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Perspectives of Organizational Change Initiatives and Culture in a University's Department

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Abstract

The current state of contemporary higher education institutions reveals challenges such as changing enrolment patterns (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AACU], 2002; Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada [AUCC], 2007; Levac & Newman, 2009), greater calls for accountability (AACU, 2002; Usher, 2015) and decreased public funding (AACU, 2002; Charbonneau, 2013; Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations [OCUFA], 2016). In addition to the external challenges of the higher education landscape, institutions are confronted with intersecting organizational issues such as the need for increasing productivity, improving communication processes, and motivating workforces (Jackson, 2010). These challenges require action, which often make change a constant in organizational life (Kogetsidis, 2012).

Organizational culture encompasses those beliefs, values and meanings of the organization's members (Kezar, 2014; Shultz, 1995) and, therefore, should be considered whenever trying to understand the change in an organization. However, due to the implicit nature of an organization's culture, leaders tend to overlook the role of culture in the change process. In addressing the often neglected understandings of organizational change and culture, this qualitative, interpretivist intrinsic case study in one university department in Canada explored staff members' understanding of organizational change initiatives and cultural shifts through semi-structured interviews. Using the framework of interpretive communities (Yanow, 2000), the intent was to explore staff members' perspectives of change initiatives and their understandings of culture changes in the department.

The findings of this exploration revealed that participants identified the practices of leaders, including behaviour, strategy and purpose, and unity, and departmental arrangements,

including staffing, structure, and role as the change initiatives that had been the most significant. The participants understood the changes through three interpretive communities including a community of frustration, a community of apprehension, and a community of willingness. The findings from the cultural analysis of the department portrayed a past culture of division and conflict, toxicity, and disrespect. A cultural shift was perceived by participants through their description of a more optimistic culture, although they still questioned a culture of "us" as a result of the artifact of locale which perpetuated the lingering feelings of separation among staff members, and a lack of department-wide traditions.

In response to the study's findings, three recommendations can be made to build on the already identified improvements to the department. The first recommendation is for leaders to thoroughly consider the implementation and communication plans for future change initiatives in the department as a community of staff members was found to need more information to help them become more accepting of change initiatives. The second recommendation would be for leaders to build on the perceived culture of optimism by emphasizing the identified need to establish department-wide traditions. The last recommendation is for leaders to explore staff members' understanding of the re-location of the department's units to one centralized building. The participants provided initial understandings of this change initiative, so once the re-location takes place, it may be in the leaders' interests to follow-up to see if the initial understandings of the change initiative have shifted in any way. As change initiatives have been perceived to result in cultural shifts, another cultural analysis department may also be informative.

The goal of this study was to provide insight for educational leaders about the importance of recognizing organizational cultures when implementing change initiatives as well as to inform

educational leaders of the potential impact of staff members' understanding of organizational change and cultural shifts.

Keywords: interpretive communities, higher education institutions, organizational change, organizational culture

being involved and engaged in my endeavours and making me feel as though nothing is out of my grasp. Your support means more to me than you will ever know.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Contemporary higher education institutions face a number of challenges, including changing enrolment patterns (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AACU], 2002; Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada [AUCC], 2007; Levac & Newman, 2009), greater calls for accountability (AACU, 2002; Usher, 2015) and decreased public funding (AACU, 2002; Charbonneau, 2013; Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations [OCUFA], 2016). Not only do higher educational leaders have to consider these challenges, they are also confronted with intersecting organizational issues such as the need for increasing productivity, improving communication processes, and motivating workforces (Jackson, 2010). These challenges require action, which often make change a constant in organizational life (Kogetsidis, 2012). Kezar (2014) explains that one thing that is for certain is that change within an organization often results in alterations to individuals' values, beliefs, and rituals. However, as Kezar goes on to explain, due to the implicit nature of an organization's culture, leaders tend to overlook the role of culture in the change process. Often an organization's culture is assumed by leaders without investigation (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). Locke and Guglielmino (2006) argue that it is critical that leaders gain awareness and a deep understanding of organizational cultures prior to implementing change. In addition, Song (2008) contends that little attention is paid by leaders to the impact of change on organizational culture.

Organizational culture encompasses the beliefs, values and meanings of all members of an organization (Shultz, 1995). Yet, a leader often gauges a department's culture based on his or her own interpretations rather than gaining an understanding of deeper meanings and assumptions of change by members of the department (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). This is

problematic as statements about culture are bold assertions that should be made about a group only after the group has been studied over an extended period of time (Mills & Gay, 2016). Furthermore, there may exist more than one culture in an organization (Bowditch & Buono 2005) and, consequently, leaders can fail to consider how different organizational cultures have shifted based on the adaptation to change (Song, 2008). The continued focus on organizations being a single identity with a life apart from the perceptions and beliefs of its members only blinds leaders to its complexity (Greenfield, 1973).

Culture is a force that provides stability and a sense of continuity amid change in higher education institutions, and, therefore leaders should be concerned with understanding it (Masland, 1985), especially since effective change processes are dependent on strategies that have been developed and matched to institutional cultures (Kezar & Eckel, 2003). Organizational culture affects job satisfaction, performance, and change (Belias & Koustelios, 2014). To ensure a positive work environment, leaders should be attuned to their organizations' cultures and possible shifts in the cultures as a result of change.

Problem of Practice

Over three decades ago, Masland (1985) recognized that the culture of higher education institutions is and will continue to be a critical element of institutional life and management. In his study titled, "Organizational Culture in the Study of Higher Education," Masland argued that exploring organizational culture can help management understand how organizations have arrived at their current state. Examining the culture could illuminate the effects of past influences on decisions and actions, which can then provide rich information for future decision making.

In the last decade, the interest in the study of organizational culture and operation efficiency has increased, although few studies have been conducted in the higher education

sector (Millan, Kastanis, & Fahara, 2014) and even fewer have focused on administrative departments. Echoing the scarcity of studies focused on organizational culture in higher education institutions is the lack of studies exploring the impact of change on organizational members' perspectives of culture (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). In addition, little consideration has been placed on how change recipients in higher education understand change and how they feel about it (George & Jones, 2001). Recognizing the dualist division of actors involved in change, this study applies Ford, Ford, and Amelio's (2008) definition of change agent and change recipient. Change agents include those who are engaged in the actual conduct of the change and also those who call for and sponsor it. Change recipients include the actors who are responsible for implementing, adopting, or adapting to change. Although, Horvers, Ybema, and Joosten (2015) critique the fixed and dichotomous categories of change agent and recipient as they do not take into account the multiplicity and variability of participants' positions in the change process, it does provide a differentiator to identify those who are affected by change through its implementation, adoption, or adaptation.

Most studies of change focus on change agents, implying that the way change recipients understand and experience change should be similar to the way change agents do (Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006). There is no basis to assume that change agents and recipients share the same understanding of change. On the contrary, Kanter, Stein, and Jick (1993) found that change agents and recipients create distinct experiences when it comes to change. Similarly, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) explain that it is not uncommon for organizational members to identify with hierarchical status or departmental functions, rather than a whole organization, which often sustains the emergence of subcultures and thus a

fragmentation of an organization. Furthermore, Yanow (2000) suggests that different interpretive communities form as organizational members make sense of their work lives.

Reflective of the gaps in literature on organizational culture and change in higher education, the problem of practice that this research addressed relates to the extensive change initiatives in a short period of time that had been initiated in one department at a university and the lack of knowledge about the organizational culture in the department given these changes. No study had been undertaken to understand the departmental culture. Similarly, there had been a lack of exploration into how staff members understand the change initiatives to which they were involved. Given that organizational culture informs current practices and how organization members make decisions (Schein, 2010), without deliberate investigation of an organization's culture and understanding of change, leaders may neglect pertinent information that could be useful in addressing unwanted cultural elements, lingering issues resulting from change, or opportunities for facilitating continuous change in a way that is meaningful to all members in the organization.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

By conducting a qualitative, interpretivist case study, I explored how staff members of an administrative department at an Ontario university understood change initiatives and their perspectives about how organizational culture has changed in the department. The administrative department being studied had recently seen leadership changes at the departmental level, as well as the most senior leadership roles, including Vice-Presidents. As a result of the leadership changes, a number of change initiatives have been implemented. These initiatives include a new customer-service model, organizational structural changes, including reporting paths and staffing changes, the establishment of a departmental mission, vision, and credo, a strategic focus on

efficiency, increased opportunities for professional development, and the relocation of the department's units to a single location. A full description of the change context and initiatives is presented in Chapter Four.

Yanow (2000) argues that to understand the consequences of changes from policies or initiatives, one must consider the broad range of people that will be affected. The only way to consider those affected by a change initiative is to explore the local knowledge through the understanding of their values, beliefs, and feelings. The purpose of this study was to understand the differences in the values, beliefs and feelings about change initiatives and culture in the department in order to inform future initiatives for this young and developing organization. Schein (2010) argues that organizational culture informs current practices and how organization members make decisions. Culture relates to the climate for future action (Schultz, 1995). Knowing the current perspectives of organizational staff members can help leaders to better plan for future change initiatives and practices, considering the perspectives of those who will be engaging with them.

The overall question guiding this study was, "How do staff members in a university's administrative department understand organizational change initiatives and consider cultural shifts as a result of those change initiatives?" Consequently, this organizational change and cultural analysis of a university's administrative department answered the following research questions:

1. Which change initiatives have been significant for staff members?
2. What interpretive communities are forming in the ways that staff members talk about change initiatives?

3. How do staff members describe cultural changes that have taken place in the department given these change initiatives?

In this thesis, I will argue that staff members understood organizational change initiatives in different ways and that they had different perspectives about the kinds of cultural changes that happened in the organization. That is, the staff members that were participants in this study were members of different interpretive communities (Yanow, 2000) in that they made sense of the department in various ways. In particular, three interpretive communities had formed in how the participants talked about the change initiatives and the cultural changes that happened in the department. Even though organizational change is often viewed as negatively perceived by organizational members and resisted, these interpretive communities demonstrated a dynamic understanding of change, including frustration, apprehension, and willingness. These differences are important, as they can help inform leaders in assessing and evaluating the outcomes of change initiatives as well as to inform future implementation of change initiatives.

