A Qualitative Exploration of Interpersonal Conflicts in Academia

By

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A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University

of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

of

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This thesis is dedicated to my partner, Terry.

His never-ending support, encouragement, patience, humour, optimism, and love

helped me to make this study a reality.

Thank you for joining me on this amazing journey.

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Courage is needed, not professional expertise,

the courage to explore uncharted regions where disciplines dissolve and

the only thing to find is life itself, in all its naked rawness

(Bloch, 1999, p. 73)

Abstract

Despite the fact that interpersonal conflict is frequently identified as an element of academic culture, a literature review identified a research gap regarding interpersonal conflict in academic communities. This exploratory study sought to fill a part of this gap by investigating the perspectives of eight faculty members on faculty-faculty conflict. Because this research was exploratory, qualitative research methods and, specifically, semi-structured interviewing were identified as the most appropriate research methods. These methods allowed and encouraged access to academic culture and presented an opportunity for personal dialogue and reflection by academics.

Over twenty hours of interview data combined with an intense data analysis process revealed seven major data themes regarding interpersonal conflict experienced by faculty members. These themes focused on the definition of interpersonal conflict, sources of conflict, coping strategies of academics, academic culture, the role of power, the role of the department head, and perceptions regarding professional development with respect to interpersonal conflict. Three cultural "meta-themes"-characteristics of academic culture, academic leadership, and faculty demographics-were also explored in order to provide a broader understanding of interpersonal conflict in academic life.

The results from this research indicate the complexity of interpersonal conflict in academia. Together, these themes and "meta-themes" can be used to frame future research projects on interpersonal conflict and to inform strategies for managing conflict in academic communities.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Research has highlighted a perplexing paradox surrounding interpersonal conflict: conflict exists in nearly all social relationships, but people try to avoid conflict because they perceive it to be negative. Mayer (1990) observed that "conflict is threatening, yet it is inevitable in vital relationships" (p. 3). Mayer also discussed how this tendency to avoid conflict often leads to experiences of increased conflict and the emergence of destructive behaviours that further escalate conflict situations. Thus, complete avoidance of interpersonal conflict is practically impossible. The tendency to try and avoid conflict, combined with the inevitable realization that all relationships have the potential for conflict, creates a paradox that must be managed within every relationship, and relationships in academic communities are no exception.

The prevalence of interpersonal conflicts in all forms of relationships increases the need for people not only to accept, but also to understand, interpersonal conflict. Unfortunately, the complexity of interpersonal conflict makes it difficult to define, though many have tried. Van de Vliert (1997) proposed the following definition of interpersonal conflict: "Individuals are in conflict when they are obstructed or irritated by another individual or a group and inevitably react to it in a beneficial or costly way" (p. 5). More specifically, Donohue and Kolt (1992) defined conflict as "a situation in which interdependent people express (manifest or latent) differences in satisfying their individual needs and interests, and they experience interference from each other in accomplishing these goals" (p. 4).

Similarly, Rahim (1986) defined interpersonal conflict as "an 'interactive state' manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities" (p. 13). This definition contains three important principles. First, conflict occurs when two or more people create or influence a two-way communication (interactive state). Second, conflict exists when ideas cannot be used together or are not logically

related (incompatibility), when people hold opinions that do not correspond (disagreement), or when issues are discordant or contradictory (dissonance). Finally, conflict occurs between people who work together or relate to each other in a meaningful capacity (within or between social entities). Rahim's characterization of conflict as an interactive process is important to understanding and dealing with conflict in the academy; his definition will be the pivotal definition of interpersonal conflict for this study.

Filley (1975) described how social relationships can, and often do, lead to interpersonal conflict. This conflict is linked to nine characteristics of relationships: ambiguous jurisdiction, conflict of interest, communication barriers, dependence of one party, differentiation of organization, association of the parties, need for consensus, behaviour regulations, and unresolved prior conflicts. Academic relationships contain many, if not all, of Filley's nine characteristics. Academic work is ambiguous and the boundaries between teaching, research, and service is rarely distinct (ambiguous jurisdiction). The academy is also struggling with scarce resources, thus increasing conflict and tensions between groups battling for such resources (conflict of interest). Academics operate independently from each other on a daily basis (communication barriers) but are also dependent on others, especially department heads, deans, and administration, for resources, information, and support (dependence of one party).

The complexity of the academy—dual management styles, multiple disciplines, and a diversified workforce—increases the potential for conflict and tension (differentiation in the organization). The collegial system of governance, while fostering discussion and acceptance, may also increase episodes of conflict within the academy (association of the parties and need for consensus). Increasing external pressures for accountability may lead to greater academic frustrations (behavioural regulations). Finally, the academy has been going through changes, imposed internally and externally, and many changes have resulted in unresolved conflict increasing the

possibility for conflict during future instances of change (unresolved prior conflicts).
Based on these characteristics, the contemporary academic environment is one that
seems predisposed to conflict.

Conflict in Academe

In fact, conflict is no stranger in academic communities. Holton (1998) observed
that academic institutions have a history of conflict:

> [C]onflict is not new to the academy. Our earliest roots are contentious ones. The
> educational establishment of the early Greeks, including Pythagoras, Isocrates,
> and Aristotle, was destroyed by conflict. Instances of conflict, both internal and
> external, led to the destruction of educational institutions in Greece, Rome, and
> the Byzantine Empire. (p. 1)

Interpersonal conflicts in academia are not only costly to the individuals involved, but
also costly to the university. Leal (1995) posited the following list of costs of
interpersonal conflict: "faculty and staff stress, a loss of productivity, an inability to meet
students' needs, and a drain on the university's administrative resources" (p. 21). If the
conflict escalates far enough, costly litigation could also result. Leal (1995) also
highlighted how faculty-faculty conflicts can, and do, "transcend departmental lines,"
creating greater institutional conflicts (p. 21).

In addition to the cost issues discussed above, there are four additional reasons
for investigating conflict in the academy. First, conflict in the academy is extremely
prevalent as conflict increases in situations where people interact regularly. Second,
conflict interferes with the normal lives of academics: "it pits individual faculty members
against each other and wastes time and effort that are best used in more creative
endeavors" (Tucker, 1993, p. 397). Third, conflict left unattended can extinguish the
concept of academic collegiality: "conflict can polarize a department, forcing members

into competing groups. In extreme cases, destructive and hostile behaviour can destroy a department's effectiveness" (Tucker, 1993. p. 397). Finally, relationship conflicts can lead to increased stress and tension, adding to the already stressful academic life that includes work that extends beyond the campus, infringing both on personal space and family time (Cuthbert, 1996). The addition of interpersonal conflict into an already stressful environment may prove too difficult for some to manage.

Despite the high costs of conflict in institutions and individual academic careers, few researchers have focused inwardly on the reality of faculty-faculty relationships in academia. Investigation of higher education has focused more prevalently on academic freedom and tenure issues (e.g., Horn, 1999a; Horn, 1999b; Cameron, 1996; Abbott, 1984), shared governance and collegiality issues (e.g., Baldridge, 1971a; Clark, 1987; Massy & Wilger, 1994), leadership issues (e.g., Bowen & Shapiro, 1998; Tucker, 1993; Weingartner, 1999) and accountability issues and the corporatization of academia (e.g., Clark, 1987; Shils, 1984).

Recently, more intimate aspects of academic culture have been investigated. These aspects include, but are not limited to, new faculty transitions (e.g., Boice, 1991; Hamin, Marcucci & Wenning, 2000; Menges & Associates, 1999), the nature of academic work (e.g., Smyth, 1995; Miller, 1995), and the stress of academic life (e.g., Fisher, 1994; Mather, 2000). The small body of research on academic conflict is centred on conflict between management and faculty (e.g., Holton & Phillips, 1995; Sturnick, 1998), conflict between students and/or conflict between students and faculty (e.g., Gibson, 1995; Keltner, 1998; Rifkin, 1998), and conflict management by deans and department heads (e.g., Gmelch, 1995; Sorenson, 1998; Tucker, 1993).

Interpersonal faculty conflict remains a private and mysterious aspect of academia. There are only a few articles detailing the reality of interpersonal conflict between faculty members (e.g., Berryman-Fink, 1998; Goodlad, 1976; Holton, 1995;

Leal, 1995). Unfortunately, these investigations do little to highlight the nature of academic interpersonal conflict. Berryman-Fink (1998) extended a small analysis of the culture of academia and faculty conflicts, but failed to investigate actual conflicts occurring between academics. Instead, she presented an overview of how department chairs and deans can help manage conflict. Leal (1995) focused specifically on the implementation of conflict resolution systems at three institutions. Goodlad (1976) investigated conflicts entangled in disciplines, scholarship, and administration, but did not investigate social or personal aspects of higher education interpersonal conflict. He did, however, hint at these aspects of conflict when he discussed the importance of separating intellectual conflict from personal and social conflict.

The hidden nature of academic interpersonal conflict seems to stem from a culture that values independence and autonomy while demanding collegiality and consensus. The appearance of conflict-laden relationships would infringe on the very definition of academic culture. Tucker (1993) expanded on the collegial model described by Baldridge (1971a, 1971b), a model that does not accept any form of conflict. Tucker (1993) observed that the collegial model is built on the premise that the community of scholars, being "men and women, not brawlers," would not tolerate conflict (p. 400). In addition, he extended that the community would solve conflicts through rationalization and discussion, not through conflict management practices.

Unfortunately, many academics do not embrace the full notion of the collegial academic culture and have not learned the intricacies of managing conflict within this culture. Hamilton (2000) suggested that many academics do not understand what it means to be an academic and a professional. Hamilton argued that while academics are indoctrinated into a specialized field, they are not socialized into the greater world of academic freedom. Consequently, they poorly understand the traditions of the profession, particularly the correlative duties of the peer collegium (Hamilton, 2000).

Hamilton echoed Shils' (1984) words demanding education and leadership in the responsibilities and freedoms of the academic ethic.

Although conflict is not considered acceptable in the collegial academic culture, its prevalence cannot be denied. First, there are numerous indicators of conflict tucked into larger academic research projects. Second, anecdotal reports of conflict hint at a larger reality of interpersonal conflict in academic communities. Third, a small, but growing, body of research into the more intimate aspects of academic work reveals instances and opportunities for conflict. Finally, research into organizational conflict repeatedly highlights how interpersonal conflict is inextricably linked to every personal relationship. These four points reinforce the need for research into the field of interpersonal conflict between academics.

Lessons from Organizational Studies

Investigation of conflicts in organizations other than academic communities abounds. Robbins (1974) argued that "no current investigation of how organizations operate is complete without an understanding of the significance of conflict and the techniques of its managements" (as cited in Rahim, 1986, p. 4). Pondy (1969, as cited in Rahim, 1986, p. 4) contended that conflict must be acknowledged as a fundamental aspect of organizational life:

> [Organizational theories] that do not admit conflict provide poor guidance in dealing with problems of organizational efficiency, stability, governance, and change, for conflict within and between organizations is intimately related as either symptom, cause, or effect, to each of these problems.

Organizational researchers have accepted that interpersonal conflict occurs in most workplace settings and have investigated many aspects of this phenomenon.

Researchers have analyzed the process of conflict, have developed models for managing conflict, and have identified continua of conflict behaviours. Interpersonal conflict in organizations also has been researched in conjunction with a myriad of situational behaviours and variables. Five major situational variables are power (e.g., Pfeffer, 1981; Vredenburgh & Brender, 1998), change (e.g., Bartunek & Reid, 1992), emotions (e.g., Johnson, Means, & Pullis, 1998; Gayle & Preiss, 1998), ethical behaviour (e.g., Wahn, 1993), and teams (e.g., De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). Important research has also been conducted in the areas of consensus decision-making and its effect on conflict (e.g., Schwenk & Coier, 1993), personal attributes of conflict resolvers (e.g., Antonioni, 1998; Montiel & Boehnke, 2000), and self-serving evaluations and the rise of conflicts (e.g., De Dreu, Nauta, & Van de Vliert, 1995).

This research provides a number of insights that are useful in understanding academic conflict. One major consideration is that conflict is rooted in an organization's or community's norms and culture. Donohue and Kolt (1992) stated that "all conflicts occur within some social or institutional context" (p. 20). They also posited one clear principle for analyzing conflict: investigate both the conflict and the context in which it is situated. This context includes the norms, values, traditions, and rituals often engaged in by people in the community or organization.

This need to investigate the culture and the context of the conflict is the very reason why findings from investigations into conflict in non-academic workplaces cannot be easily transferred to academic workplaces. Academic and non-academic organizations are very different both in context and culture. For the purpose of this study, academic organizations are defined as universities and colleges where students receive post-secondary education and professors operate under a mandate of teaching, research, and service. Non-academic (workplace) settings are, by default, all organizations that are not universities and colleges. Muller, Porter, and Rehder (1997)

summarized the basic differences between workplace (non-academic) and academic cultures. These basic differences distinguished between workplaces valuing individualism, productivity, and shareholders, and academic organizations valuing collegiality, educational outcomes, and character development.

In addition, most workplaces employ labourers, while academia employs professionals. Professions are "distinct from other occupations in that [they] have been given the right to control [their] own work" (as cited in Clark, 1987, p. 148). While other non-academic professionals may value autonomy, independence and self-direction, only academics are afforded the protection of these values through traditional freedoms of academic freedom, peer review, and tenure. For most academics, work is more a "calling" and it "subsumes the self into a community of disciplined practice and sound judgment whose activity has meaning and value in itself, not just in the output or profit that results from it" (as cited in Clark, 1987, p. 274).

These differences in the contexts and cultures of academic and non-academic institutions raise questions about the transferability of research on interpersonal conflicts in the workplace to academic communities. Further investigation into basic aspects of conflict in academic communities is needed to determine the extent to which conflict research based in other organizations is useful in academic environments.

The Nature of Conflict

Generally speaking, the close proximity of people within departments, within buildings, and within companies leads to increased conflict. This conflict is often broken into two major types: task (content) and relationship conflicts (e.g., Holton, 1998; Jehn, 1995; Wall & Nolan, 1986; Pinkley, 1990). Holton (1998) argued that "every conflict has both content and relationship components" and "both must be identified and analyzed, or the conflict will occur again, perhaps in another guise" (p. 5). Jehn (1995) further

observed that unresolved conflicts could manifest themselves in other forms. For example, unresolved task conflicts could re-surface as relationship conflicts, or unresolved relationship conflicts could materialize as task conflicts.

Task or content conflict "centers on objects, events or persons that are external to the parties involved" (Holton, 1998, p. 5). Jehn (1995) explained that task conflicts occur when there are "disagreements among group members about the content of the tasks being performed, including differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions" (p. 258). Holton (1998) acknowledged that while most task or content conflicts can be identified by outsiders as "clearly objective conflicts," for those involved in the conflict, the reality is far more illusory and complex (p. 5). This complexity may lead to "tension, antagonism, and unhappiness among group members and an unwillingness to work together in the future" (Jehn, 1995, p. 259). Further to these reactions, Ross (1989) posited that "a person's normal reaction to any form of disagreement and questioning is frustration and dissatisfaction" (as cited in Jehn, 1995, p. 259). Further investigation by Amason and Scheiger (1994) highlighted how task conflicts do lead to the frustration and dissatisfaction outlined by Ross (1989) (as cited in Jehn, 1995).

Relationship conflicts occur between individuals at a more personal and subjective level than task conflicts (Holton, 1998). Much like reactions to task conflicts, people involved in relationship conflicts often display varying degrees of hostility and frustration towards the other individual(s) involved (Jehn, 1995). Research by Walton and Dutton (1969), Peterson (1983), and Ross (1989) revealed that interpersonal, relationship conflicts at work might lead to increased feelings of "frustration, strain, uneasiness," and increased "psychological or physical withdrawal from the disturbing situation" (as cited in Jehn, 1995, p. 258).

Relationship conflict can also affect group performance. Jehn (1995) observed that interpersonal conflicts increase anxiety and fear while decreasing satisfaction with

group relationships and group experiences. Pelled (1995, as cited in Jehn, 1995, p. 259) suggested three effects that relationship conflicts have on group performance:

[First], relationship conflict reduces the ability of group members to assess new information provided by other members...[second], interpersonal conflict makes members less receptive to the ideas of other group members...[and third], the time and energy that should be devoted to working on the task is used to discuss, resolve, or ignore the conflicts.

Task and relationship conflict can be seen within the academy. Increasing pressure for collaborative research and interdisciplinary projects, combined with a scarcity of resources, increases the likelihood of task conflicts between academics. Relationship conflicts may well be embedded in such task conflicts. For the most part, academics cannot operate as independently as they have in the past. Traditionally, academics enjoyed much autonomy and independence, along with personal control over contact with other academics in the department, faculty, or institution. Internal and external demands for increased collaboration, decreased autonomy, and radical change force academics to work together. Consequently, the possibility of relationship conflict radically increases.

Precursors to conflict.

Holton (1998) explained that "all conflict can be distilled to four substantive differences: facts, methods, goals, and values" (p. 6). Thus, task and relationship conflicts are rooted in people's reactions to these four precursors. The first precursor—facts—highlights how information is not usually shared evenly through organizations. Parties involved in conflicts often differ on their perception of the facts, including their definition of the task or problem. Holton highlighted how conflicts of fact abound in

organizations where roles are not clearly defined. Fortunately, conflicts of fact are easily resolved if accurate facts are sought and accepted (Holton, 1998).

If people agree on the facts of a situation, they may not be able to agree on the methods to use to achieve desired results. The choice of method, Holton's (1998) second precursor, reveals how the diversity of sequences and procedures to attain a goal may create increased conflict. For example, a manager has been made aware of a relationship conflict occurring in her department and believes that she has the ultimate responsibility for resolving the conflict. She abides by a top-down procedure, while her employees desire a more consultative, collegial approach to conflict resolution. This difference leads to increased conflict stemming from different perceptions of methods.

What if the parties involved cannot agree on the desired results? Their different perceptions of the goals to be accomplished leads to goal conflict. This third precursor is prevalent in organizations, with parties disagreeing about both process and content goals. Holton (1998) argued that the fourth precursor—values—is the most difficult form of conflict to manage or resolve. Different values lead to different perceptions of what is fair and right.

These precursors to conflict can be identified in academic institutions. For example, administration may not share information with faculty regarding institutional changes. Thus, faculty will not have a complete understanding of the facts in order to respond appropriately to the changes. Academics might also differ on their methods for managing conflicts. Some might believe that relationship conflicts should be worked out between the individuals and that department heads should manage task conflicts. Other academics might disagree on the desired results of conflict management. While conflict resolution may be ideal, many academics might be satisfied with the perception that conflicts have been resolved. Unfortunately, these actions may lead to unresolved conflicts, which increase the likelihood of future task and relationship conflicts (Filley,

1975). Clearly, the academy contains potential instances of all precursors to task and relationship conflict. An understanding of such instances is crucial to understanding the prevalence of academic conflict and to determining methods for managing interpersonal conflict between faculty members.

Academic Conflict Model

Holton (1995, 1998) has developed, through her research and her personal academic experience, a model for managing conflict in higher education. Her model (1998) is based on a three-step process—identify the conflict, identify the solution, and implement the solution—and has some elements in common with a non-academic conflict model proposed by Fisher and Ury (1991) (Table 1). Holton cautioned that successful conflict management would only be obtained if all three steps were followed. While these three steps appear simplistic, Holton expanded each step to include critical sub-steps.

In the first step, identifying the conflict, Holton (1998) outlined six questions that must be answered by the parties involved in conflict. These questions allow those in conflict and those trying to manage the conflict to identify its nature and context. The six questions are as follows:

- Who is involved?
- What is the conflict?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- What management attempts have been made?
- What are the consequences of the conflict?

Table 1

Elements of Two Conflict Management Models

The Holton Model for Conflict Management	Getting to Yes
Holton (1998)	Fisher and Ury (1991)
<u>Identify the Conflict</u>	<u>The Problem</u>
• Who is involved?	• Never bargain over position
• What is the conflict?	• Always engage in principled negotiation
• When did it happen?	
• Where did it happen?	
• What mgmt. attempts have occurred?	<u>The Methods</u>
• What are consequences of the conflict?	1. Separate the problem from the person
	2. Resolve interests not positions
<u>Identify the Solution</u>	3. Inventing options for mutual gain
• Develop a positive attitude	4. Rely on objective criteria
• Establish ground rules	
• Identify interests of the parties	
• Develop alternative solutions	<u>The Reality</u>
• Develop criteria to prioritize alternatives	• Determine your BATNA
• Weigh alternatives against the criteria	(Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement)
	• Use negotiation jujitsu
<u>Implement the Solution</u>	Resist positional bargaining and redirect
• Create a plan of action	opponent's strengths to a useful outcome
• Decide means for managing future	• Explicitly discuss dirty tricks
conflicts	

Once these questions are answered, Holton (1998) recommended moving on to step two, identifying solutions. In order to identify solutions to an occurring conflict, Holton suggested that those involved develop a positive attitude, establish ground rules, and identify interests of the parties. From here, the parties involved are better able to develop alternative solutions to the conflict. After conducting a brainstorming session regarding possible solutions, Holton recommended that the parties develop criteria to prioritize the alternatives and then weigh the alternatives against the criteria. With all the alternatives weighted along a mutually agreed upon set of criteria, Holton suggested moving on to the last step in her process, implementing solutions. In order to implement the solution to the conflict, she explained that the parties should create a plan of action and that the parties should then determine methods for managing future conflicts.

Furthermore, Holton's model suggested that some principles identified in general conflict management models like Fisher and Ury's (1991) may be useful in academic settings. For example, Holton incorporated Fisher and Ury's (1991) "BATNA" concept (best alternative to a negotiated agreement) when discussing the need for academics to develop alternative solutions to a problem. At an even broader level, Holton incorporated Fisher and Ury's elements of defining a problem and relying on objective criteria to resolve a conflict. Holton's model reflected how aspects of general conflict management models could be successfully translated into academic contexts in order to make them useful in academic cultures. Without this translation into a form applicable to the academic culture, general conflict management models will not likely achieve desired results because they are premised on non-academic cultural issues, rather than the unique issues of academic culture.

Anecdotal Reports of Interpersonal Conflict

Despite the paucity of explicit research on conflict in academic communities, anecdotal statements drawn from the higher education literature reveal the prevalence of interpersonal conflict in academia. The plethora of statements by faculty members over a broad range of literature reinforces the notion that academic interpersonal conflict exists in many forms. These anecdotal statements underscore one of four major aspects of academia: the general climate, uncertain expectations, gender issues, and personal issues with the academy.

General climate.

Many academics, in a variety of research literature, discussed how the general climate of academia breeds interpersonal conflict. Anecdotal statements from some faculty members reinforce how conflict is embedded into the context and climate of higher education:

"Those who begin with closed minds can exercise sheer stubbornness; those who enjoy campus politics can put their wiles to work" (Clark, 1987, p. 162).

"They have the right to complain and disparage, to be sarcastic, cynical, carping, or snide. They do not need to be informed about the issues as they would within their own disciplines" (Edelstein, 1997, p. 61).

"The vicious rivalry of the new university" (Anderson and Murray, 1971, p. 100).

"Collaborative projects among faculty often fail because of competitiveness, jealousy and territoriality" (Gamson, 1994, as cited in Martin and Samels, 1997, p. 10).

"The academic rat race can be described as working a 60-hour week or more...while maneuvering through often vicious politics" (Mather, 2000, p. 7).

"Boundaries, particularly in new disciplines, are maintained with all the fierceness of the territorial imperative" (Goodlad, 1976, p. 47).

Rivalry, jealousy, politics, and turf protection can individually, and severally, create a context of interpersonal conflict between faculty members. This academic context could translate into an academic culture in which interpersonal conflict is predominant.

Uncertain expectations.

Higher education is often characterized by uncertain expectations regarding roles, functions, and duties. This lack of clarity increases the potential for conflict in faculty, especially for those newer to the academy.

"I was told when I was hired, to get tenure you must 'increase your visibility and standing in the profession.' It's like reading tea leaves. What this means was never made clear." (Menges, 1999, p. 32)

"Certainly new faculty were not clear about what was expected of them; even new hires in the same department had different understandings of expectations" (Menges, 1999, p. 313).

In addition to the challenges of fulfilling a mandate of research, teaching, and service, faculty must confront the uncertainty created by uncertain expectations. If faculty choose the wrong priority, or if they choose a priority that is different from the larger community, then they are more likely to experience interpersonal conflict as they attempt to achieve their personal agendas.

Gender issues.

Although this thesis does not directly address the role of gender in academic conflict, gender issues clearly exist in the academy. For some, these issues increase

task and relationship conflicts, thus increasing the level of interpersonal conflict in the academy.

"Four of the women displayed an underlying intensity of managed anger" (Spurling, 1997, p. 44).

"What is presented ostensibly as a culture of peers...is more accurately seen as the operation of an 'old boy' network from which women may be excluded" (Brown, 1997, p. 115).

Interpersonal conflict is a likely characteristic of any culture in which there are tensions between female and male inhabitants. When such tensions occur in academia, they are likely to contribute to interpersonal conflict.

Personal experiences of conflict.

Many faculty members have experienced some form of academic conflict. Personal reflections provide powerful evidence of a culture enflamed with hidden and overt conflict:

"I have had my share of controversies with a good many professors" (Lippmann, 1971, p. 344).

"When one is in regular contact with such a person, it becomes not just a trivial matter but a constant source of irritation and disparagement" (Braxton & Bayer, 1999, p. 64).

Personal statements of interpersonal conflict experiences in academia underscore the need to understand this phenomenon much more completely.

Although there is not a lot of research on conflict in academic communities, there is ample evidence of conflict and predispositions to conflict in the higher education literature. These anecdotal statements reinforce the existence of interpersonal conflict between academic faculty members. This study is designed to explore these

interpersonal conflict issues between faculty in order to enhance the limited research currently available on this topic.

Research Focus

Researchers have determined that interpersonal conflict exists in nearly every relationship: academic and non-academic alike. The distinction between task and relationship conflict combined with an appreciation of the precursors to conflict reinforce the prevalence of interpersonal conflict in most organizational settings. Even though research into interpersonal conflict in academic settings is limited, it has revealed that conflict in the academy is occurring, even if it is normally hidden and covert. This interpersonal conflict must be understood and managed; if it is not, academia risks enormous costs that will affect individual faculty members and the institution in general.

Unfortunately, academic conflict management models are scarce and non-academic conflict models are not easily transferred to academic settings as these two setting have fundamentally different cultures. Further investigation is warranted so interpersonal academic conflict can be understood, academic conflict models can be conceptualized, and professional development strategies can be designed.

Particularly in the current context of change and renewal, it has never been more important to be able to understand and address sources of academic conflict. To address this need, the present research was designed to contribute to a further understanding of interpersonal conflict in academic settings. This research was guided by three initial questions. First, what are the characteristics of academic interpersonal conflict? Second, how do academics cope with conflict and how do these strategies relate to strategies for resolving conflicts in other settings? Finally, what aspects of academic culture increase or decrease the likelihood of interpersonal conflict among faculty?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Researchers have embraced the notion that non-academic workplaces contain interpersonal conflict and, thus, have invested time and resources investigating this phenomenon. These investigations began sixty years ago when Follet (1941) identified dominant conflict management behaviours. Research over the past six decades has provided a solid understanding of the complexities and intricacies of interpersonal conflict in the workplace. Although there has been far less investigation into interpersonal conflict in academic settings, research has revealed that faculty members also experience interpersonal conflicts.

These various research findings related to interpersonal conflict are illustrated in a "conflict concept map" (Figure 1). At the centre of the concept map are three intersecting issues: interpersonal conflict, conflict in academic institutions, and conflict in non-academic organizations. Scholarly investigation into each of these three issues, separately and in conjunction with each other, enhances the knowledge of interpersonal conflict in both academic and non-academic settings. The literature review, which follows, details many of these aspects of interpersonal conflict in non-academic and academic institutions and reveals the need for further investigation into academic interpersonal conflicts.

The literature review begins with an examination of non-academic interpersonal conflicts. These findings are then compared with findings relevant to academic interpersonal conflicts. A discussion regarding the overarching role that culture plays in embedding interpersonal conflict in organizations, and academic culture in particular, follows. Together, the three main aspects of the literature—interpersonal conflict, interpersonal conflict in academic settings, and interpersonal conflict in non-academic settings together with the role of culture—reveal the complexity of interpersonal conflict in both academic institutions and non-academic organizations.

Figure 1. Conflict concept map.

Conflict Precursors
1. Facts
2. Methods
3. Goals
4. Values

Nature of Conflict
1. Task conflict
2. Relationship conflict

Conflict Mgmt Behaviors
• Five-part typologies
• Blake & Mouton, Thomas, Rahim

Conflict Frameworks
• Two dimensional grids

Conflict—Culture (Norms, Values, Assumptions)

Conflict Mgmt. Models
• Holton (Academic)
• Fisher & Ury (Non-Acad.)

Interpersonal Conflict

Academic Interpersonal Conflict
1. Direct investigations (faculty-faculty conflict)
2. Indirect investigation (stress, peer review process, senior faculty, teaching misconduct)
3. anecdotal (four conflict themes)

Academic Institutions

Non-Academic Organizations

Workplace Interpersonal Conflict
• Hidden conflicts
• Personality factors
• Emotions
• Orgn'al Conflict
• Ethical behavior
• Positive conflict

Academic Culture
1. Academic freedom
2. Tenure
3. Shared governance
4. Collegiality

Non-Academic Culture
1. Market forces
2. Mgmt.-worker divide
3. Entrepreneurial
4. Competitive

New Reality
• External changes
• Intellectual cap. debate

General Conflict Frameworks

The study of interpersonal conflict extends back to 1941 when Follet identified three dominant behaviours associated with conflict management: domination, compromise, and integration (as cited in Daves & Holland, 1989). Researchers have since introduced, studied, and refined conflict models that focus on continua of conflict management behaviours as indicated in Figure 2 (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1964; Thomas, 1976; Rahim, 1986). Blake and Mouton (1964) built on earlier work by Follet (1941) and conceptualized a five-part typology of conflict behaviour: domination, accommodation, problem solving, avoidance and smoothing. Later work by Thomas (1976) and Rahim (1986, 1992) succeeded in redefining the behavioural terms of Blake and Mouton's continuum while maintaining its basic typology design. Later generations of investigators (e.g. Van de Vliert, 1997) further modified the behavioural terms while maintaining the fundamental aspects of Blake and Mouton's continuum (Table 2).

Table 2

Examples of Three Five-Part Typologies

Blake and Mouton (1964)	Rahim (1986, 1992)	Van de Vliert (1997)
Domination	Domination	Fighting
Accommodation	Compromise	Compromising
Problem Solving	Integration	Problem Solving
Avoidance	Avoiding	Avoiding
Smoothing	Obligating	Accommodating

These continua of conflict behaviours were subsequently translated into two-dimensional frameworks, adding to the understanding of conflict behaviour and conflict

management (Figure 1). Blake and Mouton's (1964) framework was based on two

dimensions: concern for people on one axis and concern for production on the other

axis. The combination of Blake and Mouton's five conflict behaviours and two conflict

dimensions produced a two-dimensional conflict management grid. Again, Thomas

(1976) and Rahim (1986) adopted two-dimensional frameworks that imitated earlier work

completed by Blake and Mouton (1970) and created their own versions of conflict grids

based on concern for self and concern for others.

Van de Vliert (1997) analyzed these two-dimensional frameworks and classified

four versions of these grids (Figure 2). While all researchers began with the basic five-

part typology design, they differed somewhat in their interpretation of the grids. For

example, Blake and Mouton (1964, 1970) posited a detailed 9x9 grid or "grate of

concerns" that was used more to predict conflict behaviour (Van de Vliert, 1997). Blake

and Mouton's (1964, 1970) 9X9 conflict management grid depicted a total of 81 (9x9)

conflict behaviours, with the five dominant behaviours occupying the following grid

positions: avoiding (1,1) was in the bottom left-hand corner, which indicated low concern

for people and low concern for production; domination (9,1) was in the bottom right-hand

corner, which indicated low concern for people and high concern for production; problem

solving (9,9) was in the top right-hand corner, which indicated high concern for people

and high concern for production; smoothing (1,9) was in the top left-hand corner, which

indicated a high concern for people and a low concern for production; and

accommodating (5,5) was in the centre of the grid, which indicated a moderate concern

for people and production.

Thomas (1976) interpreted the grid like an "X" or an "L" pattern of conflict styles

with "the diagonals constitut[ing] an integrative and a distributive dimension" which was

used more to change conflict behaviours (as cited in Van de Vliert, 1997, p. 153). For

both the "X" and the "L" grids, concern for self was on one axis and concern for others

Figure 2. Conceptualizations of conflict management grids (Van de Vliert, 1997, p. 16)

Five-Part Typology	Grate of Concerns	X-Cross Model	L-Angle of Concern
-Basic Framework	-Blake and Mouton	-Thomas	-Thomas
-Two Dimensional	-9X9 Managerial Grid	-Two Dimensional Grid	-Two Dimensional Grid
-Concern for Self	-Predicting Behaviors	-Changing Behaviors	-Predicting Behaviors
-Concern for Others			

Variations of the Basic Five-Part Typology
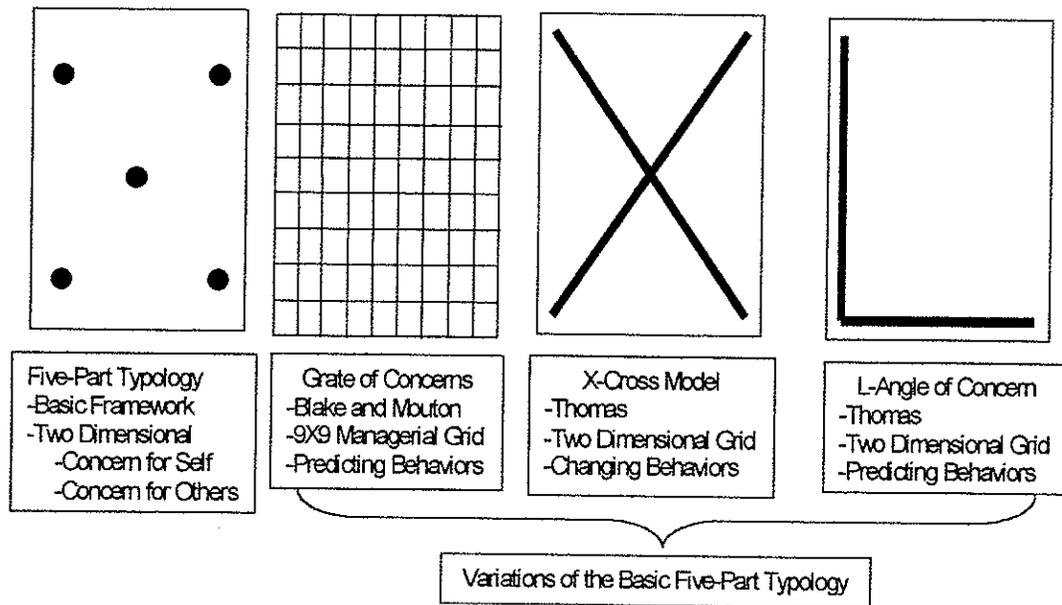
was on the other axis. On the "X" grid, forcing was at the top-left position and smoothing was at the bottom-right position of the first diagonal. On the other diagonal of the "X", integration was at the top-right position and avoidance was at the bottom-left position. Thomas (1976) later reinterpreted the "X" grid as an "L" grid, but maintained the same basic conflict behaviours along the "L" (as cited in Van de Vliert, 1997)

These frameworks were the result of work by pioneer researchers of conflict who helped to develop an interest in managing and understanding conflict in non-academic workplace settings. Additional aspects of interpersonal conflict in non-academic organizations were subsequently investigated (Figure 1), including interpersonal workplace conflicts resulting from subordinate conflicts, supervisor-subordinate conflicts, and conflicts within teams were investigated (e.g., Fortado, 1992; Daves & Holland, 1989; Wilhelm, Herd, & Steiner, 1992; De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). Further research also focused on interpersonal conflict behavioural responses in the workplace (e.g., Volkema & Bergmann, 1989; Brondolo et al., 1998). These studies have helped reinforce the complexity of interpersonal conflict and the prevalence of conflict in organizations.

Numerous other studies have forwarded concepts and theories regarding the development and management of interpersonal conflict in non-academic settings. For example, research by Bartunek, Kolb and Lewicki (1992) revealed interpersonal conflict was often hidden and private, as opposed to open and public. Interpersonal conflict in organizations has also been researched in conjunction with a myriad of situational behaviours and variables: power (e.g., Pfeffer, 1981; Vredenburgh & Brender, 1998); emotions (e.g., Johnson, Means, & Pullis, 1998; Gayle & Preiss, 1998); ethical behaviour (e.g., Wahn, 1993); change (e.g., Bartunek & Reid, 1992); and teams (e.g., De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001).

Important research has also been conducted in the areas of consensus decision-making and its affect on conflict (e.g., Schwenk & Cosier, 1993), personal attributes of conflict resolvers (e.g., Antonioni, 1998; Montiel & Boehnke, 2000), and self-serving evaluations and the rise of conflicts (e.g., De Dreu, Nauta, & Van de Vliert, 1995). Finally, researchers have identified positive aspects of organizational conflict and have begun to advocate for a minimum level of conflict in organizations (e.g., Van de Vliert, Nauta, Giebels, & Janssen, 1999; Johnson, Means, & Pullis, 1998).

