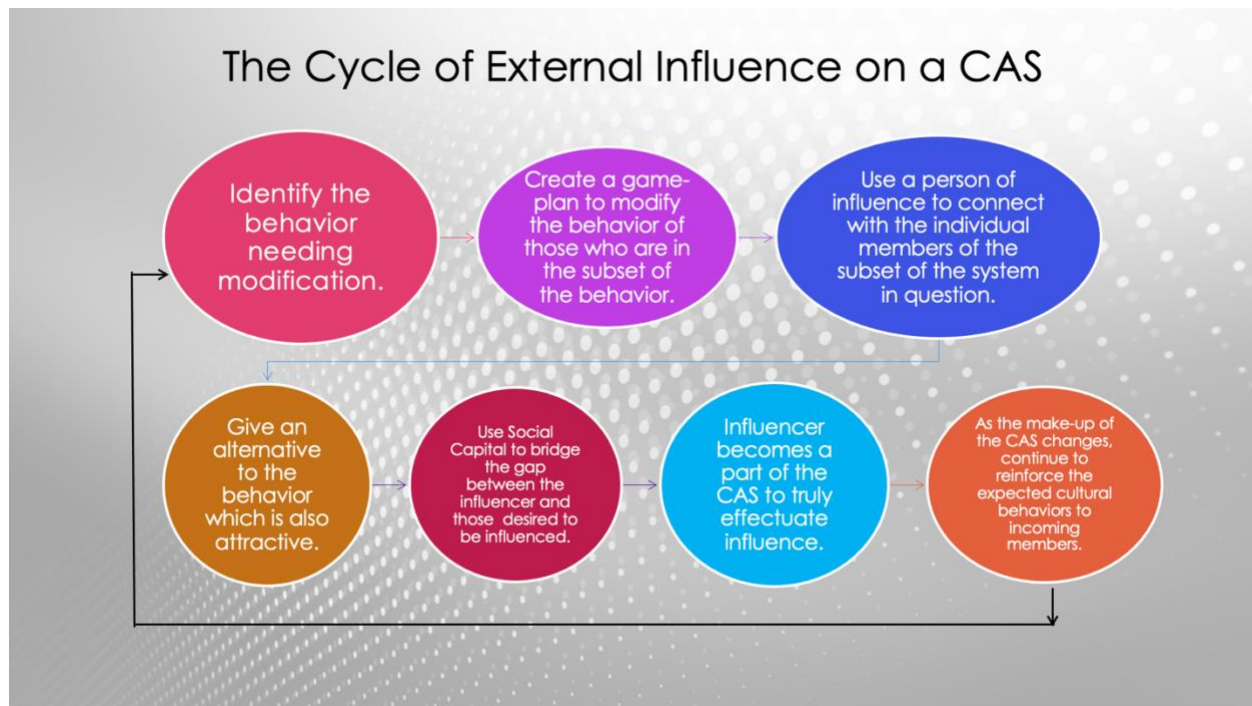
are not ongoing, within just two years half of the system will be replaced by those who could alter the actions of the group.

This means any efforts by outside influencers trying to bridge between the organizations and systems with social capital must continue. Were they to stop, as noted the influence will wane as those in the group continue to change and are replaced. Any system which has a constantly changing population is going to experience the same kind of change in make-up and behavior, resulting in the need for more actions and influence. Without it, the individuals are left to lead in their own sphere without the input and will then be forced to make any decisions with only the input they currently have without any holdover from any previous efforts of influence over their decisions. This also means any change, no matter how radical or extensive, cannot be permanent. As the population of the system evolves, each individual which comes into that population brings a new perspective which would need to be informed and influenced to have any behavior modification.

Blueprint for Other Academic Establishments For Behavior Modification of a Complex Adaptive System

After learning how these variables all intersected to create this phenomenon, how is this transferable to other situations where similar conditions exist? From what we have learned about the Complex Adaptive Systems, Leadership-As-Practice and the influence of Social Capital-Bridging, the following chart shows a path to creating possible change even when a leadership entity doesn't have nominal influence over the CAS which is trying to be modified.