Context of the Research

The department that was studied is an administrative department at a university in Ontario, Canada. The department is comprised of nine units. The department is primarily a service department for the university as its units serve students, faculty, and staff. Specifically, the department is responsible for a wide range of administrative functions supporting the university's academic programs. The department is fairly young in that it was established just over 10 years ago. The department is composed of over 50 individuals that hold full-time continuing and contract positions. Over the years of its existence, the department has been exposed to various change initiatives, most notably, leadership, locale, structure, and staffing. The specific change initiatives as identified by staff members are discussed in detail in

subsequent chapters. These types of change initiatives can be traced back to the impact of neoliberal policies on higher education institutions has resulted in an unprecedented institutional competitiveness in enrolling students to the institution (Millan, Kastanis, & Fahara, 2014). The changing landscape has also resulted in the change of the strategic mandate and a focus on improving the student experience.

Positionality of the Researcher

I undertook this study as a member of the department. While this can provide some tensions as a researcher, an issue I cover more in-depth in the ethical considerations of this study, I was considered an insider to the department as I had worked as a staff member in the department for two years and have recently worked in a more senior-role as the manager of one of the department's units. My experiences in the department are varied in that I have also worked as a contract and a full-time continuing employee. In addition to working in the department, I have also held other roles at the university which have afforded me knowledge of how other departments subsist. This unique position and experience allowed me to be immersed into the participants' perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Flyvbjerg (2011) explains that the advanced form of learning that comes from a researcher placing herself within the context being studied allows for the understanding of viewpoints and behaviours of the social actors.

Over the years of my working in the department, I have come to experience a number of changes, most notably leadership changes at the senior and departmental levels. I have observed constant change when it came to the structure of the department. The changes ranged from the creation of new units, positions, and hierarchical levels. I have also observed changes based on locale, in terms of staff members re-locating offices, buildings, and even campuses.

At a departmental level, I believe some of the changes were implemented to address cultural issues that existed including the animosity between certain staff members, managers, and units. As I myself had experienced the animosity that existed in the department, I felt it would be of interest to explore whether the change initiatives have resulted in any cultural shifts. In addition, I wanted to know how other staff members understood the change initiatives that they were being exposed to and if there was acceptance or resistance on the part of the change recipients.

I came into this study believing that all the change initiatives that the department had been exposed to were affecting its culture and morale. As my experience in the department is not something that I could easily suppress, it was imperative that I did not misinterpret or disregard other's experiences if they did not align with mine. Although the concept of trustworthiness is discussed in detail later in this thesis, my position within the department and resulting proximity to the social context being studied allowed for more discoveries which if anything helped to challenge preconceived notions and theories (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

Overview of Methodology and Methods

To explore how staff members of an administrative department understand change initiatives, an interpretivist qualitative case study was employed. Interpretivist research aims to produce an understanding of a particular context through the interpretation of a group's experiences which are derived from social processes (Willis, 2007). The case study methodology allowed me to delimit the object of study and to focus on a bounded system (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). By focusing on the specific case of staff members' understanding of change initiatives and cultural shifts in an administrative department, I was able to investigate the case in depth and within its social context (Yin, 2009). The proximity to participants created by this

methodology is reflective of interpretive research in that it "acknowledges the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being explored, and the situational constraints" (Rowlands, 2005, p. 81). Details of the department were obtained by interviewing people (Stake, 2005). A semi-structure interview was utilized to draw on theoretical concepts discussed in the literature review of the study with the intent of encouraging staff members to provide a thorough description of their experiences with change initiatives and culture in the department. Details on this study's methodology and data collection methods are outlined in Chapter Three.

Definition of Key Terms

Organizational Culture. Schein's (2010) definition of culture is pervasive in organizational change literatures. He describes culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solves its problem of external adaptation and internal integration," (p. 18). This definition is helpful in its formulation around assumptions. In this study, though, I use Alvesson and Sveningsson's (2008) definition of organizational culture as, "the mental phenomena such as how individuals within a particular group think about and value the reality in similar ways and how this thinking and valuing is different from that of people in different groups" (p. 36). The latter definition assumes that culture refers to, "what stands behind and guides behaviour," (p. 36) rather than identifying the behaviour itself, lending itself to an interpretivist view of culture.

Organizational Change. Organizational change is viewed as a broad area that encompasses various time spans, interests in general patterns or organization-specific transformations, and types of changes that an organization may experience (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). To further refine the concept of change in an organization, for this study, I use the word *change initiative* to denote the key events and acts that are associated with specific

micro-processes of change efforts (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). As change efforts involve the meanings, definitions, and identities of the people within an organization, they may result in a *cultural change* or *cultural shift*, which indicates a change in a group's ideas, values, and meanings.

      Subcultures. Subcultures refer to the different groups in organizations that express different values and interpretations. As many organizations are differentiated by work tasks, divisions, departments, and hierarchical levels, differences in meanings, values and symbols result in the formation of distinct groups (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008).

      Interpretive Communities. An interpretive community is a way to theoretically understand sensemaking, or the recognition that perspectives are socially constructed with and through the individuals who are situated within an organization, by incorporating both language and social culture (Yanow, 2000).

Assumptions and Limitations

      This study is underpinned by an assumption that staff members of an administrative department had been impacted by identified change initiatives. Also assumed is that, as a result of staff members being involved in change initiatives, there would have been some shifts in the department's culture. In conducting semi-structure interviews, it is assumed that all participants felt open to sharing their own perspectives about their experiences in the organization and I undertook measures to do this, which will be discussed in the methodology chapter. It is also assumed that the inclusion criteria for participation was appropriate in ensuring a sample of participants that would have been exposed to the same or similar types of change initiatives. Data saturation as a means of ensuring appropriate sample size is discussed in the methodology chapter.

This study was delimited to one department in one university in Ontario. This study's limitations include the inability of the findings to be generalized across different organizations. As the gathered data will be reflective of the department's staff members' understandings and perspectives, the results will be specific to this particular context. There may be a lack of transferability as the in-depth examination is focused on one department, which will most likely be unique to others. Another limitation included the researcher's familiarity with the department which will have influenced the interpretation of data; an outsider to the department may have different interpretations and certainly my own experiences have influenced what I have interpreted. Although some may view the researcher's familiarity with the department as a limitation, Merriam (2009) argues it should be viewed as an advantage for the researcher as she would have been able to enter the unit of analysis more easily.

Significance

In this study, I attempted to illuminate the ways in which individuals in an organization understand change initiatives. In addition, I sought to explore the perspectives about the organizational culture in the department given these change initiatives. This topic is of particular importance for higher education institutions as they are constantly faced with many challenges which result in organizational change in the form of initiatives. The findings of this study may help educational leaders to better understand how they can identify their organization's culture, how change initiatives are understood by members of the organization, and the impact of change initiatives on organizational culture.

Overview of the Document

In the first chapter, I provided context into the challenges experienced by higher education institutions and the significance in leaders exploring how organizational members

understand change initiatives as well as cultural shifts that may occur as a result of those change initiatives. In the following chapter, I discuss the relevant literature on organizational change and culture and present an interpretivist theoretical framework that guided by study. I also provide a methodology chapter which depicts the research design, including case and participant selection, data collection methods, trustworthiness, recruitment strategies, data management strategies, data analysis techniques, limitations, and ethical implications. In providing more department specific context, I offer a chapter describing the identified change initiatives that the department had been subject to and how the changes came to fruition. Based on the collected data, I then present two chapters of findings; the first with a focus on what staff members understood as change and the resulting interpretive communities, and the second with a focus on how staff members' depicted a cultural shift. I then present a reflexive analysis of the findings as they relate to the literature. Finally, I conclude the document with a chapter discussing my understanding of the findings based on the study's research questions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review focused on three themes that have emerged throughout my search of higher education literature on organizational change and culture. The themes include: the need for organizations that are receptive to change, the variability of recipients' understanding of change, and the link between organizational change and culture. The first section explores the literature related to organizational change in higher education institutions. It includes detailed information about the challenges faced by higher education institutions and the resulting need for transformational change with a focus on social dynamics. The second section builds on the social dynamics approach of considering the agency of organizational change. The literature presented demonstrates the variability of how agency, specifically change recipients, understands change. Finally, the third section investigates a two-fold link between organizational change and culture. The links include the effect of culture on change strategies, and the need for cultures that are receptive to change.

Changing Contexts in Higher Education

The way in which higher education institutions operate has changed in complex ways due to the global economy, public investment and accountability, diversity of the student, corporate campus environment, competitive markets, new learning theories, technology, and internationalization (Kezar, 2014). Not only do higher educational leaders have to consider these challenges, they are also confronted with intersecting organizational issues such as the need for increasing productivity, improving communication processes, and motivating workforces (Jackson, 2010). These challenges require action, which often make change a constant in

organizational life (Kogetsidis, 2012). Kezar and Eckel (2002) contend that the challenges faced

by higher education institutions have resulted in a need to create transformational change. Kezar

further explains that the context in which higher education institutions operate has shifted in

complex ways which necessitate the involvement of change agents. In response to the varied

external and internal challenges, higher education institutions undergo continuous change with a

focus on social dynamics.

The changing context of the higher education landscape can also be understood by what

Wendy Brown (2011) argues are neoliberal rationalities. Neoliberal rationalities include

deregulation, privatization, and reduction of social programs, while at the same time

emphasizing the bottom line, efficiency, and competition (Wyile, 2013). Brown explains that the

essential conditions of democracy, such as limited extremes of concentrated wealth and poverty,

and equal opportunity, have become severely compromised as a result of neoliberal governance

strategies. As with the decaying conditions of democracy, public universities are also being

impacted by neoliberal rationalities. Brown argues that higher education has transformed from a

social and public good to a personal investment in people's futures and earning capacity. The

transformation is often reflected in public universities' missions, which now see job training as a

mandate, mirroring those of for-profit institutions and reducing the value of a degree to its

income-generating capacity. Ultimately, public universities are becoming increasingly

competitive for the market share of student populations, which impacts their mission, focus, and

strategic mandates.