In summary, along with the continua of conflict behaviours and the models of conflict management introduced earlier, researchers have identified many useful and interesting aspects of interpersonal conflict in the workplace. These findings, however, harbour a non-academic cultural bias: the research for these interpersonal conflict studies was conducted within non-academic organizations and are therefore biased towards this type of cultural environment. Unfortunately, academic cultures are significantly different from non-academic cultures, thus limiting the transferability of findings between settings. Although many of these findings are not directly applicable to academic settings, they are still useful in developing a basic understanding of the complexities of interpersonal conflict and in appreciating the prevalence of interpersonal conflict whenever two or more people must, through the workplace arrangement, come into contact with each other on a regular basis.

Interpersonal Workplace Conflict

Of the above body of research, six main areas of non-academic workplace conflicts will be discussed in detail below. These include hidden organizational conflicts, personality factors, emotions, organizational aspects of conflict, ethical behaviour, and positive aspects of conflict (Figure 1). In each of the six areas reviewed, the possible relevance to academic communities is identified.

Hidden organizational conflicts.

The avoidance of conflict often leads to hidden, but very real, interpersonal conflicts. Bartunek, Kolb, and Lewicki (1992) conducted insightful research into the world of hidden conflicts in organizations. After conducting an extensive literature search on conflict in organizations, they determined that while organizational, managerial, and conflict specialists focused on public and legal aspects of conflict, researchers have largely ignored private disputes. Inspired by this finding, they undertook a study to empirically investigate these private disputes—referred to as "hidden conflicts"—in organizations.

Their analysis revealed important insights regarding the nature and the context of hidden conflicts. First, "conflict is private, covert, disguised within other activities, and often not labeled as 'conflict' at all" (Bartunek et al., 1992, p. 213). To acknowledge conflict, one must be able to identify it as separate from other issues and to label it correctly as conflict. Second, the researchers revealed that managing conflicts privately allowed the public actions of an organization to continue without the stigma of conflict. Third, unlike public disputes that follow formal rules or stages, private conflicts are characterized by more emotions, more gossip, and more "covert insults and veiled hostility" (Bartunek et al., 1992, p. 216).

Interpersonal conflicts are not only hidden and avoided, but also considered by some to be "averse" behaviours. Kowalski (1997) investigated the "underbelly of interpersonal relationships": averse interpersonal behaviours (p. 2). She cautioned that these behaviours should not be viewed as exceptions to the normal positive behaviours humans show in relationships. Instead, she advocated for a holistic picture of relationships and behaviours: "any time two or more people relate to one another, they bring to that interaction their own relationship history, personality, attitudes, and values,

as well as their on experiences with aversive interpersonal behaviours" (p. 3). Kowalski contended that aversive interpersonal behaviours—guilt, egotism, embarrassment, and complaining—are necessary because relationships are inextricably tied to the larger social and cultural environments.

The knowledge of hidden conflicts in social and cultural environments could be useful for investigations into interpersonal conflict in academic communities. Although there is limited investigation into the phenomenon of faculty-faculty conflict, interpersonal conflicts that are revealed through personal examples, statements, and descriptions in existing literature (e.g., Edelstein, 1997; Braxton & Bayer, 1999) emphasize the hidden and private nature of such conflicts.

Personality factors.

Hidden conflicts are often based on personality factors, which are "consistent behaviour patterns originating within the individual" (Burger, 1993, p. 3). Antonioni (1998) used Rahim's (1992) definition of conflict and his five characteristics of conflict to analyze how personality factors affect conflict management. He studied what undergraduate students in a business organization course and managers working in non-academic settings thought about personality factors—extroversion-introversion, agreeableness-antagonism, conscientiousness-undisciplined, openness-closeness, and emotional stability-neuroticisims—and their effect on conflict management choices.

Undergraduate students indicated that the personality characteristic "openness" was an important predictor of an integrating conflict management study. Managers, on the other hand, indicated that "agreeableness," not "openness," was linked with the integrating style. Antonioni speculated that the culture of academia could cultivate the link between openness and integrating management styles in students because academic cultures contain characteristics not found in non-academic cultures: "keep in

mind that students, not managers, are in an environment that fosters intellectualism, philosophical and artistic thinking, as well as creativity and imagination" (p.346). This speculation emphasizes the importance of culture on the investigation of interpersonal conflict; conflict findings that were conducted in non-academic settings may not be transferable to academic settings because the cultural values and beliefs are significantly different.

The awareness of personality factors and their effects on conflict may be useful for identifying interpersonal conflict in academic communities. Faculty might inherently gravitate towards certain conflict management practices. These differences might create even greater conflict between faculty and within a department if the effects of personality on conflict are not understood. Therefore, these non-academic findings allude to sources of potential conflict in academia and reinforce the need to investigate these issues in academic communities.

Emotions.

Emotions, like personality behaviours, are often associated with interpersonal conflict. Emotions are defined as "a subjective conscious experience (the cognitive component) accompanied by bodily arousal (the physiological component) and by characteristic overt expressions (the behavioral component)" (Weiten, 1992, p. 361). These emotions affect how interpersonal conflicts are both perceived and resolved (Gayle & Preiss, 1999).

Gayle and Preiss (1998) researched the phenomenon of emotions and conflict in organizational settings. They argued that "the degree of conflict emotionality merits attention because it has the potential to alter the trajectory of organizational relationships and the productivity of organizational units" (p. 280-281). Their literature review highlighted how past emotions affect current conflicts, how anger is the most widely

researched emotion of conflict, and how the intensity of the emotion affects the outcomes of the conflict.

Gayle and Preiss (1998) recounted how Campbell and Muncer (1987) identified attacks on personal integrity as the most frequent antecedent to emotional events and how "personal attacks on competence as a professional might result in the most angry and emotional responses" (p. 284). Through their own investigation, Gayle and Preiss (1998) determined that "unresolved conflicts appear to trigger lasting emotional responses that are likely to frame subsequent conflict episodes" and highlighted how this finding was consistent with findings by Klos and Singer (1981) and Weiner et al. (1982) regarding the saliency of emotions in conflicts (p. 297).

If people in non-academic settings are experiencing conflict that is linked with emotions, then there is increased likelihood that faculty in academic settings are experiencing this phenomenon as well. For instance, the peer review process, which is fundamental to academic culture, could result in a perception that a faculty member's competence was being attacked. This perception could leave a faculty member feeling a range of emotions including anger. This simple example accentuates the possibility that emotional responses are affecting interpersonal conflicts between faculty. Direct investigation into this issue needs to be undertaken in order to understand interpersonal conflict between faculty more completely.

Organizational aspects of conflict.

Researchers have investigated many aspects of conflict in non-academic organizational settings. For instance, Dormann and Zapf (2002) studied social stressors, "comprising conflicts with co-workers and supervisors and social animosities at work," and their relationship with depressive and irritation symptoms (p. 33). They found a plausible relationship between social stressors, irritation and depression in employees.

Calabrese (2000) investigated the relationship between interpersonal conflict and sarcasm in the workplace. His literature review revealed the relationship between sarcasm—a form of "verbal aggression" (p. 461)—and anger and how "sarcasm has become a socially condoned way to express hostility" (p. 467).

Researchers have also investigated the relationship between conflict styles, like those detailed by Blake and Mouton (1964), and interpersonal conflict in non-academic workplace settings. Friedman, Tidd, Curral and Tsai (2000) investigated the relationship between conflict styles (integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding), workplace conflict, and stress. Their research indicated that the use of certain conflict styles affects the level of interpersonal conflict experienced: "those who are more integrating produce an environment with less conflict, while those who are more dominating or avoiding produce an environment with more conflict" (p. 49).

Conflict styles of supervisors, and their relationship to interpersonal conflict in departments, have also been investigated. Daves and Holland (1989) investigated conflicts between supervisors and subordinates and introduced the importance of perspectives in analyzing conflicts. They argued that conflict should only be investigated when perspectives are taken into account and subsequently structured their investigation to allow for both supervisor and subordinate reports on the conflict styles of the supervisor. They found that a three-dimensional framework of conflict behaviours, based on control, openness, and distribution, more adequately reflected the range of conflict styles enacted by supervisors. Daves and Holland also revealed a greater range of avoidance behaviours used in workplace conflicts than revealed in past research (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

These investigations of interpersonal conflict reveal numerous sources of interpersonal conflicts inherent in non-academic settings. There is a high probability that some of these same interpersonal conflict sources are also operating in academic

settings. For instance, Clark (1987) observed that "disciplines have their own histories and trajectories, their own habits and practices" (p. 25) and the operation of so many distinct cultures in one institution increases the likelihood for interpersonal conflict between these groups. There are other potential sources of interpersonal conflict occurring in academic institutions: faculty members may not agree on the new direction of the department, department heads might use an inappropriate conflict management style, departments might fight over resources, and the institution might argue that changes are needed in a department. All these examples reveal the ease of which interpersonal conflict can erupt in academic institutions.

When conflict occurs across levels in an organization, power relationships are often a factor. Power in organizations has been well researched, but little investigation has occurred into the "hierarchical interpersonal abuse of power" (Vredenburgh & Brender, 1998, p. 1337). Vredenburgh and Brender (1998) investigated how power is abused in organizations and focused their research on manager-subordinate relationships. They highlighted how abuse of power, and power itself, stems from conflicts imbedded into the organizational structure. This power is also linked to individual characteristics and, when repeated and reinforced, a particular power structure can become the norm for the organization.

The academy is not immune to power struggles. In fact, the new reality of increased accountability and decreased autonomy find many academics struggling for resources, status, and positions. The abuse of power is as much a reality in higher education as it is in non-academic settings and the academy must begin to understand the complexity of power relations and their subsequent effects on interpersonal academic conflict.

Ethical behaviour.

The individual and organizational aspects of conflict often intensify in issues involving ethics. Wahn (1993) conducted a survey of human resource professionals in two Canadian provinces with the purpose of studying business ethics. Wahn cited Barach (1985, p. 132) who believed that ethics in business differs from ethics elsewhere:

> Business has its own brand of hardball and the price of success involves ethical pressures—playing to win may involve hurting someone. Some say that "business ethics" is a contradiction in terms. It is true that sometimes businessmen are pressured to compromise their standards. (p. 245)

Wahn (1993) focused specifically on the pressure to compromise and discovered an interesting link between organizational dependence and ethical compromises. Her findings "suggest that high organizational dependence will reduce the likelihood that an individual will ignore pressure to compromise ethical values" (p. 248). Therefore, the greater the independence felt from the organization, the better people are at upholding their own ethics in light of pressure from organizational sources. This insight is intriguing both in respect to academic situations, where academics are inherently more autonomous than most non-academic workers, and in the confirmation that organizations elicit pressures on employees to compromise ethics in light of profit and productivity.

There is tremendous pressure on faculty to satisfy multiple job responsibilities. These pressures may force individual academics, departments, or faculties to consider ethical compromises. At the institution level, the academy has already compromised some of its earlier ethical beliefs; the infiltration of the market, the prestige granted to research projects, and the attempts to eliminate or modify tenure systems are three examples of such compromises (e.g., Neave, 1998; Currie, 1998; Lewis, 1980). Erosion

of the academic ethic (Shils, 1984) at the individual level will surely reveal increased interpersonal conflict.

Positive aspects of conflict.

Research has also revealed positive aspects of organizational conflict. Organizational research has highlighted that, while conflict can be negative and costly, a minimum amount of conflict is necessary and needed in organizations and that this conflict provides positive outcomes for the organization (e.g., Van de Vliert, Nauta, Giebels, & Janssen, 1999; Johnson, Means & Pullis, 1998). Tjosvold (1997) highlighted how increased creativity, innovation, and better interpersonal relationships result from the existence of interpersonal conflicts (as cited in De Drue & Van Vianen, 2001). While the negative aspects of conflict—"lower effectiveness, reduced well-being and turnover" (De Drue & Van Vianen, 2001, p. 309)—are still very real, certain kinds of conflict can have positive outcomes. An acceptance of conflict may allow academics not only to reduce the personal cost of conflict because it is more accepted within the academy, but also to focus their time and energy in more meaningful academic functions.

Workplace Conflict Management Model

Fisher and Ury (1991) designed a conflict management model that reflects the principles of negotiation and is heralded as a model that can be applied to disputes in businesses, governments, and personal settings. The applicability of this model to the academic community is yet to be discovered, but aspects of Fisher and Ury's (1991) framework have been successfully translated into conflict management models for academic settings (Holton, 1998).

The <u>Getting to Yes</u> framework (Fisher and Ury, 1991) is divided into three stages: the problem, the method, and the reality of interpersonal conflicts (Table 1). Fisher and

Ury contended that people should never bargain over their positions because it is inefficient and jeopardizes personal relationships. Instead, people in conflict should focus on the substance of the problem by using principled negotiation.

After addressing the problem, people should use a four-element method to resolve their problems. First, those in conflict should separate the problem from the person. This involves acknowledging different perspectives and emotions and remaining committed to using positive communicative techniques like active listening and speaking clearly. Second, Fisher and Ury (1991) explained that people should focus on resolving interests, not individual positions. They believed difficult negotiations result from "conflict between each side's needs, desires, concerns, and fears" and that many do not realize that these interests underlie many conflicted positions (p. 40). In order to discover these interests, Fisher and Ury suggested that people ask questions about the interests, discuss their interests actively, and realize that basic human needs are one of the most powerful human interest.

The third element involved the parties inventing options for mutual gain. Fisher and Ury (1991) outlined obstacles for achieving such options: "(1) premature judgment; (2) searching for a single answer; (3) the assumption of a fixed pie; and (4) thinking that 'solving their problem is their problem'" (p. 57). In order to combat these obstacles, the parties should attempt to brainstorm for options with no mandate for decision and continue adding options until all avenues have been satisfied. This list of options allows those alternatives that enhance mutual gain to be identified. Only after these alternatives have been identified should the parties attempt to create a solution that is not only mutually beneficial but also perceived by both sides as relatively easy.

The fourth and final method element in the Getting to Yes model is the reliance on objective criteria. Determining a solution from a list of options may sound easy in the

abstract, but in reality, the activity is complex and difficult. A commitment to objective criteria decreases this complexity by introducing fair standards and fair procedures.

Fisher and Ury (1991), realizing the complexity of interpersonal conflict, introduced useful concepts that can aid people embroiled in conflict. Even if people have defined their problem and have followed the four-element method, they might still find they are in conflict. This may result from their counterpart being more powerful, not partaking in negotiation, or using dirty tricks. The authors suggested that people determine their BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement) that might help in situations where the other party is more powerful. If the other party simply will not participate in negotiation, Fisher and Ury recommended using "negotiation jujitsu," a process where an individual resists the forces of positional bargaining and redirects his or her opponent's strengths to a useful outcome. Finally, if the opponent uses dirty tricks, the other party should attempt to "recognize the tactic, raise the issue explicitly, and question the tactic's legitimacy and desirability" (p. 130).

The Getting to Yes model is both inherently simple and intricately complex. The authors urged individuals to practice these steps in order to refine their skills in principled negotiation. Although this model has been successful in many situations and settings, its direct transferability to the academic context is questionable. Holton (1998) designed an academic conflict model that incorporated aspects of the Getting to Yes framework (namely the BATNA advice) after translating them from a non-academic framework to an academic framework. While aspects of Fisher and Ury's (1991) model appear useful for academia, other aspects may need to be refined before they can be translated to the academic culture.

Summary of Workplace Conflict Literature

Research into conflict in non-academic settings is abundant and findings reveal the prevalence of conflict in most organizations. These findings also indirectly identify some areas of potential interpersonal conflict in the academy. Researchers, managers, and workers alike have accepted that interpersonal conflict is a natural part of organizational life. Interpersonal conflict is often found to be hidden and others have revealed that unresolved conflict breeds increased conflicts. In addition, power structures in many organizations inject conflict into the supervisor-subordinate relationship.

Unfortunately, the majority of interpersonal conflict investigation has occurred within the non-academic paradigm. For-profit organizations have been the target of most interpersonal conflict investigations. Investigation into conflict existing in other forms of organizations, including academic institutions and non-profit organizations, seems to be avoided. This avoidance or oversight limits the usefulness of for-profit conflict models in non-profit or academic settings. Since research has shown how conflict is inextricably linked to group relations, it is reasonable to assume that conflict is occurring in academic settings and academic models for conflict management are necessary.

Academic Interpersonal Conflict

In comparison to investigation of interpersonal conflict in non-academic settings, investigation into academic settings generally, and into interpersonal conflict in academic settings specifically, is rare. Researchers have tended to focus on other aspects of higher education for their investigations; thus, many faculty-faculty conflict findings are actually embedded in larger academic research issues. After conducting research on occupational cultures in academia, Delamont (1996) argued that even these larger

higher education research studies do not adequately address taken-for-granted norms and values of academia: "the research does not challenge the familiarity of higher education, but encapsulates an essentially taken-for-granted view of the sector" (p. 146). Collegiality is an example of a fundamental aspect of academic culture, and many believe that conflict should not exist in collegial environments. Investigating conflict would challenge the taken-for-granted norm of collegiality; thus, Delamont's finding presents one reason for the lack of investigation into interpersonal conflict in academia.

Some researchers believe that fear drives many to ignore major aspects of academic culture. Tucker (1993), in his research on the academic department, highlighted how this fear stems in large part from the importance of collegiality and the reliance on peers for everything from pay increases to tenure to dismissals. Tucker acknowledged that many academics "view conflict as abnormal or aberrant" and therefore "tend to shun the subject" (p. 397). On the surface, academics appear to deny that conflict takes place. As Weingartner (1999) observed, "academics are at least as susceptible to self-deception as the rest of humankind, and, because many of them are clever people, they are often good at it" (p. 42). This situation of concealing and ignoring conflict has characterized academia, but Tucker (1993) argued that academics need to begin the awakening process of realizing that conflict can and does occur in the academy.

There have been a few scholars who have been willing to look beyond the fear of conflict and to investigate hidden aspects of the academic culture. For example, Holton (1998, 1995) challenged the belief of a conflict-free academy and argued that conflict is a destructive force in the academy. More specifically, most research into academic conflict has been centred on conflict between management and faculty (e.g., Holton & Phillips, 1995; Sturnick, 1998), conflict between students and between students and faculty (e.g., Gibson, 1995; Keltner, 1998; Rifkin, 1998), and conflict management by

deans and department heads (e.g., Gmelch, 1995; Sorenson, 1998; Tucker, 1993). Faculty-faculty conflict, however, is less often investigated.

Although there is limited investigation into conflict in the academy, certain aspects of academic life such as stress, change, faculty misconduct, peer reviews, and new faculty transitions are more prevalent in the research literature. These studies highlight a multitude of pressures on faculty, and hint at the interpersonal conflicts bubbling below the surface in academic life. The findings of both direct and indirect investigation into academic conflict underscore the prevalence of conflict in the academy and the need to continue investigation in this area.

Direct Conflict Investigation

There has been relatively little investigation into the phenomenon of interpersonal conflict in academic communities. Lack of investigation equates with a lack of scholarly understanding about faculty-faculty conflict. Fortunately, there have been a few researchers who have directly investigated aspects of faculty conflict (e.g., Berryman-Fink, 1998; Goodlad, 1976; Holton, 1995; Leal, 1995).

Leal (1995) observed how the academy has been a leader in developing conflict resolution models for societal problems, but often only has models for student conflict in its own institutions. This lack of attention combined with an academic culture that thrives on academic confrontation and critical peer reviews of scholarly works create a precarious situation for academics. This situation, according to Leal, is made worse because academics are not explicitly trained to communicate and resolve problems. Therefore, the very academics who value collegiality are unable to create collegial environments that are not plagued with conflict. Interestingly, Leal's framework appears to extend from Baldridge's (1971a) collegial model of governance where conflict is in direct opposition to the normal functioning of scholars.

Tucker (1993) recognized two areas of interpersonal conflict in academia—personality differences and perceptions of equality (and inequality)—but only discussed the latter in detail. Included in these equality/inequality conflicts are workload conflicts, conflicts that stem from the "uncodified, unwritten tradition[s]" of academic departments (p. 399), and conflicts that arise over discipline issues. Tucker admitted that conflicts over discipline issues are difficult to manage and "sometimes lead to a kind of academic warfare in which entire factions are banished from the department" (p. 399). Tucker's use of the word "warfare" and his admittance of personality differences leading to conflict help to reinforce the prevalence of interpersonal conflict in academic departments.

Leal (1995) also outlined a number of areas that can, and do, spark faculty-faculty conflicts: "the manner in which department meetings are conducted, ideological differences among faculty, ideological direction of the department...and promotions, to name but a few" (p. 21). Unlike Tucker, Leal does not directly discuss personality clashes or attempts to manage interpersonal conflict.

Unfortunately, these studies do not highlight the complex reality of interpersonal conflict in the academy. Instead, they are focused on discrete aspects of academic and faculty culture and conflicts that are entangled in disciplines, scholarship, and administration. Investigations into other aspects of higher education indirectly reveal the prevalence of, and the predisposition to, interpersonal conflict in academic communities. In order to make the academy explicitly aware of faculty-faculty conflict, direct investigation into this phenomenon is warranted.

Indirect Conflict Investigation

Although investigation into direct interpersonal academic conflict is limited, extensive investigation has been conducted into other aspects of higher education.

These aspects, including academic stress, the peer review process, senior faculty, and teaching misconduct, reveal an academic culture predisposed to interpersonal conflict.

Stress.

The investigation of stress in academia is positive for future academic conflict research. Research into stress and conflict has lead many scholars to "traditionally assume that conflict leads to stress, and stress requires coping" (Siegall & Cummings, 1995, para. 2). Organizational research into stress and conflict has also indicated that stress can lead to conflict (Calabrese, 2000). Thus, stress and conflict are intimately linked. Lazurus and Folkman (1984, p. 21) provided a useful operational definition of stress: "a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (as cited in Siegall & Cummings, 1995, para. 6). Research into academic communities has revealed that faculty are experiencing taxing work environments, which increase their level of stress, and their susceptibility to interpersonal conflict.

Dey, Ramirez, Korn and Astin (1993) conducted a study for the Periodic Higher Education Research Institute that focused on junior and senior faculty stress (as cited in Menges, 1999). They found an overwhelming increase in reported levels of stress in all academics; 34% of all faculty respondents reported "'extreme' stress 'in the past two years'" (as cited in Menges, 1999, p. 43). The researchers also confirmed that both junior and senior faculty are suffering from "high levels of conflict between personal, home and professional duties" (as cited in Menges, 1999, p. 43). Narayanan, Menon and Spector (1999) conducted a survey studying stress across three occupations: clerical workers, sales associates, and academics. They found that while academics reported higher levels of control in their jobs, older academics experienced higher levels of

interpersonal conflict while younger academics experienced greater stress from items that wasted their time or effort.

Fisher (1994) posited a slightly different operational definition of psychological stress: "stress is created by an imbalance between *demand* or environmental pressure and the *capacity to meet that demand*" (p. 2). She also discussed how stress could be linked to a sense of "low personal control or jurisdiction over the physical, psychological or social environment" (p. 2). Therefore, stress is created either when someone feels a loss of control or when someone does not have the capacity to meet a demand. Fisher (1994) detailed many variables affecting academic stress including financial cutbacks, increased accountability demands, and role overload. Fisher explained how financial cutbacks have lead to steady erosion of job control for academics and how this erosion has led to increased stress. Her research also revealed that academics often attempt to complete a number of tasks concurrently and that this "time-sharing between tasks implies constant interruption, which is also stressful" (p. 65).

Academics are also highly susceptible to role overload: "academics faced with tasks such as lecturing, research, writing research grant applications and organizing administrative tasks, are potentially in overload situations" (Fisher, 1994, p. 66). Hamin, Marcucci, and Wenning's (2000) findings of new faculty stress confirmed Fisher's (1994) earlier concept of academic role overload. Hamin, Marcucci, and Wenning (2000) found that new faculty experience high levels of stress stemming from "the reality of learning to teach at the same time as coping with the other tasks...[like] the very long hours" (p. 94). The susceptibility of academics to role overload, and eventually to psychological stress, increases the likelihood that they will also experience some aspects of interpersonal conflict.

Research on the stress of managing academic work and home has also been conducted. With increasing numbers of women in academia and increasing numbers of

dual income families, the stress of balancing work and family can become overwhelming. Mather (2000) investigated this issue and identified two characteristics of academia that contribute to stress. The first is time and the lack of "boundary setting" in relation to knowing when to start and stop the workday; in many respects, academic work can be never-ending. The second is the difference of time commitments, with academia demanding the presence of academics during allotted hours while family demands have no defined time limits. Mather highlighted the need for time flexibility in academia to accommodate family responsibilities. The new reality for many academics is that no one person raises the family; it is a responsibility placed on both partners, with both facing increased stress trying to achieve a balance.

Academics can experience stress from many sources. Loss of job control, long hours, conflict between work and family, and role overload are but four examples that may heighten faculty stress levels. Interpersonal conflict could be an outcome of these stress levels, and it could also be another source of stress for faculty members. Further investigation into this area of stress and conflict is needed in order to understand these issues more completely.

Peer review process.

Pre-tenure faculty are commonly subjected to a peer review process that determines career milestones such as tenure and promotion. Many find this process stressful and this stress could result in increased experiences of conflict. The New Faculty Project, coordinated by Menges (1999) at the National Center on Post-Secondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, investigated how new faculty felt about the review process. New faculty from all types of post-secondary institutions— community colleges, urban liberal arts, research universities, and comprehensive universities—were surveyed.

The overwhelming majority of respondents highlighted feelings of "frustration" and "disappointment" surrounding the faculty review process (Menges, 1999, p. 33). Most of the respondents cited "the absence of corrective feedback" as a main source of their frustration and disappointment (Menges, 1999, p. 33). Instead of participating in a helpful and developmental process, they found themselves confronted with little or no constructive criticism. Coupled with these frustrations were feelings of "anger" and "suspicion" (Menges, 1999, p. 33). The review process was seen for many as a "hurdle," "like doing laundry—something that takes up time, and it gets in my way," or as a "hoop" to jump through (Menges, 1999, p. 33). The time and effort required to prepare for the review process hardly seemed justifiable to these participants when constructive criticism and helpful advice were not received in the peer review.

New faculty are struggling to cope with numerous academic stressors including the stress that accompanies the peer review process. As evidenced by Menges (1999), new faculty experienced stress before, during, and after the review process. Some faculty experienced anger, which acknowledged a link between peer review stress and conflict. Academic stressors—including the stress of the peer review process—need to be investigated further in order to understand the relationship between stress and conflict in academic lives.

Senior faculty.

Although investigation into certain aspects of junior faculty life is increasing, there is still very little research conducted on mid career and senior faculty. The primary aspect of senior faculty life that has been investigated in some depth is the administrative roles and duties most often filled by senior faculty (Tucker, 1993). The reality of senior academics at higher education institutions, years after receiving tenure, remains very much a research mystery.

The large number of senior faculty in academia, however, is not a mystery. Crase (1993) indicated how, in 1988, faculty over the age of 55 filled one quarter of academic positions. A decade later, these numbers grew dramatically as the bulge of academics hired and tenured in the 1960s and 1970s approach retirement age. This large cohort has dramatic effects both on junior faculty and on their departments; these effects can be either positive or negative. While many senior academics remain productive and active members of their departments, Watkins (1986) argued others "settle into comfortable routines," resist change, and are "hard to move" (as cited in Crase, 1993, p. 3). Anecdotal reports of senior faculty "dissatisfaction, staleness, and under productivity" hint at how this cohort affects, and is plagued by, interpersonal conflict in academic communities (Crase, 1993, p. 4).

Karpiak (1996) attempted to disprove the assumption that "it is 'natural' for middle aged professors to disengage from their disciplines, to stagnate, and to turn their attention to non-academic activities" (p. 51). In her study of 20 mid-career faculty, she found that faculty generally "find the university to be a cold, isolated, fragmented environment; 'a wilderness' in which 'the human element is missing'" (p. 60). Karpiak also noted how these mid-career faculty are 'ghosts' of the academy, caught between full and associate professors, and often ignored (p. 70, 74). This group also highlighted its anger and discouragement, but maintained hope that the future would bring positive change (p. 74). Karpiak's investigation into mid-career faculty highlighted many important aspects of this cohort's reality and underscored the high level of interpersonal and organizational conflict occurring in the academy.

Although research into aspects of senior faculty lives is limited, studies have indicated, either directly or indirectly, that senior faculty are likely to experience interpersonal conflict in their academic lives. Further direct investigation into the conflicts

experienced by senior faculty, and into numerous other aspects generally, is necessary and needed.

Teaching misconduct.

Increased awareness of conflict is also emerging in the teaching domain. Research by Amada (1994) and Schneider (1998) indicated a "dramatic rise in incivility in the classroom" (as cited in Braxton & Bayer, 1999, p. 1). Braxton and Bayer (1999) discussed how the causes of these incivilities are blamed on students, with faculty unwilling or unable to look at how they are contributing to these situations. Ryan (1971, 1976) challenged researchers to acknowledge this "blaming the victim" mentality and to begin revisiting faculty-student conflict within this new perspective (as cited in Braxton & Bayer, 1999, p. 2). Boice also acknowledged this "blaming the victim" observation: "most student incivility in the classroom may be prompted by professorial incivility" (as cited in Braxton & Bayer, 1999, p. 2). While many institutions have formal policies for managing scholarly (research) misconduct, few have formal policies regarding teaching misconduct (Braxton & Bayer, 1999).

Before investigating the occurrence of teaching improprieties, Braxton and Bayer (1999) realized that consensus on improprieties must be obtained and focused their research on this area. Once a set of normative forms of teaching improprieties was identified, later researchers could investigate the infringement of these norms in the college or university classroom. Their investigation revealed seven "inviolable" or "core" teaching impropriety norms: "condescending negativism, inattentive planning, moral turpitude, particularistic grading, personal disregard, uncommunicated course details, and uncooperative cynicism" (p. 21). They also discovered nine "admonitory" or "periphery" norms: "advisement negligence, authoritarian classroom, inadequate

communication, inadequate course design, inconvenience avoidance, instructional narrowness, insufficient syllabus, teaching secrecy, and undermining colleagues" (p. 42).

These sixteen norms provide a comprehensive picture of the range of improprieties that contribute to conflict in academic teaching. While public reports are highlighting increased classroom incivilities, scholars can now use Braxton and Bayer's (1999) norms to investigate the actual extent of occurring incivilities. In relation to the concept of conflict, the violation of any of these sixteen norms may create both organizational and interpersonal conflict. Therefore, future researchers must also investigate the issue of conflict and teaching misconducts.

Summary of Academic Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict is occurring in academia. The lack of investigation into this area does not dismiss the fact that overt and covert acts of interpersonal conflict are affecting faculty within the academy. Of the research that exists, a limited understanding of academic conflict is achieved. This understanding will be enhanced by further direct research into the area of interpersonal academic conflict and by an appreciation of the critical role that academic and non-academic culture plays in the development and management of conflict.

Culture

As discussed in various preceding sections, conflict is intimately linked to the culture of academic and non-academic settings. Non-academic conflicts are often different from academic conflicts, and academic conflicts are often not mimicked in the non-academic community. The importance of culture demands an understanding of the differences between academic and non-academic communities (Figure 1). Schein (1991, 1996) argued that an understanding of an organization's culture is paramount to the

investigation of any behaviour within the organization. He further argued that the organizational culture must be understood not from an outsider's perspective but from an insider's perspective. This insider perspective demands that researchers immerse themselves in the culture and that they undertake more qualitative methods for understanding the qualities and characteristics of the organizational culture. Schein (1996) believed that "our failure to take culture seriously enough stems from our methods of inquiry, which put a greater premium on abstractions that can be measured than on careful ethnographic or clinical observation or organizational phenomena" (p. 229). The notion then of "culture" only has substance when it is rooted in the real behaviours and actions within the organization.

Culture is normally defined by the sum of a group's norms, values, and actions. According to Cuthbert (1996), reacting to work completed by Becher (1994), defining an academic culture involves "recognizing those underlying assumptions, attitudes and values which shape how people make sense of their context" (p. 17). Clark (1987) argued that culture should be discussed in the context of "belief, commitment, and interest" (p. 106). In this view, Schein (1996) provided one of the most comprehensive definitions of culture: "the set of shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that a group holds and that determines how it perceives, thinks about, and reacts to its various environments" (p. 236). Since many of the qualities of culture are "taken-for-granted" most members are not aware of their own culture until they encounter another (Schein, 1996).

The differences between academic and non-academic workplaces are many. While both employ people, manage revenues and expenses, and satisfy specific societal needs, their characteristics and cultures are vastly different. These differences make the transfer of successful changes in one to the other either tremendously difficult or impossible. An investigation into the differences of these two cultures—academic and

non-academic—will highlight the importance of culture when investigating aspects of human behaviour and, in particular, interpersonal conflict within organizations.

Workplace Culture

For a number of reasons, non-academic workplaces have a different culture than academic institutions. First, non-academic workplaces must adhere to market forces. These forces are directed by the "wants of the individual in her or his 'isolated capacity'" (Marginson, 1995, p. 35). The workplace is therefore infused with the concept of supply and demand; times of high demand are positive for the workplace but times of low demand are negative. Traditionally, market forces have not influenced academia. Instead, it was granted autonomy and independence from government and state in order to satisfy a mandate that honoured ongoing efforts to pursue truth and knowledge instead of supply and demand forces.

Second, attaining profits is the highest priority for the majority of workplaces (referred to as for-profit organizations). Starke and Sexty (1992) acknowledged that organizations could consider a different primary priority—like job creation or employee satisfaction—but the reality remains that managers and organizations value the "bottom-line" above all other priorities. Friedman (1970) confirmed the value placed by organizations on profits and contended that an organizational leader "has direct responsibility to his employers. That responsibility is to conduct the business in accordance with their desires, which generally will be to make as much money as possible, while conforming to the basic rules of society" (as cited in Weingartner, 1999, p. 1). Conversely, knowledge and truth are the highest priorities for higher education. The academy is not designed to generate profits; it is designed to generate knowledge through research and teaching.

A third difference between non-academic and academic workplaces is the separation of management and worker. In non-academic workplaces, the roles of workers and managers are clearly divided. Managers have the right to hire, to fire, to control wages, and to assign job responsibilities. Workers, on the other hand, have limited control or power. They have the right to work or not to work; however, if they do not work or do not satisfy the manager's goals, then they will likely be fired. Workers essentially exchange their labour for wages (Weingartner, 1999, p. 85). The roles of worker and manager are far less distinct in academia. Traditionally, academics have been granted academic freedom and tenure in order to have the freedom to pursue research and teaching in areas that management or the larger community might not approve. To provide accountability, the role of the peer is especially important in academia. Peer evaluation and peer review are, traditionally, the primary method of determining tenure and promotion decisions (e.g., Hamilton, 2000).

In addition to these primary differences, academic and non-academic differences are revealed in a multitude of sub-categories. For example, the academy values participation, independence, and scholarly debate while non-academic workplaces value the entrepreneurial spirit, materialism, and adversarial competitiveness (Muller, Porter, & Rehder, 1997). These differences reveal the importance of culture in understanding interpersonal conflict in academic and non-academic settings.

Academic Culture

The culture of academia is of overriding importance to the study of academic conflict. An understanding of the academy's norms, values, and assumptions is paramount to characterizing and dealing with conflict. The culture of academia is significantly different from other workplace cultures. While most academics value the independence and autonomy provided by higher education, most workers outside

academia are not afforded such rewards. The university "comprises a large number of professional staff whose independence is not only prized (and not infrequently stoutly defended) but also necessary" (Johnston, 1996, p. 102). Independence and autonomy of academic institutions allow them to fulfill an important role in society. This distance affords academics the privileges and obligations of "reflecting on the nature and direction" of society and of searching for knowledge and truth in whatever capacity deemed necessary by the academic (Weingartner, 1999, p. 6). Independence and autonomy form the basis of academic freedom; without these sanctions, "their ability to explore the frontiers of knowledge would be substantially constrained (Johnston, 1996, p. 102). However, the privilege of autonomy also creates tensions. As Clark (1987) observed, "individualism and narrow self-interest, richly rewarded, strain against the commonalties of community and principle" (p. 107).

Norms are also especially important in higher education. They help to harness the activities of an independent and autonomous group of players, acting as a code of conduct and as means for reaching explicit or implicit goals (Braxton & Bayer, 1999). In their research on faculty misconduct, Braxton and Bayer (1999) determined that faculty context—"institutional type and academic discipline"—plays a much larger role in controlling for and reinforcing academic norms (p. 112). These contextual factors were found even more powerful than individual, personal characteristics of faculty. Becher (1989) hypothesized that academic culture is communicated through the induction of new people: induction is a "process of selection and socialization to the pivotal norms of the field governing criteria for truth, and how it is to be achieved, communicated and used and secondarily to peripheral norms governing personal life-styles, attitudes and social relations" (as cited in Weiner, 1996, p. 60).