Figure 5.1. The Cycle of External Influence on a CAS



- Identify the behavior needing modification.
- Create a game-plan to modify the behavior of those who are in the subset of the behavior.
- Use a person of influence to connect with the individual members of the system in question
- Give an alternative to the behavior which is also attractive which can replace the undesired behavior.
- Use Social Capital to bridge the gap between the influencer and the influenced.
- Become part of the CAS to truly effectuate influence
- Combat reversion to the previous action by educating those who come into the CAS in the cultural expectations of the group.

- If the action continues, start back at the beginning to identify where the shortcomings exist.

While not a foolproof process, this was shown to be effective in this case, stopping the chant with the student section as constituted. When the members of that group changed as graduation, matriculation and other factors bore down to change the make-up of the Complex Adaptive System, so did the intricate connections between members of the crowd which affected their collective behavior. For administrators at K-State, in this specific instance and set of circumstances, this isn't a one-time fix. With students leaving through graduation and entering the CAS of a student section through enrollment every year, efforts must be made by those hoping to modify the system further to continue to influence those who come in and educate them as to the culture and behavioral expectations if the behavior modification is expected to hold.

Limits of the study

A weakness of this study is the inconsistency of the sample from one game to the next, since no two student section crowds for any game are made up of the same members. That variability makes it a little harder to pinpoint changes and generalize results. For future studies on this topic, the researcher suggests broadening the sample size to include greater numbers, or to include crowds from other sports as well. By increasing the sample size, we could see more variation in the responses and the reasons for the behavioral decisions. This would open up more examples of the Leadership-As-Practice that is going on by the individuals during their interactions with other members of the Complex Adaptive System. Any time a sample size is increased, the extrapolation is more accurate, and getting more qualitative data from the CAS would be helpful.

Another limit is the changing make-up of the CAS represented by the student section crowd on a game-to-game basis. Since no sporting event crowd is constant-every sporting event represents a slightly different set of members of the system- the dynamic of the system changes from game-to-game. This means it is difficult to over-generalize results since we don't have a constant set of members in every case. While efforts were made to specifically get members of the crowd who had longevity and regular attendance, it is very difficult to determine how often the subjects are at games percentagewise and what their individual presence or absence means to the influence of the behavior.

Recommendations for future research

Picking up on the notion of the ever-changing CAS, future research could start by looking at the conditions by which a CAS changes and morphs and how often it needs to be revisited by an influencer to keep behavior in a constant pattern with the desired influence. Tracking that influence over a longer period of time, particularly when the individuals within the CAS change as often and regularly as a student body, would be useful.

This kind of study could be repeated with other ideas and other crowds depending upon what is important within those crowds and the dynamic that exists between the individual members. Would these dynamics be the same once we leave the specific field of academia and college sports and look at the professional level or other kinds of large crowds? Each of these has a different make-up and feeling, so finding out if these ideas are transferable would be a logical next step. Including other large gatherings which are not related to the emotion of sports, but instead politics, protest or other kinds of gatherings over which outside members would like to hold influence would be useful advancements.

Similarly, with a pattern evolving in this case of becoming a part of the Complex Adaptive System being the final step in finding the way to influence the whole, the flow chart of behaviors and ideas should be tested with other instances and situations. Being intentional with the activities of those who are hoping to influence the members of the system who are displaying Leadership-As-Practice would give us an idea if this observed pattern is repeatable in an intentional way. This situation happened almost accidentally in that many efforts to influence the crowds had been unsuccessful in so many instances, regardless the kind of strategy employed. It was almost through trial and error that those in authority changed to different approaches and tactics, finally finding one which worked to influence the members of the system. Being intentional from the beginning in a more scientific approach would give more evidence to the efficacy of the strategy.

Another avenue for future research is how the system itself polices the group and creates a culture and socialization for those who become part of the system. Are students schooled in the culture of the crowd like they are taught their academics, and could that be a more organized activity which could include administrative efforts? Looking at how different fan-bases police their own members within their system would be another logical next step.