Competing Views of Organizational Change

As a result of the varied challenges being faced by higher education institutions,

organizational change occurs at the individual, structure and systems, and organizational climate

levels as well as at different degrees including first-, second-, and third. Organizational change experienced by higher education institutions can be further explained using organizational theory. In her book, "Organizational Change Theories: A Synthesis," Christiane Demers (2007) provides a synthesis of organizational change literature with the intent of creating a better understanding towards the evolution of the field. It is within these eras and perspectives that the organizational change being experienced by higher education institutions can be understood.

Prior to the 1980s, organizational change was conceived in terms of growth adaptations (Demers, 2007). This perspective encompasses a rational adaptation approach, which views organizations as an instrument controlled by managers who alter structures and systems in response to internal and external pressures. It also encompasses an organic adaptation approach, which views change as the emergent result of processes, a life cycle approach, which views organizations as living organisms that transition between predetermined stages of change, a population ecology approach, which views change as disruptive and hazardous for organizations as well as difficult to achieve, and finally a new institutionalism approach, which views organizations as adopting change for symbolic purposes (Demers, 2007). The adaptation and growth perspectives mostly focused on looking at change as an outcome from an outsider's perspective. By focusing solely on the outcome of change, these approaches developed explanations of change through precursors and consequences, neglecting to understand how change occurs (Demers, 2007). The overall assumption of this era is that change is normal and occurs in incremental adjustments to allow organizations to maintain equilibrium.

The oil crisis of the 1970s led to an increase in environmental uncertainty, impacting how change was viewed and studied in the 1980s. In this perspective, change was viewed as a form of adaptation in that the environment was now considered a force driving change. Two dominant

view-points emerged in this era: managerial-functionalist and organizational-interpretive. In the managerial-functionalist view, change is portrayed as an episode, defined by a starting point of dramatic actions initiated by top management and ending with a return to equilibrium. Some studies took an organizational-interpretive view in that they portrayed change as reciprocal due to its top-down and bottom-up process of all actors within an organization contributing to change. In this view, change process is more incremental and emergent. The organizational-interpretive view helped influence the next era's focus on change as being dynamic.

Following the uncertainty caused by the turmoil of the 1970s economy, there was a growing impression that although the period of crisis would stabilize, the unpredictability of globalization would remain. This caused a shift from viewing change as emergent to viewing it as a long-term process of renewal, expressed in terms of learning and innovation. Also, rather than approaching change from a management perspective, this era demonstrated an interest in increasing an organization's capacity for change. Demers (2007) presented two approaches to change within this era: natural evolution and social dynamics. Natural evolution approaches organizational change objectively, viewing it as behavioural learning, evolving, and emerging. The social dynamics approach prefers a subjective stance in that organizational change considers all agencies and that human beings are purposeful and reflexive. One of the most notable differences between the two approaches is the nature and role of agency in organizational change. From the natural evolution approach, agency is said to be blind. Recipients are viewed as reacting to rules and participating in processes but are powerless to alter the organization. Recipients are not depicted as having emotions, dreams, or imagination. They simply exchange information, rather than attempting to assign meaning to their existences within an organization. The social dynamics approach, on the other hand, provides a more sophisticated view of agency.

Agency, in this approach, engages with other people and tools in a reflexive manner. An agency's subjectivity and identity become important factors in driving change. Recipients assign meaning to change which helps to explain it. In what follows, I discuss some of the literature on organizations and how change is viewed, in relation to higher education institutions.

From a more traditional and rationalist assumption about organizations, organizational change can be conceptualized as occurring at different levels, degrees, and steps. Kurt Lewin's (1975) change model, which is described as one of the early models of planned change (Harigopal, 2006), outlines three organizational levels in which change can occur: at the individual, structure and systems, and organizational climate level (Lewin, 1975). The individual level often reproduces changes to an individual's attitudes, values, skills, and behaviour. A change to structure and systems results in adjustments to work designs, reporting relationships, and/or information systems. Change in organizational climate results in variations in leadership and decisions making styles, and interpersonal working relationships. Furthermore, Lewin (1975) contended that organizations strive to maintain a state of homeostasis. This steady state is achieved through the maintenance of opposing behavioural forces including the maintaining status quo and pushing for change. When both behavioural forces are equal, organizations are said to be in a quasi-stationery equilibrium. Change would only occur when one behavioural force is increased or decreased.

Other organizational theorists have suggested organizational change also occurs at different degrees. First-order changes include minor adjustments that do not impact a systems' core and transpire as the system naturally grows and develops (Levy & Merry, 1986). Second-order changes are viewed as transformational in that they can impact institutional cultures (Eckel & Kezar, 2002). Two indicators of second-order changes are attitudinal or cultural evidence, for

example the emergence of a new relationship with a stakeholder, or structural elements, such as the creation of a new unit (Kezar, 2014).

Bartunek and Moch's (1987) article discussing the relationship between organizational change and the use of organizing frameworks, or schemata, describes a more interpretivist conception of the degrees of organizational change. The authors take into consideration organizational schemata, which generate shared meanings or frames of references for an organization through negotiations. Organizational schemata allow members to have a common orientation toward an event, or change. Bartunek and Moch contend that change efforts can follow three different orders of schematic change. First-order schemata changes apply to the tacit reinforcement of present understandings. In this order, changes are consistent with already present schemata. For example, the implementation of a change initiative aimed at increasing participation in decision making when there is already a shared agreement outlining the value in decision making. This type of change might result in increased skill in participative decision making based on an already-shared agreement that participation is valuable. This type of change supports an interpretive schemata that was already in place in the organization.

Second-order schemata changes relate to the conscious modification of present schemata in a specific direction. In this order, entire organizational schemata are sought to be changed. For example, if an organization wanted to foster increased employee involvement, but there was resistance from managers who felt it could threaten their jobs, the schemata of the managers would have to be changed for the initiative to succeed.

Finally, third-order schemata changes aims to develop the capacity of members to acknowledge their present schemata resulting in the ability to change the schemata as required. In this order, organizational members are able to determine when second-order change is

required. In this sense, organizational members develop the ability to be a diagnostician, decision maker, and expert in implementing and changing schemata.

Kezar's description of second-order changes is relevant to the current state of higher education institutions when we consider the influences of neoliberal pressures on higher education institutions. Her model signifies a fundamental modification to an organization's mission, processes, and structure, one that Wendy Brown (2011) argues quite clearly about in the contemporary higher education organization. However, what is interesting for my study is that Bartunek and Moch's third-order degree of schemata change recognizes that higher education institutions undergo continuous change. Furthermore, from an interpretivist lens, Bartunek and Moch's schemata suggests that individuals themselves engage in the change in organizations, which aligns with Greenfield's (1973) radical view of organizational theory. Greenfield's view of organizational theory is that the entity of an organization lies with how human activity creates organizations rather than how humans respond to organizations. Building on this understanding, Greenfield recognizes that organizations are social realities within which individuals interact. This leads to individuals being the creator of organizations. Greenfield explains that structure and process have no uniform effect on individuals but rather depends on individuals' perception of it and how they define it within their social context. This same concept can be applied to organizational change. Organizational change requires more than change initiatives, it requires changes in the meanings and purposes of individuals within an organization. This is where Bartunek and Moch's schemata acknowledges how individuals create an understanding of the need for change within an organization, as oppose to solely responding to it.

Organizational change is often considered to evolve through sequential steps. Lewin's (1975) model for planned change outlines three steps, which include unfreezing, moving, and

refreezing. In the unfreezing step, individuals become aware of the discrepancies in either behaviour, the system, or the organizational climate, which elicit a need for change (Lewin, 1975). The moving step denotes the shift in behaviours as a result of changes to the organization's structure and processes. Finally, the refreezing step refers to the point in which the organization stabilizes and achieves the preferred behaviour (Lewin, 1975). This model provides a simplistic and linear process in which organizational change occurs. More recently, Kotter (1996) also outlined a sequential model for change management. The model involves a series of steps that lead to the achievement of organizational change. Kotter's model begins with establishing a sense of urgency, resulting in an awareness of the need for change, which is reflective of Lewin's unfreezing step. The next steps in the model can be viewed as an expansion of Lewin's moving step in that they describe the process required for creating shifts in behaviours. The steps include creating a guiding coalition which involves forming a group that has enough power and influence to lead change, developing and communicating a vision and strategy that align with the change, empowering broad-based change through the removal of obstacles of change, shifting structures of systems that conflict with the new vision, and encouraging new ideas, demonstrating the viability of change and build momentum through short-term wins, and consolidating gains with the intent of producing more change. Kotter's final step of the model is to anchor the change in culture, similar to Lewin's refreezing step where an organization stabilizes and achieves the preferred behaviour.

Although Kotter's (1996) model expands on additional steps required to achieve what Lewin (1975) describes as the moving step, both models neglect to account for specifics in achieving the steps, different types of changes, and complexities of change. Pollack and Pollack (2014) outline a number of criticism of Kotter's model, suggesting that it describes what should

be done, but not how it should be done. Furthermore, they argue that this model is not general enough to be applied to different types of change. In illustrating this point, Pollack and Pollack went on to enquire how Kotter's process could be used in practice based on their paper exploring a manager's implementation of a major change. Although, Kotter's process depicts a linear sequence of steps, Pollack and Pollack found that it was not representative of the complexities involved in change. Rather, they found that managing change required multiple concurrent instances of Kotter's process.