Murlis and Hartle (1996) observed that academics participate in two contracts with their institutions: one economic and the other psychological. The economic contract

focuses on basic pay issues, while the psychological contract focuses more on characteristics expected of academics. These characteristics reinforce the value of academic freedom, autonomy, independence, and self-direction. Other aspects in the psychological contract include challenge, quality of colleagues, recognition, and honesty. According to Murlis and Hartle (1996), "quality of colleagues" refers to "at best the exhilaration of working with some of the best minds in the country in a particular area, as well as developing them or supporting leading edge research" (p. 49). They do not, however, mention interpersonal relationships with colleagues.

Another distinguishing feature of the academy is the requirement that the same person perform teaching and research functions. While these two activities can be complementary, work in one does not always facilitate work done in the other. In addition, these two functions are valued very differently within the institution. Clark (1987) observed this reality of academic duties:

> The greatest paradox of academic work in modern America is that most professors teach most of the time, and large proportions of them teach all the time, but teaching is not the activity most rewarded by the academic profession nor most valued by the system at large. (p. 99)

Clark also observed how "teaching is an institutional obligation for which hours can be specified. While other activities are carried out in free time, teaching is done in constrained time" (p. 72). Thus, the teaching load figure is the only "objective" measure of academic workload; however, this load figure does not capture the amount of time spent researching or completing service requirements.

Because research and teaching are valued differently in the academy, academics are forced to battle these time tensions on a regular basis. The overwhelming pressure to research increases resentment of time taken for teaching. Essentially, more time for teaching is "seen as more of a burden; more time for research is not" (Clark,

1987, p. 73). "The fixation of teaching time as the definition of load speaks volumes about the conflicting duties, incentives, and preferences found in the American professoriate" (Clark, 1987, p. 73). In an era of increased accountability, the workload of academics is coming under increasing attack. There is no equivalent research load definition or computation, yet research duties are usually the most significant aspect of tenure and promotion decisions. This paradox of research and teaching will continue since both are necessary to the university but they are not necessarily valued equally.

Another unique aspect of academia is the role of management. Weingartner (1999) distinguished between two forms of management in academia: instrumental administrators and academic administrators. While instrumental administrators satisfy many functions similar to administrators in non-academic work, the role of academic administrator is unique and peculiar or as used by Weingartner "sui generis" (p. 33), Latin for "it's own kind" as defined by the Canadian Oxford Dictionary (1998, p. 1451).

Weingartner (1999) identified many reasons for this "sui generis." First, academic administrators do not manage faculty members and they rarely make autonomous decisions that affect faculty members. Instead, they work to reach consensus on issues affecting academics. In essence, "academic administration [is] the supervision of faculty self-governance," and is a paradox in and of itself. Second, most academic administrators have not been trained in the art and science of administration. Their extensive education, instead, is concentrated in a specific discipline, rendering them as historians, biologists, or social workers.

Why then do people with little training in academic administration fill these administrative roles? This question reveals yet another paradox of higher education: the awareness of the culture and the acceptance of peers are more highly valued requirements for administrative roles than formal training courses. In addition,

administrators return to faculty roles once their term has ended, thus they must always keep in mind their peer role (Weingartner, 1999).

Academic departments and their role in shaping and maintaining academic culture also help to distinguish academia from non-academic institutions. Autonomous and independent professors are woven into the institutional culture through the extensive hierarchy and achieve "for one's self, one's department, one's institutions, and one's class of institutions" (Clark, 1987, p. 61). This complex hierarchy has created an intersection where individual academics and institutional missions converge: the department. Clark (1987) highlighted two important functions of the department. First, the influence of the disciplines in each department is overwhelming and serves not only to balance, but also to overtake, the bureaucratic hierarchy constituting the institution's perspective. Second, the departments help strengthen the collective academic voice. This voice is then better able to protect itself from market and institutional forces while championing for their unique discipline (Clark, 1987).

The department has been and continues to be the heart of the academic voice. "The department is the local rock on which the power of voice is based in academia, the organized base for the capacity of academics to exercise influence within the organization to which they belong" (Clark, 1987, p. 65). The department has become "the building block of faculty hegemony" (Clark, 1987, p. 154) which can both extend individual faculty perspectives while creating and fostering a collegial managerial atmosphere.

To enhance the understanding of academic culture, an appreciation of the four "pillars" of traditions in the academy—academic freedom, tenure, shared governance, and collegiality—is necessary. Consequently, these aspects of academic culture are elaborated in some detail. These four pillars do not exist outside the academy and thus radically distinguish it from non-academic communities.

Academic freedom.

This section looks at the definition of academic freedom and how it forms a critical element of the content in which conflict emerges and is managed in the academy. The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) is the governing body enforcing academic freedom in Canada. CAUT (2000) provided the following definition of academic freedom:

> The common good of society depends upon the search for knowledge and its free exposition. Academic freedom in universities is essential to both these purposes in the teaching function of the university as well as in its scholarship and research. Academic staff shall not be hindered or impeded in any way by the university or the faculty association from exercising their legal rights as citizens, nor shall they suffer any penalties because of the exercise of such legal rights. The parties agree that they will not infringe or abridge the academic freedom of any member of the academic community. Academic members of the community are entitled, regardless of prescribed doctrine, to freedom in carrying out research and in publishing the results thereof, freedom of teaching and of discussion, freedom to criticize the university and the faculty association, and freedom from institutional censorship. Academic freedom does not require neutrality on the part of the individual. Rather, academic freedom makes commitment possible. Academic freedom carries with it the duty to use that freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base research and teaching on an honest search for knowledge (Approved by the CAUT Council, 1977).

The definition of academic freedom is vague and lends itself to re-interpretation when new academic freedom issues arise. This vagueness may also foster interpersonal

conflict among and between academics as they struggle to determine what is and what is not an academic freedom. As new issues of academic freedom arise, the level of academic conflict potentially increases as well. A few examples of such issues will help reinforce this academic struggle.

Two academics—Falconer and Underhill—were closely linked with academic freedom and conflict incidents before CAUT's official academic freedom definition. During WWI, Sir Robert Falconer, President of the University of Toronto, came under attack from academia and from society when he declared that there were no legitimate grounds for dismissing German professors from the U of T. While Falconer's support of academic freedom at the U of T was unwavering, it did not restrain the unbridled conflict that erupted on his campus, ultimately forcing the German professors to leave (Horn, 1999a).

Falconer believed that academic freedom should allow academics to search for truth and to search for it without restrictions. However, he did warn that this freedom only existed inside the academy and did not extend to outside political actions (Horn, 1999a; Cameron, 1996; Abbott, 1984). Falconer's restriction on academic freedom led to a later generation of conflict and academic freedom struggles. Dr. Frank Underhill, a Canadian professor who thought that scholars must help define social goals, adamantly believed that academic freedom should include freedom of political action and political thoughts. Through conflict and unrelenting pressure, Underhill trailblazed a refined definition of academic freedom during the 1930s that secured political freedom for academics inside and outside the university (Abbott, 1984). Almost thirty years later, CAUT finally issued a comprehensive definition of academic freedom that included the various freedoms secured by Falconer and Underhill in prior generations.

Unfortunately, CAUT's official definition of academic freedom did little to decrease the conflict or struggle involving academic freedom issues. In fact, the vague

definition actually entrenched the notion of conflict and struggle involving academic freedom issues because so many academics could not rely solely on the definition. For instance, some academics argued that academic freedom is no longer seen as a privilege to search for truth. Instead, they see academic freedom as a right that "extends to the expression of any desire, any sentiment, any impulse" and is categorized under the larger freedom of expression (Shils, 1993, p. 154). These differences extend from a vague definition of academic freedom.

Others herald that academic freedom is desperately in need of protection in academia. Bohm (1998) proclaimed that "academic freedom is under direct attack" citing incidents at Carleton University (para. 18). He argued that current acts by the academy are severely limiting academic freedom and that faculty must realize the ramifications of such changes before the privilege of academic freedom is lost. Academic freedom is one of the most important aspects of higher education but its nuances and vagaries present many challenges for academics. These challenges are frequently engulfed in academic interpersonal conflict and present a costly reality to academic life.

Tenure.

Tenure is closely linked with academic freedom and thus closely linked with controversy and conflict. Horn's (1999b) analysis of the Canadian tenure system revealed that "not only is tenure misunderstood, it is under heavy attack" (p. 261). While many feel that tenure is synonymous with job security, Horn argued that it serves far greater purposes. These purposes include "intellectual independence, collective autonomy and the time and financial security needed to carry on scholarly and scientific work" (p. 261). Later justification for tenure came when CAUT declared that tenure provided the ultimate protection of academic freedom.

The 1960s boom era in higher education led to a large number of professors being hired and tenured. Cameron (1996) argued that during the 1960s, tenure was almost a right for every professor—standard and substandard—who had undergone a five-year probationary period. Unfortunately, the 1960s boom era quickly turned to the 1970s "bust" era characterized by changed economic conditions, increased governmental demands for accountability, and criticism voiced by the public regarding the academy. This "new reality" resulted in heated debates regarding the tenure system. Monahan (1984) observed that arguments for abolishing the tenure system increased during the 1970s since many wanted to create institutions that were more flexible and more rigorous in their promotion strategies. Opponents of tenure "argue that it fosters mediocrity because it makes individuals complacent, indifferent, indolent, inefficient, neglectful, and unproductive" (Lewis, 1980, p. 87). Perley (1997) discussed how numerous studies have revealed that academic freedom could be uncoupled from tenure and survive; however, he cautioned that these studies lack validity and reliability since non-academic institutions completed them.

Advocates of tenure argue instead for the protection and continuation of tenure. Benjamin (1997) cited the "contributions of tenure to professional excellence and the social quest for truth" as two reasons for upholding tenure (para. 1). Others argue that tenure is good for society because it generates intellectual capital and excellent scholarship (Finken, 1996; Horn, 1999b). These tenure debates are still occurring early in the twenty-first century (e.g., De George, 2001; Plater, 2001).

Tenure continues to be one of the most hotly debated aspects of higher education. These debates bring both heightened interpersonal conflict and institutional conflict into the academy. As external pressures increase on academia, debates surrounding the validity and usefulness of tenure will continue to rage and academics will continue to find themselves in conflict-ridden environments.

Self-governance.

Self-governance models attempt to decrease the level of internal conflict in academic and other professions. Hamilton (2000) contended that historical characteristics of the four original professions—academia, law, medicine, and the ministry—reveal the necessity of shared governance models. These four professions involve the following distinct characteristics:

1. The pursuit of a learned art through formalized education and extensive training;

2. a commitment to a distinctive ideal of public service which imposes ethical demands to which ordinary citizens are not subject, to restrain self-interest, and to use the special knowledge and skills gained for the common good; and

3. professional autonomy gained from self-regulation in the form of peer review. (p. 12-13)

These ethical responsibilities combined with inherent fiduciary duties to society reflect the need for self-governance models. The need arises because market models are not able to satisfy and sustain professional responsibilities. For example, Hind (1971) observed that traditional subordinate-supervisor relationships do not function adequately in professional settings and that this small segment of the population demands peer-controlled environments.

This self-governance model is most closely associated with departmental or faculty meetings which represent guild-like settings reminiscent of traditional academic institutions. Within these meetings, faculty are treated as equal and decisions operate on a "one-person-one vote" process (Clark, 1987, p. 150). Faculty also govern the election of new department chairs and department heads. This bottom-up structure ensures that

the "front-line" workers maintain control over who guides and directs them in the short term (Clark, 1987).

Hamilton (2000) also insisted that the academic peer review culture is "the linchpin of the traditions of the learned professions" (p. 14), and argued that shared academic governance is the "corollary of the concepts of academic freedom and peer review" (p. 16). Shared governance then is critical to the success of peer reviews and the maintenance of academic freedoms. This success is led in large part because shared governance ensures that faculty have absolute authority over the following areas of academia:

1. policies for admitting students;

2. curriculum;

3. procedures for student instruction;

4. standards of student competence and ethical conduct;

5. maintenance of a suitable environment for learning; and

6. standards of faculty competence and ethical conduct, including faculty appointments, promotions, and faculty status. (p. 16)

As academia struggles with academic freedom and tenure concerns, it must also remain aware of challenges in governing and focusing their diverse and independent academics. Unrelenting market pressures have forced academia to defend its commitment to shared governance (Hamilton, 2000) and these external pressures naturally inject increased conflict into the academic system and expose academics to higher levels of interpersonal conflict.

Collegiality.

Baldridge (1971a) introduced three models of academic governance and argues that all three exist in the academy. He also admits that these models do not usually

operate independently from each other; more often all three are in operation in the institution. The operation of three governance models in one institution increases the possibility of conflict. Interestingly, Baldridge (1971a) contended that these three models—collegial, bureaucratic, and political—differ on how conflict is viewed and managed within the academy. An investigation of these models, as interpreted by Tucker (1993), is forwarded to garner a greater understanding for both the characteristics of these models and their reactions to academic conflict.

The collegial model is most often associated with academic governance. Millet (1962) provided a useful working definition of collegiality:

> [It] presupposes an organization in which functions are differentiated and in which specialization must be brought together, or coordination if you will, is achieved not through a structure of superordination and subordination of personal and groups but through a dynamic of consensus. (as cited in Baldridge, 1971a, p. 5)

Goodlad (1976) argued that collegiality fosters intellectual conflict while disregarding interpersonal conflicts. Tucker (1993) contended that the collegial model simply does not accept any form of conflict. The collegial model is built on the premise that the community of scholars, being civilized people and not barbarians, would not tolerate conflict. If conflicts arose, this community would solve them through rationalization and discussion (Tucker, 1993). This approach to conflict might help to explain the lack of investigation into academic conflict.

While the bureaucratic model may not be representative of faculty governance models, it does characterize administrative aspects of the academy including its formal hierarchy, formal policies, and complex authority structures (Baldridge, 1971a). The bureaucratic model, like the collegial model, does not tolerate conflict but it does allow for the existence of conflict as long as it is moderated and managed through

bureaucratic means (Tucker, 1993). The political model of academia arises "from the complex, fragmented social structure of the university, drawing on the divergent concerns and life styles of hundreds of miniature subcultures" (Baldridge, 1971a, p. 8). In this model, there is no community of scholars and no building of consensus; instead, there are autonomous groups lobbying for support through "negotiation, political influence, and bargaining" (Tucker, 1993, p. 400). The political model is the only model that accepts conflict and views it as a necessary outcome of group behaviour and organizational structures.

Thirty years have passed since Baldridge (1971a, 1971b) first conceived of the three academic models. After all the changes forced on academia over the past three decades, the pillar of collegiality, or at the very least the outward appearance and the perpetuation of the myth of collegiality, continues to be reinforced by the faculty complement of the academy.

There are, however, differing perspectives on the current reality of collegiality in higher education. Gamson (1994) contended that collegiality is more a myth than a reality in many academic institutions: "a sense of community is hard to find anywhere, even in small colleges" (as cited in Martin & Samels, 1997, p. 10). Cole (1999) observed that pre-tenure academics "were not cut out for competition and self-promotion of academic life and communicated a longing for a more collaborative context within which to teach and work" (p. 285). Finally, Bone (1997) described how academic collegiality and the community of scholars is "highly susceptible to self-interested justification and protectionism, masquerading as necessary autonomy" (p. 21).

Clark (1987) observed that while many faculty espoused the benefits of collegiality, he identified an "element of sheer personal control" in the academics (p. 152). Extending from Clark's findings, Edelstein (1997) introduced the concept of "hollowed collegiality" where the idea of shared decisions and shared governance is

overshadowed by individual lobbying and self-directed interest protecting (p. 77). Massy and Wilger (1994) conducted a large investigation into the concept of "hollowed" collegiality and determined that while certain aspects of collegiality—"sharing of research findings, decision-making about promotion and tenure, and decision making about course offerings"—were prevalent, other aspects were lacking (p. 18). For example, they discovered that "vestiges of collegiality serve faculty convenience but dodge fundamental questions of task" thus revealing its superficial or hollowed nature (p. 19).

The diversity of governance models and individual academics increases the prevalence of interpersonal conflict in the academy. Increased competition and accountability are also increasing the dynamics and reactions of academics and academic models. Cole (1999) argued that it is this very competition that keeps academics away from each other and erodes the very collegiality they are seeking. The unmet expectation of a collegial academic environment further increases the risk of interpersonal academic conflict.

New reality.

The "new reality" for higher education began in the 1970s and its effects are reflected in the analysis of the four academic pillars. The boom era of the 1960s turned into the bust era of the 1970s with an explosion of threats to the historical nature of higher education including increased student demand, reduced government spending, increased public control, external demands for accountability (Shils, 1984; Neave, 1998). Higher education is now attempting to maintain a delicate balance between government intervention and institutional independence.

Governments are continuing to demand greater contribution from universities while consistently decreasing public financial support. Shrinking public funding is forcing universities to rely on private monies to help lessen their financial burdens. Currie (1998)

cited four ways cuts in public funding are affecting universities: "creating more links with industry, establishing commercial arms, selling education to foreign students, and restructuring campuses" (p. 16).

Events in the past few decades have forced universities to adapt to and change with the needs of its consumers and the market. For example, the UK has seen radical changes to its higher education system including changes to its higher education funding structure, to the scope of its polytechnics, and to the rate of its business school expansion and reform. Gore, Steven and Bailey (1998) investigated how the business schools coped with such external changes and observed that while external bodies were trying to force a "hierarchical management structure" on the schools, the business schools fought such a structure (p. 255). As explained by Gore et al., "the exposure to environmental change has to be reconciled with other factors, such as the historical tradition of collegiality, staff expectations, and the need for subject integration" (p. 255).

Nevertheless, these external changes have altered the business schools' contexts. Gore et al. (1998) found "higher sickness absence, greater use of disciplinary procedures and a great proportion of administrative support" (p. 257). Unfortunately, this report did not delve into the more personal realm of change; it did not ask how this change affected individual people, how it had increased or decreased conflict and what effect it had on the individual work of academics and staff in the business schools. The magnitude of such changes in the UK business schools increased the likelihood that faculty members would have experienced interpersonal conflicts.

Another example of change relates to the intellectual capital debate in Canada, the United States, and in the UK. Keep, Storey, and Sisson (1996) observed that changes in higher education led to the "reduction in the unit resource" and increased internal pressures on academic work (p. 35). This reality of reduction produces immense strain on the intellectual capital of an institution; "future plans cannot be predicted upon

past levels of quality because much of this base has been spent and insufficient steps have been take to replenish it" (p. 35). Consequently, academics experience increased stress and interpersonal conflict and risk burnout and illness.

Higher education has responded to these changes and their potentially costly results by introducing many initiatives that workplaces have found successful. Total quality management strategies and key performance indicators are two examples of such initiatives. While these initiatives have proved useful in other workplaces, scholars argue that their "success [in higher education] depends on trust, commitment, and a supportive culture—features which may not be so readily available in the unfolding context" of the new reality (Keep et al., 1996, p. 37). As highlighted earlier, the transfer of one successful venture may prove unsuccessful in another arena. Many also worry about academia's fundamental obsession with the market. For example, Ralston Saul believed that the academy was designed to critique and assess market forces but now fears that "universities are aligning themselves with specific market forces and no longer fulfill the role of active independent critics" (as cited in Currie, 1998, p. 18).

These major changes are affecting the fundamental aspects of the academy and those attempting to function within the higher education system. Changes of these magnitudes naturally expose academics to interpersonal conflict. They also expose the academy to the possibility that their very culture could change in compliance to these external forces.

Literature Review Summary

As illustrated, interpersonal conflicts exist wherever interpersonal relationships occur. Therefore, interpersonal conflicts exist in all organizations—academic and non-academic—since these institutions are filled with an infinite combination of relationships. Extensive interpersonal conflict investigation has occurred in non-academic settings and

have revealed explanations, frameworks, methods regarding conflict management. Academia has not been exposed to such extensive investigation and thus has minimal explanations, frameworks, or methods of academic interpersonal conflict. In addition, non-academic findings may not be directly transferable to academic settings. The cultures may be too radically different, therefore eliminating the practical application of the foreign model.

The extensive investigation of interpersonal conflict in non-academic settings does, however, aid the academy in many meaningful ways (Figure 1). Foremost, it reveals the likelihood that interpersonal conflict in the academy is prevalent. These findings also guide researchers to appreciate the complex effect that culture plays in increasing or decreasing interpersonal conflict. The hypothesized presence of academic interpersonal conflict combined with the unique features of academic culture reveal the need for researchers to undertake a qualitative study of conflict in the academy. Researchers must enter the culture of the academy and allow the thoughts and feelings of the academics to surface. Once the prevalence, or at least the existence, of academic interpersonal conflict is confirmed, researchers can then determine theories and studies to expand this largely uncharted area further.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review, the original research focus can be elaborated. From the analysis of interpersonal conflict research, the present research was designed to explore faculty member perspectives on the issues of academic interpersonal conflict. The following questions guided this exploratory study:

1. How do faculty members define interpersonal conflict in the academy?

2. Based on their own definition of interpersonal conflict, what are some examples of such conflict in the academy?

3. What strategies do faculty members have for dealing with conflict in the academy?

4. What advice or information do faculty think would be most useful for other faculty involved in interpersonal conflict?

Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodology for this study was designed to investigate faculty perspectives on interpersonal conflict in the academy by allowing and encouraging access to academic culture through personal dialogue and reflection by academics. Schein (1996) concurred with the need to enter another's culture in order to appreciate its complexities: "We will not learn the power of culture unless we cross real cultural boundaries" (p. 239). Because this research was an exploratory study of interpersonal conflict in an academic culture, qualitative research methods and, specifically, semi-structured interviewing were identified as the most appropriate research methodology. The researcher was trained, through a graduate level qualitative research methodology course and the completion of a qualitative pilot study, in the research methods chosen for this study.

The primary data source for this study was information garnered from semi-structured interviews with informants. In order to understand the choice of research methodology for this study, an appreciation of qualitative research methods generally, and semi-structured interviewing specifically, is necessary. Consequently, these aspects are discussed in some detail. In addition, a discussion of a pilot study investigating faculty member perspectives on the rules for managing conflict is included. The pilot study provided an opportunity to uncover some of the researcher's own (sometimes implicit) theoretical frameworks and personal biases. The pilot study also extended some interesting themes regarding academic interpersonal conflict and some useful lessons on conducting personal interviews on such a sensitive topic. These themes and lessons together enhanced and clarified aspects of the thesis methodology. A more detailed research focus, including the study's intended procedures, subjects, and context conclude the chapter.

Qualitative Research Principles

Qualitative research methods are distinct from quantitative research methods. The former seeks to answer "why" while the later seeks to answer "what, where, when and how many" (Mostyn, 1985, p. 116). Qualitative research methodologies incorporate textual, inductive analyses to help researchers understand, learn, or probe one area deeply. One of the advantages of the use of verbal, textual data to analyze a problem is that qualitative researchers can remain focused on the problem's process and context and not just on its outcome measures. Brenner (1985) included a powerful quote by Filstead (1970) on the definition of qualitative research:

> Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to "get close to the data," thereby developing the analytical, conceptual, and categorical components of explanation from the data itself—rather than from the preconceived, rigidly structured, and highly quantified techniques that pigeonhole the empirical social world into the operational definitions that the research has constructed. (p. 148)

Schein (1996) agreed with Filstead and believed that more qualitative methods should be used to investigate organizational behaviours and cultures. Past reliance on quantitative research methodology "have failed to take culture seriously" because they forced researchers to "put a greater premium on abstractions than can be measured" (Schein, 1996, p. 229).

In qualitative research, the researcher must enter the problem area and collect data directly from the source. Qualitative researchers therefore want to study their sample in its natural setting with the goal of exposing taken-for-granted assumptions in that culture. Cadler (1977) argued that "qualitative research is typically characterized by a period of intense interaction between the researcher and the subjects in their own milieu" thus allowing the subjects to "reveal in their own words their feelings about a subject" (cited in Mostyn, 1985, p. 121). Schein (1990) also contended that data should

be allowed to emerge untainted by the researcher's biases or frameworks (cited in Howard, 1998). In order to achieve this outcome, Schein (1996) suggested that researchers "spend much more time observing and absorbing these other cultures, learning to see them for the insider's perspective, discovering in the process even other occupational cultures that affect how organizations work" (p. 239). Unlike quantitative researchers who control their sample and their sample setting, qualitative researchers must give up this control and focus on obtaining the best possible informants in order to gather appropriate data.

Researchers use small samples when conducting qualitative research. These small samples allow the researcher to probe deeply into one area. Unlike quantitative research, samples in qualitative research are rarely representative of the general population and therefore do not allow for generalizability of results. Schein (1990) so adamantly believed in the uniqueness of culture that he argued that to generalize about cultures is to engage in unethical behaviour in research (cited in Howard, 1998).

Qualitative researchers use methods that are flexible and evolving. Together these methods help the researcher to define a hypothesis and to take an in-depth look at a problem. While numbers and measurements can be included in qualitative data analysis, they are not statistically analyzed. Instead, qualitative researchers use a variety of textual or verbal techniques, including observations, open-ended interviews, participant observations, and document reviews, to collect data (Hittleman & Simon, 1997). These data are then analyzed using content analysis as a "diagnostic tool" (Mostyn, 1985, p. 117). The purpose of this tool "is to identify specific characteristics of communications systematically and objectively in order to convert the raw material into scientific data" (Mostyn, 1985, p. 117).

Data are collected in field notes, documents, or transcripts, and are analyzed throughout the process. This analysis is an inductive, additive process, with researchers

searching systematically for themes that are grounded in the data (not in the biases or preferences of the researcher). Burgess (1982) discussed the importance of systematic recording of field research because "the record of field experiences are the detail out of which theoretical, methodological and substantive discussions are constructed" (p. 193).

Once data are collected, qualitative researchers follow a general analysis process: they organize their notes, reduce their data, identify patterns (or themes), develop further research questions, and then loop back to the beginning of the process and begin again. Researchers must fully explain their process, including their coding procedures and their use of multiple data sources, so that research consumers can understand their process to determine if it might apply to their setting (Hittleman & Simon, 1997).

For this study, an appreciation of academic culture could only be realized by entering this domain. Personal biases regarding academia and academics were acknowledged and subsequently minimized to allow for an honest understanding of the culture and its impact on academic interpersonal conflict. This understanding was pursued through semi-structured, informal interviews with the informants.

Semi-structured interviewing.

Structured interviews are one of the data collection methods commonly used in quantitative research. These interviews "define situations in advance and do not allow the researcher to follow up any interesting ideas" (Bechholfer, 1974, cited in Burgess, 1982, p. 107). Semi-structured interviews, in contrast, allow for the details and nuances of everyday life to emerge. Burgess (1982) applauded Palmer's (1928) summary of the aims of semi-structured interviews. These aims included "the opportunity for the research to probe deeply, to uncover new clues, to open up new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, accurate, inclusive accounts from informants that are based

on personal experience" (p. 107). Lofland (1971) contended that interviewing mimics detective work with the researcher trying to determine why things are happening through an analysis of various clues (cited in Burgess, 1982, p.236).

Although this form of interviewing may contain elements that are unstructured and flexible, it is not uncontrolled. Palmer (1928) argued that researchers are in control of this form of interviewing: "the researcher must keep the informant relating experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the research problem and encourage the informant to discuss these experiences naturally and freely" (cited in Burgess, 1982, p. 107). Foote Whyte (1982) further argued that terms like "non-directive" and "unstructured" do not indicate that qualitative interviews are structured in terms of a research problem and are employed to satisfy such questions. The benefit of flexible interviewing techniques is that they are "designed to provide the informant with freedom to introduce materials that were not anticipated by the interviewer" (Foote Whyte, 1982, p. 111), while collecting common categories of data from each informant.

Burgess (1982) observed that researchers must honour the subjects by allowing their own words, phrases, and beliefs to surface. Therefore, researchers must embody active listening techniques along with the fundamental ability to structure questions in a conversation-like setting. Essentially, researchers must be able to "share the culture of their informants" (Burgess, 1982, p. 108). Foote Whyte (1982) reinforced this need to honour the subjects: "the research interviewer listens more than he [sic] talks...and accepts statements that violate his [sic] own ethical, political, or other standards without showing his [sic] disapproval in any way" (p. 111). In addition, Foote Whyte forwarded the following advice to researchers—"don't interrupt accidentally" (p. 111)—and cited that in only extreme cases should the researcher interrupt the informant.

Brenner (1985) contended that an interview guide should be used in the intensive interview process. This guide is a formal list of questions or issues that the researcher

wants to address in the interview. However, intensive interviewing is normally semi-structured and does not lend itself to formal, structured questioning. Brenner (1985) argued that, unlike structured interviewing, intensive interviewing must only succeed in covering the topics on the list, and not worry about how these topics are covered "as long as [the researcher] acts nondirectively and takes care that the accounts are adequate...and as complete as possible" (p. 152).

For intensive semi-structured interviewing, Brenner (1985) argued strongly for tape recording interviews, not only because note taking is distracting, but also because the researcher is busy with a multitude of other tasks during the interview. He explained that the interviewer is "continuously busy monitoring whether his/her actions are adequate, in the context of the interview guide and the interview situation, and whether the informant's information is adequate, that is, provides acceptable and complete answers to the questions" (p. 154). Foote Whyte (1982) agreed that tape recording is a useful tool for collecting interview data but cautioned that recording devices could affect the interview setting. Informants could talk about issues more "for the record" instead of discussing issues in a natural conversation (Foote Whyte, 1982, p. 118). Researchers should also be aware that the tape recorder may hinder the building of rapport in the beginning stages of the study and must be willing to put forth extra effort to build trust and rapport (Foote Whyte, 1982).

Foote Whyte (1982) detailed the delicacy of the interview setting. Informants are often suspicious of researchers. Informants have no reason to believe the confidentiality statements espoused by researchers and need time to judge the amount of details that they will reveal to researchers. Thus, researchers should spend the first interview building trust and rapport with the informant, discussing less emotional or political issues, and focusing on issues that allow for greater description. As the informant becomes more comfortable with the researcher and with the conversation, the

researcher can venture more evaluative topics. Foote Whyte (1982) cautioned investigators to limit their data checks (probing for further details, explanations, or examples) in the first interview; these checks could hurt the relationship that they are trying to build with the informant.

For this exploratory study, semi-structured interviewing was employed. While there was a list of interview questions, the informants had the freedom to introduce concepts and ideas that were not conceived of in the interview planning stages. Relating to Foote Whyte's (1982) advice on the delicacy of interview situations, each informant was interviewed a minimum of two times, with the caveat that if another interview was needed, it would be conducted. In the first interview, the focus was on building trust and rapport with the informant while obtaining general perspectives on interpersonal conflict in academia. The second interview was focused more on obtaining personal perspectives of interpersonal conflict issues facing the academy. As the issue of interpersonal conflict is sensitive and political, it took most of the first interview to build trust and rapport with the informants. Once the foundation for this trust and rapport was laid, the informants shared their perspectives, thoughts, and ideas much more candidly and eliminated the need for a third interview. If this trust and rapport had not been fostered in the first interview, or if the interview protocol was not completed by the end of the second interview, a third interview would have been employed in order to collect common categories of data from each informant.

Pilot Study

Many qualitative researchers (e.g., Brenner, 1985; Lofland, 1971, 1984) favour beginning or pilot studies. The pilot study is a forum where useful interview questions and an interview guide can be developed. Researchers must struggle with the realization that the initial interview questions do not provide adequate data to satisfy their research

questions. They must also be flexible in this stage to identify areas of refinement that will aid their later study.

In February 2001, a beginning study (pilot study) that investigated academic conflict in a professional school was conducted. This study focused on learning faculty perspectives on the informal and formal rules for managing conflict in their department, faculty, and university. Ethics approval was obtained, and three informants were selected randomly from a list of professors in a professional faculty in a Canadian research university. The informants all signed consent forms before the first interviews and all chose their offices as the setting for the interviews. Alex (pseudonym) and Janice (pseudonym) were interviewed twice each, but Mary (pseudonym), due to her complicated travel schedule, could only be interviewed once. All interviews, lasting approximately one hour each, were tape-recorded and later transcribed.

Alex was first to agree to participate in the study. Alex was with the faculty for over ten years and he was a tenured, full professor. Janice was second to agree to participate. Unlike Alex, Janice was much newer to the faculty, having been there under two years, and she was in a tenure-track position. Mary, the last informant, was also new to the faculty, having also been there under two years, and she, like Janice, was in a tenure-track position. The disparity between academic experiences was not intentional. Informants were chosen randomly and this random selection alone created the disparity. Based on the observations from the pilot study, a more comprehensive thesis study would include informants from both ends of the experience scale.

A semi-structured interview format was used to explore faculty members' perspectives on conflict issues. Informants were encouraged to discuss questions and issues and the interviews flowed naturally from these perspectives. When this line of inquiry ran its course (that is, the informant had nothing more to say about it), other Ethics-approved questions were introduced to the conversation (Appendix A). The

constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to analyze the interview data. With this method, "the researcher simultaneously codes and analyzes data in order to develop concepts" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 137). By constantly reviewing the data, it was possible to discover important themes and crucial questions to pursue in an expanded study.

Personal Perspectives

When I first began the pilot study, I was not aware that I had a theoretical perspective. Although I had learned about many qualitative perspectives in my Master's level qualitative research methodology class, I had no experience in determining what perspectives I held. After conducting and transcribing only one interview, I quickly learned that I held beliefs that closely related to the symbolic interactionist and ethnomethodologist perspectives.

A symbolic interactionist "places primary importance on the social meaning people attach to the world around them" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 11). According to Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionists believe that meaning determines action, that individuals hold different meanings, that creating meaning is active, and that people "see" the world through their constructed meanings. Berg (1998) expanded on Blumer's definition by adding that "objects, people, situations, and events do not in themselves possess meaning... meaning is conferred on these elements by and through human interaction" (p. 9). Bogdan and Bilken (1992) further contended that "human behaviour is an ongoing and negotiated interpretation of objects, events, and situations" (cited in Berg, 1998, p. 10).

Berg (1998) outlined three basic elements valued by most symbolic interactionists. First, data regarding human interaction is most important. Second, informants' perspectives —regarding their own situations and those of others — are

fundamental to satisfying any research question. Third, interactionists agree that people's interpretation of their situation and setting directly affects the "nature and meaning of their actions as well as the setting itself" (Berg, 1998, p. 9). After only one interview, I realized I was more interested in the meaning faculty attached to the rules for managing conflict than I was in learning what academic rules were in operation.

Ethnomethodologists "examine the ways people apply abstract cultural rules and common sense understanding in concrete situations to make actions appear routine, explicable, and unambiguous" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 13). Garfinkel (1967) observed that people who hold this perspective are concerned more with how people maintain their reality and are less concerned with their individual actions. Although I initially approached my topic hoping to find out the rules for managing faculty conflict (activities), I quickly realized that I was more intrigued by how informants wrestled with the informal, subtle, ambiguous conflict rules and how they applied these meanings to their realities. This deeper understanding will be the focus of the larger study on interpersonal conflict in academic communities reported in this thesis.

Themes Discovered

The data from the five pilot interviews in some ways validated findings in the research literature, and in other ways revealed themes not identified from the literature review. Conflict is inherently complex and data from these interviews confirmed this complexity. Although interviews began with a focus on the rules for managing conflict, it was realized that these rules are attached to deeper academic issues. Specifically, they appear to be attached to a complex academic structure, to the doctoral training program, to the independent nature of academia, and to the differences between tenured, non-tenured, junior, and senior faculty.

Complex academic structures.

The informants revealed the complexity of academic structures and the reliance on implicit and subtle rules to manage behaviours within the academy. While there are formal, explicit rules for managing academic functions and academic conflict, the informants believed that academia relies much more heavily on implicit understandings, informal socializations, and implied rules for managing academics. Newer faculty informants revealed that these implicit and implied "rules" increased new faculty conflict as they adjust to their new work environment. Once academics have been socialized into the academic culture, it seemed that their conflict level decreased. These interviews revealed the importance of understanding a faculty's implicit rule structure and sparked questions regarding the doctoral program that led to the next theme.

Doctoral programs.

Academic culture appeared to rely heavily on doctoral program influence in socializing potential academics. If academia directs faculty through implicit standards and norms, how can faculty members be sure that they perceive the proper rules? The informants revealed a strong connection between doctoral program training and their understanding of implicit faculty rules. All three informants acknowledged the substantial role their doctoral program played in showing them how to be academics. These programs seem to teach graduate students not only about teaching and research, but also about expected academic behaviour.

How does an academic community socialize members who might not have been exposed to this training in their doctoral program? How does this reliance affect students who are taught different implicit academic rules? How can a faculty manage if its members do not collectively understand the rules and standards regarding job responsibilities? This reliance on doctoral programs as a means for teaching implicit and

explicit academic rules should be investigated further in future studies on academic faculty members.

Independent techniques.

The pilot study informants revealed that independent conflict management techniques are used most often to solve academic conflicts. Academics are "a group of people who work so independently and are in a culture where you get that autonomy" (Alex, int. 2, p. 11). While this independence is positive for many aspects of academic life, it appeared to negatively influence what issues can and cannot be discussed with colleagues. These perceptions seemed to relate to the doctoral training theme discussed above; however, they also seemed to be affected by faculty "understandings" regarding inappropriate topics and by faculty reliance on outside support structures. Janice and Mary, the participants with less experience, perceived that it is appropriate to talk to colleagues about general issues and advice, but that it is inappropriate to reveal to colleagues that they are having trouble managing their job requirements. Both new faculty members appeared to have learned that their faculty values competence and capability, not the appearance of incompetency and incapability.