Conclusion

In the case of “The Chant” at Kansas State University, we see how the crowd acted as a Complex Adaptive System as the individual members held their autonomy of action and made individual decisions and actions to change a behavior of the crowd as a whole. Though this CAS is always changing because the make-up of the crowd changes from game-to-game, as the members have similar attributes and influence tolerances, each individually came to similar

conclusions and ideas within the system. This synergy of action changed how the system behaved as a whole and made a difference in how they reacted to the stimuli available.

The individuals in the group were also shown to have demonstrated Leadership-As-Practice by establishing common actions and decisions without any nominal leader. The practice of the individual changed the actions of the whole. Without a member of the group specifically tasked to create the three-legged ontology of leadership (leader, follower, common purpose), the group relied on the decisions and leadership in place (Raelin, 2020) of individual members to guide action and direction of the crowd as a whole. These traits were seen in the stopping of the “The Chant” during men’s basketball and football contests for a certain period of time, until the make-up of the system began to change.

However, that does not mean these members were not influenced by outside agencies. The influence of tradition- the threat of elimination of the fight song “The Wabash Cannonball”- and the influence of a stronger nominal leader in another realm- basketball coach Jerome Tang- both altered the individual decisions of those within the system. These outside influences, while not part of the system itself, still held sway over some of the decision-making ability and direction of the individual actors using Social Capital-Bridging techniques to gain connection with the CAS, and then entry into the group. As a result, we can see that though a crowd may be a Complex Adaptive System, it may not be operating in a vacuum, still being influenced by outside agencies while still making the decisions which will lead this group.

We also see that when social capital is used as a bridge to influence an outside group, the ultimate success lies in the one trying to exert the influence becoming a part of the system which they are trying to change. Jerome Tang’s efforts to be in the crowd, inserting himself into the system in a very physical way, gained him access and influence with the group as he became a

part of the system. Once part of the system, his actions could then be taken into account as the individual actors within the system interacted and made decisions.

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Appendix A -

Interview Questions- Students

Investigating “The Chant” interview questions for the individual student participants:

Interview questions relating to research questions:

RQ1- How does the K-State student section represent a Complex Adaptive System?

Questions:

1. How much are you influenced by the other members of the crowd?
2. How do you feel as part of a crowd in terms of belonging?
3. When other members of the crowd decide to do something, how does that change your behavior?

RQ2- How does the process of ending “The Chant” demonstrate Leadership as Practice

Questions:

1. Do you feel you are able to make your own decisions while in a crowd?
2. How do you keep your individual autonomy while in a crowd?
3. Why did/did not you participate in “The Chant” at football and men’s b-ball games?
4. Why do you now not participate in or instigate “The Chant” at those games?

RQ2a- How does a body of people organically “change their minds” about what is cool/appropriate/acceptable?

Questions:

1. How much does what is “cool” or “socially acceptable” influence your behavior in a crowd?
2. If you deemed something not “cool” would you refrain from following others in the crowd?

RQ3- What effect and influence can a leader without direct stewardship over a group have?

1. As a crowd member, how are you influenced in your behavior by someone who has no direct authority or jurisdiction over the crowd?
2. What influence has Jerome Tang had on your decision as an independent actor within the crowd as to how to act?

Interview Questions- Administration

Background-

What inspires you as a follower?

What was your philosophy when you came to be a head coach?

What was your intentionality when creating this relationship?

How do you view this relationship?

RQ1- How does the K-State student section represent a Complex Adaptive System?

Questions:

4. How do you view the student section as a whole?
5. How do you view those relationships between the members of the student section?

RQ2- How does the process of ending “The Chant” demonstrate Leadership as Practice

Questions:

5. What made you aware of the chant and how did it make you feel?
6. What do you think the dynamic is in the crowd and how do you relate to them?

RQ2a- How does a body of people organically “change their minds” about what is cool/appropriate/acceptable?

1. Was the effort for chant cessation intentional?
2. What inspired you to do that?

Questions:

RQ3- What effect and influence can a leader without direct stewardship over a group have?

3. What was the best way you thought as a leader who doesn't really control this group to influence them?
4. How did you use your own social capital to bond with the students?
5. What are you hoping to teach? Is this a partnership?

RQ3a- What role does social capital play in decision-making with regards to influencing groups of individual members?

1. If we were to put together a blueprint for this, what have you learned and how would you go about it?