Demers (2007) is clear in her synthesis that although organizational change theories have evolved over a period of time, it does not mean that one theory simply replaces another. Demers contends that the emergent view of change brought about in the third era is strengthened by encompassing the transformational model. Transformational change brought about a new view which sees change as evolutionary, or continuous, rather than occurring in incremental adjustments to allow organizations to maintain equilibrium. The social dynamics approach to organizational change builds on the emergent view of change but considers all agency, not just managers, or top-down approaches. Higher education institutions are not exempt from the impact of environmental uncertainties and turmoil and are therefore exposed to continuous change. As they continue to be faced with external and internal challenges resulting in continuous change, higher education institutions can be said to be adopting a social dynamics approach. In this approach, members of the organizations are conscious and purposeful human beings (Demers, 2007) who create shared meanings of change which can be explored to better understand organizational change.

Leading Change

Although one of the criticisms of transformational change is its focus on management's perspective of change, leadership still plays a crucial role in organizational change. For continuous change to transpire, leaders are expected to outline a shared vision and to facilitate the required structures and processes that would allow the members of the organization to engage in learning. For the purpose of this study I considered the role that leaders play in organizational change.

As leadership can be understood as encompassing different features and characteristics, this study draws on the seminal and often cited work of Yukl (1989) to define a leader as "any individual that can influence task objectives and strategies, commitment and compliance in task behavior to achieve objectives, group maintenance and identification, and the culture of an organization" (p. 253). Bendermacher, oude Egbring, Wolfhagen, and Dolmans (2017) argue that leaders have the ability to control elements such as the structural context dimension, which includes influence of resource allocation, clarification of roles and responsibilities, establishment of partnerships, and influence of people and processes.

Transformational leaders are viewed as change agents as a result of their engagement in the conduct of a change initiatives, as well as their authority to call for and sponsor a change initiative (Ford, Ford, & Amelio, 2008). Researchers have argued that transformational leaders are effective change agents who are able to motivate their followers to perform by inspiring a vision rather than relying on rewards based performance (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 2003; Flemming, 2016).

Transformational leadership is essential for higher education institutions to provide the skilled manpower required for economic and social development in the twenty-first century

(Bush, 2003). Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms members of an organization (Northouse, 2016). A number of models of transformational leadership exist, which outline factors associated with the type. Avolio (1999) outlines a model that grew out of Bass' (1985) model. The model describes four transformational leadership factors. The first factor is idealized influence which describes a leader who is a strong role model for its followers which often results in followers identifying with the leader and wanting to emulate the leader's high standard of moral and ethical conduct. There is often a great deal of respect and trust between the leader and followers. Leaders are able to provide their followers with a vision and a sense of mission. The second factor is inspirational motivation. This factor describes leaders who communicate high expectations to followers and through the use of a shared vision, motivate them to become committed to the organization. The third factor is intellectual stimulation, which describes a leader who stimulates followers to be creative and innovative. The final factor is individualized consideration, which describes a leader who provides a supportive environment for followers to share their needs. A leader will act as a coach or adviser to help followers reach their full potential.

Another transformational leadership model is that of Bennis and Nanus (1985). Bennis and Nanus identified four common strategies used by leaders who were transforming their organizations. The first strategy is for leaders to have a clear vision. This vision must be simple, understandable, beneficial, and create energy among an organization's members. By having a vision that is supported by members, it helps them to learn how they fit within the overall direction of the organization. The second strategy is the ability of transformational leaders to be social architects in that they are able to use the communicated vision to transform the organization's values and norms, which can be seen as the ability to transform an organization's

culture. The third strategy is for leaders to create trust in their organizations. To accomplish this, leaders must follow through with what they said they were going to do. The fourth strategy is the ability of leaders to use a creative deployment of self. This strategy involves leaders understanding their own strengths and weaknesses so that they can immerse themselves in what they do best with regards to the tasks and goals of the organization.

Finally, another model that reflects transformational leadership is that of Kouzes and Posner's (2002) which consists of five fundamental practices. The first practice is for leaders to model the way. This requires leaders to be clear about their own values and philosophy. By building on common values that they share with followers, it helps leaders to follow through on their commitments. The second practice is for leaders to inspire a shared vision that helps followers to challenge the status quo. Building on challenging the status quo is the third practice which requires leaders to innovate, grow, and improve. In this practice, leaders take risks and learn from mistakes as they go. The fourth practice is to enable others to act. In this practice, leaders build trust, promote collaboration, and allow others to make choices while being supportive of those choices. The fifth practice is to encourage the heart. In this practice leaders are attentive to the need of followers to be recognized for their accomplishments. In recognizing successes, leaders can build a community of spirit.

These three models help to describe the strategies and practices required of transformational leaders. Commonalities emerge from all of the models including the leader's ability to create a vision that aligns with and stimulates followers, to be a role model for its followers, and to challenge the status quo by encouraging and supporting followers to grow, innovate, and improve. This form of leadership is concerned with the emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals associated with organizations (Northouse, 2016), which puts it in

proximity to organizational culture. A key aspect of transformational leadership is its ability to assess follower's motives (Northouse, 2016). Through assessing follower's motives, this can be seen as an attempt to understand an organization's culture. This is particularly important when considering organizational change. As leaders strive for change, the success or failure of implementing change often rests with a leader's ability to understand, manage, and reshape an organization's culture (Locke & Guglielmino, 2006; Millan, Kastanis, & Fahara, 2014). This form of leadership is appropriate for organizations faced with change as it empowers followers and nurtures them during the change process (Northouse, 2016), as well as it enables organizations to lead change rather than to be reactive to it (Osseo-Asare, Longbottom, & Chourides, 2007).

This study's recognition of the transformational leadership construct does not argue that it is the only leadership construct that should be considered, but rather that is an informative construct when reflecting on how higher education institutions must adapt to their changing landscape as a result of neoliberal rationalities. The focus on increasing commitment and effort of an organization's members toward the achievement of organizational goals has led to greater productivity and a more competitive edge in the higher education market (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Starratt, 2011). It is important to note that even though organizations' qualities, dimensions, and effectiveness may be improved (Hewitt, Davis, & Lashley, 2014), inappropriate uses of power and privilege, which create or perpetuate inequity and injustice, are often overlooked (Shields, 2010). This framing of leadership was used to consider the interplay between leaders, followers, change, and culture.

Understanding of Organizational Member's Views of Change in Higher Education

Although understanding the reasons for change and the process of change is important, the experience of change recipients is also a crucial factor to consider in successful organizational change. Moch and Bartunek (1990) contend that one should not assume that recipients share the same understanding of change as agents. Based on the notion that organizational change in higher education is continuous, educational leaders must consider the impact of change on those being affected by the change. Neumann (1995) identified a lack of studies that consider change from the perspective of those who are actually being impacted by or who are implementing the change. Neumann argues that there is virtually no knowledge of what it is like to undergo changes in higher education institutions. Although, this particular scarcity was identified over 20 years ago, there is still a shortage of studies that explore understandings of change from a variety of organizational actors' points of view, rather than only the change agents' (Bartunek et al., 2006). There is also a scarcity of studies exploring the understanding of change from different organizational actors' perspectives, especially from an administrative department perspective. In conducting a database search of the ProQuest Education database using key terms such as: higher education, administration, organizational change, interpretation, actors, members, and implementation, it yielded more than 800 results. In further defining the search criteria to include only peer-reviewed journal articles published after 2000, the results were reduced to 100. In reviewing the search results, a majority of the journal articles focused on academics/faculty (Milone-Nuzzo & Lancaster, 2004; Reid, 2017; Smith, Hecker-Fernandes, Zorn, & Duffy, 2012; Potempa & Tilden, 2004; Mundt, 2004), and students/curriculum (Brown & Marshall, 2008; Emerson & Records, 2008; Farris, Demb, Janke, Kelley, & Scott, 2009; Toma, 2007).The following section outlines three studies, with a focus on higher education

institutions and the health care sector, which help to explain the different ways in which members of an organization experience organizational change.

In exploring the phenomenon of organizational change, Dasborough, Lamb, and Suseno's (2015) study sought to understand employees' emotions during a structural change of a department in a higher education institution. The change being explored was a structural change resulting from the merging of two departments. The participant sample consisted of employees that had only been informed of the merger for a short time. The authors characterized the employees as attempting to develop some understanding of the merger based on the limited information that they were provided. The authors found that change can provoke intense emotions that can impact its implementation and went on to describe three understandings of employees' emotions during the structural change. The three understandings were identified as change as an opportunity to look forward to, change as potentially a threat that needs to be carefully managed, and change as inevitable. When participants understood change as an "exciting opportunity to look forward to," (p. 583) they focused on the results of the change which was viewed as a promise of stability and strength. Participants' focus on realized improvements resulted in feelings of anticipatory hope, optimism, excitement, happiness, and pride. The authors also explained that when participants were privy to complete information leading up to the change, it resulted in a positive outlook and lack of concern.

Another finding from the study was that some participants understood change as potentially being a threat that needed to be carefully managed. Participants experienced negative emotions based on the process leading up to the merger and the way in which it was implemented. The focus of participants in this understanding was on the short-term process and the immediate threat of how change would impact them personally, including changes to their

positions. Participants expressed distress with the lack of consultation and insufficient disclosure leading up to the structural change which resulted in feelings of surprise or shock. Although change was viewed as a threat, some participants were still able to see the potential benefits of the change.

The final finding from the study was that some participants' understood change as being inevitable. In this understanding, participants had a sense of trust in change as well as a belief that the degree of change was minor and that the organization's identity would not be affected. Participants were calm when faced with change as they believed it was unavoidable, and that it was well-founded. An advantage of this study is that the authors did not approach the exploration from a positivist perspective. Rather than reporting the employees' feelings as either positive, or negative, the authors identified discrete emotions which allowed for an understanding of why individuals felt a certain way toward change. Leaders can use these understandings to assist individuals with appropriate actions based on their emotions.