While the academic culture is independent and faculty feel that they must maintain an appearance of control, the informants expressed that they often turned to people from outside their units for support. These academics were often from their doctoral program, but they were also from other faculties and universities.

Unique faculty culture.

All three informants mentioned the uniqueness of their faculty's culture. Approximately five years ago, this professional faculty had been fraught with conflict. Prior battles or "wars" (Mary, int. 1, p. 28) that were waged in the faculty continue to

affect its current culture. Alex was not sure how the battles were resolved. He was only aware that he does not see these conflicts in public settings any longer: "at first, people were mainly hesitant to talk to each other, be friendly with each other, but for the most part, certainly in public I think, everyone was professional and cordial" (Alex, int. 1, p. 16). While the appearance of these conflicts has decreased, it was difficult for the informants to tell how sufficiently they had been resolved or when, or if, they will re-occur.

The introduction of new academics into the faculty has begun to alter the faculty culture. Alex highlighted how the faculty's culture has changed: "there's new people that have joined in the last three years, then what happened for a third of us isn't even part of our institutional memory" (Alex, int. 2, p. 19). Since prior battles are not part of their memory, "some of the new hires [are] saying... 'this is a fine place to work... so let's get on with it'" (Alex, int. 1, p. 19).

Lessons Learned

This beginning study presented many important and useful lessons. These lessons are directed to specific aspects of investigating conflict and general aspects of qualitative research methods. These four lessons—confidentiality, semi-structured interviewing, word power, and active listening—were used to enhance the present study's methodology.

Confidentiality.

The issue of confidentiality was extremely important when discussing conflict issues with faculty members. For example, at the end of one interview, an informant mentioned that she had seen conflict "get pretty heated" but would share this data "only if I were anonymous" (Janice, int. 2, p. 36). This comment reinforced how important trust

and anonymity were in discussing conflict issues; although this informant was assured that she was anonymous, she did not fully trust the researcher with sensitive and politically-charged data.

The pilot study demonstrated the importance of building trust and rapport with informants. For Janice and Mary especially, more personal or more explicit discussions regarding conflict were only achieved near the end of their interviews. It appeared, as Foote Whyte (1982) argued, that the informants needed a chance to "warm up" to discussing conflict issues and time to judge if they could trust a researcher with their data. In the present research study, some lead-time was spent developing relationships with informants in order to increase their trust and their willingness to share personal information.

Semi-structured questions.

Interestingly, more data were obtained from the semi-structured questions than the structured questions. The informants seemed to respond better to a discussion or conversation rather than a "question-and-answer" period. It was not clear if this was because of the nature of the topic — conflict — or if this was due to the interview preferences of the informants. What was clear is that a direct question regarding conflict often stopped the conversation flow, whereas when a question was woven into the context of the discussion, the conversation flow was maintained. While this lesson may only be applicable to these three informants, this awareness of how to approach questioning can be applied to future informants, to interviews, and to a larger study.

Word power.

Alex, Janice and Mary provided a valuable lesson about conducting conflict research: avoid using the word "conflict" during the interview. The informants reacted

negatively to the word "conflict" and seemed to interpret it as extreme and negative. After the first round of interviews was complete and the data had been transcribed, the negative impact of word "conflict" was realized. The data analysis process revealed the words informants used to describe conflict; stress, frustration, and tension were all used as synonyms to interpersonal conflict. The use of these words, instead of the word conflict, helped to maintain the flow of discussion during the interview; the informants appeared to react positively to the researcher using their words instead of relying solely on the word "conflict" when asking questions or making comments. These words were useful in phrasing interview questions in the present study.

Fortado (1992) realized the importance of word choice in his interviews with subordinates regarding supervisory conflicts. He highlighted how the term "grievance" has the connotation of a formal complaint, while the term "conflict" denotes "all other latent and manifest conflicts" (p. 1143). Fortado (1992) welcomed the advice of Schein (1985), who observed how the inherent or implied meanings of such words as "grievance" or "conflict" decrease or limit dialogue "because these words tend to carry negative connotations (i.e., conflicts are bad, and grievants are troublemakers)" (p. 1143). Fortado incorporated this advice in his study on subordinates and supervisory actions and used words like "human relations" and "problems" to refer to conflicts in order to expand the dialogue with informants (p. 1143).

Active listening.

Active listening occurs when people "listen carefully and communicate [their] understanding of a speaker's message by reflecting or mirroring them back" (Cournoyer, 1996, p. 93). The message includes both verbal and non-verbal cues: "it means listening not only for the content of the message, but also for the underlying feelings, and for non-verbal cues that go with the message" (Starke and Sexty, 1992, p. 460). Active listening

can reveal that what is being said and what is not being said together constitute the full message. Many times during the interviews, what the informants did not say was as important as what they did say. This awareness and this need to be actively listening reinforced the amount of attention, energy and commitment that qualitative researchers must exude in every interview situation.

Understanding the complete message, acknowledging the message, and communicating it back to the sender are all aspects of active listening that must be incorporated into interviewing contexts. Interviewers must be prepared for any comment or reaction and allow the interviews to naturally ebb and flow while collecting parallel data sets on critical aspects of conflict. A conscious effort is required to really listen to what the informant is saying (both verbally and non-verbally) and not to let personal biases influence the interview data.

Enhanced Research Focus

The pilot study contributed in important ways to the design of the expanded study on interpersonal conflict in academic communities described in this thesis. The results confirmed that qualitative research methods were the most appropriate methods to be used in a study of this kind. The pilot study also helped guide decisions regarding specific interview questions, the number of informants, and the context from which informants would be recruited. Based on the pilot study results, the thesis research focused on how conflict is perceived and experienced by junior and senior faculty members from four different departments in a Canadian research university. Approval from the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) was granted before data collection occurred (Appendix B).

Both the literature review and the pilot study revealed the need to combine and uncover junior and senior faculty perspectives on conflict in the academy. This dual

focus allowed for a more complete picture of interpersonal conflicts affecting academics to emerge since both junior and senior academic viewpoints were investigated. The combination of these perspectives allowed not only for greater amounts of data to be collected (different perspectives on interpersonal conflict in academic settings), but also for frequent data checks to be incorporated into the analysis process (how did junior and senior faculty perceive interpersonal conflict in the academy). The specific research emphasis for this study was on learning about the kinds of conflicts participants' experience in an academic environment, and on the similarities and differences in the ways junior and senior faculty perceive the sources, experiences, and consequences of these conflicts.

Sample

Four pairs of informants, consisting of one junior and one senior faculty member from each of four departments, were sought as the intended sample for this study. Junior faculty members were defined as those in a full-time, tenured or tenure-track position for five or fewer years, and senior faculty were defined as those in a full-time, tenured position for 15 or more years. These criteria were designed to provide two distinct groups of faculty members, based on experience. The decision to recruit four pairs of faculty members was guided by the realization that through the course of the study an informant or a pair of informants may be lost. By initially including eight faculty members in the study, the possibility that useful and meaningful data could be collected and analyzed was maintained, even if one or two participants did not complete all the interviews.

Participants were sought from four different departments in one of the larger faculties of a research university campus. The political sensitivity of the topic made it advisable to find pairs of participants from different disciplines within one faculty because

anonymity could not be ensured if too many faculty were interviewed within one department. Based on similar concerns, only larger departments with greater than four junior faculty were targeted; otherwise, informants could be identified, although every precaution would be taken to ensure their anonymity. In order to further ensure that the identities of both colleagues remain confidential, the identity of participating colleagues was not discussed with informants.

Although it was initially planned that members would be informed about the study through a brief presentation at a departmental meeting followed by a distribution of information letters requesting their participating in the study, the time-lag in department meetings (up to two months) and the tight agenda schedule at these meetings did not make these initial presentations feasible. Instead, department heads agreed to a distribution of ENREB-approved contact letters to each of the department members (Appendix C). Thus, participants were contacted through letters outlining the study, sent to their campus addresses.

Interested participants contacted the researcher either via telephone or email. Possible junior-senior pairings were identified from the volunteer list. However, it must be noted that a higher degree of interest was found with senior faculty making it difficult to recruit pairs from each of the four departments. It was decided that due to this difficulty in recruiting junior and senior pairs, it would be beneficial to interview all faculty who were interested in the study. This decision led to the following faculty sample: six senior faculty members and two junior faculty members from four departments in a large Faculty (Table 3).

Department A and Department C had junior and senior informants, while Department B had only senior faculty informants, and Department D only had one senior faculty informant. A second mailing of contact letters with a memo indicating an interest in junior faculty was sent to Department B and D where only senior faculty had been

Table 3.

Description of Study's Eight Participants

Participant	Dept.	Yrs. Exp.	Exp. Level	Sex	Tenure Status
Sherman	A	>15 years	M-Ex	Male	Tenured
George	A	>15 years	M-Ex	Male	Tenured
Julie	A	< 5 years	L-Ex	Female	Probationary
Paul	B	>15 years	M-Ex	Male	Tenured
Joe	B	>15 years	M-Ex	Male	Tenured
Jane	C	< 5 years	L-Ex	Female	Probationary
Brad	C	>15 years	M-Ex	Male	Tenured
Stan	D	>15 years	M-Ex	Male	Tenured

Variable Explanation

Participant: Faculty were identified by assigned pseudonym.

Department: Faculty member's departments were identified only by one of four

codes: A, B, C, or D. Faculty in the same department were assigned the

same department code.

Years Experience: Faculty either had greater than 15 years of experience in the

University or less than five years of experience in the University. The

former were assigned the code "> 15 years" and the latter were assigned

the code "< 5 years".

Experience Level: Based on years experiences, faculty were assigned "M-Ex"

(More Experience) if they had greater than 15 years experience and "L-Ex"

(Less Experience) if they had less than five years experience.

Sex: Faculty were assigned either the code of Male or Female.

Tenure Status: Faculty had either achieved tenure status or were working

towards tenure. The former were assigned the code "tenured" and the

latter were assigned the code of "probationary"

recruited. This second mailing did not generate any interest by junior faculty in these departments and further contact was deemed intrusive and annoying for faculty in those departments. The richness of the data, combined with two mailings to faculty in Department B and D that did not lead to junior faculty interest, led to the decision that the eight-faculty sample was adequate for the purposes of this exploratory investigation.

Interview Protocol

The development of the interview protocol is guided by the following proposed research questions:

1. How do faculty members define interpersonal conflict in the academy?
2. Based on their own definitions of interpersonal conflict, what are some triggers and examples of such conflict in the academy?
3. What strategies do faculty members have for dealing with conflict in the academy?
4. What advice or information do faculty think would be most useful for other faculty involved in interpersonal conflict?

These basic questions were elaborated through the literature review and the results of the pilot study to develop an interview protocol (Appendix D). This interview protocol was approved by ENREB.

As the topic of interpersonal conflict is politically sensitive, the interview protocol was designed so that much of the first interview was spent building trust and rapport with the informant. The initial questions allowed the informant to discuss general aspects of academic life; these questions were used as "warm-up" topics to increase the informant's comfort with discussing conflict issues and to create a rapport between informant and researcher. Once this rapport was developed, questions relating more specifically to interpersonal conflict in academia were introduced. These questions allowed the informant to define interpersonal conflict and to describe general reasons

why academic life could involve academic conflict. The first interview was concluded by having the informant discuss some of the procedures used to manage or resolve academic conflict in the Faculty.

The second interview was designed to investigate more personal aspects of academic interpersonal conflict. The first few minutes of the interview were used to discuss aspects of the prior interview. In addition, each informant was thanked for his or her openness in the prior interviews and was assured that his or her perceptions added to the researcher's understanding of interpersonal conflict in academia. This introduction allowed both informant and interviewer to ease back into the sensitive topic of interpersonal conflict while maintaining the sense of rapport and trust gained in the prior interview. The informant was then asked to expand on aspect of his or her academic culture that was shared in the last interview. From there, the informant was asked to describe other aspects of academic culture and how these aspects affect the interpretation and management of interpersonal conflict between faculty members. Further questions that probed for information regarding the Faculty's explicit and implicit rules for managing conflict were introduced subsequently. The second interview was concluded with the informant describing any conflict workshops or models that might be used to help faculty manage their own interpersonal conflict. A third interview was to be used if major interview questions were not covered in the previous two interviews due to lack of time, or if the researcher and informant felt that more time was needed to build trust in order to share personal perceptions of conflict issues.

Data Collection Procedures

Each informant was confidentially recruited for a minimum of two, one-on-one interviews lasting approximately one hour each. All informants were made aware of the possibility of a third one-hour interview if extra time was required for the development of

rapport and trust and the collection of common data sets. A decision about whether to conduct the third interview was made after the second interview. Rich data collection was achieved in only two interviews each per informant, thus rendering unnecessary a third interview for any of the eight informants. At least one week separated the first and second interview for each informant and all interviews were audio-taped.

The need to protect the informants' identities also affected the interviewing context. Although it would have been more convenient to interview faculty members in their offices, this arrangement was not initially advisable for this project as the anonymity and confidentiality of the informants cannot be maintained since the researcher was to make a public presentation to the department regarding the study. The public presentation would make the researcher known to the entire department and her appearance in the department would indicate that she was there to interview a faculty member for her research. Therefore, based on this initial premise, the informants would be asked to choose from a list of interview locations that included an office outside their faculty, an office provided by the researcher, or a location suggested by the informant.

However, the inability to make public departmental presentations created the opportunity to allow faculty to choose their offices as the location for the interviews. All faculty in each of the four departments were sent contact letters (Appendix C) and only interested faculty contacted the researcher via telephone or email. The researcher maintained her anonymity and was able to move throughout the department much like any other student during the school term. All interested faculty expressed their desire to interview in their own offices and made assurances that this location was private and maintained a high degree of confidentiality and anonymity. The combination of no public presentations and faculty interest in their own offices as the interview location rendered the decision to interview each faculty in his or her own office.

At the beginning of each first interview, the informants were asked to sign a consent form that was approved by a University ethics committee (Appendix E). This consent form outlined the nature of the study, the tape recording of interviews, and the rights extended to the informants. For example, participants were informed that every interview would be audio taped and that they had the right to stop the tape at any time during the interviews. The informants were also instructed that they have the right not to answer any of the questions posed during the interview. Further, they had the right to end an interview or withdraw their participation in the study or any part of the data they had provided at any time. Finally, the consent form detailed how anonymity and confidentiality would be protected by the use of pseudonyms on all tapes and all documents relating to the research project. Faculty were amused by the statement that all documents would be kept in a fireproof safe; most asked about the safe and why such extreme measures were needed.

The first interview began only after the informant had signed the consent form. Each interview began with "warm-up" questions intended to diminish the informants' anxiety about participating in a study on interpersonal conflict in academic communities. After some degree of rapport was built using these "warm-up" questions, questions directly relating to interpersonal conflict in academia were introduced. As the interviews were semi-structured, the informants' were able to introduce unanticipated topics and the researcher was willing to investigate these new topics accordingly. For example, Julie and Stan wanted to move directly into discussion regarding interpersonal conflict and did not feel that the warm-up questions were necessary. In addition, Stan directed most of the first interview, weaving a tale that lasted well over the allotted one-hour time period. These examples underscore the value of semi-structured interviewing in that the researcher must be flexible enough to follow the informants' line of discussion while maintaining the ability to introduce common issues to all informants.

Every interview went over the approximate one-hour time frame indicated to informants in the consent letter. Most interviews ranged from one hour and five minutes to one hour and fifteen minutes. Stan's interviews were the longest with both lasting almost one hour and twenty minutes each. Each tape-recorded interview was transcribed immediately after the interview in order to capture maximum retention of body language and vocal cues expressed in the interview. In addition, the researcher recorded observer comments during and immediately following each interview. These comments reflected important and intriguing non-verbal body language communicated by the informants as well as personal thoughts and ideas generated by the researcher during the interview. Together these two types of data—transcribed data and observer comments—created one complete data set per interview.

Due to the sensitive aspect of the research topic, much time and effort was used to build trust and rapport with the informants during every interview. Garnering this trust and rapport took longer with some informants than with others and this variability in time increased the likelihood that some of the questions were not covered in the prescribed interview order. If questions were not covered in one interview, they were be included for discussion in the following interview. In addition to rapport, trust was built by reinforcing the confidentiality and anonymity of every aspect of the interview, with every effort directed to securing the informant's anonymity. Finally, many informants were unsure how useful or applicable their perspectives were to the investigation; therefore, informants were reassured that their perspectives were useful, needed, interesting, and applicable.

Data Preparation and Analysis

Directly following each interview, the researcher transcribed the tape-recorded data. These data were entered into a word processing document and formatted into

short data lines to allow for coding and analysis. Pseudonyms were used for all identifiable informant characteristics in order to ensure continued confidentiality and anonymity. For instance, pseudonyms were used for the names of informants, the names of the department and discipline, and the names of other faculty or buildings mentioned during the interview. In addition to the interview data, the researcher integrated observer comments in the data transcription to produce a single, comprehensive data set. The observer comments were clearly distinguished from the actual transcript of the interview: these comments were placed in parenthesis when imbedded in the data set.

The transcribed data sets were analyzed using the constant comparative method whereby the "researcher simultaneously codes and analyzes data in order to develop concepts" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 137). This method is iterative, inductive, intuitive, and time-intensive, demanding a great commitment by the researcher both to the data and to the analysis process. This commitment ensures that theories and concepts are allowed to emerge from the accumulated data sets. The researcher reviewed the data sets regularly, with each data set receiving at minimum three full reads and subsequent opportunities for reflection. This review process increased understanding of the data and contributed to enhanced theme identification and coding grid design.

As themes emerged, a coding framework was developed and applied to each data set. As this coding and analysis process was complex and iterative, the researcher kept detailed information and reflection insights regarding emerging themes and coding refinements. The application of the coding framework lead to the emergence of other themes, which demanded the further development of a refined coding framework. The framework was then applied to each data file and each complete data set was re-coded based on the refined data themes. Episodes, or sections of text in the transcript that

illustrated a particular theme, of each data theme were then identified in each of the sixteen data sets.

In addition, data triangulation (Denzin, 1978) was employed during the data analyses process. According to Denzin (1978), data triangulation involves a focus on time, space and person:

> A major focus in time observations will be its relationship to ongoing interactions...Similarly, they can also sample space and treat it as a unit of analysis...Personal data point, of course, to the most common unit of analysis—the social organization of personas through time and space. (p. 295)

Faculty members were interviewed on two separate occasions, with at least one week between each interview. Each interview was held in the same space—the faculty member's office—with both the faculty member and researcher occupying the same space during both interviews. Individual faculty members, not specific groups of faculty members, were solicited for participation in the study; Denzin (1978) defined this "person" triangulation the "aggregate analysis" because it seeks data from individuals only without incorporating interactive or collective person analyses. These individual faculty members provided their perspectives, thoughts, ideas, and concerns regarding interpersonal conflict in academic communities for this exploratory study.

This process of theme identification and triangulation led to an increased appreciation of the data themes and to an even broader conceptualization of the data. The resultant themes regarding interpersonal conflict in academia were then used to expand, compare, and contrast findings from the literature. The combination of resultant themes and literature findings led to the emergence of broader interpersonal conflict insights for academic communities. These insights revolved around the roles that academic leadership, faculty demographics, and academic structures play in interpersonal conflict between faculty members. These "meta-themes" are expanded in

the following chapter along with a discussion on how these themes help to answer this study's four basic research questions. Together, these themes and "meta-themes" can be used to explore other aspects of interpersonal conflict in academic communities in future research projects.

Chapter 4: Results

A review of the literature on interpersonal conflict revealed a gap in research regarding interpersonal conflict in academic communities. While there was literature on conflict in general and conflict in non-academic settings, there was little literature on interpersonal conflict in academic settings. The literature review also emphasized major differences in academic and non-academic settings: academic settings are characterized by independence, autonomy, and the search for truth, while non-academic settings are characterized by dependence, structure, and the search for profits. These cultural differences between the two settings limits the transferability of findings in one setting to the other; for example, a conflict management model in a non-academic setting might be successful, but when transferred into an academic setting, it might be unsuccessful because it is premised on different cultural assumptions. Thus, an exploratory investigation into the area of interpersonal conflict in the academy was warranted in order to begin to fill some of the gaps in this research area.

Four major research questions were raised as a result of the literature review process. These questions are listed below:

1. How do faculty members define interpersonal conflict in the academy?

2. Based on their own definition of interpersonal conflict, what are some examples of such conflict in the academy?

3. What strategies do faculty members have for dealing with conflict in the academy?

4. What advice or information do faculty think would be most useful for other faculty involved in interpersonal conflict?

Over twenty hours of discussion with eight faculty members revealed seven major themes. These themes underscored the complexity of academic communities in general and of interpersonal conflict in academic settings specifically. Participants disclosed two definitions of interpersonal conflict between faculty members (theme one)

and cited numerous sources of conflict in the academic community (theme two). Faculty in this study also revealed varied coping strategies (theme three); however, analysis uncovered that avoidance was the most often used coping strategy when faced with faculty-faculty conflict.

These discussions also revealed important insights into how faculty interpreted their academic culture (theme four). Inherent in this culture are differences in rank, status, and prestige, all of which contribute to a power differential between and among faculty members (theme five). The department head's role in the departmental community (theme six) was also seen as important both in terms of the academic culture and the management of interpersonal conflicts. Finally, faculty provided striking feedback regarding the kinds of assistance academics might need in order to be more prepared to cope with interpersonal conflict in academic communities (theme seven). Essentially, they felt public forums like workshops would not be useful for faculty members; instead, they suggested private forums or information presented in ways that honour academic characteristics.

Each of the seven themes introduced necessary and needed dialogue on interpersonal conflict in academia. A summary of the distribution of episodes relevant to each theme is presented in Table 4. The examples, stories, and descriptions provided by the faculty are the foundation of these themes, and are represented throughout the results chapter to contribute to an enhanced understanding of the challenges and issues facing faculty members in terms of interpersonal conflict. The following notation is used for all faculty quotes: "Pseudonym, Department Code, Level of Experience, Interview, Interview Page Number, Line Number". For example, a quote from Julie (pseudonym) may be cited as "(Julie, A, L-Ex, 1, p.12, 4-5)" which would express that Julie was a member of department A with less experience (L-Ex) as an academic and that the quote came from the first interview (1), on page 12, from lines 4-5.

Table 4

Distribution of Episodes Relating to Data Themes Across Informants

Informant	Theme #1 Definition of Conflict	Theme #2 Coping Stratagies	Theme #3 Sources of Conflict	Theme #4 Role of Head/Dean	Theme # 5 Academic Culture	Theme #6 Power	Theme #7 Conflict Wk'shop Beliefs
George	6	11	12	4	19		3
Julie	9	10	11	3	8	1	1
Sherman	4	6	11	3	19	3	1
Jane	6	18	14	7	19	9	8
Stan	5	21	7	8	25	1	
Joe	5	12	15	8	12	3	2
Paul	7	16	16		27	8	3
Brad	4	11	14	4	16	4	5

Defining Conflict

As indicated in the literature review, theoretical definitions of interpersonal conflict are complex and elusive. Defining conflict proved even more difficult for the eight faculty members in this study. Many faculty expressed concern over what was meant by "conflict" and when they were told that their definition would guide the discussions, they struggled to provide a working definition. For instance, Julie stated, "I don't know, I wouldn't, I would ask you" (A, L-Ex, 1, p.16, 23) when asked how she defined conflict. When she realized that she would have to provide the definition, she began to conceptualize a definition of conflict. Some academics had prepared some definition in advance but others, like Julie, had not conceptualized a definition prior to the interview. Although the specifics of their definitions varied, some common themes were observed across definitions of interpersonal conflict.

Participants' use of the word conflict differed. These variations in defining conflict were readily apparent, both in the interviews and data analysis. Some faculty could easily define their perception of the word conflict while others struggled to define the term. Some interpreted "conflict" as extreme conflict behaviours and tried to explain how the academy did not have conflict in that sense:

> I don't know of a single member of my department who has ever had a fist fight in the hallway, or even a hissy fit, or a screaming match, a sorry, a screaming match, yes, hissy fit, no...because that sort of thing isn't a workplace kind of a thing. (Paul, B, M-Ex, 1, p.21, 2-12)

Instead, participants indicated more subtle and covert aspects of academic conflict. Although these subtle forms of conflict may be more difficult to detect, analyses of interview data quickly revealed the pervasiveness of some forms of interpersonal conflict in this academic community.

Faculty members discussed their operational definitions of interpersonal conflict and used numerous examples to underscore their beliefs. Some participants defined conflict in terms of interests. For instance, Stan observed that conflict existed when faculty attempted to promote themselves instead of their discipline or their university: "I guess for me it's when I see individuals promoting their own self interests at the expense of interests of other individuals, that's sort of intellectual or academic conflicts" (D, M-Ex, 2, p.1, 17-21). In contrast, others defined conflict in terms of emotion. For example, Sherman explained that he is in conflict when resolution does not occur:

> I see myself as being in conflict with somebody else in the department, with other
>
> people in the department, if we, if we clearly disagree and we don't resolve it or
>
> we choose to resolve it by, there's a winner and a loser and the winner takes all.
>
> (A, M-Ex, 2, p.27, 6-11)

Similarly, Brad expressed that "interpersonal conflict occurs when anger is involved" (C, M-Ex, 1, p.15, 6-11).

These operational definitions of interpersonal conflict were most often categorized into two distinct types: ideological (political) and personality-based. Joe easily distinguished between these two major types of academic interpersonal conflict: "I see two types, and they may be connected, I see conflict which is due to a clash of personality...and other times there are profound professional disagreements" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.6, 9-10 & 20-21). Julie also made this distinction between ideological and personality conflicts: "since I didn't have personal conflicts with those colleagues, the only conflicts that I might possibly have with them was ideological" (A, L-Ex, 1, p.18, 14-16). Jane (C-L-Ex) introduced the concept of conflict that could be grieved; these conflicts would be resolved through the grievance standards and procedures employed by the faculty union. Jane contended that conflicts that become involved in the grievance procedure extended from ideological and personality-based conflicts, with the only

difference being the faculty member's decision to involve the union and to make the conflict much more public in nature. Jane admitted that for most ideological and personality-based conflicts experienced by academics, the grievance procedure is not exercised: "there's not a lot you can do because some of it is ideological, and you can't grieve ideology, some of it's just personality, people you just don't like, who don't like you" (C, L-Ex, 1, p.19, 40-43). Thus, the cornerstones of academic conflict appear to be ideological or personal, with a relatively few developing into conflicts that use grievance procedures.

Unlike Joe, Julie and Jane, other informants were less concise about the different types of conflicts. However, discussion with these informants revealed that ideological and personality-based conflicts were fundamental in academia. George, Stan, Sherman, Paul, and Brad identified the two conflict types and made it clear in their discussions that ideological and personality conflicts were separate and distinct from one another. Ideological conflicts were conflicts that extended from the thoughts, ideas, and beliefs held in and about the discipline. For example, Paul indicated how his department was grounded in disciplinary-based differences: "see one of the built in conflicts in this discipline is between the [two subcategories], between Group A and Group B [based on discipline focus]" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.23-24, 52-4). Stan confirmed how "factions that were organized theoretically and methodologically" (D, M-Ex, 1, p.5, 53-55) existed in academia. These conflicts were considered fundamentally different from personality-based conflict. Personality-based conflicts were conflicts that occurred when faculty member's personalities clashed. George confirmed that personality disagreements were "inevitable" in academic departments (A, M-Ex, 2, p.3, 54). Thus, faculty members were in consensus both about the two major types of conflicts experienced by academics and about the fundamental differences between these types of conflicts.

Jane (C-L-Ex) was the only informant to discuss how ideological and personality conflicts could overlap. She provided two examples, one when a personality-based conflict is demonstrated through an ideological position and one when an ideological conflict is demonstrated through personal attacks on the faculty member:

[U]sually [academic conflicts] can be traced back to some kind of disagreement that has, that is intellectual in nature...there's no problem in disagreeing with things, the problem becomes when it's carried through, that dislike or that disrespect is carried through and no longer is just a matter of commenting in a peer review kind of way on an article, it's now become very personal. (C, L-Ex, 2, p.5, 34-35 & p.6, 29-34)

[W]here it gets murky and muddy is where a personal difficulty is cloaked by an ideological disagreement, so really, the foundation of the disagreement is personal antipathy. (C, L-Ex, 2, p.7, 9-13)

This discussion was intriguing because it did not appear in any other interview. At the very least, it indicated the subtlety of academic conflict and the need to understand its nuances more completely.

Participants also elaborated their definitions to include the ease with which ideological conflicts, personality-based conflicts, and even grievance conflicts could be resolved. As Jane (C, L-Ex) explained, conflicts employing grievance procedures were thought to be most easily resolved because there were procedures in place to guide a conflict to its resolution. The other two types of conflicts—ideological and personality-based—had less opportunity for resolution. "As a colleague you're kind of stuck...and unless there's something tangible and clear enough to be greivable, say, there's not a lot you can do" (Jane, C, L-Ex, 1, p.19, 35-38). Stan (D, M-Ex) echoed Jane's thoughts

regarding difficult-to-resolve conflicts and suggested this had to do with faculty not being held accountable for their actions. Others felt that ideological conflicts were more easily resolved than personality conflicts. Julie (A, L-Ex), for example, expressed her realization that non-personal conflicts—ideological or political—were more easily managed or resolved than personal conflicts. She further stated that she preferred non-personal conflicts because "personal ones cannot be solved while non-personal …can be" (Julie, A, L-Ex, 2, p.10, 39-40). This understanding added another dimension to the definition of academic conflict.

In defining conflict, an interesting distinction between debate and conflict was posited by the participants. Debates were not the same as conflicts, and healthy debates were a major part of academic life. George provided a working definition of a debate: "it's debate as opposed to discussion, we're not just sort of pooling views, we're really challenging that view and say to a person, you can't be serious about that, and it goes from there" (A, M-Ex, 1, p.3, 30-33). Sherman reinforced this notion of debating and indicated that it's occurrence in academic departments is ordinary, normal, and distinct from conflict: "[debating], that's a normal thing that will show up in any department, I wouldn't call that conflict, that's more, a wholesome debate in terms of what are our needs and our priorities" (A, M-Ex, 2, p.2, 19-25). Conflict, for these faculty members, was something deeper than these debates. For Sherman, debates become conflicts when the topic affects the parties personally: "by conflict I see something as more than just disagreeing on something, we disagree on something to the point that it affects our relationship" (A, M-Ex, 1, p.16, 1-6).

Finally, informants consistently defined conflict in terms of negative actions or repercussions. Faculty only identified positive aspects of conflict when directly asked about potential benefits of conflict. However, once asked about positive conflict, faculty were able to articulate a few positive aspects of interpersonal conflict in academic

communities. For instance, conflict was seen as positive if it allowed faculty to change their opinion on an issue or subject: "I know you disagree about something but then the other person convinces you or, at least, makes you think twice about it, and that must be positive" (Paul, B, M-Ex, 1, p.23, 43-47). George echoed Paul's understanding of positive conflict:

> [T]o the extent that, that, the conflict involves a discussion process in which people share information and that information allows you to change your opinion on something...there's some positive aspects to a discussion process in the situation with interpersonal conflict in which people come to realize more completely the facts of a situation. (George, A, M-Ex, 1, p.7, 42-47)

Conflict was also seen as positive if it helped "to create something new" (Julie, A, L-Ex, 2, p.10, 17-18) or if "it might instigate [faculty] to do more [research] (Joe, B, M-Ex, 2, p.16, 38). Although faculty could identify a few positive aspects of interpersonal conflict in academic settings, they consistently defined conflict as negative. As the informants' definition of conflict guided the interviews, more negative, than positive, aspects of conflict were identified and discussed.

Discussions with the eight participants revealed a complex understanding of interpersonal conflict. First, academic conflict is subtle. Second, it can be broken down into either ideological or personality-based conflicts, with either of these types expanding into a grievable conflict. Third, personality-based conflicts are perceived to be more difficult to resolve than ideological conflicts. Finally, faculty provided operational definitions of conflict that focused on negative, rather than positive, aspects of interpersonal conflict.

Both the junior and senior faculty participants detailed differences between ideological and personality-based conflict, although only one junior participant detailed how one type of conflict could be masked by another type of conflict. Only senior faculty

mentioned the distinction between debating and conflict; junior faculty did not indicate this distinction in their interviews. The pervasiveness of interpersonal conflicts in academic settings is discussed in the following section.

Sources of Academic Conflict

The eight participants in this study revealed numerous sources of interpersonal conflict imbedded in major aspects of academic life. For example, hiring decisions injected a high level of conflict into many departments. Other sources of conflict included issues between faculty cohorts, course assignments, jealousy and turf protection, interpretation of rules and regulations, administrative decisions, and "prima donna" academics. The pervasiveness of these conflicts, and the fact that they are tied to fundamental aspects of academic life, underscore the need to understand interpersonal conflict in academia.

Hiring decisions.

Departments must, with increasing frequency, hire new faculty members to fill vacated or newly created positions. The informants declared that these hirings inject conflict into their lives and were one of the more "controversial" aspects of faculty life (Sherman, A, M-Ex, 2, p.1, 44). George indicated how hiring decisions created departmental "bad blood":

> Well, the bad blood is, of which I have some, is that if you, if a hiring decision is made to hire somebody you did not think the department should have hired, well, then you have bad blood toward the decision and toward the person who comes in to fill the position, you already don't think they should be there and consequently you keep your distance, are not interested in their work, etc. (A, M-Ex, 1, p.5, 31-37)

Brad also identified how conflict was manifested when faculty did not agree on the hiring decisions of a department:

> It is unsolvable, you've got a guy had been hired that should never have been hired, and he's clearly incompetent, and I don't mean that in a bad way, just incapable of doing the job properly. (C, M-Ex, 1, p.11, 8-13)

Julie expanded on this "bad blood" phenomenon by indicating that fighting between members of a department "manifests itself only during the hiring decisions, always" (A, L-Ex, 1, p.12, 3-4).

In addition, Jane expressed frustration with her department's hiring process. The hiring committee was kept separate from the general faculty population and Jane felt that there was an undue sense of secrecy and power entrenched in this process, thus causing conflict among the faculty members.

> We've had an odd practice of keeping hiring committees very separate from department committees, with no communication, I mean that's weird...That's something I'd like to see changed, you know, that's something that leads to a bit of friction, why all the secrecy, why all the, why, why, why is this happening, this is weird. (C, L-Ex, 1, p.17, 32-35 & 48-52)

Stan also indicated how the hiring process could invoke conflict between faculty members, describing how some "[hiring] meetings were hot, they were just hot and ugly" (D, M-Ex, 2, p.10, 48-49).

Joe also discussed how the hiring process could cause significant ideological disagreements between faculty members. For instance, Joe explained that "in my department, we've been asked in recent years what should be the priorities in hiring, and I know I don't see eye to eye with some of my colleagues on some specifics" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.12, 8-13). These differences of opinion regarding aspects of the hiring process increase the possibility of interpersonal conflict between faculty.

Interpersonal conflict in academia can stem from the way a department manages its hiring process or from the decisions a hiring committee makes regarding the most qualified person. Faculty from all four departments observed that hiring and the hiring process were sources of interpersonal conflict among faculty. In their shorter academic careers, both junior faculty had already learned that hiring opportunities raised serious issues of interpersonal conflict; for example, hiring decisions identified departmental factions or camps that were not obvious to the new faculty member prior to the hiring decision. As the university continues to increase its numbers of new hires, this issue becomes even more important.

Faculty cohorts.

Faculty in this study also indicated that conflicts occur between different faculty cohorts. Following a 30-year period of low hiring levels, academia has recently begun to introduce a large number of new faculty into academic departments and this has caused drastic changes in age distributions and cohort conflicts in many departments. Jane described how her department was made up of two distinct cohorts—the young and the old—and how the older cohort attempted to maintain departmental control:

> Getting people to think, well, just because it was your decision doesn't mean it was my decision and if you really want to get weird and crass about it, we're going to be here for longer so you have to move over a little bit, I'm not asking you to jump out the window but there is a change of guard happening and the vision of the department does have to change to reflect the needs and interests and strengths of the people who are going to be here in the next ten, fifteen years. (C, L-Ex, 2, p.18, 38-48)

Brad (C, M-Ex) also observed conflicts occurring between faculty cohorts, especially on certain topics like course and program requirements. Although these major issues were

formally resolved in his department, "there's a little bit of animosity involved in that, and that's basically the younger people against the older people" (C, M-Ex, 1, p.17, 48-51). Sherman admitted that some senior faculty take advantage of new faculty's precarious situation: "well I think we do exploit them a little bit in the sense that they do more committee service than the rest of us do because they, they see that they have to prove themselves" (A, M-Ex, 2, p.20, 46-50). Cohort struggles could also stem from senior faculty either not understanding that their department now included new faculty who were not part of decisions made in prior years, or they could stem from an exploitation framework where senior faculty take advantage of pre-tenure faculty.

Faculty from two of the four departments observed that cohort struggles were a source of interpersonal conflict. Faculty in the remaining two departments did not explicitly mention these struggles as conflict precursors; however, they did mention some new faculty issues that could potentially lead to interpersonal conflict. For example, Paul mentioned that "most of [the new faculty] are women and that wouldn't have been the case, you know, 30 years ago" and that this "group of new ones who are just now having children for example" are introducing familial dynamics not witnessed in the department for many years (B, M-Ex, 1, p.6, 30-32 & 5-6). Stan also indicated that new faculty would be forced to inherit an unhealthy departmental climate since many senior faculty were close to retirement and therefore not invested in "fixing" the current negative climate: "they'll inherit this because they are young faculty members and they're going to have to live with this for years to come" (D, M-Ex, 1, p.34, 23-27). As the number of new faculty continues to grow, this source of conflict is of particular concern for senior and junior faculty in academic departments.

Course assignments.

Faculty participants also reported frustration with the process of course assignments. Brad discussed how assignments could cause conflict, especially when a faculty member is assigned a new course to develop and then does not get recognition for these efforts at promotion or tenure. Jane expressed how faculty in her department felt "short changed or penalized for doing or not doing certain things and not getting the courses that the would really like to get and not getting courses that are related to their research areas" (C, L-Ex, 1, p.16, 15-19). Stan identified a related source of aggravation that occurred when faculty demanded prime teaching slots and were unable to see that they might need to compromise in order to fulfill a complete teaching schedule for the department. George also acknowledged how conflict could arise over course assignments: "for course assignments, there might only be a few plush teaching assignments, so there's conflict over who gets it, but we generally understand this is the case" (A, M-Ex, 1, p.5, 22-25). Conversely, Sherman and Joe did not find course assignments to be a source of conflict; for example, Joe described how he was "flexible" and has found "that faculty members are usually very accommodating" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.13, 29-30) in the course assignment process.

Faculty from all four departments indicated that the course assignments were a source of conflict. Two senior faculty did not, however, feel that course assignments were major sources of conflict and one junior faculty member did not mention any aspect of course assignments in either of her two interviews. The other junior faculty member mentioned that course assignments invoked interpersonal conflict among faculty, which resonated with many of the senior faculty observations regarding the course assignment process. In summary, course assignments have the potential to be a source of interpersonal conflict for both junior and senior faculty.

Jealousy and turf protection.

Jealousy and turf protection were identified as another source of faculty-faculty conflict. Julie explained how competition between graduate students, "an example of academic jealousy" (A, L-Ex, 2, p.18, 35-36), could translate into jealousy between academics when graduate students became academics. Joe reinforced how jealousy between academics could lead to conflict by providing a working example:

> If you have say a subset within a department, two or three people, who become quite successful, may set up some formal or semiformal group, or centre, or whatever, they may be an object of envy because they are successful, they get money, and it may be said that they're making their sub-branch of the discipline too important, so you get some sort of subdued conflict about things like that. (B, M-Ex, 2, p.6, 23-40)

Paul observed that the assignment of graduate student advising could lead to jealousy amongst faculty members; this jealousy was linked to a situation where a minority of faculty get the majority of graduate students without adequate compensation and reward from the department. As Paul explained, "some of the people in one area have never had a grad student whereas the other area has several every year... each one of them [faculty members] is carrying a heavier burden so they complain" and the only reward is a teaching credit that is perceived as inadequate but "that's about all we can do cause we don't have any other way of us bringing more resources to bear" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.12, 12-14 & 21-22 & 35-37). Stan observed that jealousy and conflict could also arise over issues of research, teaching, and course assignments. Specifically, he described a hypothetical situation of two faculty members: one faculty member runs a research institute, gets buyouts for most of her teaching duties, and demands a prime teaching spot for her one class, while the other faculty member teaches a full course load, struggles to complete research, and requests a course assignment that would be

conducive to completing some research. Stan expressed that he would be personally "offended" by the former faculty member and stated, "why do they think foot soldiers shouldn't go first, you already got a research silver spoon in your mouth, why in the hell should you get prime time" (D, M-Ex, 2, p.41, 39-40). Regardless of personal preference towards the former or the latter faculty member, course assignments in situations like these could easily spark jealousy and conflict between faculty members. Therefore, faculty could be jealous of faculty members having too much success, for not sharing equally in departmental duties, or for perceiving that incorrect decisions regarding duties and rewards were being made.

Closely related to jealousy was turf protection and Brad, Jane, and Paul agreed that this was a significant source of conflict. Brad provided a useful description of turf protection: "someone feels insecure and feels threatened for example and I think very often it is, you get insecure, and you want to protect your space so you don't get hurt" (C, M-Ex, 1, p.15, 24-29). Jane explained that "perceptions that so and so is hoarding resources, [and] perception[s] that so and so is hoarding grad students" (C, L-Ex, 2, p.5, 30-32) were turf protection issues that triggered interpersonal conflict among faculty. Paul described a faculty environment that had, in the past, felt very territorial; faculty members had a sense "of it being vital to protect my little bailiwick" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.25, 35-36). However, Paul explained that he had not witnessed this turf protection or protecting your "bailiwick" in his department in recent years.

Perceptions of inequality and feelings of insecurity can trigger reactions of jealousy and territorial protection. Faculty from all four departments observed that these jealous and territorial reactions were sources of interpersonal conflict among faculty. Both junior and senior faculty were aware of these sources of conflict and cited many potential triggers for jealousy and turf protection reactions. These reactions increase the potential for interpersonal conflict among faculty as they attempt to cope with academic

situations that pit faculty against each other for resources, graduate students, and rewards.

Interpretation of rules and regulations.

Faculty-faculty conflict could also result from differing interpretations of rules and regulations. For example, Stan identified very closely with the idea of a university where teaching, research, and service were all expected from faculty members and was irritated by faculty who chose to emphasize only one component and then "reap the rewards of that very selfish kind of strategy" (D, M-Ex, 2, p.2, 47-48). Stan's frustration was clear in his observation of promotion requirements for associate and full professor:

> [I]n terms of promotion, you'll get promotion to associate if you're a good teacher and a researcher, you can get promoted to full even though you're recognized as not being particularly good teacher, based on you're research record, you <u>cannot</u> get to full without a good research record. (D, M-Ex, 2, p.2, 13-19)

Other participants also mentioned this inconsistent message and its subsequent source of conflict. For instance, Brad described a hypothetical situation where one faculty member was forced to design a new course because he was not assigned a course in his desired area:

> [T]he person who doesn't get the course is given a course not in their field, so there's an enormous amount of work involved, so they have to do the work, but then the department head the following year says, "listen, you didn't do enough research here, why didn't you get something published?" and, of course, the answer is, "because I was doing this goddamn course that you gave me that I shouldn't have gotten, give it to the other guy next time." (C, M-Ex, 1, p.15-16, 45-5)

Brad's description of conflict in developing a new course stemmed from an inconsistent message passed from administration to faculty: on one hand, time for teaching was demanded, but on the other hand, time not spent on research was punished.

Paul described how administrators offer mixed messages to faculty in terms of what is valued and what is funded and how this could cause conflict for faculty members having to operate in such circumstances. For instance, he discussed how administration sent out the message that undergraduate education was valued but did not provide faculty with necessary support for such education: "it means that our much wanted attention on undergraduate education, must be happening in another faculty, or someplace, because we can't keep up" (Paul, B, M-Ex, 2, p.10, 10-15). Another perceived mixed message from administrators was with respect to seniority/faculty age distributions. Paul observed how academic administrators demanded more optimal seniority and age distributions in departments but did not provide departments with assistance for achieving these more optimal distributions: "even though central admin. would criticize us for being top heavy, they didn't do anything to help us not be top heavy, so what could we do" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.9, 10-13).

These mixed messages were also felt by newer faculty members who must balance what they have been told were their duties with what they understand is valued for tenure (excellence in research). For instance, Julie indicated that her department head had been helpful in shielding her from committee work, one of the three main functions that all faculty must fulfill: "my department head is quite good, in terms of keeping me away from the service, so I don't have to do it, not now, not in the beginning any way" (A, L-Ex, 1, p.6, 13-17). This removal of one component of the academic contract underscores the confusion and frustration Stan experienced in relation to faculty who do not complete all aspects of their academic mandate.

Faculty from all four departments and from both cohorts mentioned the difficulty caused by mixed messages sent from administration to faculty. They also indicated how these messages could trigger interpersonal conflict among faculty. The variety of mixed messages occurring in academia indicate the heightened potential for faculty-faculty conflict in departments as they attempt to figure out what messages are really being indicated.

Administrative decisions.

Participants also felt that broader issues like administrative mandates, decisions, and budgetary actions were key sources of interpersonal conflict in the academy. Brad and Stan both revealed how violations of standards and of professional actions could lead to conflict situations. For example, Stan's biggest source of conflict was frustration that came from realizing that certain faculty were not honouring their academic mandates:

> It's individuals acting in ways that undermine the mission statement of the
> university, it's conflict with the institution, it's in conflict with our purpose, and so
> it's not me [getting mad at] you because I think you're a jerk, it's me [getting mad
> at] you because you're not investing into what you're supposed to be investing
> into, and that you'll be rewarded for that is the part that's so absolutely infuriating.
> (D, M-Ex, 2, p.3, 21-32)

Joe further expressed how conflict could occur when internal or external governing bodies tried to impose mandates that affected segments of the faculty population. He personally felt that certain administrative actions had been "unethical" and had affected him negatively (B, M-Ex, 1, p.2, 14). Paul believed that many academic conflicts were grounded in conflicts over the budget: "budgets [are] always at the bottom of everything... what sometimes appears to be personality disputes really are often budget

based" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.11, 9-10 & 14-16). The range of administrative responsibilities is vast, with many responsibilities having the potential to spark interpersonal conflict in academic settings.

Senior faculty from three of the four departments indicated that administrative decisions could trigger interpersonal conflict among faculty. Junior faculty in this study did not, however, mention their perceptions regarding how administrative decisions affected faculty relations; further investigation into the perceptions of junior faculty on administrative decisions is warranted. As indicated by senior faculty in this study, interpersonal conflict among faculty could be triggered by administrative decisions regarding the academic mission, budget, or faculty issues.

"Prima Donna" faculty.

Paul, Stan, Joe, and Jane also observed that "prima donna" faculty members were a source of faculty-faculty conflict. Stan described how "institutionally and structurally we've set up a kind of recruitment process that brings in prima donnas" which were faculty that "have big egos, they're relatively soft and they've been promoted to quite a bit of power over resources and about power over students and content of their classes" (D, M-Ex, 1, p.8, 25-27 & 14-16). These faculty caused conflict because they "really do expect their opinion to count more than anybody else's or their judgment on the matter to be wiser than anybody else's" (Paul, B, M-Ex, 2, p.20, 10-14). Joe described these people as "petty" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.16, 50) and Jane expressed the "danger" (C, L-Ex, 2, p.8, 5) of faculty using their power and status to devalue another faculty's research topic and methodologies.

Faculty from three of the four departments targeted for this study indicated that "prima donna" faculty were a trigger for interpersonal conflict in academic communities. None of the faculty from department A—neither the senior nor the junior faculty—

mentioned the problems caused by faculty who have larger egos and abuse their power. Consensus from the other three departments, and the two cohorts, indicates that "prima donna" faculty are potential sources of interpersonal conflict among faculty.

Summary.

Faculty members can be exposed to numerous sources of academic interpersonal conflict. These conflicts, erupting from fundamental aspects of academic life like hiring, tenure procedures, and administrative practices can cause personal distress and tension. Junior and senior faculty often indicated the same sources of interpersonal conflict in academic communities. In addition, faculty from the four different departments observed many similar triggers of faculty-faculty conflict. Fortunately, junior and senior faculty from all these departments have learned many strategies for coping with interpersonal conflicts in their workplaces.

Coping Strategies

With all the potential for academic conflict, how do academics cope when faced with, or surrounded by, faculty-faculty conflict? Some faculty relied on their colleagues for support during a conflict and newer faculty members were encouraged to rely on departmental assistance when confronted with an interpersonal conflict with another faculty member. Other faculty members have learned that diversifying their interests and not having their entire identity as an "academic" was useful in coping with interpersonal conflicts. Closely related to this strategy was the understanding, attributed to the aging process, regarding how other faculty members will behave and react to issues and how appropriate responses could be framed in turn. Some faculty also relied on objective and rational thought to cope with conflicts, and used talking, diplomacy and flexibility to manage conflicts directly. Understanding and forgiveness were also employed by other

faculty members determined to deflate, rather than inflate, interpersonal academic conflicts. Governance issues, although a source of academic conflict, were also identified as a coping resource for faculty involved in conflict.

Most informants, however, revealed that they employed one of many avoidance strategies, from moving to a different building to waiting for the person or people to retire, in order to cope with conflict. The consensus on this coping strategy points to its importance in academic life. Academics in this study appeared to prefer avoiding a conflict situation instead of resolving a conflict situation.

Colleagues and department heads.

Jane expressed how her biggest source of help during times of conflict were her colleagues:

> That first line is just, the person across the hall or the person next door to you, you feel you can go shut the door and scream, and you've got to have that too, you've got to feel that there are people in your department and your floor whom you can trust. (C, L-Ex, 1, p.24, 6-11)

The department head was another source of help for faculty, especially new faculty, involved in conflict. Julie explained that "whenever I have a real difficult situation I just go to him [the department head]" (A, L-Ex, 2, p.4, 28-29). Jane also explained how the department head and dean were integral players for new faculty coping with conflict: "they can go see other people if they feel they've been unfairly dealt with, you know they can see the head of the department, they can see the dean, and this is, that's very good for policy stuff" (C, L-Ex, 1, p.23, 21-26). Julie and Jane differed in their thoughts regarding what issues should go to the head. Julie felt that she could go to the head for most conflict matters, while Jane felt that only conflicts that had repercussions or ripples should go the head:

Repercussions, it's when it ripples, and it's got a, it has the potential for affecting

your reputation, it's not just you and your colleague any more, it's outside, and if

you want to have some control over those ripples then you need to go see your

head and say, "I've been told this, or I've heard this, and I think this is happening

and where do we go here." (Jane, C, L-Ex, 1, p.25-26, 45-1)

Senior faculty members also cited the department head as a good source of help for

new faculty members. For instance, George provided the following advice to new faculty:

"I mean especially if this is a junior faculty member, whether it makes sense to talk to the

department head, cause that's an obvious resource for younger faculty members " (A,

M-Ex, 2, p.18, 32-37). The head did not seem to be seen as a resource with respect to

conflict resolution for more senior faculty.

Junior faculty appeared to be the only faculty who relied on colleagues and

department heads for support when faced with interpersonal conflicts. Although senior

faculty did not indicate that they relied on this form of support, they did describe the

important role department heads play in helping junior faculty with issues of conflict.

Further investigation into this coping strategy is required in order to understand why

junior faculty rely on colleagues and department heads while senior faculty do not

perceive that these people are sources of academic support during times of conflict.

Identity diversification.

Both Brad and Stan expressed how they were actively involved in their family

and Sherman indicated that he was committed to outside activities as well. Sherman

observed that this outside commitment helped him cope with conflicts: "this [conflict]

doesn't fester within me because this is not the centre of my social life, if it was, as it is, I

think, for some of my colleagues, then I think, it would be much more difficult to handle"

(A, M-Ex, 1, p.20, 45-50). Faculty who have their full identity wrapped up in being an

"academic" may be more affected by interpersonal conflicts because their entire social life would be affected.

Only senior faculty in this study indicated that diversifying their identity had helped them to cope with interpersonal conflicts that occurred between faculty. Identity diversification may be a learned coping mechanism for academics or it may be a strategy entertained more by faculty who have achieved tenure. Further inquiry into this coping mechanism is warranted.

Academic experience.

Four participants expressed how they have learned over their academic career to tolerate many actions that occur in departmental settings. Brad and Paul admitted that they used to approach some conflicts with confrontation but have learned over the years to be more flexible and to avoid most conflicts. George and Sherman also discussed how they have learned how other people will react to certain situations and how they have come to understand other people's positions on issues. The following quotes reinforce this learning and changing process that has occurred for these four participants over the past 25 years:

> I think that a lot of us have mellowed and become a lot more flexible and I think we don't take ourselves as seriously as we used to. (Brad, C, M-Ex, 1, p.3, 3-7)

> I think over the years people have mellowed a lot and that helps, and there's less sense of it being vital to protect my little bailiwick. (Paul, B, M-Ex, 1, p.25, 31-36)

> I guess it's part of the aging process, there's some people in the department whose views on this area are views that I do not share now and have not ever shared and they basically, they come from a different vantage point, and [when] I

was much younger, I was much more pissed at this, but in the case of this one

individual, it gradually became obvious, even to me, that deep down this was

really a good hearted individual, it was very hard not to like him. (George, A, M-

Ex, 2, p.6-7, 45-2)

On certain issues I know how certain people will vote, and I suspect on certain

issues people in the department know how I vote too, in that sense, they're fairly

drawn, I would say there are about 20% on either end who always vote in

particular ways on certain issues, in opposite ways. (Sherman, A, M-Ex, 2, p.9, 7-

16)

Much like identity diversification, academic experience as a coping strategy was

only mentioned by senior faculty members. These faculty members, from three of the

four departments, all indicated that the experience of academic life has taught them

many lessons for dealing with interpersonal conflict that occurs between faculty. These

lessons are not as available to junior faculty simply because they have not been part of

academic life for long enough.

Direct action.

Joe explained that he relied on diplomacy if confronted with conflict and tried to

manage issues "objectively" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.13, 48). George also observed that he tried to

approach conflict issues analytically:

If its conflict involving some academic matter I will, I will tend to be analytical

about it, I like to know what it is that we're trying to achieve, what's the objective

function here... if there are strong emotions involved then I am likely to want to

know where the emotions are coming from in order to have some idea what

might have generated them and what will cause them to go away or be resolved

or be satisfied, or whatever, whether they are mine or somebody else's. (A, M-

Ex, 2, p.8, 21-25 & 31-38)

Faculty members may also choose to talk out their problems with colleagues, especially

if their department has a culture of openness. Julie and Sherman both felt that their

department has this type of open culture:

We do allow each other to feel strongly about issues and to be passionate about

things...it's really that honesty that is a strength in our department, I think if we,

these differences primarily were spoken behind people's back and never to their

face we would be more likely to have situations where people didn't talk to each

other. (Sherman, A, M-Ex, 2, p.11-12, 42-1)

I guess the main rule is just be friendly with each other, I think the main idea is try

to be as nice personally as possible, so, that's become clear, the things that

noticed. (Julie, A, L-Ex, 2, p.13, 32-36)

This open culture, at the very least, may help faculty to cope with their interpersonal

conflicts directly since complete avoidance is not allowed because academics are

expected to maintain some semblance of communication.

Others, like Joe and Stan, realized the value of talking but insisted that most of

these discussions should be in private. Stan expressed at the end of one interview how

he felt that private "interpersonal conflict is fine", while "public conflict is bad" because it

overtly indicated that people cannot be "congenial" (D, M-Ex, 1, p.37, 55-57). Joe

explained how most "serious talks" between faculty and the head regarding issues like

faculty interpersonal conflict were held "behind closed doors" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.7, 24-26). In

addition, Joe described how he was able to minimize some conflicts experienced by

faculty by instructing them not to "talk about these things when you greet each other in the corridors, or in your office with the door open" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.8, 38-41). Faculty must be made aware of the implicit understanding that some conflict matters should be managed in private. Academia was not described by faculty in this study as a culture that valued direct, public confrontations; instead, it was described as preferring private discussions when direct action must be taken.

Directly managing interpersonal conflict between faculty through talking and rationale thinking was not widely used by faculty in this study as a coping strategy. However, some faculty did choose to directly cope with interpersonal conflicts rather than to avoid them. Faculty from department A all indicated that their departmental culture valued direct action and encouraged all members to communicate. Senior faculty from two other departments also explained the usefulness of direct action in coping with interpersonal conflict.

Understanding and forgiveness.

Stan, Julie, and Brad expressed that they cope with conflict by trying to see the person behind the conflict. As Stan explained, "I can find good things in all of these people" (D, M-Ex, 2, p.8, 16-17), even the people with which he is in conflict. Brad indicated that "all you try to do is you try to stay low key and flexible and human and understand that human perfection is not natural and in some way try to remedy it" (C, M-Ex, 1, p.9, 62-65).

These participants also acknowledged the importance of forgiveness, forgetting, and the need to let go of grudges. Brad described a powerful moment of forgiveness where a faculty member lost his temper with him and Brad chose to forgive and forget instead of remain upset: "[this situation involved another faculty] losing his temper and me not losing my temper and just forgetting about it and I think he's always been very

grateful that I did" (C, M-Ex, 1, p.12, 16-18). Although Stan expressed the importance of letting conflict dissipate and of not holding grudges, he made it clear that this was not the same as forgiveness:

It doesn't mean I am warm bosom buddies, it doesn't mean that I have forgotten, it doesn't mean that I have forgiven them for the dirty pool, it doesn't mean that I'll speak highly of them when it comes to those kinds of things, it means I'll never trust them again, but those are all things that they've earned, not something I've dispensed on them without their input, so that's my conclusion, they're not to be trusted, that doesn't mean that just because I don't like them, doesn't, or the way they act, that I have to carry around a grudge, life's too short, I don't need to carry around grudges, there's enough...aggravation in the world, without cultivating enemies, you know. (D, M-Ex, 2, p.8, 19-35)

Faculty from three of the four departments indicated that understanding and forgiveness were necessary reactions to interpersonal conflict. It may be that discipline plays some role in this coping strategy, being that none of the faculty from the other department made mention of these qualities in coping with faculty-faculty conflict.

Governance issues.

The academic structure—the rules, values, beliefs, and governance—contributed in many ways to conflict between academics. Participants repeatedly mentioned how conflicting rules often led to conflicts. The also discussed how the governance system contributed to increased conflict. For example, the department head is neither granted autonomy nor power to execute many important accountability mandates, and yet it is the department head who is expected to implement such mandates. Faculty in this study were aware of this struggle:

[I]t's getting to be more and more of a thankless job, you know, too much work,

not enough of their own research gets done, and more administrator load, fewer

resources, so it's really hard, really hard. (Jane, C, L-Ex, 2, 15-16, 48-11)

[S]o [deans] delegate those kinds of things down to you, you have to make the

decision, so either you roll over [or] ... you're going to try and do your job at all at

the other end of the hall, then you're going to end up making enemies ...they wait

for you, and there's really very little you can do about it, so from administrator's

point of view, it's pretty hopeless. (Stan, D, M-Ex, 1, p.22, 52-54 & 59-61 & p.24,

10-13)

The struggles faced by department heads contributed to faculty-faculty conflict either

because of the non-constructive ways heads coped with the struggles or because of the

faculty "enemies" that existed when a head reverted back to being a faculty member.

Many senior faculty participants discussed how governance and policy decisions

helped faculty manage and cope with interpersonal conflicts. The creation of a faculty

union was one major development that helped faculty deal with conflict in the academy.

Paul explained that "one important way we all had coping was to create the faculty

union, the creation of a faculty union was sparked by the need to feel control, more

control, not total control, over our future careers" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.32, 1-6). The union

created grievance procedures, which many faculty, senior and junior, cited as a means

for coping with certain conflicts. For example, George declared that:

The grievance chair is happy to launch grievances, that is of course a way of

dealing with conflict, there is a, there are a number of committees of the union

that people who feel aggrieved on various ways or underrepresented or

otherwise marginalized can go to the union. (A, M-Ex, 2, p.21, 27-34)

In addition to the union, faculty members cited policy decisions regarding tenure, promotion, hiring, and the election of heads as useful means for decreasing the potential for conflict. There used to be great variety in the way tenure and promotion decisions were handled, which contributed to interpersonal conflicts in departments. For example, Stan remembered that "it used to be that a department head would call you in and tell you you had tenure, yeah, it used to be a department head would call and say I think it's time for you to be promoted" (D, M-Ex, 2, p.14, 39-42). Contrast this with how tenure and promotion decisions are now made:

> Tenure and promotion committees are now faculty based, they have a nucleus from the department but they have members from the faculty so you could sort of protect an individual whose involved in a certain amount of infighting in his or her own department, with people from the outside and tenure and promotion ones are very, very careful, they are very, very careful. (Stan, D, M-Ex, 2, p.15, 4-12)

These changes to the tenure and promotion process have not, however, completely eliminated interpersonal conflict. Both Brad and Joe discussed interpersonal conflicts that still arose over these tenure and promotion issues. Joe remembered an incident that occurred in a tenure committee meeting:

> [O]ne time I was a member of a tenure committee...and...well, when it came to discussing the applicant for tenure...other members of the department, said, well, yes he's a very good teacher, yes he's got some very solid research publications, but they voted against tenure cause they didn't like him. (B, M-Ex, 1, p.5, 18-25)

Although these policy changes have been helpful in reducing the possibility of conflict, they have not completely eliminated conflict surrounding promotion and tenure.

Another means of coping with conflicts was the creation of an election procedure for department heads. Two participants mentioned that, in the past, department heads were not objectively appointed and faculty had to band together to implement policies for

rationale appointment procedures. Faculty in this study explained that the systematic procedure for electing heads for a finite term, rather than having them appointed by the dean or having heads maintain their position indefinitely, reduced some interpersonal conflict in the department. Stan observed that faculty believed strongly in these democratic elections: "we have worked so hard against autocratic rule, we're not gonna to be ruled by an independent department head and we're not gonna to be ruled by...people who do politics in small rooms and then spring things on collectives" (D, M-Ex, 2, p.31, 30-35 & 38-39). Electing heads and establishing rules for collegial and collective decisions are means for decreasing some of the conflicts that can occur between heads and faculty members.

While senior faculty indicated that governance issues, which had occurred early on in their career, had helped them to cope with some interpersonal conflicts among faculty, junior faculty only observed the important role department heads played in helping minimize interpersonal conflict in departments. The lessons learned by senior faculty when they were new to the academy appeared to have impacted their perceptions of academia to this day; these lessons regarding electing heads, objective processes and procedures, and the creation of the faculty union are, simply, the reality for junior faculty who appeared more aware of the struggles involving academic department heads.

Avoidance.

Most of the academics interviewed explained how they tried to avoid conflict. "You know some of us don't seek out conflict, we try to avoid conflict situations, we may even try to bend over backwards," Joe explained when asked how he managed academic conflict (B, M-Ex, 1, p.11, 34-36). Paul resonated these feelings: "I'm probably more along the avoidance line than the confrontation line...you learn what to avoid and

what not to avoid" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.20, 47-49 & p.24, 42-44). As a new faculty member, Jane described how she has begun to learn the importance of avoidance in relation to interpersonal conflict in academic communities: "if you don't like somebody, very often you can stay away from that person or that person can stay away from you...you can stay off the committees" (C, L-Ex, 2, p.6-7, 50-7). This avoidance of committees is exactly what Sherman has done ever since he got into a conflict with another faculty member.

This tendency to avoid conflict situations, or to avoid situations that might aggravate past conflicts, was played out in numerous ways. As Stan explained, "there's a thousand ways to distance yourself from the problem" (D, M-Ex, 1, p.12, 5-6). Faculty could move to a different building, wait until other faculty retire, and simply not talk to each other or to anyone else. Paul described an extreme example of avoidance: "we have one [...] hermit in our department who will not participate, doesn't see anyone, ...doesn't actually leave his office when he's there...he never goes for coffee, or wanders around or chats with people" (Paul, B, M-Ex, 1, p.19, 31-37). Finally, faculty could simply leave and as Julie indicated, "this is actually why it is so hard to find the conflict" (A, L-Ex, 1, p.11, 16-17). It appears that in academia, it is easier to avoid than it is to directly resolve a conflict situation.

For some academics, physically leaving the conflict situation was a useful coping mechanism. All the participants interviewed described how their departmental members were split geographically between buildings. Joe explained how most of these splits occurred: "some members of those departments have deliberately decided to come to Building 2 or 3 to get away from their colleagues" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.9, 1-3). George and Paul described incidents of faculty moving from one building to another to avoid conflict:

The losing side in that [debate] decided that they didn't really want to subject

themselves to this [debate] so they moved their offices. (George, A, M-Ex, 1, p.6,

15-17)

The hiring conflicts got so bad that I resigned [from the administrative position]

and then decided I couldn't put up with it anymore and moved. (George, A, M-Ex,

1, p.6, 27-29)

We have a department which is located in [...] different buildings, now there was

a time when I thought this was a real weakness, but as time went by, I've come

to recognize that it's a real strength because it means we can avoid each other if

we want to. (Paul, B, M-Ex, 2, p.25, 2-8)

Paul provided the following advice to faculty who find themselves in academic

interpersonal conflict: "I would advise them to avoid or to move" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.24-25, 54-

1). Interestingly, this ability to move to another building to avoid conflict appeared to be

decreasing. Sherman (A, M-Ex) indicated how new faculty in his department were all

being located in one place and Jane (C, L-Ex) acknowledged that this was the case in

her department. Time will tell if these new faculty are going to be able to use moving to

other buildings as a coping strategy in the future.

Another way to avoid conflict, as described by faculty in this study, was to wait

until the person or people retire and remove the conflict. Both junior and senior faculty

relied on this tactic. For example, Paul described how people in his department and

faculty were waiting for their hermit to retire:

I think some people are quite fed up on the grounds that he's a very senior

person, he shouldn't be making the pay that he makes, but what do you do about

it, all you can do is hope he retires as quickly as possible, no sign of it, by the

way. (B, M-Ex, 2. p.17, 40-46)

George indicated how some conflicts were simply not worth pursuing; for example, it

was easier to wait for a faculty member to retire than to get into a conflict over

performance. Jane also agreed with this need to wait until some people retire. She

expressed that new faculty had to make a choice between waiting and acting: "some of it

is just slowly making the case and some of it is just waiting for people to retire" (C, L-Ex,

2, p.19, 6-8).

Joe has learned that retirement is the only way to remove some conflicts: "some

problems aren't resolved, they can't be, in one of the instances that I mentioned to you,

personal dislike lingered until the guy retired" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.18, 4-6). Other difficult-to-

resolve issues, like wanting to hire new people as Paul explained, can only resolved as

senior people retired; until then, the department must cope with discipline areas that are

being neglected and with faculty who may not be performing certain functions

adequately.

Since many conflicts cannot, or will not, be resolved, faculty members appeared

to rely on distance and time to help avoid conflict situations. Julie had already learned

this lesson as she coped with a recent conflict: "well, we don't go out together, we don't

interact, we don't have reasons to interact" (A, L-Ex, 1, p.17, 29-30). Other faculty

members, unable to move away from their conflicts, may choose not to speak with each

other. Stan called this action "cultivated indifference" and explained that "there are some

people in this department who don't even acknowledge each other, they can walk down

the hall and it's like the other person's invisible, and it's mutual, that's the way they want

it" (D, M-Ex. 2, p.7-8, 55-10). Although nearly every participant acknowledged that

cultivated indifference and complete avoidance between faculty members occurred in

departments, George, Sherman, and Julie all revealed that their department, department A, had an informal policy that every member must talk.

Faculty members from both cohorts and from all departments indicated the importance of avoidance in coping with interpersonal conflict in academia. This finding is insightful because of the consensus by faculty on its importance and use in numerous interpersonal conflict situations.

Summary.

Although academics can use any number of strategies to cope with interpersonal conflict in the academy, most have learned, or are learning, that avoidance is one of the most useful coping strategies. Faculty may use other strategies like colleagues, department heads, and identity diversification and may acknowledge the role that experience and governance play in managing conflict; however, discussions with participants revealed that most were likely to incorporate some aspect of avoidance into any coping strategy.

There were differences in the coping strategies used by faculty in different cohorts and different departments. Junior faculty indicated that colleagues and department heads were sources of support while senior faculty observed that identity diversification and academic experience provided help in dealing with interpersonal conflict at work. Faculty in department A indicated that their department culture valued talking and direct action and faculty in departments C and D indicated that understanding and forgiveness were useful actions during conflict situations. Strategies for coping with interpersonal conflict in academic settings appear to be diverse and to vary both with cohort status and departmental affiliation.

Role of Department Head or Dean

The department head has the ability to be both a source of conflict and a resource for coping with conflict. This prominent role of the department head sparked much discussion on the department head's duties and the characteristics that heads should demonstrate. Most participants sympathized with the department head's role. Jane felt that this role was "getting to be more and more of a thankless job, you know, too much work, not enough of their own research gets done, and more administrator load, fewer resources, so it's really hard, _really_ hard (C, L-Ex, 2, p.15-16, 48-11). Others observed that department heads, because they revert back to being professors and colleagues after their term is complete, were stuck in a lose-lose situation. George explained that:

> The department head could crack the whip, but the department heads are not likely to do that in part because, I mean, department heads are not like CEOs of firms, CEOs of firms go from being CEOs to being chairman of the board to retiring on a generous pension, but they don't then go back down to the foreman level, well, department heads don't wink out of existence when they finish their term, they go back to being professors, well, when you start cracking the whip you make a lot of enemies then when you go back down to being professor, they're all waiting for you. (A, M-Ex, 2, p.28, 40-55)

Even though there were these administrative challenges, department heads played a vital role in faculty dynamics. As discussed in the "Coping Strategies" section, department heads were a resource for new faculty, providing both general information regarding the department and specific support new faculty who encountered interpersonal conflict. Thus, department heads must struggle through their finite

administrative term, personally coping with their own issues while supporting newer faculty as they cope with their experiences of interpersonal conflict.

Many participants felt department heads should hold certain skills or characteristics to be effective both at interpersonal relations and at managing academic conflicts. Brad explained that heads should be "low key and flexible" (C, M-Ex, 1, p.9, 63), Joe emphasized the ability to "keep your mouth shut" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.14, 14-15), and Jane valued the department head's ability to display "interpersonal savvy" (C, L-Ex, 1, p.24, 50). Sherman explained how he saw the role of department head shifting from that of a scholar to that of a shop steward. This shift would mean that the head "would function more than before as representing the viewpoints of the department to the dean and above" (Sherman, A, M-Ex, 2, p.12-13, 56-3) instead of focusing his or her attention to needs of the faculty members. Finally, Julie shared that she valued a department head who had "the ability sometimes to be impartial and just relate information that they've got" (A, L-Ex, 2, p.4, 39-41) to all faculty in a department.

Faculty from all four departments discussed the important role of department heads in academic institutions. Both junior and senior faculty observed the struggles and challenges facing department heads and indicated characteristics that they would like to see embodied by faculty who fill these roles.

Academic Culture

Faculty operate in a culture that is different from cultures experienced in non-academic workplaces. As Stan explained, "this is an ivory tower after all, and it's not like real life" (D, M-Ex, 1, p.8, 4-5). The interpretation and perceptions of this culture provided dramatic insight into the values and beliefs of academia. Faculty participating in this study provided their perceptions of academic independence, familial relationships, departmental divisiveness, faculty accountability and academic freedom, collegiality, and

tenure. By understanding these perceptions, observers can begin to appreciate how rules and procedures can be both sources of conflict and strategies for coping with conflict. These perceptions also provide observers with an understanding of the complexities of issues in academic life and how conflict is embedded in many layers within the academic structure.

Independence.

Faculty operate in a fairly independent, and sometimes isolated, environment and this independence is highly valued.

Academics have a real short fuse when it comes to being told what to do, that's why many of them have gravitated to this line of work because you're quite independent, there are some, there are rules you're supposed to be following, but within those rules you have your own time. (Jane, C, L-Ex, 2, p.25, 30-36)

In this context, however, faculty struggle with a lack of boundaries regarding work time and play time. Brad described this situation with which many academics struggle:

The great thing about this job is it's never done, I mean you're always finding interesting things to think about, interesting things in the world...but the terrible thing about the job is it's never done, you're always doing it, and that can be very dangerous. (C, M-Ex, 1, p.13-14, 50-14)

Jane reinforced this point and explained that there is a "tendency of the job to spill out and eat up every single moment, you can always write another paper, you can always be over prepared...like there's, a sense, it's just not enough time in the day" (C, L-Ex, 2, p.26, 16-20).

Faculty from all four departments expressed the important role that independence plays in academic life. They were more likely to work independently than in collaborative efforts: "academic life, people very often are engaged in individual

projects and they will work with the other colleague <u>only</u> if they find the pleasure doing

that" (Julie, L-Ex, 1, p.5, 11-13). Junior and senior faculty appreciated this independence

but realized that with it came some serious boundary issues between work time and play

time.

Family metaphor.

Many senior academics used the metaphor of a family to describe their academic

culture. These academics were originally hired in the boom era of the 1960s and early

1970s, and together they have been promoted, tenured, and are now approaching

retirement age. Paul shared how faculty "have to live with the people in [their] own

department, over maybe a long term, I mean one could easily contemplate a whole

career of having to live with the same group of people" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.30, 18-23). George

described his fascination with this aspect of academic life: "universities are fascinating

places to watch psychology at work, because the same actors are there for thirty years

in a row, they don't go away" (A, M-Ex, 2, p.16, 29-33).