Bartunek et al. (2006) study explored staff nurses' interpretations and experiences related to a hospital's initiation of a shared governance program aimed at giving nurses greater authority and control, stimulating a sense of responsibility and accountability, and allowing active participation in the decision-making process. The findings of their study reported that there are three categories of meaning that emerged among the change recipients including: the meaning of change was consistent among the employees and the managers/administrators, the perception of inconsistencies with the goals of the change, and the perceived personal impacts of the change. For example, participants understood the initiative of shared governance to mean increased empowerment, which aligned with how managers and administrators viewed the initiative. However, in implementing shared governance, participants felt that there was inadequate training

due to other changes that were also being initiated at the time, which was perceived as an inconsistency. Participants also understood shared governance as impacting them personally as extra work was required on top of their regular duties. The authors contend that managers and administrators would be well served to solicit employee's understandings of change. The positive, negative, and contradictory understandings may contain valuable information that can help both agencies to devise corrections. Another finding involved the process of sensemaking. The authors found that even though the understanding of change is primarily individual, understandings may then be shared among members of a workgroup which can affect how change is understood. Finally, the authors found that inadequate, infrequent, and poorly timed education about change was likely a reason for its lukewarm reception. The authors go on to suggest the importance of presenting education and clear rationales regarding a change over a period of time as it will have a strong impact on how the change is received and understood.

Jones et al. (2008) examined the influence of the organizational level on employee's perception of change. The organizational levels studied included the executive level (change strategists), the supervisor level (change managers), and the non-supervisor level (change recipients). In interviewing 61 participants of a hospital that underwent large-scale change, Jones et al. found that three categories emerged that reflect the key issues employees experienced during the change: 1) emotional and attitudinal issues, 2) process issues, and 3) outcomes issues. Emotional and attitudinal issues included positive or negative feelings and work environments, uncertainty, conflict, power, and politics, and values associated with change. Process issues included those of communication, involvement, and leadership that were associated with the change. Finally, outcome issues included the internal structure, services and staff, and external impacts associated with change. Based on the organizational levels, there were similarities and

differences in how employees understood change. All three levels discussed the problematic nature of communication and participation during the organizational change. The differences in understanding change stemmed from the different roles and the direct impact of change on those roles. For example, executives had a key role in the change process itself, but the impact of change, such as the addition of responsibilities to a non-supervisory role was less dramatic for them than those in supervisory or non-supervisory roles. Although, exploring change meaning at different organizational levels highlighted similarities and differences in how employees understood change, categorizing non-supervisor level staff as only having capacity to be change recipients fails to acknowledge their agency to enact and facilitate change. This study assumes that organizational change in a sequential process that begins with the strategists, is implemented by the managers, and then received by the recipients.

These three studies present different ways in which change recipients understood change by employing a social dynamics approach. The studies reflect a social dynamic approach by recognizing that individuals undergoing change do not simply receive change, but that they assign meaning to it (Demers, 2007). Although the studies approached the understanding of change from different perspectives such as invoked emotions, meanings of change, and resulting issues, there are similarities among the findings. Dasborough et al. (2015) findings that participants view change as a threat that needs to be managed highlights the importance of ensuring consistent meanings surrounding a change and the goals that are put in place to achieve that change (Bartunek et al., 2006). When inconsistencies arise, participants described feelings of negative emotions and attitudes (Dasborough et al., 2015; Jones et. al, 2008) often as a result of the process (Jones et. al, 2008) or the personal impact of the change (Bartunek et al., 2006). The studies' findings can also be combined to provide leaders with a strengthened approach to

understanding change. Change can be explored by taking a look at the process of implementation (Jones et. al, 2008) which includes the communication and involvement of leadership. The way in which change is communicated and implemented results in participants perceiving its meaning and goals as being either consistent or inconsistent with those of the change agents (Bartunek et al., 2006). Consequently, change is then understood as an opportunity or a threat (Dasborough et al., 2015).

Organizational Culture

Although the idea of culture made its way into mainstream organizational analysis in the 1970s and 1980s, the concept is still considered a central aspect when discussing organizational life through commitment and motivation, resource allocation, and organizational change (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). The idea of organizational culture is understood as being a significant element in organizational change efforts and the focus is often on preparing a culture for change, rather than exploring how change affects culture within a particular time and place in the organization. At a time when organizations are being challenged in many ways, change initiatives are being implemented to increase productivity and effectiveness. To address these challenges, higher education institutions must undergo transformational change, as outlined earlier in this chapter. Aguirre and Martinez (2006) explain that the target of any transformational change must be organizational culture. Unfortunately, leaders often characterize their organizations as unique but then default to using standardized terms when describing them (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). Schein (2010) also argues for the importance in understanding the unique and particular facets of an organization in suggesting that leaders need to understand their departments' culture better in order to improve them. Based on the constant changing nature of higher education institutions, a two-fold link between change and culture is often made,

focusing on the effect of culture on change initiatives and the need for cultures that are receptive to change.

For the purpose of this study, organizational culture was approached from the root metaphor perspective meaning an organization's culture is seen as something the organization is (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). Schultz (1995) explains that a root metaphor culture encompasses the processes by which the members interpret their experiences, how the interpretations are expressed, and how they relate to organizational action.

The field of organizational culture studies has been influenced significantly through the seminal work of Schein. In a recent edition of his seminal work, Schein (2010) defines culture as,

> A pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 18)

Schein presents a model of organizational culture as being represented through different levels of degrees in which cultural elements are visible to an observer: artifacts, which includes everything one can see, hear, and feel about a group; espoused principles and values, which are a group's ideologies; and basic underlying assumptions, which are taken-for-granted beliefs and values of a group.

Schein's (1990) model has been critiqued by organizational studies scholars who are influenced by interpretivism in that his model employs a positivist approach in viewing culture as a unitary phenomenon that can be designed by organizational founders, implemented by senior executives, and learned by new members. This view does not account for social dynamics

as it does not consider all agencies at all levels of an organization (Hatch & Yanow, 2009).

Hatch (1993) argues that Schein's model would be more useful if it integrated ideas drawn for

symbolic-interpretive perspectives. Thus, Hatch modified Schein's original model by introducing

dynamism to cultural theory. Hatch focused on processes, such as manifestation, realization,

symbolization, and interpretation in order to introduce processual terms. Dynamism affords the

model the ability to shift from a static conception of culture to instead consider the relationships

between cultural elements as processes. In addition to the introduction of processual terms,

Hatch also highlighted the need to consider symbols in combination with artifacts. The symbolic-

interpretive view contends that it is not just about the physical object, or the artifact, but rather

the ways in which artifacts are produced and used by organizational members. The association of

an artifact with a meaning is then represented as a symbol.

Similarly, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008), who view Schein's model as being

inclusive and broad in analyzing various levels, believe a more holistic view of organizational

culture should involve the construction of meaning and sensemaking. In their book, *Changing*

Organizational Culture: Culture Change Work in Progress, Alvesson and Sveningsson provide a

detailed account of organizational change, while drawing on theories of organizational culture to

help explain how organizations can promote change. The authors provide an investigative model

for capturing an organization's culture and context. The model consists of six elements which

include background and context, strategy and intended line of action, design, implementation and

interaction, reception and interpretation, and results and outcomes. What is of particular interest

is the reception and interpretation element of the model as it outlines an interpretivist approach

for understanding an organization's culture. The focus of this element is on how members of an

organization ascribe meaning to change based on their interpretations (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008).

To gather the interpretations and experiences of members, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) conducted interviews which sought responses to topics such as background and intentions, specific change strategies and tactics, how change actors work with the strategies, the perception of change recipients' responses to the strategies, and long-term effects. The outlined approach is one that is interpretivist as it addresses the meanings and values that characterize an organization rather than relying solely on the objective logic associated with change (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). The authors explain that people's sensemaking cannot be assumed to follow the beliefs and values promoted by those at the top such as managers and executives. In analyzing meaning construction, it can help to identify assumptions that are difficult to observe which can help leaders to understand the perspectives of others.

Subcultures. In Bowditch and Buono's (2005) book about organizational behaviour in modern organizations, the authors argue that more than one culture can exist in a single organization. In addition to a dominant culture, an organization may also be comprised of subcultures. Research suggests that subcultures can exert more influence on employee commitment than the larger organization's culture (Bowditch & Buono, 2005). In Egan's (2008) study of how subcultures influence employee motivation, he defines subcultures as collections of individuals with a shared identity and experience that is different from those of the larger culture. Egan went on to find that subcultures were the greatest environmental influence on employee application of learning and that leaders could utilize direct reports and followers of those groups to influence and motivate them.

Culture emerges from a variety of sources including history, decision making, agendas, and policies (Masland, 1985). As organizations are often divided into smaller units that perform specific tasks, they will in turn have their own histories, reflecting specific and localized decision making, agendas, and policies. The fragmentation of tasks, roles and responsibilities observed in a higher education institution often results in the existence of subcultures (Lester, 2015).

Individuals within an organization often do not interpret everything similarly due to the complexity of the differentiation of work tasks, divisions, departments and hierarchical levels that can foster different meanings and values (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). Staff and leaders of a particular group often form connections and rituals that typically emerge from unique functions, tasks and goals (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008; Egan, 2008). Schein (2010) also acknowledges that as smaller units are created based on differentiation, the units will form their own cultures with their direct leaders.

Schein (2010) categorizes departmental differentiation based on function and occupation; geographical decentralization; product, market, or technology; divisionalization; and hierarchical levels. The function and occupation category entails assumptions that are associated with technology and education required for certain professions. Geographical decentralization is a result of an organization creating local units for reasons such as customer needs, labor costs, and access to material. The product or market category often necessitates different interactions with customers which can require a different mindset and lead to different kinds of shared experiences. As an organization grows, it may decentralize its functions into different units, which is called divisionalization. These units often have an increased amount of autonomy and develop their own histories. Finally, as organizations grow, the number of members often increases which makes it more difficult to coordinate activities. To address this issue,

organizations often create additional layers in the hierarchy to spread the level of control across management so that it remains reasonable. An example of a department's differentiation can be seen in Locke and Guglielmino's (2006) study on the influence of subcultures on large-scale planned change in a college. At the outset of the study, the authors identified four subcultures based on the function and hierarchical levels of individuals which were administration, senior faculty, junior faculty, and support staff.

Another example of a department's differentiation was presented in Millan, Kastanis, and Fahara's (2014) study which explored culture from a differentiated perspective and focused on the inconsistencies among members defining effectiveness indicators. To reflect the differentiated perspective, the authors first identified subcultures, by using a questionnaire based on the Inventory of Educational Organization Culture (ICOE). This instrument consists of 62 items and is intended to establish how certain cultural components that are in elementary schools connect with dimensions that recognize effort as a factor of success, credibility of the directors and human relationships, leadership in management, communication and organizational equity (Marcone & Martin del Buey, 2003). Groups were then generated based on the similarities in responses, which identified clusters. These clusters were grouped and differentiated by their activity and function, which were administrative, faculty, and learning environments.

In addition to subcultures, countercultures should also be considered by leaders. Countercultures are subsystems that have sets of values that directly contradict the core values of a dominant culture (Jones, Laskey, Russell-Gale, & le Fevre, 2004). As subsystems are comprised of individuals, countercultures can emerge when individuals or groups feel that their needs are not being addressed. A leader of a larger organization may not be able to identify countercultures as he or she may not have direct contact with staff members of smaller

subsystems. A leader will want to be aware of countercultures as they often engage in forms of dissent which can include direct opposition to the organization's values (Bowditch & Buono, 2005).

      Linking Organizational Change and Culture. Kezar (2014) explains that the major obstacle of implementing change in organizations is often associated with the values and underlying beliefs of a change being in opposition with the existing cultural norms of a group. Due to the implicit nature of an organization's culture, leaders will often overlook the role of culture in change. Kezar and Eckel's (2002) research builds on the link between organizational change and culture in higher education by investigating the ways in which culture shapes change processes and strategies. Kezar and Eckel's study on the effect of institutional culture on change strategies in higher education demonstrates the importance of aligning a change approach with the institutional culture. The study focused on six institutions that were selected based on their level of progress in implementing a change strategy, their capacity and willingness to collect data related to their change strategies and culture, their representation of different institutional types, and the similarities of change initiatives related to teaching and learning. These criteria ensured that the differences in strategies would be associated with the cultural differences rather than being related to change agendas.

      The authors found that there was a relationship between institutional culture and change. The authors also found that institutional culture and change are related to the cultural typology and that they are a helpful lens for understanding the relation between culture and change. Although the cultural typologies were helpful in providing an exploratory lens, they could not explain each institutions' change process alone. Therefore, there is a need to examine culture in depth as it appears to facilitate change as well as provides a deeper and richer understanding of a

change process. Kezar and Eckel's study demonstrated that the success of change strategies depends on their coherence and alignment with culture. The authors concluded that leaders undertaking change could utilize cultural typology.

  Culture types and change. Cultural trait studies have developed general profiles that help describe the different cultural profiles, or types that exist in organizations. Saffold's (1988) article exploring the oversimplification of strong culture type's effect on organizational performance brings to light the weakness of depending on composite cultural profiles. Although, culture types embody cultural characteristics that are common across organizations, as Saffold argues, "they fail to do justice to the complexity of the organization's cultures" (p. 548). As cultures are particular to an individual organization and molded by its historical circumstances and the personalities of its members, they are constantly evolving (Saffold, 1988). As opposed to labelling organizations a specific cultural types, leaders can instead use cultural profiles as a starting point for an exploration into understanding an organization and recognizing that different cultures can react differently to change (Kezar, 2014).

  As the focus of this study is on the higher education landscape, an emphasis is placed on cultural literature reflective of this sector. In Smart and St. John's (1996) article exploring the linkage between organizational culture and performance in higher education, they presented a framework based on different culture types. This framework is grounded in Cameron and Ettington's (1988) two-dimensional typology of organizational cultures which has since been refined by Cameron and Quinn (1999). Smart and St. John further distinguish the horizontal dimension's cultural extremes based on internal emphasis, short-term orientation, and smoothing activities; and external positioning, long-term orientation, and achievement-oriented activities. Similarly, the authors distinguish the vertical dimension's cultural extremes based on flexibility,

individuality, and spontaneity, and stability, control, and predictability. Based on this two dimensional framework, four cultures are formed which Smart and St. John conclude are consistent with generic literature on organizational culture, such as Cameron and Quinn's Competing Values Framework, and are compatible with how higher education has been viewed by scholars. The four culture types include: the clan culture, the bureaucratic culture, the adhocracy culture and the market culture. The clan and the adhocracy cultures are both characterized by high flexibility, individuality, and spontaneity but differ in that the clan culture has an internal emphasis, with a short-term orientation and utilizes smoothing activities, while the adhocracy culture is more externally positioned, with a longer-term orientation, and employs achievement-oriented activities. On the opposite side of the vertical dimension are the hierarchy and market cultures which are characterized as being based on stability, control, and predictability. Again, they differ in that hierarchy cultures have an internal emphasis, with a short-term orientation and utilizes smoothing activities, while market cultures are more externally positioned, with a longer-term orientation, and employs achievement-oriented activities.

The placement of the cultures on the two dimensional framework elicit differing leadership styles, bonding mechanisms, and strategic emphasis. Clan cultures' strategic approach focuses on human resources and cohesion which require leaders who are mentors or facilitators and system that rely on loyalty and tradition to promote bonding. Adhocracy cultures' strategic approach focuses on growth and new resources which requires leaders to demonstrate dimensions of entrepreneurship and innovation. The culture's system relies on development to promote bonding within the system. Hierarchy cultures' strategic approach focuses on stability which requires leaders who are coordinators or organizers and a system that relies on rules and

policies to promote bonding. Market cultures' strategic approach focuses on achievements which require leaders to be producers and driven. This system relies on competitive actions to promote bonding within the system.

Tierney (1988) also established a framework of organizational culture that is still used in higher education studies (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Tierney's individual institutional culture framework outlines essential operative concepts that a cultural researcher could use to study a college or university. The concepts include: the environment in terms of how it is defined and the attitudes toward it; the mission and how it is defined, articulated and used for decision making; the socialization and what members need to know to survive or excel in the organization; information based on where it is housed, who can access it and how it is disseminated; strategy which includes those who makes the decisions, how the decisions are arrived at and any consequences for bad decisions; and leadership in terms of what is expected of leaders, who are the leaders, and the level of formalization of the leaders (Tierney, 1988). This framework provides leaders with a lens to observe their institutional patterns and to develop a clearer picture of the institutional culture (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Kezar and Eckel contend that Tierney's framework is a sophisticated tool that allows for the understanding of the complexities and uniqueness of institutions.

Kezar (2014) explains that leaders can use cultural profiles as a starting point for an exploration into understanding an organization and recognizing that different cultures can react differently to change. Kezar and Eckel (2002) demonstrated in their study on the effect of institutional culture on change strategies in higher education that cultural profiles and frameworks can be used in conjunction to provide a more powerful lens to interpret and

understand organizational culture. Employing cultural profiles and frameworks in this manner allows leaders to recognize the complexity of organizations' cultures.

    Culture of change. Although, conceptual models of culture tend to oversimplify the complexities of organizational culture (Hatch, 1993), culture types provide guidance for leaders to improve their understanding of an organization. However, culture types neglect to take into consideration organizational change. As Schein (1996) contends, culture and subcultures play a critical role in the process of organizational change. Bergquist (1992) explains that one of the most effective ways to cope with challenges associated with change is for leaders to examine their own institutions so that they can develop an appreciation for the diversity of cultures that exist. This was highlighted in Locke and Guglielmino's (2006) study on the influence of subcultures on change as their findings suggest that subcultures experience, respond to, and influence organizational change in their own ways. This only illuminates the need for an organization's leader to have a full understanding of the subcultures that exist. A leader's attempt to integrate system-wide solutions may be more difficult to implement as there is more than one culture to consider, and as there will most likely be guiding values and assumptions that will influence responses to change (Locke & Guglielmino, 2006).

    In addressing the challenges faced by higher education institutions, leaders are looking to integrate and anchor changes with the intent of improving effectiveness (Locke & Guiglielmino, 2006). Leaders have also begun to recognize the success or failure of change lies with their ability to understand, manage, and if necessary, reshape their organization's culture (Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Denison, 2001; Kotter, 2002; Schein, 1985). Organizational culture is then a mechanism that can contribute to an organization's ability to survive and adapt (Schein, 2004). Unfortunately, many higher education institutions have been built on a culture that emphasizes

tradition and stability, rather than one that is responsive, flexible, and innovative which would allow it to thrive with continuous change (Millan, Kastanis, & Fahara, 2014). In response to the unpredictability, complexity, and diversity of the world, Schein (2010) suggests that organizational leaders can stabilize perpetual learning and change through what he calls a learning culture which encompasses characteristics such as a learning orientation, adaptation, and flexibility. Schein provides ideas for leaders to help guide their cultures to become more learner focused. Such ideas include encouraging staff to be proactive problem solvers, especially considering the shifting environment, valuing reflection and experimentation with the goal of generating new ways of doing things, depending on staff to provide specialized knowledge and skills, recognizing that communication and information are central to the well-being of staff, and analyzing cultures to help reveal how the group functions.

Past eras of quality management in higher education institutions have been focused on mastering instruments of quality control rather than change (Ehlers, 2009). Recently, there has been a shift in focus to one that prefers change over control, development over assurance, and innovation over compliance (Ehlers, 2009). Along this vein, Ehlers contends that there are two opposing developments faced by higher education institutions. First, the challenges associated with governmental structures and accreditations, as well as rules and regulations causing organizational change can be daunting. Second, the increased interest in culture impacting organizational improvement in higher education becoming a preoccupation for institutional leaders. However, Harvey and Stensaker (2008) asserted that organizational culture and educational quality should not be seen as independent entities. This is where the concept of quality culture in higher education comes into view as it plays a crucial role in understanding that

quality development, or change, relies on organizational culture. According to the European University Association (EUA), quality culture is:

> An organizational culture that intends to enhance the quality permanently and is characterized by two distinct elements… a cultural/psychological elements of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment toward quality and… a structural/managerial element with defined processes that enhance quality and aim at coordinating individual efforts (EUA, 2006, p. 10).