Many of the senior participants reminisced about being part of an academic

family. For example, Joe explained that "in many ways, until very recently, we'd all

grown old together" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.3, 27). George described that "it's like you've been

with some 20 years, we're like family, and we know how their going to respond to

various issues" (A, M-Ex, 1, p.6, 47-48). This ability to learn about each other and to

learn from each other was another important aspect of the familial academic life: "that's

the other thing about a <u>long</u> career, people do change, they come round or you come

round" (Jane, C, L-Ex, 1, p.21, 45-47).

As a cohort, the senior faculty members remembered interacting much more

frequently both inside and outside academia. Paul recounted that "when I first came

here, we were highly, highly sociable and we did a lot of things like, parties on

weekends" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.21, 23-25). Sherman described how these interactions benefited his academic perspectives as a new faculty member: "that informal interaction, as a younger faculty member, I found it very helpful, there were, quite often, there were discussions around ideas I wouldn't necessarily have been thinking about if I hadn't heard my colleagues talking about it" (A, M-Ex, 1, p.12, 45-50). George explained that: "we had a good deal more fraternization among department members outside the university when I first came, but we don't do that now" (A, M-Ex, 1, p.11, 31-36). Interestingly, Paul felt that there were more opportunities for conflict when people were socializing more frequently. This was especially the case when alcohol was involved: "I think there was more conflict then because there were more occasions for people to be thrown together, particularly with a bit of alcohol mixed in, whereas, when you aren't meeting that way anymore, you don't have occasions very much" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.21, 37-45).

While this fraternization was described as useful and beneficial for faculty members, it drew to a close well over a decade ago for most academics. This was due in part to university restructuring and in part to a faculty cohort that was aging. Paul described this change: "everybody moved into middle age and so on, and, well, a lot of people didn't want to drink anymore, for one thing, and their wives didn't want them to and so on" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.21, 33-37). George explained how they all got old and had seen each other's "warts" (A, M-Ex, 1, p.11, 34); therefore, the socializing died out. This academic family now socialized less than they did when they first began in academia.

Senior faculty from three of the four departments mentioned the importance of their academic family. This family started in academia together, experienced the highs and lows of academic life together, and matured together. This family of academics is now approaching retirement age and is beginning to experience a new generation of

academics in their midst. Only time will tell if this new generation of academics will feel that their colleagues are like a family to them.

Departmental divisiveness.

Faculty must also accept a certain amount of departmental divisiveness. Departmental camps or factions, usually based on ideology, exist and have the potential to affect every departmental decision. For example, Joe described a department that always split decisions, even decisions as simple as amending the minutes of a prior meeting:

> [T]hey split [...] on every issue, including the famous issue about whether or not to approve or amend the minutes of the meeting of February X...every motion to approve or amend [the minutes] was lost on a [...] tie vote. (B, M-Ex, 1, p.4, 43-45 & p. 5, 5-6)

Julie observed how camps in her department split physically and ideologically on a hiring decision:

> [W]e had one part of the table, and there was another part of the table, and it just happened that people came in and they sat down with those people whom they just wanted to talk to, and so then there was a discussion...and a vote was taken and then, the vote was split half and half and literally by the sides of the table. (A, L-Ex, 1, p.12, 9-19)

These departmental camps were often caused by interpersonal conflict and continue to inject a level of conflict in their departments.

These physical and geographical splits of faculty were closely related to the avoidance coping strategy where faculty were more likely to move to other buildings because of conflict instead of working to resolve the interpersonal conflict between faculty. Both junior and senior faculty, from all departments in this study, indicated the

pervasiveness of these camps in academic communities. These camps, depending on their reactions to decisions, have the ability to negatively impact the departmental climate and to increase the possibility of faculty-faculty conflict.

Accountability.

The ability, or lack thereof, to hold academics accountable for their job duties was another recurring theme expressed by participants. This frustration was enhanced when academics wanted the rights of academia (like academic freedom) without the corresponding responsibilities. Stan succinctly expressed this concern: "people are very good on rights but very short on understanding responsibilities" (D, M-Ex, 1, p.32, 63-64). Brad expressed that "so much depends on what values, what assumptions you come to the job with" (C, M-Ex, 1, p.16, 11-12) and if academics value different things then the possibility for conflict increases. For example, Brad shared his annoyance with faculty members who do not attend convocation. Although this was not a formal job requirement, Brad has always felt that it was his duty to attend convocation when his students graduate and he was saddened by his colleagues who don't share this value.

Participants shared many stories of academics who had violated some aspect of the academic contract but who had not received what were felt to be appropriate sanctions. For example, Paul described how a senior faculty member in his department refused to fulfill any of his service requirements and how this refusal could not or would not be rectified: "That's a problem that absolutely no one can solve, and I know it has been considered by several deans, two, and I know it has gone to the VP academic who couldn't come up with a solution either (Paul, B, M-Ex, 2, p.17, 21-26). This inability to hold a faculty member accountable for basic job requirements increases the opportunity for conflict between faculty members in this department. George shared the frustration

felt by academics when faculty members who have behaved inappropriately were not sanctioned:

> When he ended up not being slung out of the university, the department head and the rest of the department were really pissed, we didn't think there was any room in our department for this character. (A, M-Ex, 2, p.4, 17-21)

Joe also expressed how a good research record could excuse bad behaviour and job duty avoidance. If "your research effectiveness may excuse a number of things" (Joe, B, M-Ex, 2, p.12, 25-26), faculty members may find that they are surrounded by academics who are enjoying privileges not shared by the entire department or faculty.

This issue of accountability was intimately linked to the interpretation of academic freedom. At a broad level, academic freedom essentially means the freedom to teach and to research without fear of repercussions (Shils, 1984). However, many faculty have extended this notion to include a wide variety of behaviours: "anytime we try to call them into account for anything, they tell us to get lost, right, we're interfering with their academic freedom" (Stan, D, M-Ex, 1, p.8, 30-33). These broad interpretations of academic freedom could cause interpersonal conflict for some faculty, like Stan, who believe that academics should be held accountable for fundamental job responsibilities.

Issues of academic rights and academic responsibilities were important to faculty from all departments in this study. More specifically, senior faculty expressed their frustration at faculty who were not held accountable for their actions; senior administration, deans, department heads, and even faculty colleagues appeared to be limited in their ability to hold faculty responsible for any academic action. Further investigation into the perceptions held by junior faculty on this issue of accountability is needed in order to determine how they perceive this academic situation.

Collegiality.

The concept of collegiality also had varied interpretations and these variations could trigger faculty-faculty conflict. Joe, George, and Julie provided various definitions of collegiality:

It means that we should engage in civilized discourse, that we should have the interests of our discipline at heart and that these interests in being professional people give us a sense of unity that should be able to overcome any personal jealousies. (Joe, B, M-Ex, 2, p.8, 28-33)

Collegiality certainly involves critiquing, oh yeah, it's not just a support session no, it's a decision making in which issues are discussed and then choices are made, but options being discussed involves specifying the pros and cons and often that's in kind of a debating context see, the opposite of collegiality is non-transparency, is no decision, no discussion. (George, A, M-Ex, 1, p.7, 21-29)

My colleagues would talk a lot about collegialities, they would always, the things that they would use is actually completely unfair, they would say that, "how come you can put, say, students over your colleagues," something like that, and I would just say, "that actually the problem is not preferring some people over other people, it's basically a question of preferring one ideology over the one. (Julie, A, L-Ex, 1, p.14, 15-22)

Faculty from both cohorts and from three of the four departments expressed variations in collegial definitions. These differences indicate a possibility for increased

interpersonal conflict among faculty because they may be operating from, and acting on, varying interpretations of collegiality.

Tenure.

The journey to tenure is one of the most stressful and conflicted times for junior faculty. Much stress and conflict extends from the difference between formal and informal rules regarding what actions and duties are valued in the tenure process. Stan provided the most striking example of conflict that occurred when values over teaching, research, and service conflict with the informal rule that research was valued above all other functions for pre-tenure faculty. He spent much time describing the "selfish" behaviour of faculty who try to get out of teaching and service requirements in order to pursue research activities, and yet when asked what actions were important for getting promoted and tenured, he replied:

> [D]o as little service as you can get away with, and devote no more time to your teaching than is necessary, try and get release time stipends, try and get contracts that buy out teaching release times, try and get grants, do whatever you can. (D, M-Ex, 2, p. 40, 31-37)

Thus, faculty, especially new faculty, are left to struggle with these contradictions and to make judgment calls on where to spend their time and energy.

Coupled with this environment of contradictions is the informal, and unwritten, rule that new faculty are to keep out of conflict until they reach tenure. Jane described this myth that was understood by most pre-tenured faculty:

> The myth that we all absorb is keep your head down, just keep your head down, don't piss anybody off, don't fight any major battles, don't bring yourself unnecessarily into anybody's attention who is in power, in any way, keep your

head down, and it's, I think most people do a form of that for their first five or six years. (C, L-Ex, 1, p.33-34, 55-10)

Joe, one of the more senior participants, confirmed this reality and explained that for "the first three years or so you play it a bit safe, you try to avoid <u>any</u> conflict situations, you try to avoid taking on outside commitments" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.21, 13-15).

However, avoiding conflict for six years appeared to be nearly impossible. For example, participants revealed that a major source of conflict was the "changing of the guard" between junior and senior faculty, with conflicts arising over the future direction of the department and the roles and responsibilities of all departmental faculty:

I think visions over where the department should go, that's a big one, it's what kind of department do we want, because people come in to a job, a new job, fresh, many of them fresh out of grad school, not all, but many, and with an idea, like a vision of what kind of work I want to do and what kind of environment I want to do that work in and where I think the curriculum should head and what kinds of courses I'd like to see offered, and where the department should turn, and all that energy and enthusiasm is terrific <u>and</u> it can sometimes be at odds with really established ways of doing things. (Jane, C, L-Ex, 2, p.17, 14-29)

Attitudes about junior faculty may also create forms of faculty-faculty conflict. For example, Brad described how "there are a fair number [of new faculty] now and they seem incredibly young to me, you know they are so young, many of them don't have children yet and families" (C, M-Ex, 1, p.3, 38-41). Paul described how the young faculty are "trying to get various things going" which the senior members find acceptable if "they'll do the work" because most of the senior faculty "are not very inclined to do it" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.1, 38-50). Sherman also observed that new faculty have more responsibilities and duties "than the rest of us do because they, they see that they have to prove themselves" (A, M-Ex, 2, p.20, 48-50). As new faculty struggle with conflicting

messages, excessive job requirements, and the realization that senior colleagues are not fulfilling the same mandate as them, the possibility for conflict dramatically increases.

The tenure process and tenure decisions are fundamental aspects of academic life. Faculty from all four departments and from both cohorts expressed their frustration with a tenure process that employs implicit rules and regulations and provides disproportionate rewards for some aspects of the academic mandate.

Professional appearance.

Regardless of conflict experienced, participants expressed a need to maintain professional relations with other faculty members. Professional relations included being nice, polite, cordial, or civilized to faculty members despite the way the academics really felt about them. This "veneer of civilization" (George, A, M-Ex, 2, p.5, 13-14) that faculty portray seemed to help faculty maintain a public sense of harmonious relationships despite unsteady private relationships:

> Whenever our work overlaps in any way, we deal with each other as true professionals and as if nothing has ever happened, but we don't socialize, we don't. (Sherman, A, M-Ex, 1, p.20, 20-27)

> People usually are professional, they can hate each other's guts because of their work, or you know you think my work's valuable or I think your work is crap and you're intellectually dishonest but I have to put up with you so I roll my eyes but we work on a committee anyway, so most people manage to act professionally. (Jane, C, L-Ex, 1, p.21-22, 49-10)

> I mean there are some people I don't have much to say to but there's nobody I won't say hi to, there's nobody I won't speak to, there's no one in this department

or in this university that I won't tell about a good article that I read that I know is in their area or a chapter. (Stan, D, M-Ex, 2, p.7, 42-47)

The converse to professionalism appeared to be either "cultivated indifference" (Stan, D, M-Ex, 2, p.7, 55) and not talking, or nasty behaviour. Jane expressed that if faculty did not act professionally, "then I think then you get into the real sticky situations of, yeah, these people being nasty and using grad students against each other, that's happened so, yeah and that's really nasty" (C, L-Ex, 1, p.22, 13-17) and this nastiness quickly becomes conflict for involved faculty members. Interestingly, there was an absence of discussion regarding solving conflicts as the converse to professionalism that masks hatred, dislike, or mere annoyance towards other faculty members.

Faculty from both cohorts and from all four departments indicated how important it was for faculty to maintain the appearance of professionalism. There was consensus among the faculty that a public persona of collegiality and tolerance was necessary to operate in academic communities. Since academic conflicts are embedded in basic academic structures, faculty members will have many opportunities during the course of their academic career to perfect their outward professional appearance. Unfortunately, much time, energy, and effort could be wasted on maintaining this appearance instead of resolving and removing sources of academic conflict inherent in the academic culture.

Summary.

Academic culture is dramatically different from other workplace cultures, in part because it values independence and autonomy and has structures like tenure, collegiality and self-governance that are not found in non-academic settings. All eight faculty members, from four departments and from both cohorts, identified major aspects of this academic culture that helped to create an understanding of how faculty perceive

their academic life. Understanding how faculty interpret their culture allows observers to appreciate the complexity and intricacy of academic culture while acknowledging how interpersonal conflict can occur on many levels. In addition, the role of power, and the numerous ways it can impact faculty, became so apparent through discussions with faculty that it warranted its own section because it appeared to influence all aspects of academic culture.

Power

Academic culture injects power imbalances between faculty members. These imbalances can lead to interpersonal conflict for affected academics. In fact, as Sherman explained, "power is very much the central issue" (A, M-Ex, 2, p.14, 32) in most faculty-faculty conflict situations. Brad also believed that most disputes were grounded in the search for power: "I think a lot of times those disputes over let's say philosophy of teaching or how the department should be run, a lot of times those are disputes over power and people want power" (C, M-Ex, 1, p.8-9, 56-20). Abuse of power between senior and junior faculty seemed to be the most damaging, especially when issues like promotion and tenure arose:

> That's why interpersonal conflict with people who are more powerful than you
> feels dangerous, really dangerous, if it's your own immediate, you know people
> who were hired when you were hired, that's not so serious, but it's the
> established people, people with tenure, people higher up, [that are serious].
> (Jane, C, L-Ex, 1, p.36-37, 53-1)

Participants shared many revealing stories of how academics have abused their power and how this abuse has caused problems between faculty members. Stan described his annoyance at faculty who use their power over graduate students: "I might lose respect for you cause I think you're involved in a situation of power, where you're

taking advantage of and exploiting somebody that may be naïve, who may think this is what's supposed to happen" (D, M-Ex, 1, p.10, 18-24). This exploitation and abuse of power also happened between faculty members, especially between junior and senior or pre-tenure and tenured faculty. Sherman recounted how a senior faculty member used his power to influence a junior faculty member in an election process: "[a junior faculty member] had received communication from a senior member of the department suggesting that maybe he wouldn't get a permanent position if he didn't vote" a particular way (A, M-Ex, 2, p.13-14, 60-2). A much more basic example of the use of power was the belief that junior people should be subordinate to senior people when working together on projects. While Julie acknowledged that this situation was helpful in some respects because it allowed for certain rules to operate regarding duty delegation, she also explained that conflicts could erupt when "in general senior faculty perhaps expect it, but it's just like older people always expect others to, to subordinate" (A, L-Ex, 2, p.25, 8-15) especially if junior faculty were unwilling to play by these rules.

Protection against these abuses of power appeared to be limited. As Jane explained, there was an understanding for pre-tenured people to keep themselves out of trouble and "don't bring yourself unnecessarily into anybody's attention who is in power" (C, L-Ex, 1, p.34, 2-4). However, there were numerous opportunities for conflict, as witnessed in the sources of academic conflict section, and there was tremendous possibility that junior faculty would find themselves in some type of disagreement or conflict with a senior faculty member. This reality creates a tremendous amount of tension for pre-tenured faculty because they are never sure if or when a minor disagreement could turn into a major conflict:

> Inevitably, even in your every days, you're going to come across people you
> disagree with, who you fight with...it magnifies everything, because you like to
> think, again, that your colleagues recognize that you are untenured and therefore

vulnerable, or you _feel_ vulnerable...and you'd like to think that you could disagree with them without them penning a nasty little note to your rank and tenure committee, you can't be sure, you just can't be sure, you're not sure, because if they're nasty enough and if they've been nasty to a lot of people, how do _you_ know that they're not going to say, I think so and so's work is sub-standard, and they're not going to say where the conflict really resides, they're going to find fault in some other way, so that's when you need networks, that's when you need to sort of spread the word. (Jane, C, L-Ex, 1, p.34, 16-42)

These networks of colleagues help to fight the victim's battle when he or she is not there. In Stan's case, his network of colleagues actually insisted on fighting his battle even when he told them that he no longer wanted to fight. Unfortunately, maintaining these networks uses precious time and energy, both of which are limited for new faculty. But, this expense of resources appears to be necessary to battle power differentials between senior and junior faculty: "all you can do is just keep up your end of the propaganda which takes a lot of effort" (Jane, C, L-Ex, 2, p.9, 11-13).

Paul provided insight into the academic reality for a professor with power. Paul described his realization that he had gained success and power:

I've had the consciousness of being successful and really that smoothes things, I was aware about ten, maybe 15 years ago, that I had got to a point, let's put it this way, I was not, I was untouchable, nobody can get me. (B, M-Ex, 1, p.30-31, 54-13)

He also discussed how colleagues who are not as successful struggle with greater tensions and conflicts than those who are more successful as academics. This insight validates many of the concerns the junior people feel about being watched and feeling that others are out to get them, because, in reality, many of them could be being

watched. Jane emphasized this concern that new faculty feel that they are under the gaze of senior faculty:

> [I]t's a very intense feeling of being scrutinized, that you're under surveillance...
> you can't be sure that you're being watched, you're not, you know, you're not
> convinced that everybody's watching your every move, but on the other hand,
> you can't be reassured that your not being watched all the time. (C, L-Ex, 1, p.35,
> 48-49 & p.36, 31-36)

Whereas junior faculty feel that scrutiny is intense and contributes to a sense of paranoia, the realization by senior faculty that they are finally "untouchable" is powerful and telling. In many ways, this untouchable feeling may contribute to the perpetuation of abuses of power.

Junior and senior faculty from all four departments expressed how power structures and power imbalances impact academic life. Junior faculty indicated how power was used and abused and how these actions impacted less powerful pre-tenured faculty members. Senior faculty indicated that they were much more aware of power issues when they were younger and had less power. Junior faculty, senior faculty, department heads, and administrators need to appreciate the significant role that power plays in academic life. The belief that all faculty are equal is simply not true. Status and role differences between junior and senior, and tenured and non-tenured, faculty inject power differentials that can easily lead to conflict situations.

Conflict Workshops

While most informants identified numerous sources of interpersonal conflict in academia, few were supportive of workshops or models for resolving conflicts. Although they could see the theoretical value in a conflict workshop, they were quick to point out that it probably would not work for faculty members: "I mean it might be helpful but they

wouldn't want it...no it would be an awful fuss and bother" (Joe, B, M-Ex, 2, p.15, 10-14).

Various reasons were given for this negative reaction to conflict workshops. Jane

forwarded how academics in her area were sceptical of teaching and training and how

this scepticism would keep them away from a workshop on conflict: "it's scepticism, and

a little bit of cynicism, about the value of engaging in these kinds of activities" (C, L-Ex,

2, p.26, 36-38). George immediately responded that a workshop would not be a good

avenue for helping academics with their conflicts and when probed for reasons why, he

responded with the following explanation:

> It's not central to our academic pursuits, the conflicts that I have with faculty
>
> members are, with faculty members in my department are conflicts that are
>
> based on, I don't like their personality, that's not going to go away, they're based
>
> on substantive disagreements within the discipline and I don't expect this
>
> workshop that is an outside my area to contribute very much to that and
>
> secondly, marginal because I just don't encounter it very frequently, and the tools
>
> that I think would be needed to deal with that kind of conflict are going to start
>
> with some psychological tools that I don't think the workshop is going to impart.
>
> (A, M-Ex, 2, p.22, 32-46)

Julie expressed that while a workshop might be useful, she was "not sure that the

university would be in good position to process such things" (A, L-Ex, 2, p.8, 12-13)

because faculty members might not be comfortable discussing their problems with other

faculty members. Paul felt the same way as Julie and shared how he would not be

comfortable discussing his problems in a group setting: "certainly if your colleagues were

right there, you wouldn't, I wouldn't talk" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.31, 49-50). In addition to being

uncomfortable speaking about their conflicts in public, faculty members might also fear

the repercussions of attending such a workshop. George summarized how the mere

attendance at a conflict workshop would produce a negative public connotation for the faculty member:

> Other reasons that it might not be well attended period is that the mere attendance, turning up at a workshop on conflict resolution is a little like turning up to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, it's not a, you're making some kind of statement by being there, and I don't know that a junior faculty member would not be dead keen on making that kind of statement. (A, M-Ex, 2, p.23, 17-25)

Paul shared this understanding, and declared that faculty members "must avoid any sense of upsetting the norm" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.31, 9-11).

Participants offered their advice on creating a training device for communicating guidance for coping with faculty-faculty interpersonal conflicts. First, they expressed how academics were not receptive to "touchy-feely" workshops. Sherman declared that for faculty in general, and senior faculty specifically, "these touchy, feel-good kind of things, we, make contact with your inner self etc., etc., none of us would relate to that, it wouldn't, we'd likely complain that it was just a waste of time" (A, M-Ex, 2, p.26, 11-15). Jane expressed how her "nightmare" would be if "somebody handed me some glossy little booklet or pamphlet with smiling people on the front shaking hands, and I would just go EEEWWW" (C, L-Ex, 2, p.14, 39-42).

Second, they discussed how faculty workshops might not be the best forum for faculty conflict assistance. Paul discussed how assistance in coping with faculty-faculty conflict could be "more on a one to one, or a confidential, rather than a presentation kind of basis" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.30, 50-52). Julie echoed these thoughts and explained that most people involved in conflict would go to "somebody who doesn't know anything" about them or their situation (A, L-Ex, 2, p.8, 28). George forwarded the notion of having faculty focus outwardly on a faculty conflict case study instead of inwardly declaring their personal conflict struggles. He felt that this would be

less threatening to the individual because you know you're going to discuss a case that involves X and Y and it's not you and it's not your department, you're comments, mind you, are going to reveal something about your own particular case but it's, that's, that's just implicit, it's not explicit. (A, M-Ex, 2, p.24, 4-14)

Thus, faculty assistance may be more useful if it was kept at an arms-length distance from fellow faculty members.

Third, Jane shared how any faculty assistance, be it in the form of a brochure or a workshop, must be grounded in the qualities and characteristics of the faculty's culture. Thus, an understanding about faculty cynicism towards administration must be achieved. Faculty members in this study seemed to be leery of any device controlled by the administration. Jane described this leeriness:

As soon as it gets attached to administration, like human resources, people go, Evil, Evil, Evil, it's about management, it's about control, it's about making us do what they want, it's directive, it's not encouraging, it's yet another way of standardizing aspects of human behaviour that cannot be standardized, so it would just go over like a lead balloon. (C, L-Ex, 2, p.27, 18-26)

Depending on discipline and department, faculty members might value different forms of assistance. For example, Jane explained how faculty in her department would balk at any guidance that is "couched at all in a language of identifying with the person" (C, L-Ex, 2, p.28, 20-21). Guidance for these faculty members "has to be concise, it has to be crisp, it has to be clear, it has to be matter of fact, it has to be short, sweet, informative" (Jane, C, L-Ex, 2, p.14, 44-46). George emphasized that faculty members would appreciate summary information from a workshop so they could benefit from the information without having to attend: "I think that they would be interested in a digest summary of the proceedings, that's quite different, in a plain brown wrapper, thank you" (A, M-Ex, 2, p.23, 29-32). He also explained that a forum like an electronic listserv would

be useful to create a dialogue while ensuring some physical distance from other departmental members.

Interpersonal conflict in academic communities plays a prominent role in academic life and junior and senior faculty expressed a need for some form of assistance in coping with these conflicts. However, they did not feel that a public workshop or discussion would be beneficial for academics. Instead, they articulated other ways to share information and advice with faculty, ways that took into account fundamental aspects of academic culture like privacy, independence, and scepticism. Assistance should be direct and to the point, it should be private enough to allow faculty a sense of security in discussing conflict, and it should take into account departmental and discipline characteristics. Faculty also indicated that, even though workshops might not be appropriate, some form of assistance is necessary, even if it just introduces basic information on interpersonal conflict in academia. These data suggest that an understanding of academic culture—both globally and locally—is imperative to the successful creation of any type of assistance for faculty members coping with interpersonal conflict in academia.

Summary

This study was an exploratory investigation into the aspect of interpersonal conflict in academic communities. Research into this area is scarce and this study sought to fill some of the gaps found in the literature. Over twenty hours of interview data combined with an intense data analysis process revealed seven major data themes regarding interpersonal conflict experienced by faculty members. These themes focused on the definition of interpersonal conflict, the sources of conflict, the coping strategies of academics, the academic culture, the role of power, the role of the department head, and the perceptions regarding interpersonal conflict professional development.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Until recently, there had been little exploration of the experience of interpersonal conflict in academia. The literature was virtually silent regarding interpersonal conflicts that faculty members experience as part of their academic life. However, the literature did indicate that administrator-faculty and student-faculty conflicts occur in the academy and provided advice and strategies on how to cope with such conflicts (e.g., Holton & Phillips, 1995; Sturnick, 1998; Keltner, 1998; Sorenson, 1998; Tucker, 1993). In contrast, the literature provided numerous indicators of interpersonal conflict in non-academic environments and forwarded workshops and models for conflict management (e.g., Fisher & Ury, 1991). An understanding of the cultural differences between academic and non-academic settings was also gained from the literature. This understanding underscored the difficulty of transplanting non-academic models and strategies into academic settings (e.g., Muller, Porter, & Rehder, 1997; Weingartner, 1999). Although the literature shared little direct evidence for faculty-faculty conflict, there was indirect evidence that it was occurring (e.g., Menges, 1999; Karpiak, 1996; Braxton & Bayer, 1999); therefore, this study was conducted because of the gap in the literature concerning interpersonal conflict in the academy.

Four Main Questions

This qualitative study sought to address some gaps in the literature by exploring the conflict experiences of eight faculty members to gain their perspectives on faculty-faculty conflict. Four major research questions guided these interviews:

1. How do faculty members define interpersonal conflict in the academy?

2. Based on their own definition of interpersonal conflict, what are some examples of such conflict in the academy?

3. What strategies do faculty members have for dealing with conflict in the academy?

4. What advice or information do faculty think would be most useful for other faculty involved in interpersonal conflict?

During approximately 20 hours of interview time, faculty underscored the prevalence of faculty-faculty conflict and confirmed the need to continue research into this area. These interviews revealed many answers to the four research questions. The major findings were that faculty defined conflict very specifically, that they saw numerous sources of academic conflict, that they try to avoid conflict as much as possible, and that they felt that dialogue on interpersonal conflict—both its occurrence and its subsequent coping strategies—was best conducted informally and privately in a manner that takes into consideration the characteristics of academic culture. Each of these major findings are now discussed in more detail, followed by a more general discussion of academic culture, leadership, and faculty renewal.

Defining conflict.

Faculty members identified two major forms of academic interpersonal conflict: ideological and personality-based. Joe explained that "there are occasions when conflict between faculty members may involve both personalities, clashing personalities, but also a real difference of opinion about the nature of the discipline" (B, M-Ex, 2, p.1, 11-15). These findings were similar to findings produced by Jehn (1995) and Holton (1998) that indicated that conflict was often broken into task (content) and relationship conflicts. Ideological conflicts appeared to be extensions of task conflicts while personality-based conflicts mimicked relationship conflicts. Interestingly, seven of the eight faculty members felt that these two types of conflicts were separate and distinct: conflict was grounded either in ideological differences or in personality differences. Jane (C, L-Ex) was the only academic to discuss how these two types of conflicts could overlap; personality conflicts could erupt into ideological conflict and ideological conflicts could

surface as personality conflicts. For example, Jane described how personality conflicts could be masked by ideological conflicts: "where it gets murky and muddy is where a personal difficulty is cloaked by an ideological disagreement, so really, the foundation of the disagreement is personal antipathy" (C, L-Ex, 2, p.7, 9-13).

There was striking consensus between the faculty members participating in this study and Tucker (1993) regarding the characteristics of ideological. Tucker explained that these conflicts arose over discipline issues and from "uncodified, unwritten tradition[s]" of academic departments (p. 399). Faculty reiterated these descriptions, describing how differences in disciplinary perspectives often lead to interpersonal conflict. Jane described how opinions over research could lead to interpersonal conflict:

> [Some] very, very powerful, institutionally powerful people...they hate your
> research area, they hate your research topic, they're fundamentally opposed to
> your work and they want you gone, and they will use that, that's your terror, that
> they will use that to get rid of you. (C, L-Ex, 1, p.35, 38-47)

Thus, as in Tucker's (1993) earlier work, the specific findings of this research suggested that the task conflicts [ideological conflicts] that occur in academic departments and in academic disciplines create varying levels of interpersonal conflict for involved faculty members.

Tucker (1993) also discussed how equality issues lead to factions, wars, and banishments in academic departments. In fact, these factions "sometimes lead to a kind of academic warfare in which entire factions are banished from the department" (p. 399). Faculty in this study also pointed out that wars and factions occurred in academic departments; however, they felt that faculty wars occurred both from personality-based and ideological conflicts. For example, Brad discussed how ideological conflicts and personal political views could escalate to the point of departmental wars: "there are political wars that have occurred in our department and there are enemies, there are

people that dislike each other, for good reasons and for no good reasons" (C, M-Ex, 1, p.7-8, 52-8). Stan confirmed how "factions that were organized theoretically and methodologically" (D, M-Ex, 1, p.5, 53-55) existed in academia. By acknowledging that interpersonal conflict could develop into physical factions and personal wars, faculty emphasized both the magnitude of such conflicts and the need for more careful attention to conflict resolution in the academy.

Sources of conflict.

While a healthy body of literature existed regarding sources of workplace interpersonal conflicts, there was a gap in the literature regarding academic sources of conflict. Interpersonal conflicts in non-academic settings have been researched in terms of a number of situational variables like power (e.g., Pfeffer, 1981; Vredenburgh & Brender, 1998) and emotions (e.g., Johnson, Means, & Pullis, 1998; Gayle & Preiss, 1998). Hidden conflicts (e.g., Bartunek, Kolb & Lewicki, 1992), conflicts in teams (e.g., De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001), and conflicts in decision making (e.g., Schwenk & Coier, 1993) have also been widely researched in non-academic settings.

This non-academic research base contrasted sharply with the virtual absence of investigation into interpersonal conflict in academic communities. Few researchers have directly investigated academic conflict (e.g., Berryman-Fink, 1998; Goodlad, 1976; Holton, 1995; Leal, 1995; Tucker, 1993), while others have indirectly emphasized how conflict occurs between faculty members. Results from this study added to this small body of direct conflict research by indicating numerous sources of interpersonal conflict in the academy. It also highlighted how conflict sources in non-academic settings—like hidden conflicts and organizational sources of conflict—were occurring in academic communities.

Clark (1987) observed that "disciplines have their own histories and trajectories, their own habits and practices" (p. 25). Such practices and habits—of discipline and institutional communities—form the basis for many academic interpersonal conflicts. For example, faculty revealed that interpersonal conflicts erupted from the hiring decision process, course assignment process, and turf protection/jealousy reactions. Another aspect of academic history is the reality of a large senior faculty cohort. The potential for conflicts between this cohort and the younger cohort, in terms of vision, goals, and practices, increases as more senior faculty are retiring and are being replaced by junior faculty. Another conflict embedded in this cohort struggle is the admission that many senior faculty take advantage of non-tenured faculty: "well I think we do exploit them a little bit in the sense that they do more committee service than the rest of us do because they, they see that they have to prove themselves" (Sherman, A, M-Ex, 2, p.20, 46-50). This exploitation will surely lead to further conflicts between cohorts.

More generally, Vredenburgh and Brender (1998) emphasized that the "hierarchical interpersonal abuse of power" (p. 1337) is linked to individual characteristics and, when repeated and reinforced, can become part of the norm of non-academic organizations. Faculty in this study revealed that power struggles were imbedded in academic cultures and contributed to interpersonal conflict between faculty in much the same way as Vredenburgh and Brender (1998) discovered in their study. In many cases, "power is very much the central issue" (Sherman, A, M-Ex, 2, p.14, 32) in faculty-faculty conflicts. Abuse of power between senior and junior faculty seemed to be the most damaging, especially when issues like promotion and tenure arose:

That's why interpersonal conflict with people who are more powerful than you feels dangerous, really dangerous, if it's your own immediate, you know people who were hired when you were hired, that's not so serious, but it's the

established people, people with tenure, people higher up, [that are serious]

(Jane, C, L-Ex, 1, p.36-37, 53-1).

Power struggles appeared to affect both senior and junior academics, with junior academics feeling more susceptible to abuses of power throughout the tenure process.

Although faculty described power differences between departmental faculty, they warned that these differences needed to be more widely acknowledged throughout academia. Administrators should not operate under the belief that all faculty have the same amount of institutional power:

"[Y]ou have to have somebody in an administrative position who recognizes these differences in power, that's really important, you can't have somebody say, oh you're all colleagues, you're all on even playing field, no you're not." (Jane, C, L-Ex, 2, p.12, 28-33).

The structure of academia appeared simultaneously to create power imbalances between faculty and to deny the existence of power imbalances. This reality created additional interpersonal conflicts for faculty. Further investigation into this area is warranted.

These numerous sources of interpersonal conflict added to the literature on academic conflict by indicating how conflict is embedded into many aspects of academic life. For example, Leal (1995) pointed out a number of areas that spark faculty-faculty conflicts: "the manner in which department meetings are conducted, ideological differences among faculty, ideological direction of the department...and promotions, to name but a few" (p. 21). This study confirmed these sources and added many others to the list.

For instance, faculty also shared how academia has the habit of cultivating "prima donnas" or faculty that "have big egos, they're relatively soft and they've been promoted to quite a bit of power over resources and over students and content of

classes" (Stan, D, M-Ex, 1, p.8, 14-16 & 25-27). These faculty can cause significant interpersonal conflict because they attempt to satisfy their needs over the needs of others. Conflict could also erupt from different interpretations of department, faculty, and university rules, regulations, habits, and practices. Paul (B, M-Ex) shared how administrators forwarded mixed messages regarding teaching and research and Stan (D, M-Ex) identified the confusion of a mandate that demanded teaching and research and a reward structure that favoured research over teaching.

In addition, indirect sources of academic conflict like stress, the peer review process, and senior faculty struggles were also readily apparent in this study. Faculty did not mention that teaching misconduct was a source of interpersonal conflict; however, some faculty (e.g., George, A, M-Ex, 2; Stan, D, M-Ex, 2) did state that, if they became aware of a colleague's teaching misconduct, they would be more inclined to discuss the problem with the colleague rather than avoid the issue, "especially if it was a course that [the faculty member] was using as a prerequisite" (George, A, M-Ex, 2, p.30, 12-13). Faculty in this study confirmed that stress, the peer review process, senior faculty struggles, and teaching misconducts could be sources of interpersonal conflict in academic life.

These sources of conflict also revealed that non-academic conflict findings were useful indicators for potential academic sources of conflict. For example, Filey's (1975) work regarding social relationships and interpersonal conflict could be applied to academic relationships and interpersonal conflict. Characteristics like ambiguous jurisdiction, communication barriers, conflicts of interest, and differentiation in the organization were all described as sources of faculty-faculty conflict by academics in this study. Research on power, hidden conflicts, and organizational sources of conflict in non-academic settings were also indicated as sources of conflict in academic communities. As investigation into the area of interpersonal conflict in academia

continues, more sources of conflict will surely arise; for now, this study revealed a greater number of sources of faculty-faculty conflict than indicated in existing research.

Coping strategies.

Researchers (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim, 1986) have identified five major interpersonal conflict coping strategies. Blake and Mouton (1964) identified domination, accommodation, problem solving, avoidance, and smoothing as predominant coping behaviours. Rahim (1986) built on Blake and Mouton's (1964) work and identified domination, compromise, integration, avoiding, and obligating as major coping strategies. In researching the literature on academic conflict, no studies on academic interpersonal coping strategies were found. Academics could conceivably be using any or all five major forms of coping behaviours identified by Blake and Mouton (1964) or Rahim (1986), depending on the type of interpersonal conflict experienced.

This study revealed that avoidance was the major coping strategy for junior and senior faculty. Time and time again, faculty discussed how they avoided conflict: they moved to different buildings, they avoided confrontations, they avoided being on certain committees, they moved to other offices, they waited until people retired, and sometimes they even left the university. Stan described some of the "thousand" ways academics could avoid conflict:

> [T]here's a thousand ways to distance yourself from the problem, so you could
> teach in an area where they don't teach, you could move from this floor to
> another building...some faculty have moved, moved out, other people move part-
> time, people come Monday, Wednesday, Friday instead of Tuesday/Thursday
> and so they miss certain people, you know, that's not an accident. (D, M-Ex, 1,
> p.12, 5-9 & 13-17)

Pre-tenured faculty also quickly learned that conflict avoidance was their best strategy until they achieved tenure. Jane explained how new faculty learned to "keep their head down" and to stay out of trouble:

> The myth that we all absorb is keep your head down, just keep your head down, don't piss anybody off, don't fight any major battles, don't bring yourself unnecessarily into anybody's attention who is in power, in any way, keep your head down, and it's, I think most people do a form of that for their first five or six years" (C, L-Ex, 1, p.33-34, 55-9).