Quality culture is considered a specific kind of culture which encompasses shared values and a commitment to quality (Bendermacher et al., 2017). It consists of hard aspects such as strategies and processes, as well as soft aspects which include values, beliefs and commitment (Bendermacher et al., 2017). Bendermacher et al., conducted a realist review with the intent to identify inhibiting and promoting organizational context elements that impact quality culture. Their review of the literature identified a number of promoting elements which they then associated with the structural/managerial elements (or hard aspects) and subcultural/psychological elements (or soft aspects) outlined in EUA's definition of quality culture.

Although quality culture seems a natural fit for higher education institutions as it encompasses shared values and a commitment to quality, Harvey and Stensaker (2008) contend that its application to a higher education setting should be done with caution. Too often, leaders sought after creating a quality culture rather than using it as a tool for asking questions about how things work and function. Harvey and Stensaker go on to argue that quality culture should be viewed as an ideological construct, which comes into opposition with Bendermacher et al.'s (2017) article outlining working mechanisms or prescriptions of its implementation. In addition,

Bendermacher et al. do not take into consideration the different contexts of organizations, such as learned ways of life, which Harvey and Stensaker argue quality culture cannot be constructed without. The critiques of the quality culture type only reinforces Hatch's (1993) argument that conceptual models oversimplify the complexities of organizational culture. The review of different culture types provides a framework for leaders to use as a starting point for understanding their organizations. Rather than assigning a culture type to an organization, different elements of culture types can be used to build a picture that best represents an organization's historical circumstances, personalities of its members, and complexities.

Theoretical Framework

Interpretivism

This study is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, informed by literature related to interpretive communities and framing. The interpretivist paradigm consists of a constructivist framework which adopts a relativist ontology. This ontology contends that realities can be understood in the form of multiple mental constructions, which are socially and experientially based and context specific in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Humans construct knowledge through their lived experiences and through their interactions with others (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). The epistemological assumptions of this framework are transactional and subjectivist. This assumption asserts that the researcher and the participants are interactively linked, meaning that who we are and how we understand the world is a central part to how we understand ourselves, others, and the world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The constructivist epistemology maintains that even the researcher is shaped by her lived experiences, which always come out in the knowledge generated by a study (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

The interpretivist paradigm is based on the presupposition that we live in a society characterized by the possibility of multiple interpretations (Yanow, 2000). For an interpretive researcher, it is not about contesting the nature of reality but rather understanding a particular context through the interpretation of a group's experiences which are derived from social processes (Willis, 2007). Social processes, including language and traditions, are used to construct meaning and shared understandings amongst groups of individuals (Willis, 2007). The existence of multiple interpretations differentiates interpretivists' core belief that there is no objective reality, but rather a socially constructed reality. In using this paradigm, an interpretivist researcher is able to "understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 19). The interpretive nature of this study allowed for the exploration of how participants made sense of change initiatives. Interpretation is at the heart of sense making, which is how humans are able to assign meaning to their lives. Sense-making is the development of cultures, social structures, and routines based on how groups of individuals notice or select information, make meaning of that information, and then act on it (Coburn, 2006). When individuals and groups are exposed to change, they actively construct meanings of the change by placing new information into existing cognitive frameworks (Coburn, 2006).

Interpretive Communities

Groups of individuals use language to construct meaning and a reality of a particular context. As not all individuals interpret reality the same way, different groups may exist based on the construct of different realities. There have been a number of terms such as speech communities (Hymes, 1972), discourse communities (Swales, 1990), communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002), and interpretive communities (Fish, 1980; Yanow,

2000) used to describe these groups of individuals. Although these terms share common aspects, there are significant differences that need to be noted. Speech communities are groups of people who recognize their language use as different from other language users (Hymes, 1972), while discourse communities are groups of people that have goals or purposes, and communicate, typically through written communication, to achieve those goals (Swales, 1990). Fish (1980) originally described interpretive communities as an open network of people who share ways of reading texts. To address the limitations of the linguistics foci of these communities, a more sociocultural term of community of practice was employed (Borg, 2003). Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) define communities of practice as, "groups of people who share a concern, set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). Individuals in these communities share information, advice, and insight. They often find value in the information that is shared, strengthening personal relationships, and creating a sense of identity. These communities are important for organizations, as they are a source of knowledge, which is often a key to success. Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) explain that by cultivating communities of practice in strategic areas, organizations can manage knowledge as an asset.

Further evolving the terms above is Dvora Yanow (2000) who is best known for her research in the communication of meaning in organizational and policy settings. Her 2000 book titled, *Conducting Interpretive Policy Analysis, Underlying Assumptions of an Interpretive Approach: The Importance of Local Knowledge*, outlines a process for identifying interpretive communities through the analysis of artifacts. Yanow describes an interpretive community as a way to theoretically understand sensemaking by incorporating both language and social culture. Drawing on Weick (1995), Yanow considers sensemaking a recognition that perspectives are

socially constructed with and through the individuals who are situated within an organization. Language and social culture consist of thoughts, speeches, symbols, practices, and meaning. Through the process of interaction, members of a community come to make sense of their organization by using the same or similar means of acquiring and understanding knowledge, engaging in similar acts, and using similar language to talk about thought and action (Yanow, 2000). In the area of policy analysis, Yanow explains that these communities of meaning help address implementation problems that are created by different understandings of a particular policy. Using a similar approach, the communities of meaning can be used to help leaders understand how those in an organization make sense of change initiatives. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2008) echo this sentiment by arguing that, "a more thorough understanding of the politics, context, and substance of change can be gained," (p. 28) by acknowledging interpretations, experiences and sensemaking. Also, in relation to change, Eckel and Kezar (2003) who applied a sensemaking framework to study transformational change in higher education, found that deep change requires people to undergo a meaning construction process, which leads to a rethinking of existing understandings.

Yanow's (2000) work has been focused in some regard specific to the field of interpretive policy analysis. An interpretive policy analysis framework draws on the interpretive paradigm to focus on the meaning of symbols found in language, objects, and acts of individuals involved in policy processes. I draw on her insights of the field of interpretivist policy analysis to inform the way organizational change initiatives is conceptualized and studied. Bennett and Howlett (1992) highlight the close relationship between policy and change by defining policy change as incremental shifts in existing structures, or new and innovative policies. Incremental shifts can be seen as organizational changes initatives, for example the change of a department's structure,

the change of strategic purpose, or even the changes in policies that drive departmental processes. Often, these changes result in symbols, or artifacts of language, objects, and acts that are important to individuals who are impacted by the changes. The artifacts symbolically represent the values, beliefs, and feelings that individuals associate with change (Yanow, 2000). By exploring how individuals talk about their experiences of incremental shifts, or change initiatives, one can begin to construct shared meanings across groups of individuals.

Symbolism. The study of symbolism in organizational life provides rich potential for understanding organizations and their cultural identity (Vaughn, 1995). Symbols can be objects, acts, relationships, or linguistic formations that individuals ascribe meaning to (Cohen, 1976). In organizations, symbols are created by individuals and represent a broad range of cultural phenomena. Vaughn's examination of organizational symbols suggests that shared systems of meanings are constructed through symbolism. When symbolic meanings are grouped together, it can be viewed as a representation of an organization's ideology or worldview (Vaughn, 1995).

Barrett, Thomas, and Hocevar's (1995) article reconceptualising the change process from a rational planning perspective to an interpretive perspective also reiterates a more dynamic view of meaning, in that the process of organizing involves the construction, maintenance, and destruction of meaning among organizational members. Barrett et al, go on to argue that organizational discourse provides insight into the pervasiveness and complexity of organizational change.

The study of organizational symbolism, or artifacts, through organizational discourse provides a different lens for understanding the impact of change on culture. Artifacts, including language, attire, texts, and spaces, can represent symbols of shared meanings that are important to groups of individuals within an organization (Yanow, 2000). Yanow explains that artifacts not

only encompass what a group sees, hears, or feels but also can be used to identity a group's values, ideologies, and assumptions. Yanow's artifacts of human creation relate to Schein's (2010) organizational culture model in that Schein also argues that cultural elements are visible to an observer through artifacts. The benefit of employing Yanow's definition of artifacts is that it integrates a more symbolic-interpretive perspective by addressing the concept of symbolism. In this view, an artifact is much more than a physical form. Artifacts are instead a way in which meaning is assigned and used by organizational members (Hatch, 1993). Rather than viewing artifacts as objective forms, Yanow acknowledges that artifacts carry symbolic meaning. It is the analysis of the artifacts that allows a researcher to delve into the worldview or culture of an organization by exploring the espoused principles and values, and basic underlying assumptions.

Artifacts as space. Artifacts such as space and activities can be used to explore their effect on individuals and how they can evoke emotional and physical responses (Yanow, 2000). To analyze space, including buildings, location, lighting, and furnishings, a researcher must have first-hand experience of the artifact being discussed. This creates a shared understanding of the artifact between a researcher and participant. The researcher's familiarity with the space object allowed for initial inferences of values, beliefs, and feelings instilled by space objects, which could then be compared to the participant's shared experience and associated meaning of the space object.

Artifact as language. Another type of artifact is language. Weick (1995) highlighted the importance of the use of language to communicate meaning among members of an organization and the need for more narrative methodologies for analyzing language. There are two ways to analyze an artifact of language: metaphor analysis and narrative analysis (Yanow, 2000). Although a metaphor is often associated with imprecise thinking, developments in cognitive

linguistics now consider metaphors as a way of seeing and learning (Yanow, 2000). A metaphor is a combination of two unlike elements that interact and create a new perception when used in a single context. Metaphors provide insights into the situations they are used to describe. Individuals often use metaphorical language in their everyday speech to describe organizations. Kezar (2014) provides an example of the metaphor "the childless zone," which women used to describe the tenure and promotion process at an institution. This metaphor suggested not only a lack of value for family, but also a sense of discrimination that women experienced when engaged in the process.