Both junior and senior faculty relied on varying types of avoidance strategies to cope with interpersonal conflict.

Avoidance behaviours, like moving to other offices and avoiding contact with colleagues, involve varying levels of faculty and institutional costs. Faculty costs include the effort involved in maintaining distance with certain colleagues, the loss of productivity when time is used to avoid a colleague rather than to engage in academic work, and the potential psychological stress incurred from harbouring negative feelings toward colleagues with whom prior conflicts occurred. Institutionally, avoidance behaviours have the potential to affect the academic and departmental cultures, the overall productivity of the university, and ultimately the very pillars of collegiality and the peer review process. These faculty and institutional costs increase as the number of academics relying on avoidance strategies increases. Further investigation into this area is required in order to appreciate the amount of time, energy, and resources used to avoid, rather than to resolve, conflicts between faculty members.

Although avoidance was the main coping behaviour, faculty expressed that other behaviours were sometimes used. For example, faculty relied on their colleagues and department heads for support during many conflict situations. Others have diversified their identity through involvement in activities and organizations outside academia; this

diversification has helped them to distance themselves from certain types of faculty-faculty conflict. Senior faculty have also found that the aging process has taught them many important conflict management lessons. Brad (C, M-Ex) felt that over the past thirty years "a lot of us have mellowed and become a lot more flexible and I think we don't take ourselves as seriously as we used to" (C, M-Ex, 1, p.3, 3-7). Paul (B, M-Ex) agreed that the aging process has brought a mellowing-out process: "I think over the years people have mellowed a lot and that helps, and there's less sense of it being vital to protect my little bailiwick" (B, M-Ex, 1, p.25, 31-36).

Experience helped to transform many senior faculty from being protective of their territory and rigid in their ideas. New faculty entering academia do not have this wisdom of experience and may exhibit many characteristics that senior faculty once demonstrated. New faculty may also display other "prima donna" qualities like expecting "their opinion to count more than anybody else's or their judgment on the matter to be wiser than anybody else's" (Paul, B, M-Ex, 2, p.20, 10-14). These characteristics and qualities may lead to increased interpersonal conflict in departments, as senior faculty try to work with junior faculty and junior faculty try to work with each other. As the number of new faculty is expected to increase dramatically over the next few years (Elliott, 2000), so to is the possibility that interpersonal conflict will increase in academic communities. In order to circumvent some of these interpersonal conflicts, academia could consider proactively addressing these "prima donna" characteristics and their effect on faculty members and departments. If these issues are not addressed, new faculty may leave the institution before they gain the experience and the wisdom to mellow out and to become more flexible.

Other faculty found that when they must deal with interpersonal conflict directly, actions such as talking, rational and objective thinking, and understanding were necessary and needed. However, academics also have learned that the university

governance system, while being a source of conflict, could also play a role in removing interpersonal conflicts between faculty. For example, faculty have worked to develop hiring, tenure, promotion, and election procedures that are public, objective, and rational. These procedures used to be much more subjective and irrational, causing conflict between faculty and between faculty and administration. Senior faculty also described how they fought for and won representation from a faculty union, which helped faculty cope with numerous issues including interpersonal faculty-faculty conflict. Policies and procedures may need to be developed in order to cope with the accountability mandates currently being forced on academic communities. The university governance system could, though the development of useful policies, help to lessen interpersonal conflicts associated with accountability mandates.

The participants in this study emphasized the importance and prevalence of avoidance, over all other forms of coping behaviours, in academic interpersonal conflict situations. This insight raises questions regarding how applicable Blake and Mouton's (1964) and Rahim's (1986) five-behaviour conflict management typologies are for higher education conflict. Further investigation into this area is necessary and needed in order to understand the range of coping behaviours upon which academics rely and their associated benefits and costs to faculty members and higher education institutions.

Faculty support.

The recognition of ideological (task) and personality-based (relationship) conflicts in academia, combined with numerous sources of interpersonal conflict and a tendency for faculty to avoid conflict, stressed the need for some type of faculty support regarding interpersonal conflict in academic communities. Two major conflict management models, one designed for non-academic settings (Fisher & Ury, 1991) and one designed for academic settings (Holton, 1998), provided useful information and guidance for

academics and non-academics involved in conflict situations. The Holton (1998) model incorporated aspects of the Fisher and Ury (1991) model to create a comprehensive conflict management framework that was readily applicable to managing conflict in academic settings. The main difference between the two models was that the Holton (1998) model incorporated fundamental aspects of the academic culture into its strategies and guidance, while the Fisher and Ury (1991) model applied to more general, non-descript audiences and settings.

Faculty in this study were asked if they were aware of any conflict workshops or models that were used to help deal with conflict and the resounding answer was "No". They were not aware of any conflict management models and they were certainly not aware of any conflict management models being used in academia. George (A, M-Ex) discussed how, because of his parenting role, he had sought guidance from personality models to help cope with interpersonal conflict. Although these models were used to help him understand his children's behaviours, George was able to apply his findings to his colleagues and to begin to understand their personalities and actions better. None of the other participants had sought out this type of support; they held no knowledge of conflict management models or workshops that would be helpful to them and their conflict situations.

Faculty were asked if they would find any workshop or model useful or helpful. Theoretically, most faculty felt that a workshop or discussion would be useful. Practically, however, faculty felt that any public form of help would not be accepted. Jane (C, L-Ex) observed how academics in her area were sceptical of teaching and training and how this scepticism would keep them away from a workshop on conflict: "it's scepticism, and a little bit of cynicism, about the value of engaging in these kinds of activities" (C, L-Ex, 2, p.26, 36-38).

This aversion to public forms of help appeared to be linked to a deeper academic cultural issue: normative expectations for control. Faculty members felt that they must maintain an aura of competency and control and "must avoid any sense of upsetting the norm" (Paul, B, M-Ex, 2, p.31, 9-11). One way to upset the norm of control and competency would be to attend a public discussion on conflict management; the academic norm appeared to be that faculty members should be able to manage their issues without any external help. George (A, M-Ex) summarized how the mere attendance at a conflict workshop would produce a negative public connotation for a faculty member:

> Other reasons that it might not be well attended period is that the mere attendance, turning up at a workshop on conflict resolution is a little like turning up to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, it's not a, you're making some kind of statement by being there, and I don't know, junior faculty member would not be dead keen on making that kind of statement. (A, M-Ex, 2, p.23, 17-25)

Unfortunately, as witnessed from this study's findings, many faculty did not have the skills or the strategies to cope effectively with interpersonal conflict and these cultural beliefs prevented them from seeking a whole range of professional development opportunities with respect to conflict.

Even if academic culture could be altered so that attending workshops or discussions was acceptable, faculty shared the importance of understanding academic culture in designing any professional development strategy. Workshops, discussions, and even pamphlets designed from a business, administrative, or non-academic cultural mindset would not be effective in academic settings because academic culture differs in important ways from other work environments. At a broad cultural level, the academy values participation, independence, and scholarly debate while non-academic workplaces value the entrepreneurial spirit, materialism, and adversarial competitiveness

(Muller, Porter, & Rehder, 1997). These differences must be reflected in the design of any form of academic support.

Faculty also indicated a number of specific academic characteristics that should be addressed when designing any form of professional development. First, many academics are leery of any initiative developed by administration:

As soon as it gets attached to administration, like human resources, people go, Evil, Evil, Evil, it's about management, it's about control, it's about making us do what they want, it's directive, it's not encouraging, it's yet another way of standardizing aspects of human behaviour that cannot be standardized, so it would just go over like a lead balloon. (Jane, C, L-Ex, 2, p.27, 18-26).

Second, academics generally prefer information that is "concise, it has to be crisp, it has to be clear, it has to be matter of fact, it has to be short, sweet, informative" (Jane, C, L-Ex, 2, p.14, 44-46). Workshops or pamphlets should not be couched in any "touchy-feely" language; instead, they should be direct and to the point. Finally, academia can be divided into many sub-cultures based on department and discipline. Faculty suggested designing different formats for the different cultures:

If anybody ever wanted to start a program or print out materials, they would have to print lots, they might all refer to the same policy, but they would have to be tailored in how they represented the policy to the faculties, they would have to have very different ones. (Jane, C, L-Ex, 2, p.30, 26-31)

Therefore, broad cultural understandings of academia are important, but so are more specific cultural understandings of disciplines and departments. If these cultural issues are designed into a faculty workshop or pamphlet, then faculty are more likely to respect the information presented to them.

Summary.

Exploration of the perspectives of eight faculty members on the topic of interpersonal conflict was simultaneously intriguing and discouraging. First, this study reinforced that the literature had gaps in terms of faculty-faculty interpersonal conflict and that research was needed into this important aspect of academic life. Although many researchers have investigated conflict between administrators and conflict between students, few have explored the area of faculty-faculty conflict directly. This gap in the literature was made even more pronounced when compared to the literature on interpersonal conflict in non-academic settings. Second, this study revealed the need to sustain a dialogue on faculty-faculty conflict because it is an inherent aspect of academic life. Academics struggle with ideological and personality-based conflicts throughout their academic careers and face many opportunities for disagreements to erupt into conflict situations. Faculty also struggle to fulfill an intense mandate of teaching, research and service, while wrestling with issues of conflict and power as they negotiate their roles in their departments. This struggle is especially difficult for new faculty members who feel that they are being judged by senior members of their department, with whom they do not share an equal power relationship. Unfortunately, there is little public acknowledgement that these conflicts even exist and therefore little support for resolving such conflict issues is available.

Third, this study emphasized the roles that academic culture and academic leadership play in increasing and decreasing interpersonal conflict in academic communities. Many faculty experience conflict as they attempt to interpret many fundamental academic issues, which reinforces a confused academic mandate. The very pillars of academia—academic freedom, tenure, collegiality, and self-governance—also become sources of conflict for faculty since numerous definitions, interpretations, and applications exist within academe. Finally, this study revealed how academic

administrators, most importantly department heads, contribute to the escalation of some interpersonal conflict between faculty members. In some respects, this escalation is due to poor leadership, but in other respects, it is due to an academic culture that forces the department head into a quasi-leadership role, walking a tightrope between faculty member and administrator.

Broad Cultural Themes

The seven themes detailed in the previous chapter and the answers to the research questions detailed above highlight the important role that academic culture plays in academic interpersonal conflict. The norms, values, rules, and goals of an institution create opportunities for increased conflict between faculty. Three cultural themes emerged from this study as important to providing broader understanding of interpersonal conflict in academic life. The first cultural theme expands on the characteristics of academic cultures and emphasizes how these characteristics create an environment of conflict for faculty. Faculty in this study pointed out that many fundamental aspects of academia contribute to conflict and underscored the importance of learning how faculty, and not just the literature, define aspects of academic culture.

The second cultural theme relates to the role of academic leadership with a specific focus on the department head as the closest point of contact with faculty. Faculty in this study highlighted that department heads need certain leadership qualities and actions to help faculty cope with conflict. However, they also emphasized how academia has created a precarious department head role and how this situation actually contributes to increased faculty-faculty conflict. The final cultural theme relates to the changing faculty demographics facing academia. Many conflicts in this study occurred because of tensions between junior and senior faculty and the next decade will only

exacerbate these tensions as universities struggle to hire new faculty and to keep more seasoned faculty.

Academic culture.

Schein (1996) provided a comprehensive definition of culture: "the set of shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that a group holds and that determines how it perceives, thinks about, and reacts to its various environments" (p. 236). Thus, culture only has substance when it is rooted in the real behaviours and actions within the organization. An understanding of the academy's norms, values, and assumptions is paramount to characterizing and dealing with conflict.

One of the necessary features of a research university is that it values the research contributions of its members. Such a statement seemed obvious, but many institutions explicitly mandate teaching and research requirements, while they implicitly acknowledge that research is more valued than teaching. This confusion appeared to be linked to an incomplete cultural transformation within academia, a transformation from a teaching culture to a research culture. Paulsen and Feldman (1998) explained how "the high status of research became part of an underlying assumption about the kind of faculty work expected and rewarded" and how this created a dominant research culture and a "subculture" of teaching (p. 689). The operation of these two cultures creates many opportunities for faculty-faculty conflict as academics struggle to fulfill a confusing academic mandate.

Examples from this study emphasized some struggles that this broad cultural issue of research and teaching created for faculty members. Brad (C, M-Ex) described how course development, while demanded by the department head, was not valued as meaningful work during promotion and tenure procedures:

[A faculty member] is given a course not in their field, so there's an enormous amount of work involved, so they have to do the work, but then the department head the following year says, "Listen you didn't do enough research here, why didn't you get something published," and of course the answer is, because I was doing this goddamn course that you gave me that I shouldn't have gotten, give it to the other guy next time. (C, M-Ex, 1, p.15-16, 46-5)

Stan (D, M-Ex) identified very closely with the external university mandate—teaching and research—and was irritated by faculty who chose to emphasize only one component and then "reap the rewards of that very selfish kind of strategy" (D, M-Ex, 2, p.2, 47-48). His identification with the external mandate of teaching and research rather than the implied internal mandate of research placed him in conflict with other faculty who identified with, and worked towards, the goals of the internal mandate. These mixed messages were also felt by newer faculty members who must balance what they have been told is valued (teaching and research) with what they understand is valued for tenure (excellence in research). These interpersonal conflicts were rooted in academic confusion over the need to teach and research and the prestige of research excellence.

Other aspects of academic culture also contribute to conflict between faculty members. Cultural issues like academic freedom, tenure, collegiality, and independence define academia and create opportunities for faculty-faculty conflict. Faculty members in this study expressed how differing interpretations and abuses of these cultural issues heighten interpersonal conflict in the academy. For example, faculty expressed how independence is highly valued and control is abhorred:

Academics have a real short fuse when it comes to being told what to do, that's why many of them have gravitated to this line of work because you're quite independent, there are, there are some rules you're supposed to be following, but within those rules you have your own time (Jane, C, L-Ex, 2, p.25, 30-36).

Other researchers have emphasized that the interpretation of academic freedom has spread to the protection of nearly any faculty action: academic freedom has been re-interpreted as a right that "extends to the expression of any desire, any sentiment, any impulse" (Shils, 1993, p. 154).

Although independence and autonomy are secured through academic freedom mandates, some faculty believe that they are immune to any guidance or direction. Stan (D, M-Ex) expressed how, for some faculty, academic freedom has come to equal autonomy from sanctions:

> They've been promoted to quite a bit of power over resources and about power
>
> over students and content of their classes, so they have tremendous autonomy,
>
> we call it academic freedom, they have tremendous latitude to do what they want
>
> to do and so in many ways that's a recipe for disaster, right, because you're
>
> setting up individuals who are more inclined tell people they disagree with to just
>
> get lost, right, get out of my face, you're interfering with my academic freedom.
>
> (D, M-Ex, 1, p.8, 15-25)

These beliefs abuse the basic definition of academic freedom. The Canadian Association of University Teachers [CAUT] (2000) outlined the following definition of academic freedom:

> [A]cademic members of the community are entitled, regardless of prescribed
>
> doctrine, to freedom in carrying out research and in publishing the results thereof,
>
> freedom of teaching and of discussion, freedom to criticize the university and the
>
> faculty association, and freedom from institutional censorship.

CAUT's definition did not include the broad freedom of never being told what to do.

Unfortunately, this belief that academics are free from sanctions exists in some academic communities and creates interpersonal conflict among faculty who hold varying levels of agreement with this interpretation. For example, some faculty may feel

that publishing graduate work as their own is wrong, while others may feel that it is their freedom to publish their student's work. Stan (D, M-Ex) explained that he has seen faculty members abuse their position of graduate advisor and refused to work on any graduate committee unless a contract outlining basic issues, like not "stealing" graduate student's work (D, M-Ex, 2, p.1, 35), is signed in advance. Faculty who dislike being told what to do react negatively to such a contract: "you can go call me a [...], you call me unreasonable, you can say I'm interfering with your academic freedom, and you think it's perfectly legitimate and so on," (Stan, D, M-Ex, 1, p.17, 6-10). Without clear definitions of what constitutes academic freedom, and without sanctions for abuses of academic freedom interpretations, faculty will continue to struggle with conflicts stemming from this issue.

These struggles echo struggles experienced by the definition and interpretation of tenure. A massive debate regarding the legitimacy of tenure is raging in academic institutions. Opponents of tenure "argue that it fosters mediocrity because it makes individuals complacent, indifferent, indolent, inefficient, neglectful, and unproductive" (Lewis, 1980, p. 87). Proponents of tenure argue that "contributions of tenure to professional excellence and the social quest for truth" are two reasons for upholding tenure (Benjamin, 1997, para. 1). Junior and senior faculty are caught in the middle of this debate, a debate that is escalating as more senior faculty retire and more junior faculty enter the academy.

Faculty in this study did not directly cite these tenure debates as sources of conflict. Instead, they indirectly reinforced how conflict-ridden the tenure process has become and how the achievement of tenure grants immense freedom and power. Jane described a myth that is understood by most pre-tenured faculty:

The myth that we all absorb is keep your head down, just keep your head down, don't piss anybody off, don't fight any major battles, don't bring yourself

unnecessarily into anybody's attention who is in power, in any way, keep your

head down, and it's, I think most people do a form of that for their first five or six

years. (C, L-Ex, 1, p.33-34, 55-10)

The ability to "keep your head down" is practically impossible given the numerous

sources of interpersonal conflict including the inherent struggles between junior and

senior cohorts. Conversely, Paul (B, M-Ex) observed how tenure grants immense power

and personal security from a sometimes harsh academic community:

I've had the consciousness of being successful and really that smoothes things, I

was aware about ten, maybe 15 years ago that I had gotten to a point, let's put it

this way, I was not, I was untouchable, nobody could get me. (B, M-Ex, 1, p.30-

31, 54-13)

Both the broad tenure debates and the specific tenure struggles emphasize how cultural

beliefs regarding tenure inject levels of conflict into academic departments.

One final example of cultural confusion is the integration of business concepts

into academic culture. Traditionally, academic culture had centred around issues of

academic freedom, tenure, collegiality and self-governance. Currently, it is struggling

with a culture of quality, accountability, and managerial mandates. This struggle began

shortly after the boom era of the late 1950s and 1960s.

After the rapid growth of the 1960s, the academy faced a bust era characterized

by three major changes (Neave, 1994). First, it felt a financial crisis, with governments

decreasing financial support to academic institutions. Second, governments believed

industry-based initiatives like quality mandates could be fostered in academia and

strongly encouraged universities to adopt such measures. Finally, universities faced a

reality of classroom overcrowding, declining faculty/student ratios, and increasing

student debt caused predominantly by a lack of needed resources. Within this context,

the adoption of business-focused initiatives became inevitable. Government and state

had gained enough financial power to demand that assessment and accountability initiatives, developed in the business community, be undertaken in universities.

As universities began to adopt these business initiatives, a new managerial culture began to develop in academic administrations. This culture further polarized faculty and administrators. The managerial culture did not value collegial decisions; instead, it believed that a more central and "neutral" body (like the administration) could respond more appropriately to budgetary cutbacks without the bias of "preserving academic territory" (Newson, 1998, p. 114). Although this managerial culture was initially implemented to appease external forces, many believe that it now threatens the academic culture: "through the technologies and outward-looking orientation of managerialism, the internal programmatic activities of the university have been brought under the influence, if not the control of, supra-local constituencies such as governments, the business community, funding agencies and the like" (Newson, 1998, p. 120).

These cultural clashes between managerial values and collegial values translate into interpersonal conflicts between faculty members. Within the department, faculty can differ on their level of support for these new initiatives creating tension and division among colleagues. For example, these changes might create conflicts between junior and senior faculty because they hold different values and assumptions regarding accountability mandates. Junior faculty may be more likely to identify with an accountability mandate, having attended higher education during the adoption of these initiatives. Senior academics, on the other hand, may feel threatened by such initiatives and may not understand how faculty members could embrace such non-academic functions. This hypothetical example illustrates how conflicting cultures can increase faculty-faculty conflicts in the department.

Senior and junior faculty are forced, on many levels, to interpret what institutions *really* value. Some argue that the university values teaching and research and expects high standards in both areas. Others argue that the university values research above teaching, citing incidents where faculty are promoted or tenured because of a strong research record, regardless of teaching record. Some feel that academic freedom affords complete behavioural freedom, while others believe that academic freedom includes a list of academic responsibilities. Finally, some abhor any instrument or initiative that is linked to the business world, while others argue that certain business models like accountability and assessment are needed in academic institutions of the 21st century.

Although the higher education literature showed distinct differences in academic and non-academic cultures, evidence from this study showed some similar dynamics are found in both settings. For example, faculty in this study indicated that they contend with power differentials between senior and junior faculty and hierarchical issues between administration and faculty; these issues are similar to power and hierarchy challenges encountered in non-academic settings. In addition, faculty in this study described problems that occurred as a result of inequitable, unfair, or vague work assignments; people in non-academic settings must also contend with these issues surrounding work assignments. Perhaps with increasing expectations for accountability and the consequent strengthening of managerial culture in universities, new research focussing on these trends needs to be conducted.

These similar dynamics in academic and non-academic settings suggest that non-academic conflict models, like Fisher and Ury's (1991) <u>Getting to Yes</u> model, may be more readily applicable to academic settings than was originally conceived. If the two cultures struggle with similar sources of conflict, then conflict management models designed to address these issues may only need minor cultural adaptations in order to

be successful in academic cultures. For instance, in a case where there are conflict issues around a particular hiring choice, a department head could intervene to focus the parties' attention on how the hiring process could be made more transparent, rather than allowing sometimes legitimate tensions to be manifested as conflict between persons. At the very least, the awareness that academic and non-academic settings have some similar dynamics suggests that these two cultures are not as dissimilar as indicated in the literature.

Taken together, these examples underscore a need, both in the literature and within universities, to acknowledge how the academic culture is contributing to conflict and confusion among faculty. Faculty are forced to use already limited time, energy and resources to battle competing cultural ideologies and to determine which sets of values are most important to uphold. Academia must begin an educational process to learn how these multiple and competing cultures are creating negative environments for faculty members. If they do not undertake such a process, then faculty will continue to struggle with the tensions created, and academic teaching, research, and service will suffer.

Leadership.

Academic leadership can help or hinder faculty-faculty conflict. Operating in an environment of competing and conflicting cultures, academic leaders are forced to wade through troubled faculty waters. Faculty in this study felt that most conflicts, unless they became an issue for the union, remained private departmental issues. The department head was responsible for many faculty-faculty conflicts, with limited information going into the more public domain of dean, senior administration, or union. In addition, the independent and autonomous nature of academics creates a precarious situation for academic leaders who are encouraged to accept an old adage about faculty

management: "getting academics to do anything is like herding cats" (Stan, D, M-Ex, 2, p.17, 40-41).

Department heads (chairs) have the closest interaction with faculty members and are responsible for managing and resolving many faculty-faculty conflicts. Conflict issues only go outside the department in exceptional circumstances: "a lot of the stuff you don't bother the dean [with]...you don't want the dean micromanaging, I mean he's delegated responsibility to you, you try and do your own job" (Stan, D, M-Ex, 1, p.21, 27-32). Unfortunately, many department heads are not given adequate training or adequate autonomy to manage faculty effectively. This leaves faculty feeling that they are "at the mercy of who the head is" (Jane, C, L-Ex, 2, p.15, 7-8), fearing that an academic will obtain the role of department head without embodying necessary leadership characteristics or qualities.

Department heads often move from the role of professor into the role of administrator. As Gmelch and Miskin (1993) explained, these roles demand different skills and characteristics. Professors operate in solitary and private environments, valuing their autonomy, and working largely within their disciplines. Heads operate in social and public environments, in which accountability and an understanding of the larger academic structure are valued characteristics. Thus, a "transformation" must occur as professors become department heads. If these transformations do not occur, then the role of the department head is compromised (Gmelch & Miskin, 1993).

How does the university ensure that these transformations occur in department heads? In most situations, the university offers little help or guidance for faculty members who assume department head responsibilities. Tucker (1993) described this lack of guidance for department heads:

> While specifically designed national and regional workshops are conducted for
>
> new presidents, vice presidents, and deans to help prepare them for their new

responsibilities, few such opportunities are available to department chair

persons, who outnumber all other types of university administrators combined.

(p. 28)

Thus, departmental leadership is a gamble: if the professor is willing to make the

transition, the department benefits; if he or she does not adapt, then the department

suffers. When departments suffer, the institution suffers: "an institution can run for a long

time with an inept chief executive, but not long at all with inept department leaders"

(Leaming, 1998, p. 28).

Gmelch and Miskin (1993), Tucker, (1993), and Leaming (1998) described the

important role department heads play in conflict management. Gmelch and Miskin

(1993) and Leaming (1998) focused their discussions on conflicts *with* colleagues, not

conflicts *between* colleagues; that is, they primarily discussed administrator-faculty

conflict, rather than faculty-faculty conflict. Gmelch and Miskin (1993) outlined six major

sources of conflict for departmental chairs: inter-faculty conflict, conflict attitude,

unsupportive faculty, unsupportive chairs, role of evaluation, and role of mediation.

Although inter-faculty conflict was listed as a source of conflict for chairs, this source was

limited to the following interpretation: "faculty disagreeing with each other which resulted

in 'bickering, whining, and feuding,' 'acting without reason,' and 'ideological and personal

wars.'" (p. 104). Department heads may fail to comprehend the extensive role

interpersonal conflict plays in faculty life, and how faculty wars and feuding reflect

deeper academic issues that must be resolved, not avoided.

Leaming (1998) described the chair's role of conflict manager in terms of "dealing

with difficult faculty." This phrasing immediately sparks the notion of an "us-and-them"

mentality with faculty against administration. Nine difficult faculty members were

described: the faculty member with a substance abuse problem; the obstinate faculty

member; the weak classroom teacher; the department gossip; the department snitch; the

loud, abusive faculty member; the lean, mean venting machine; the high maintenance faculty member; and the unmotivated faculty member. Leaming did not address how interpersonal conflict struggles may cause these faculty members to become "difficult" or how faculty and departmental culture may reinforce certain conflicts and contribute to increased problem faculty. Heads must remain acutely aware of the numerous sources of faculty-faculty conflict and resist engaging in the blame game. As Leaming's (1998) discussion of difficult faculty implies, it appears to be far easier to label certain faculty members as difficult instead of to investigate the real cause of the problem. Although faculty members may legitimately be the problem, difficult faculty members should be an instant reminder for chairs that faculty-faculty conflicts are privately raging beneath the public surface.

Tucker (1993) described, in some detail, interpersonal conflicts experienced by faculty. Tucker posited a number of explanations for the limited discussion into the role chairs play in interpersonal conflict among faculty members:

> Academicians with preconceptions about harmonious campus life are often reluctant to speak or even think about discord and dissension in their immediate environment. Those who think of conflict as abnormal or aberrant tend to shun the subject. Some chairpersons view conflict in their department uneasily and feel that it is somehow their fault. Some chairpersons are unaware that conflict exists because they are so awe-inspiring that their faculty members conceal it from them. (p. 397)

Regardless of reason, department heads must begin to appreciate the conflicts and struggles experienced by faculty.

The results of this study add to the literature on department heads by highlighting two additional conflict management roles that heads must play if they are to manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts effectively. Existing literature discussed how department

heads must manage and resolve faculty-administration conflicts, how they must deal with difficult faculty members, and how they must help faculty with their personal and "inner" conflicts. In addition to these common kinds of academic conflicts, this study underscored the importance of the roles department heads play in helping to resolve interpersonal conflicts occurring in a department and, in particularly, in assisting newer faculty who become caught up in conflict situations.

Faculty in this study outlined numerous sources of interpersonal conflicts between faculty members, describing how these situations lead to various levels of avoidance and personal frustration. These faculty were not talking about "difficult" faculty members per se; instead, they detailed situations where interpersonal conflicts could erupt between faculty. Just as department heads need to be aware of conflicts that are occurring between faculty and administration, they also need to be aware of the prevalence of interpersonal conflicts between faculty members in their departments.

This awareness is most important in the case of newer faculty. Both junior and senior faculty in this study explained how the department head is a key resource for new faculty in conflict situations. The department head may be the only person a new faculty can safely turn to in times of conflict. New faculty do not want to create further conflict, and frequently do not know who to trust and who to fear. Consequently, the head's role in new faculty conflict is accentuated.

This study also added to the literature by creating a dialogue on the quasi-administrator role that department heads are forced to play. George described how department heads are caught in a precarious administrative position:

Department heads are not like CEOs of firms, CEOs go from being CEOs to being chairman of the board to retiring on a generous pension, but they don't then go back down to the foreman level, well, department heads don't wink out of existence when they finish their term, they go back to being professors, well,

when you start cracking the whip you make a lot of enemies then when you go

back down to being professor, they're all waiting for you. (A, M-Ex, 2, p.28, 42-

55)

Department heads operate on finite terms, rotating from the professoriate into

administration and then back to the professoriate. During their years as departmental

administrators, heads must battle a major irony of the university: the chair is charged

with great authority over performance and evaluation and yet he or she must be

constantly aware that the professors they judge become the professors who judge them

when they return to the professoriate. This situation limits the amount of authority

department heads can exercise during their finite term.

Faculty demographics.

Throughout the study, faculty discussed conflicts that occurred between junior

and senior faculty. These "cohort" conflicts focused mainly on differences in vision,

mission, and goals for the academic department. Senior faculty have dominated the

academic landscape for over three decades and they were the founders of their

universities current academic path. Junior faculty, who are currently entering academia

in large numbers, have their own perceptions of academia and their own vision for the

university. Senior and junior faculty often see their department taking different paths and

this can be a major source of interpersonal conflict for involved faculty. In order to

appreciate the challenges facing these two cohorts, a discussion regarding faculty

demographics is included.

Most of the senior faculty in this study were hired during the boom era of the late

1960s and early 1970s. They described this cohort as large and idealistic, a product of

the 1960s, wanting to rebel against the issues of that time (e.g., Stan, D, M-Ex; Brad, C,

M-Ex). Faculty members recalled how they overthrew departmental leadership, fought

for shared governance, and created rules and procedures to limit the role subjectivity played in academic functions. For nearly two decades these faculty have controlled the vision and mission, the culture, and the formal and informal rules of their department. These faculty members have now matured and many are retiring or considering retiring in the near future. This reality has allowed the university to once again hire new faculty. For years, the university had been limited in their hiring because they had hired and tenured so many faculty in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and then felt the financial crisis of the 1980s and 1990s (Frank, 2000).

Mwenifumbo and Renner (1998) contended that universities are caught in a "demographic/financial ratchet" and each "twist" of the ratchet is "squeezing from [universities] greater and greater measures of the energy and vitality necessary for adaptations" (p. 22). This effect was spawned by the rapid growth and expansion of the 1960s and 1970s when universities were in a boom era both in terms of students and faculty. Unfortunately, this boom era was followed by a bust era of the late 1970s and 1980s. Universities were faced with increasing financial and governmental pressures that continued into the 21st century.

The boom era witnessed rapid hiring and tenuring of a large number of faculty members. These faculty members have dominated their institutions and their disciplines for over three decades. Mwenifumbo and Renner (1998) studied this demographic profile as part of their "ratchet" investigation. They noted that in 1992-1993, Statistics Canada reported a skewed age profile for full-time academics: aggregate data from nine Canadian institutions revealed a median age of 50 and a mean age of 48.88. They also explained that "the median age in this study (50.0) can be compared with earlier data compiled by Statistics Canada (1983). In 1970-71, the median age of faculty was 37 years, a decade later (1980-81) it was 42 years" (p. 28). This older cohort will continue to dominate until large number of faculty retire and are replaced with younger faculty.

Frank (2000) explained that, in the 1990s, Canadian universities operated from a position of retrenchment and cut "some 3,500 faculty positions since 1992" (p. 8). A combination of faculty retirements and an inability to replace faculty due to budget cuts led to this severe loss of faculty. These "dark days of retrenchment" appear to be drawing to a close, opening the door to faculty growth and renewal (Frank, 2000, p. 8). Elliott (2000) contended that anticipated student enrolment growth of nearly 20% by 2010 are forcing universities to recruit and replace faculty positions vacated by retirements. Elliott also suggested that governments are beginning to realize that years of budget cuts negatively affected universities: "[provincial governments] recognize the serious erosion that has taken place in university core budgets and they appear to understand that, in order to continue placing such high expectations on universities, governments will have to start reinvesting in higher education" (p. 2).

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) predicted that Canadian universities will hire "between 2,500 and 3,000 new faculty a year" over the next six years (Elliott, 2000, p. 4).

> Universities will need to hire between 1,200 and 1,400 faculty a year over the next six years just to meet enrolment growth and to make up for the 3,500 faculty who left over the past few years. Universities will also need to hire an additional 1,300 to 1,600 professors a year over the same period to replace departing and retiring faculty. (Elliott, 2000, p. 4).

Many universities are already embracing this period of renewal. Frank (2000) reported that "the University of Alberta...has already hired 400 new academics...Concordia University filled 50 positions over the past two years, and the University of British Columbia says it needs 900 more professors by 2005" (p. 10).

What does this mean for interpersonal conflict in academic institutions? As universities hire more junior faculty, potential for faculty-faculty conflict will increase.

Time and again, faculty in this study commented that struggles between junior and senior faculty often lead to interpersonal conflict. There were many possible explanations for these struggles. Faculty attributed some problems to the power differences between junior and senior faculty. They also indicated that conflict can emerge over differing visions of the department. Faculty further indicated that senior faculty could feel threatened by new faculty and may react in ways that spark interpersonal conflict.

Another possible reason for junior-senior cohort struggles may be generational differences. Younger faculty differ from senior faculty in many respects: they grew up in different generations, they participated in different stages of their discipline's development, and they were trained to value varied interpretations of the academy. Whereas senior faculty were part of the baby boom generation and the 1960s hippie generation, younger faculty "born between 1963 and 1981" are part of generation X (Leaming, 1998, p. 250). As Fay (1993) explained, baby boomers and Generation Xers have different outlooks based on their journey through different generations. For baby boomers, "the combination of prosperity and social decay gave birth to cynicism, even indignation [and led] many boomers to adopt nontraditional, anti-establishment identities" (p. 54). For Generation Xers, the opposite reality rings true:

> Even before the recession started in 1990, these young people's economic horizons were limited by a sluggish job market, stagnant wages, and the high costs of real estate, higher education, and health insurance. At the same time, social conditions were far calmer in the 1980s than in the two preceding decades. (Fay, 1993, p. 54)

These broad generational differences affect faculty members' perspectives and ideologies, which cause natural tensions and interpersonal conflicts between members of the different cohorts.

Finally, universities do not appear to be addressing how these new hirings will impact departmental cultures. Many senior academics used the metaphor of a family to describe their academic culture. These academics have spent the better part of 30 years together, experiencing promotions, tenure, academic success, personal development, and the aging process together. They have achieved a high degree of institutional power, with most having been tenured for decades. Currently, the university has begun, and will continue, to introduce large numbers of new hires at a rate seen only 30 years before when these senior academics themselves were hired. These new faculty will likely hold different values, ideologies, goals, and visions and senior faculty many not be sure how to include these new younger "siblings" into their academic families.

The metaphor of a family is insightful not only because it provides a basis for understanding how senior faculty relate to each other, but also because it provides an insight into the conflicts facing new faculty members entering academia. The stability of the academic family is now being shaken by the retirement of numerous experienced academics and the introduction of large numbers of younger faculty members. This problem needs to be addressed as part of institutional recruitment and retention strategies in order to minimize the probability of interpersonal conflict between junior and senior faculty and to increase the probability of job satisfaction for newly hired academics.

In addition to cohort struggles, faculty members expressed that hiring decisions were one of the most conflict-ridden aspects of academic life. With an increasing demand for new faculty, academics will be forced to participate much more regularly in the hiring process. Currently, faculty members reported that they only go through major hirings every few years so they are able to recover from, or mentally block, the conflicts that arose during the hiring procedures. In the near future, they will not have this recovery time. Instead, they will be involved in hiring decisions almost every year.

If hiring decisions bring out the worst in academics, and if the university is entering a phase of increased demand for faculty, what are the implications for faculty members and departments? The implications revolve around a reality of increased interpersonal conflict for junior and senior faculty members and touch on renewal and retention issues. Cohort struggles and hiring conflicts are two major sources of conflict that faculty, department heads, deans, and administrators must acknowledge. Conflict-ridden departments are unlikely to cultivate satisfied academics and, in the impending boom market of the 21st century, unsatisfied academics could easily leave for better interpersonal situations. The potential waste of time, effort, and resources to manage these conflicts will be overwhelming unless conflict issues related to renewal are addressed.

Summary

As evidenced by the literature review, there is a research gap regarding interpersonal conflict in academic communities. This exploratory study sought to fill a part of this gap by investigating the perspectives of eight faculty members on faculty-faculty conflict. The iterative and evolving data analysis process revealed seven enhanced data themes regarding interpersonal conflict between faculty: defining interpersonal conflict between faculty members; sources of conflict in academic communities; coping strategies; interpretation of academic culture; power differentials between and among faculty members; the important role of the department head; and, perspectives on professional development regarding interpersonal conflict.

Each theme provided insights into an academic culture that struggles to cope with, and manage, interpersonal conflict between its faculty members. Together, these data themes provided answers to the four main research questions that guided this exploratory study. For instance, the numerous sources of interpersonal conflict identified

by the participants in this study emphasized the probability that faculty members will experience some form of interpersonal conflict during their careers. One source of conflict in particular, the hiring process, suggested that conflict levels will escalate as academia hires greater numbers of junior faculty. In addition, this study revealed that avoidance is a major coping strategy employed by faculty members when faced with interpersonal conflict and that newer faculty believe that they are to avoid all conflict until they are tenured. Power differentials between junior and senior faculty and between pre-tenured and tenured faculty make this avoidance strategy difficult as faculty use their power in ways that heighten interpersonal conflict between faculty in a department.

Department heads were seen to play an important role in interpersonal conflict management, with newer faculty relying on their heads for guidance, information, and support. Faculty in this study emphasized that heads must remain aware of their role as supporter and mentor to newer faculty and alert to the numerous sources of interpersonal conflict, including those stemming from abuses of power, in order to effectively govern their departments. This study also provided insight into how faculty perceive their academic culture and revealed how major issues of academic freedom, tenure, and collegiality are interpreted differently among faculty. Finally, faculty in this study recognized the need for some form of professional development strategy to help academics cope with interpersonal conflict. However, they cautioned that a strategy would only be successful if it was developed from an academic culture perspective and if it provided faculty with a security that they would not be upsetting the norm of competence and control if they participated in the professional development opportunity. These data themes and the answers they provided to the research questions begin to address some of the research gaps that exist in the literature regarding interpersonal conflict in academic communities.

These data themes also provided awareness of broader academic cultural issues that could impact the levels of interpersonal conflict experienced by faculty. Understanding how academics interpret their own academic culture is paramount because competing interpretations could be sources of interpersonal conflict. For instance, faculty members could operate from different definitions of academic freedom or collegiality and these different definitions could conflict with definitions held by other faculty members in their department. Faculty could also differ on their acceptance of aspects of the business culture entering academic culture; for example, newer faculty may be more accepting of accountability mandates while senior faculty may feel that it is a threat against their academic freedom. By understanding academic culture, both theoretically and practically (as defined by academics), researchers will be better able to conceptualize interpersonal conflict in academic communities.

The role of leadership in academia also impacts interpersonal conflict between faculty. As faculty in this study observed, department heads operate in a precarious setting: they are empowered to govern the department, but their resolve can be weakened by their understanding that their term is finite and that they will eventually move back to their professor role. Thus, department heads have been delegated much departmental responsibility without the means to hold faculty accountable for these responsibilities. This study revealed that newer faculty rely on department head support during situations of interpersonal conflict. If heads are to be effective in their conflict management role, they must be given the support to hold faculty members responsible for their actions, and the training to act responsibly in this role.

Finally, the impacts of faculty demographics on interpersonal conflict must also be acknowledged. As indicated by this study, junior and senior faculty experience interpersonal cohort conflicts. These conflicts revolve around the vision of the department, the particulars of a discipline, or the responsibilities of junior and senior

academics. Demographically speaking, large numbers of senior faculty will soon be reaching retirement age, and as these faculty retire, universities will be hiring many junior faculty. The influx of junior faculty over the next decade increases the probability of greater cohort struggles and interpersonal conflicts between junior and senior faculty on a myriad of issues.

This study was initially guided by the following definition of interpersonal conflict: "an 'interactive state' manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities" (Rahim, 1986, p. 13). Although this definition helped to structure the literature review and some of the study's methodological decisions, data from the study revealed that this guiding definition could be expanded. First, Rahim's (1986) definition frames conflict as fundamentally negative in nature. While many faculty saw conflict negatively, some did contend that there were positive aspects to interpersonal conflict between faculty. For instance, one faculty member suggested that an episode of conflict could open either member's thinking to view an issue in a new way. A more complete guiding definition of conflict could be one that accepts its negative, neutral, and positive aspects without valuing one over the others.

Second, this study revealed that faculty-faculty conflicts were often subtle and covert, occurring more often in private, rather than public, forua. Faculty might not always be aware that they are involved in a conflict or have contributed to a conflict situation. A guiding definition could incorporate this subtle aspect of conflict and acknowledge that conscious action may not be needed to cause or create conflict. Thus, Rahim's (1986) definition could be expanded to include negative, positive, and neutral aspects of conflict that occur either through deliberate interactions or inadvertent behaviour.

Further Research

This study was exploratory in nature and was conducted in order to provide insights into the relatively unexplored phenomenon of interpersonal conflict in academic communities. The seven data themes, the answers to the research questions, and the three broad academic cultural issues generated from this study provide countless opportunities for further research. Each of the seven themes could be expanded individually into research projects. For instance, a qualitative or quantitative study could be designed to investigate the predominant sources of interpersonal conflict in the academy or to investigate principal coping strategies used by faculty members. Other studies could be designed to investigate the following areas:

- What are the challenges and issues facing junior, mid-career, and senior faculty in terms of interpersonal conflict?

- Do faculty across disciplines define interpersonal conflict similarly?

- Is there a basic definition of interpersonal conflict in academia?

- What are the costs of interpersonal conflict in academic communities?

- How do department heads manage interpersonal academic conflict?

- How do contemporary academics define terms like collegiality, self-governance, tenure, and academic freedom?

- What role does graduate school play in cultivating interpersonal conflict management techniques in faculty members?

These topic areas could also be expanded to include investigations into gender, cohort, and ethnic differences and similarities relating to interpersonal conflict in academic communities. As findings from these future studies are published, the gap in the literature regarding interpersonal conflict in the academy will close.

In addition, this study could be replicated in a much broader study that encompassed a larger sample size and faculty representation. The sample for this study was small and restricted to only one Faculty in a research university. Although it generated many useful themes and insights, a larger qualitative study, encompassing a larger sample size and participation from more Faculties and disciplines, is warranted. This present research, at best, represents the perspectives of eight faculty members from only one Faculty; academics from other Faculties and disciplines may hold different perspectives of interpersonal conflict in academic communities. Furthermore, gender, ethnicity, and seniority level characteristics could be investigated in a broader study with a larger sample size. This present exploratory study was not designed to investigate other faculty characteristics and how they impacted the perception of interpersonal conflict in the academy. Including other characteristics, like gender, ethnicity, and seniority level, could provide a greater depth of understanding regarding how interpersonal conflict is perceived by academic faculty.

Finally, findings from this study could also be implemented in a proactive manner in academia. The development of a useful professional development strategy, either for a graduate school setting or for a faculty-based setting, could be undertaken immediately. Developing this strategy would take time and resources, especially if issues like academic culture and discipline culture are taken into account. By creating a strategy now, academia might be better prepared for the potential increase in interpersonal conflict in the future. In addition, department heads could be informed about their necessary support role for new faculty and instructed to stay aware of the prominent role that power plays in faculty-faculty relations. As the number of junior faculty increases, department heads will find that the importance of these two issues will grow and that advance preparation and awareness will be paramount. At the very least, findings from this present study could be used as the basis for creating a dialogue

regarding interpersonal conflict. This dialogue could help to dispel harmful academic myths and to reinforce useful coping conflict strategies. It could also help to create an academic culture that accepts and manages interpersonal conflict between faculty members.

Chapter 6: Reflections

Many people in my life have struggled to understand my interest in the academy. They either do not understand what I am trying to learn or do not appreciate how the details of the academy could be interesting. All they see is a person who graduated with a Commerce degree and secured a full-time research position at a University, only to give up the full-time position to go back to University to research higher education in the Faculty of Education. Their confusion is clearly warranted; I was also confused during much of the transition from one role to the other.

It has taken me almost the entire length of my Master's degree—two years—to be able to articulate my scholarly journey in a manner that decreases people's confusion. Although a Commerce degree, a research position, and a Master's of Education degree do not explicitly appear linked, for me they are linked. In my final year in Commerce, I took a readings course with Dr. Anderson. It was during this course that my interest in interpersonal conflict and the communication of conflict took flight. With the guidance of Dr. Anderson, I researched, analyzed, and reported the various ways interpersonal conflict is expressed. As a research analyst, my interest in conflict evolved from a purely business mindset to a more academic mindset. Through my job, I was learning about the numerous pressures being placed on academic faculty in the name of quality, efficiency, and accountability.

It was through a chance encounter with a brochure from the Post-Secondary Education stream of the Faculty of Education that I decided to approach one of the faculty on the list regarding my general interest in conflict and my growing interest in interpersonal conflict in academic communities. Watching my future advisor's excitement over my topic confirmed that I was moving in the right direction: I was meant to explore this topic through an Education lens. By entering the Master of Education program with a specific thesis topic already developed, I was able to integrate the knowledge I was

gaining in each course to the development of my thesis study. Each course, however, emphasized a larger area of interest in the culture of academia.

This cultural interest actually broadened my interest in academic conflict. I began to question how conflict in the academy was different from conflict outside the academy. During my search for an answer to this question, I stumbled onto a fascinating academic discovery. Unlike the healthy body of literature on conflict—sources, reactions, models, coping strategies—in non-academic settings, there existed a limited dialogue on interpersonal conflicts between faculty. How could this be? Most students can describe conflicts occurring between their faculty members and most faculty members can remember incidents of interpersonal conflict with other faculty. At an anecdotal level, faculty and students were aware of interpersonal conflicts in the academy; at a scholarly level, this awareness was lacking.

My interest in academic culture and academic conflict then became a quest to make explicit what was known implicitly: interpersonal conflict occurs between faculty and a dialogue on this topic must be cultivated. The focus of this quest demanded that qualitative research methods be used for this exploratory study. The thoughts, ideas, and perspectives of faculty were needed in order for broader cultural and conflict themes to develop. These broader themes could then be used as the basis for further research.

Methodological Reflections

In my course on qualitative research methods, I developed a pilot study to gather preliminary data that could be used to enhance my later thesis study. The focus of this pilot study was to learn about the formal and informal rules for managing conflict in the academy. I secured three informants—two junior faculty and one senior faculty—for this study, and used informal, semi-structured interviews and constant comparative analyses to discover important themes and lessons. During this pilot study, I became aware of the

difficulty in conducting good qualitative research: it demands massive amounts of time, energy, and commitment to transcribe, reflect, and analyze pages upon pages of data. I am grateful to have had the opportunity of a pilot study to learn these lessons; I was prepared for the time demands and commitment levels necessary to conduct a complete thesis study using qualitative research methods.

Although I was aware of these issues, other learning opportunities arose throughout the design and delivery of the study reported in my thesis. These learning opportunities helped me to refine the subject sample, the interview location, and the questions discussed during the interviews. For instance, in my original thesis proposal, I stated that I would contact department heads, obtain their permission to speak at a departmental meeting, and then distribute contact letters to all members of the department. I believed that this plan would be successful because faculty would know that I had departmental approval for this study and I would be able to explain my study on a much more personal and direct platform. From there, faculty could then decide if they wanted to participate. Actual events that occurred highlighted some of the limitations of such a plan.

I did contact all department heads and asked their permission to speak to the faculty at their next department meeting. I was either denied permission (due to tight departmental agendas) or was granted permission to attend meetings that were months away. One department head actually said that she was not going to grant me permission because she did not feel that any faculty would be interested in what I had to say. All department heads did, however, grant permission for me to contact faculty directly through Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)-approved contact letters. ENREB granted approval of this methodological change and faculty in each of four departments were contacted.

Even though I was not able to speak to faculty in a general setting, I quickly learned the benefit to this was that I maintained my personal anonymity. This benefit helped me to accommodate the interview locations. I had originally planned to hold interviews outside of the department in order to protect the faculty members anonymity; however, every faculty member expressed that he or she wanted to be interviewed in his or her own office. Had I made the public presentation to the department, I would not have been able to accommodate this request because I would not have been anonymous. Faculty would recognize me and be able to determine who I was interviewing in their department. Since I maintained my anonymity, with only a letter as contact to the faculty, I was able to manoeuvre around the department without drawing any suspicion since I maintained the appearance of a student (backpack, casual dress) and blended into the activity of the department. The combination of my anonymity and the faculty members' assurances that their offices were private and confidential increased my confidence that the interview and the informant would remain anonymous.

Some faculty did, however, experience some trepidation after receiving the contact letters. They were suspicious of the letter, questioning who gave me their name and why they were asked to participate. One person contacted my advisor directly to ask questions regarding my thesis while another person requested that she would only consider participating in my thesis if she could read my proposal. After consultation with my advisor, we decided that releasing the entire proposal could potentially bias the informant and compromised on the release of only the methodology chapter. Once faculty were informed that everyone in their department was contacted and that they were not singled out as an important person to talk with, their suspicions subsided.

I was quite surprised at the response rate from three of the four targeted departments. Within 24 hours of distributing contact letters to two departments, three informants had agreed to participate. The department where the department head was

short and abrupt with me, stating she would not make time in her meeting for me because she did not think any faculty would be interested in the study, was the department to achieve the quickest response time to my information letter. I sent the letters out on Thursday afternoon and on Friday I had two interested faculty from that department. Although it could have been just a coincidence, the quick response from these faculty members suggested that there was some form of interpersonal conflict occurring in that department.

Two weeks later, I distributed letters to the third department and one informant agreed to participate within days of receiving the letter. The fourth and final department also had quick response rates, with two informants agreeing to participate within only a few days of distributing the contact letter. Many faculty were courteous enough to contact me if they could not or would not participate; those who could not participate do to scheduling issues expressed that they would be willing to be interviewed in the summer or fall if my study extended that long. Most of these faculty shared that they were intrigued by my study and offered me much success in my research endeavours.

This delight in response rate turned to apprehension when I realized that I was not achieving the junior-senior pairing for which I had hoped. I was receiving a high response rate from senior faculty interested in this study and minimal responses from junior faculty. After discussing this situation with my advisor, we decided to implement an "interview all interested faculty" policy, with the hope that junior faculty would subsequently agree to participate in the study. Fortunately, two junior faculty agreed to be interviewed, although Julie expressed concern that she was so new that she might not have anything to contribute. We decided to hold one interview to see if this was indeed the case; interestingly, Julie had much to contribute, providing stories, examples, definitions, and concerns regarding conflict in the academy.

In designing this study, I was most concerned about gaining only one faculty cohort perspective—either junior or senior—and risking a limited exploration into the interpersonal conflict issues facing academic faculty. Findings from the pilot study emphasized the need to gain both junior and senior faculty perspectives in order to capture a greater picture of academic reality; there is more likelihood that junior and senior faculty will have different perspectives on issues occurring in the department and between faculty.

The ideal of having pairs from all four departments, however, could not be achieved. Pairs were only achieved in two departments. In the other two departments, one only had one senior informant (Dept. D) and the other had two senior (and male) informants (Dept. B). Lack of pairs was superseded by the realization that male perspectives were dominating the data collection. Therefore, a second distribution of contact letters with a covering memo (Appendix C) was sent to all faculty in Department D and only female faculty members in Department B. The goal was to find any other faculty member, ideally junior, from Department D (the "interview any interested faculty" policy"), and to find a female faculty member, ideally junior, from Department B to provide a gender balance to the male informants this department. It is important to note that gender balancing was not a prerequisite for this exploratory study; however, in two departments, informants were of differing cohorts—junior and senior—and differing genders thus encouraging a search for this makeup in departments with only male informants.

Newer faculty were reticent to participate in the study and results from the study provided possible explanations. First, pre-tenured faculty must fulfill an intense mandate of teaching, research, and service and may not have the time to participate in a graduate student's thesis. Faculty in this study confirmed that there is a "tendency of the job to spill out and eat up every single moment...like there's, a sense, it's just not enough time

in the day" (Jane, C, L-Ex, 2, p.26, 16-18 & 20). Second, pre-tenured faculty, lacking institutional power and the security of tenure, may feel too vulnerable to participate in a study that focuses on interpersonal conflict between faculty members. As described by a junior faculty member in this study, pre-tenured faculty absorb a "myth"

> The myth that we all absorb is keep your head down, just keep your head down, don't piss anybody off, don't fight any major battles, don't bring yourself unnecessarily into anybody's attention who is in power, in any way, keep your head down, and it's, I think most people do a form of that for their first five or six years. (Jane, C, L-Ex, 1, p.33-34, 55-10)

Junior faculty could perceive that the stakes would be too high to participate in an interpersonal conflict study; involvement would create a risk, however minor, that they would bring themselves unnecessarily to the attention of their colleagues. Gaining this understanding helped me to appreciate even more the participation and contributions made by Jane and Julie in this study.

Although I did not achieve the originally planned pairings, the two junior faculty provided balance to perspectives expressed by senior faculty and enough overlap in the issues to conclude that the sample was adequate for this study. This sample of six senior faculty and two junior faculty also provided insights into senior faculty perspectives on academic issues. My literature review revealed that this segment has not been researched as intensely as the junior faculty segment. In addition, the junior faculty provided enough balance in their perspectives to allow for a greater understanding of how interpersonal conflict affects both junior and senior faculty members. Senior faculty spoke of issues that affected junior faculty and junior faculty spoke of issues that affected senior faculty and it was within these dialogues that the a diversity of academic issues like power, culture, and coping strategies became clear.

Interview Reflections

Unlike the pilot study, the informants in this study seemed willing to talk about conflict. The way the interviews were structured included a warm-up section where the informants were asked to talk about themselves first. I got the sense that some informants really just wanted to skip right to the conflict dialogue. Upon reflection, I think that I should have structured my topic and my letter to indicate that I am investigating academic culture and the appearance of academic conflict so my introductory questions would not seem so out of place. Julie was the most explicit in saying that she just wanted to start talking about my conflict questions instead of wasting time on basic questions. For instance, I asked her to describe some of her greatest academic moments, to which she replied "one of the question about the conflict, I can go to those, if that is your preference" (A, L-Ex, 1, p.6, 33-34) indicating to me that she did not want to spend time on the warm-up questions. Stan was also eager to discuss his conflict issues, alluding to them throughout the warm-up session. For example, Stan mentioned early on that "there have been some problems as of late that we can talk about at some point" (D, M-Ex, 1, p.11, 30-32) indicating that he was willing to discuss conflict questions, but was waiting for me to ask the conflict questions. It appeared that once some of these academics agreed to talk about conflict they were ready to talk about the conflict that they experience in their academic lives. However, the general questions did allow for a backup plan if the interview ran short or if a line of discussion did not work.

After the warm-up questions, I felt awkward introducing questions directly relating to interpersonal conflict. It almost seemed like I was avoiding the conflict issue at first and then trying to force it into the conversation later. In order to minimize this awkwardness, I waited until the participants mentioned something involving some aspect of interpersonal conflict and then asked questions involving this area more directly. The

participants seemed most nervous about what was meant by the term "interpersonal conflict" but generally seemed to relax when they realized that their definition would guide the discussion. Once the topic of interpersonal conflict was introduced directly, the informants willingly discussed their perspectives, thoughts, and ideas on the subject.

I found that observing faculty mannerisms and expressions was one of the most interesting aspects of the first and second interviews. The most striking mannerism I found in seven of the eight participants was that when they talk, after a point when they seem to be more comfortable with me, they lean back in their chair and talk with their hands on their head (making a wide diamond shape with their arms). Six of the participants who did this mannerism were male and the seventh was female. Julie, the female, did a variation of putting her hands on her head where she pulled her hair back like a half ponytail often as we spoke. A faculty member in the pilot study also spoke with this mannerism, leaning back in his chair with his hands on his head. If nothing else, this mannerism symbolized to me a moment when the faculty member became comfortable with my questions and me. Initially they would sit in their chairs, upright and hands either on their desks or folded in front of them. As the interview continued, there was a point where they would lean back in their chair, a gesture that expressed to me that they were more comfortable in the setting.

I also became aware of the responsibility I had as a researcher collecting data on the emotional area of interpersonal conflict. Although I understood that there was a possibility that informants would reveal personal stories or examples, I was impressed at how freely some informants discussed personal aspects of interpersonal conflict. Julie (A, L-Ex) and Jane (C, L-Ex) both underscored how these stories brought to the surface feelings of anger, hurt, frustration, and sadness through the re-telling of the story. For instance, Julie expressed how she was very upset after our first talk and how, after I left, she was very angry and felt that everything was back again: "I felt like you know, when

you speak to...psychoanalytic, it was almost very similar, basically I was trying to recall bad experience and I told you about this bad experience and afterwards I felt really, really bad" (A, L-Ex, 2, p.9, 25-29). Jane had a powerful flashback of an interpersonal conflict incident that had happened years earlier and mentally relived a terrible experience:

> This is just bringing me back, my god...oh it was ugly, it was terrible... BRUTAL experience I have ever had in my life, yeah, just, I had just remembered it...so boy oh boy, I had forgotten all about that, I had successfully repressed it. (C, L-Ex, p.29, 43-44 & 46 & p.30, 13-14 & 44-46)

Once I became aware of the impact these personal disclosures might be having on the informants, I tried consciously to end every interview on a positive topic. For instance, I would ask the informants to describe what they liked most about academia or what were the best things about being an academic. I also re-asked Jane if she wanted to meet for a second interview; although we had already agreed to a second interview before the first one had started, I wanted to give her an option to remove herself from the study if she felt too emotionally drained by the memory. For future research, I would like to acquire greater understanding of counselling and support skills so I can ensure that I will say and do the necessary things when an emotional replay of a past life event occurs.

Data Analysis Reflections

The data analysis process in this study was iterative and evolving. A major task for qualitative researchers is to become aware of their own personal biases and how these biases might impact the data analyses process. Early on in this study, I realized that I was harbouring biases of faculty members and their perspectives regarding interpersonal conflict that had arisen during the pilot study. After only a couple of interviews with senior faculty informants and junior faculty informants, I realized that I

had subconsciously expected the senior faculty to act in the same manner as Alex, the senior informant in the pilot study, and the junior faculty to act like Janice and Mary, the junior faculty in the pilot study. I would catch myself thinking, "Oh, I thought he would be more open to that question because he was a senior faculty member" or "I can't believe a new faculty member would share this information with me". I struggled, during these first few interviews, to try to keep these newly understood biases in check. As the number of completed interviews increased, I found that the biases I had about senior and junior faculty lessened, which allowed me to focus even more on what the informants were saying and doing.

Qualitative researchers must also be actively engaged in their data, reviewing it, reflecting on it, and writing about it often. This active engagement provided the most rewarding aspects of this study. During my three months of data collection, I read a part of at least one transcript every day. This helped me to understand the informants' perspectives on many issues and it forced me to reflect regularly on generated data themes. This intimacy with the data was especially helpful as new datasets were introduced into the analysis process. Data themes would converge and diverge and it was only by reading and reflecting on the datasets regularly that enhanced data themes were generated.

The "avoidance" coping strategy theme is a primary example of this data theme evolution. Faculty members would mention how they coped with interpersonal conflict by not talking to certain faculty members, by moving to a different building, or by accepting that certain issues would remain active until a faculty member retired. I initially characterized these actions as acts of resignation: faculty members were resigned to conflict in their workplaces. As the number of informants increased, and as these similar coping strategies kept being mentioned, I started to think that instead of just being resigned to conflict, faculty members were displaying some form of learned helplessness

regarding interpersonal conflict. Finally, I realized that instead of being resigned or acting helpless, faculty members were actually using avoidance as their main coping strategy. This enhanced data theme would not have been possible if the datasets were not read and reflected upon often and if new data were not allowed to converge and diverge with existing data themes.

At first, I was thrilled to identify this avoidance theme as the common connector to all these coping strategies. Then, as I re-read the datasets with this enhanced theme defined, other issues in the datasets took on new meaning. For example, the theme of accountability began to fit into a larger picture of academic culture: lack of accountability standards might increase the use of avoidance coping strategies which could increase the lack of accountability standards since interpersonal conflict issues are not directly discussed. This spiral process of avoidance and accountability was made even more striking when faculty began to share that some of their avoidance measures—like moving to another building—were not available to newer faculty. This information combined with an understanding that newer faculty should "just keep [their] head down, don't piss anybody off, don't fight any major battles, don't bring [themselves] unnecessarily into anybody's attention who is in power" (Jane, C, L-Ex, p.33-34, 56-4) emphasized the interpersonal conflict struggles for newer faculty. This led to an even broader question of how newer faculty could avoid conflicts if the opportunities to avoid had lessened. As the number of newer faculty increase, the answer to this question becomes even more important, especially when issues like job satisfaction, retention, and attrition arise.

Clearly, the analysis process in this study was iterative and evolving. Insights into one data theme shed light onto other issues, which in turn brought other issues into focus. Intimacy with the datasets helped to clarify these important data themes. The rewards for this intense analysis process were great. Enhanced data themes were

identified and broader cultural issues that would impact interpersonal conflict between faculty in the future were recognized. In addition, I was able to develop my qualitative research skills and to identify qualitative research issues relating to conflict that I could develop in doctoral studies. The lessons, insights, and skills developed from this data analysis process will better prepare me for future qualitative research studies.

Final Thoughts

This exploratory study into interpersonal conflict in academic communities has been both academically and personally rewarding. Academically, I was able to create dialogues with eight academics on the topic of interpersonal conflict, which enabled me to understand their perspectives on this topic. This understanding enhanced the data analyses process and allowed for major themes to be identified. Answers to the four major research questions that guided this study were recognized and future application of the results from this study were determined. Thus, I found this study to be academically rewarding.

Personally, this study allowed for insights into academic life that could not be obtained by books or journals alone. Being that I desire to become an academic, I found the perspectives of these eight faculty members on academic life to be invaluable. I also enjoyed the dialogues that occurred after each interview officially concluded. Each informant expressed intrigue into my research topic and wanted to know what had led me to this study. This often led to informal talks about academic life and some faculty members gave me advice on graduate schools, completing my Ph.D., and becoming a new faculty member. This study confirmed my personal interest in academic culture and interpersonal conflict in academic communities and my personal desire to become an academic researching post-secondary education.

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Appendix A

Ethics-Approved Pilot Study Interview Questions

   First round of interviews.

1. How long have you been with the University of Manitoba?

2. What is your area of specialization?

3. Are you a member of any committee or project involving other members of the university? If yes, what are they?

   Prompts: Faculty/Departmental, University wide

4. To the best of your knowledge, what are the "rules" for handling conflict in the faculty?

   Prompts: Between faculty members, between faculty and students, between faculty and administration

   (Conflict may be redefined as disagreements, problems, or misunderstandings.)

5. Are there any informal or unwritten rules that you perceive are important in managing conflict in your faculty or in the university as a whole?

6. With which area of the university—students, colleagues, department heads, deans, and other faculties—do you have the most difficulty resolving conflict? Are there rules in place to help you resolve these conflicts?

   Second round of interviews.

1. Do you perceive there to be differences in how you resolve or manage conflict, and how others in your faculty resolve or manage conflict?

2. What are the normal procedures for resolving conflict issues between yourself and your department head or dean?

3. How would you describe the culture of your department? of your faculty?

4. Are you aware of any workshops, models, or learning devices being used to help faculty members resolve or manage conflict?

Appendix B

ENREB Certificate of Approval for Study

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

11 February 2002

TO: **Kelly Risbey**
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Lorna Guse, Chair**
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

Re: **Protocol #E2002:010**
"A Qualitative Exploration of Interpersonal Conflicts in Academia"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Appendix C

ENREB-Approved Contact Letter

<Date>

Dear Dr. «LASTNAME»,

My name is Kelly (Dineen) Risbey and I am a Master of Education student in the Post-Secondary Studies program. The focus of my thesis is interpersonal conflict in academic communities and I am conducting an exploratory qualitative study into the perspectives of faculty members regarding interpersonal conflict in the academy. I am hoping that you will agree to be part of this study.

The perspectives of eight academic faculty members will be gathered through informal, semi-structured interviews. Each faculty member will be interviewed twice, with the possibility of a third interview if needed. The interviews will examine faculty members' definitions of conflict and their perceptions of how conflict is, or should be, dealt with in academic communities. Faculty members will be asked to provide hypothetical examples of interpersonal conflict in the academy, with the understanding that real names and events in the conflict could be disguised in order to protect confidential information. The interviews will last approximately one hour each and informants will choose one of three locations for the interviews: an office outside their faculty, an office provided by the researcher, or a location suggested by the informant. The interviews will be held at the informant's convenience and will normally be completed in a two-week period.

Every interview will be tape-recorded and later transcribed. You have the right to stop the tape at any time during the interviews and the right not to answer any of the questions posed during the interview. Further, you have the right to end an interview or withdraw your participation in the study or any part of the data you provide at any time.

You can also ask for additional information at any point in the study. At the end of the study, each informant will be provided with a summary of the research findings.

Every effort will be taken to protect your anonymity and confidentiality. All tapes, transcripts, and data reporting will be identified only by pseudonyms. These pseudonyms will protect all identifying characteristics, including name, department, faculty, and university. At no time will your identity be revealed to anyone. There is no deception involved in this study and I anticipate a minimum level of risk to the informants.

Again, I hope you will agree to be part of this study. If you have any questions or if you would like to begin interviewing right away, I can be reached by telephone at 254-5767 or by email at   . I look forward to our interviews and to learning about your perceptions regarding interpersonal conflict in academic communities. My advisor is Dr. K. L. Taylor and she has worked closely with me during the developing and planning stages of this study. If you wish to speak with her directly, she can be reached at 474-7456.

Sincerely,

Kelly (Dineen) Risbey

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

   First interview.

1. How long have you been here at the University?

2. Is this your first full academic position?

3. What attracted you to academic life?

4. Can you describe some of the ways in which you interact with other faculty
   members?

      What does this entail?

5. How do you define interpersonal conflict?

   (Conflict may be redefined as disagreements, problems, or misunderstandings.)

6. Can you describe some of the major triggers of conflict in academic life?

7. Can you tell me about an incident of conflict from your own experience as a faculty
   member?

      If no, can you tell me about an interpersonal conflict that you have

      witnessed as a faculty member?

8. Can you describe some of your own strategies for dealing with interpersonal conflict
   at work?

9. To the best of your knowledge, what are some of the rules for handling conflict in
   your faculty?

      Prompts: Between faculty members, between faculty and administration,

      between faculty and students.

   Second interview.

1. Briefly review context of interview one (building trust and rapport while emphasizing
   that active listening was practiced).

2. How would you describe the culture of your department or faculty, with respect to conflict?

3. How have you learned to deal with interpersonal conflict at work?

> Could you share with me an example of how you have dealt with interpersonal conflict in your academic life?

4. Do you think that you manage or resolve conflicts similarly or differently from your colleagues?

> If yes, in what ways?

> If no, can you describe your similar ways of managing or resolving conflicts?

5. Can you describe for me the normal procedures for handling conflict issues between faculty members in your faculty?

6. Are you satisfied with these procedures?

> If yes, why?

> If no, what would you like to see changed?

7. Can you share with me any implicit rules that are used for managing conflict in the faculty?

8. Do you know of any workshops or models being used to help faculty members resolve conflict?

> If yes, have you attended any? Do you think that they have been effective?

> If no, could you describe for me the kinds of things you would like to see in a workshop?

Third interview (if necessary).

1. Thank the informant for agreeing to the third interview.

2. Briefly review the contexts of the first two interviews (emphasizing the trust and the acceptance that has been building and reinforcing the use of active listening skills).

3. Introduce questions from the second interview that were not covered due to lack of time.

> Phrasing: In our last interview, you were discussing _____. Could you share with me how you handled the conflict you were discussing in our last interview (having recapped it moments before)?

Appendix E

ENREB-Approved Consent Letter

<u>Qualitative Research Study</u>

<u>Consent Form</u>

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I have read the information letter describing Kelly (Dineen) Risbey's qualitative research study. The purpose of her thesis is interpersonal conflict in academic communities. Kelly is conducting an exploratory qualitative study into the perspectives of faculty members regarding interpersonal conflict in the academy.

I am aware that the interviews will examine faculty members' definitions of conflict and their perceptions of how conflict is, or should be, dealt with in academic communities. Faculty members will be asked to provide hypothetical examples of interpersonal conflict in the academy, with the understanding that real names and events in the conflict could be disguised in order to protect confidential information. I understand that participants in Kelly's study will be asked to participate in a minimum of two interviews (with a third interview being conducted if needed) that will last approximately one hour each and will normally be completed in a two-week period. I also understand that all interviews will be tape-recorded and later transcribed.

Further, it is my understanding that every effort will be made to keep my information and my identity completely confidential, both in transcript data and in subsequent reports.

Kelly will be using pseudonyms for all identifiable characteristics and she will be the only person to have access to my identity. Kelly will be the only person with access to my interview tapes and she will be personally transcribing every one of my interviews. While her thesis advisor, Dr. K. L. Taylor, and other committee members will have access to interview transcripts, Kelly's use of pseudonyms in the transcripts will ensure that my identity is not revealed. The interview transcripts will be stored, for up to ten years, in a locked, fireproof safe at Kelly's residence. After this time, the transcripts will be destroyed. All interview tapes will be destroyed as soon as the thesis is successfully defended. Until they are destroyed, they will be stored in a locked, fireproof safe at Kelly's residence.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw my participation from this study at any time, and, if I do withdraw, that my data will also be withdrawn from the study. I also understand that I am not obligated to answer any interview question and that I have the right to stop the tape recorder at any point during the interviews. There is no deception involved in this study and Kelly anticipates only a minimum level of risk to the informants. At the end of the study, I will receive a report summarizing the major research findings.

I fully understand that this qualitative study is being conducted in fulfillment of Kelly's Master of Education thesis and that Dr. K. L. Taylor is her advisor. Dr. D. Schonwetter (Postsecondary Studies, Faculty of Education), Dr. C. Piotrowski (Family Studies), and Ms. R. Howard (Equity Services) are her three other committee members. I agree to participate in Kelly's qualitative study by participating in two (or possibly three) interview sessions.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive you legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional

responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. You continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

_____   _____

Date   Date

_____   _____

(Signature in ink)   (Signature in ink)

Participant   Researcher

- -

Request for Report of Research Findings

I want to receive a summary of the research results at the end of the study.   Yes   No

Please send the report to the following address:

_____

_____

_____   _____   _____

                                          (Signature in Ink)   (Signature in Ink)

                                          Participant   Researcher

                                          _____   _____

                                          Date   Date

Participant's Copy

Qualitative Research Study

Consent Form

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I have read the information letter describing Kelly (Dineen) Risbey's qualitative research study. The purpose of her thesis is interpersonal conflict in academic communities. Kelly is conducting an exploratory qualitative study into the perspectives of faculty members regarding interpersonal conflict in the academy.

I am aware that the interviews will examine faculty members' definitions of conflict and their perceptions of how conflict is, or should be, dealt with in academic communities. Faculty members will be asked to provide hypothetical examples of interpersonal conflict in the academy, with the understanding that real names and events in the conflict could be disguised in order to protect confidential information. I understand that participants in Kelly's study will be asked to participate in a minimum of two interviews (with a third interview being conducted if needed) that will last approximately one hour each and will normally be completed in a two-week period. I also understand that all interviews will be tape-recorded and later transcribed.

Further, it is my understanding that every effort will be made to keep my information and my identity completely confidential, both in transcript data and in subsequent reports.

Kelly will be using pseudonyms for all identifiable characteristics and she will be the only person to have access to my identity. Kelly will be the only person with access

to my interview tapes and she will be personally transcribing every one of my interviews. While her thesis advisor, Dr. K. L. Taylor, and other committee members will have access to interview transcripts, Kelly's use of pseudonyms in the transcripts will ensure that my identity is not revealed. The interview transcripts will be stored, for up to ten years, in a locked, fireproof safe at Kelly's residence. After this time, the transcripts will be destroyed. All interview tapes will be destroyed as soon as the thesis is successfully defended. Until they are destroyed, they will be stored in a locked, fireproof safe at Kelly's residence.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw my participation from this study at any time, and, if I do withdraw, that my data will also be withdrawn from the study. I also understand that I am not obligated to answer any interview question and that I have the right to stop the tape recorder at any point during the interviews. There is no deception involved in this study and Kelly anticipates only a minimum level of risk to the informants. At the end of the study, I will receive a report summarizing the major research findings.

I fully understand that this qualitative study is being conducted in fulfillment of Kelly's Master of Education thesis and that Dr. K. L. Taylor is her advisor. Dr. D. Schonwetter (Postsecondary Studies, Faculty of Education), Dr. C. Piotrowski (Family Studies), and Ms. R. Howard (Equity Services) are her three other committee members. I agree to participate in Kelly's qualitative study by participating in two (or possibly three) interview sessions.

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continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

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_____   _____

Date   Date

_____   _____

(Signature in ink)   (Signature in ink)

Participant   Researcher

- -

Request for Report of Research Findings

I want to receive a summary of the research results at the end of the study.   Yes

No

Please send the report to the following address:

_____

_____

_____

_____   _____

(Signature in Ink)   (Signature in Ink)

Participant   Researcher

_____   _____

Date   Date

Researcher's Copy