Similar to metaphorical language, narrative analysis creates meaning and gives shape to those meanings (Yanow, 2000). Van Buskirk and McGrath (1992) presented a concept of emotion as a narrative which could be used to highlight aspects of change. By collecting stories throughout and organization, a researcher can set the groundwork for understanding change. Narratives focus on issue-oriented stories told by the individuals affected by change. By gathering individuals' narratives surrounding a particular change, comparisons across different versions can be made (Yanow, 2000). Van Buskirk and McGrath's study which collected stories from employees of an organization that had experienced a new strategic plan which transformed the way the organization did business provided an example of how narratives can be used to understand how change is interpreted by members of an organization. Narratives can also help researchers to identify protagonists and antagonists, and to describe relationships, conflicts, tensions, or solutions associated with a change. Again, Van Buskirk and McGrath's study provides an example of this as the firing of an employee was interpreted as threatening to the members of the organization. Plots drawn from narratives embody an individual's values, beliefs and feelings, which can be used to assign meanings to change and to identify interpretive

communities. The organization adopted a new management philosophy which was articulated as intense, but through the analysis of member's stories, they interpreted the philosophy as a calculated plan to intimidate and fire. Although the new vision was meant to inspire its members, the lean and mean interpretation, coupled with the firing of an employee, intensified a developing sense of threat. This created a worsening atmosphere, generating a lot of negative emotions which led to a form of resistance to change. In collecting the stories told throughout an organization, leaders can gain an understanding about how emotions, or interpretations of change, can influence aspects of the change process.

Artifact as symbolic act. Finally, artifacts can be found in the form of symbolic acts such as a ritual. Ritual analysis begins with the identification of repeated patterns of activity (Yanow, 2000). In analyzing rituals, through participants' discourses, a researcher must be attuned to the relationships between repeated acts and purposes, as expressed in language. Although, actions cannot always be easily observed, a researcher can identify discrepancies between expectations and practice through narrative analysis. Yanow provides an example in studying the contrast between word and act at a mediation center. The mediation center often measured its success based on completed and signed settlements of disputes, which depicted a very low success rate. In contrast, Yanow and her research team found the mediation center's clients indicated that their outcomes were highly successful, including situations in which no formal settlements were established. Rather, the clients believed that the mediation center helped them to clarify positions, discover unseen options, improve community ties, and learn skills that would allow them to proceed through the dispute on their own. The clients understood success as the steps along the way toward a formal settlement, even if one was not reached. When Yanow

and her team brought this discrepancy back to the mediation center, members were able to re-examine and re-evaluate their sense of what they were doing and their understanding of success.

Framing. An important consideration is the way in which artifacts are framed. Artifacts can be analyzed to establish meanings based on how individuals think about and act on, or as Rein and Schon (1996) describe as "frame" a situation, explaining that a frame is a schema of interpretation based on individual's perception and identification of meaningful events and occurrences. These schemas help individuals to identify, locate, perceive, and label the meaningful events or occurrences in their lives. A frame functions as a guide to the way individuals perceive their social realities and present themselves to others (van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). The concept of framing is well suited for understanding organizations considering they are social constructions in which members are constantly creating and re-creating (or framing) meaning of their work lives, (Weick,1995).

Used as an interpretive device, a frame helps to not only make sense of an experience but also to better understand subsequent actions (Coburn, 2006). Frames help to strengthen the act of sensemaking by focusing on problem framing of a policy implementation. For example, Coburn's study of a school's response to a policy change through sensemaking and frame analysis provides evidence that the way change is defined is important because it elicits certain responses, which can shape the direction of future change. Coburn's study provided an example of problem framing when a school defined their students' problem of reading comprehension in terms of teachers' instructional practice, which prevented the exploration of solutions that involved parents and the community. Framing activities can shape how implementation unfolds, opening and closing doors for action and setting parameters in which decisions are made.

Through the employment of sensemaking and framing, not only are shared meanings understood based on change, but also the subsequent actions of the change are better understood to inform solutions to change problems, or to inform the implementation of future change. Kezar (2014) further develops the connection between change and sensemaking by explaining that transformational change is about people making new sense of things by exploring what change means for their roles and responsibilities, identity within the department, and overall perspective.

Chapter Summary and Next Steps

In this chapter, I presented a literature review which focused on three themes related organizational change and culture. Within the three themes, I synthesized the literature and research relating to the changing context of higher education, resulting in the need for organizations that are receptive to change, consideration of the variability of recipients' understanding of change, and the recognition of the link between organizational change and culture. In addition, I presented an interpretivist paradigm, informed by literature related to interpretive communities and framing, which helped guide my study. In the following chapter, I describe the theoretical and practical matters employed in establishing a harmonious methodology for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how staff members understood change initiatives as well as their perspectives on how the departmental culture has changed through these initiatives. This chapter presents the theoretical and practical matters employed in establishing a harmonious methodology for data collection and analysis. In this chapter, I will present the research design, including the methodology, case and participant selection, data collection methods, trustworthiness, recruitment strategies, data management strategies, data analysis techniques, limitations, and ethical implications.

Case Study

This qualitative study employed an intrinsic case study methodology to gather insight of staff members' perspectives of organizational change and culture in a university's administrative department. A case study is an appealing research design for fields of education and administration because the understanding that is achieved can improve practices in a similar context (Stake, 2005). The case study methodology allowed me to delimit the object of study and to focus on a bounded system (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). I chose to do an intrinsic case study, by focusing on a specific case so that I was able to investigate it in depth and within social context (Yin, 2009). In exploring the complex social unit, it allowed me to identify various variables of potential importance (Merriam, 2009). As the case study is based on a real-life situation, I was able to explore it from a holistic perspective, which ensured congruency with the interpretivist framework. The case study placed me as close to staff members as possible, which Stake (2005) argues is more insightful than relying on convenient derivative data collected by surveys. The proximity to participants created by this methodology is also reflective of

interpretive research in that it "acknowledges the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being explored, and the situational constraints" (Rowlands, 2005, p. 81).

The Case

A case study permits a bounded system to be studied based on various contexts that are embedded in its entity, including: historical, cultural, physical, social, economic, political, and ethical (Stake, 2005). This study explored the understandings and perceptions of change initiatives and culture of an administrative department's staff members at one university in Ontario. The administrative department is comprised of nine units which each have its own processes, tasks, and customers dependent on its function. The administrative department was chosen based on its recent exposure to change. In applying Schein's (2010) work on defining organizations, the department can be categorized using his major bases of differentiation. For Schein, differentiation within a department occurs based on the different functions and occupations of a unit, the geographical decentralization of the department, the product created or technology used by a unit, the division as a result of decentralization of the department, and the existence of hierarchical levels. The department is comprised of various occupations which bring with them multiple assumptions that can differ depending on the roles and responsibilities of an occupation. Geographic differentiation is evident as the department is separated across two different locations and various buildings. The department is also differentiated by the customers that are served (students, parents, faculties) and the types of technologies employed (specialized software, automation of processes). As there are different services provided by the department, the units were further divided based on their functions. These bases of differentiation often results in units forming their own cultures with their direct leaders (Schein, 2010). The administrative department embodied a complex system comprised of subsystems that allowed for

a rich analysis of interpretive communities and cultures. This department was one in which the most could be learned (Mills & Gay, 2016) as it was an information-rich case that allowed me to study it in-depth (Patton, 2015).

Recruitment

Initially, this study included only three of the department's units. The three units were selected based on discussions with the department's leader. The department's leader was asked to identify which units of the department had been exposed to the greatest amount of change initiatives. Based on this criterion, along with the original criteria of being a full-time continuing employee and working in the department prior to June 2013, this resulted in an original participant pool of 16 individuals. It is recognized that the sample was originally affected by the department's leader's identification of units that they felt were most impacted by change initiatives. After initial recruitment emails were sent, four participants indicated that they did not want to take part in the study, and two participants did not respond to my invitations. I decided that the sample size of 10 participants would not be adequate in ensuring saturation of data. I also believed that to gain a clearer picture of the department, and to address the issue of the department leader's influence on the sample, it would be beneficial to include more units. I reviewed the organizational chart and decided to include an additional three units. Two units were not included in the revised criteria based on their composition of recently hired or contract employees. To account for the new criteria, a revised ethics approval was submitted to expand the potential participant pool from three units to six units, increasing the pool by half.

All managers and staff identified during the two stages of purposeful sampling were sent a recruitment email inviting them to participate in the study. (See Appendix A for the Email Script and Letter of Information.) Those who chose to participate in the study were sent a

meeting request, with the pre-interview activity, based on their preferred location and time. Prior to the interview, the participants were required to sign a consent form.

Study Participants. Purposive sampling was used to identify the potential participants as staff members within the department. Additional criteria included that the participants must have been considered full-time continuing employees and had been working in the department prior to June 2013. This type of sampling is also considered "criterion" sampling, as all the participants represented those who would have been exposed to change initiatives, which formed the basis of this study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Based on the sampling criteria of participants, six of nine units could be explored. After careful consideration, identifiers other than unit and type (staff or manager) were omitted as details such as gender, years of employment, or age could reveal the participants' identities. To ensure anonymity of the participants, demographic identifiers were intentionally excluded.

Thirty participants were invited to participate in the study. A total of 16 staff members agreed to participate in the study. The 16 participants comprised of five managers and 11 staff members. There was at least one participant represented from each of the six units included in the study. Participants ranged from those holding more senior level roles to those holding more junior level roles within the units. The functions of the units meant that there was a diverse compilation of participants who worked directly with the customer, and those that did more of the behind the scenes tasks. Based on the composition of the participant sample, there was also a representation of staff and managers who were situated at different locations.

Although, there is no magic number that represents an adequate sample size in qualitative research, Lincoln & Guba (1985) argue that saturation is the measure by which a researcher can determine if sufficient data has been collected for the study. I determined that the sample size of

16 ensured that there was saturation of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as it was at this point that I could confirm that no new information was being introduced by participants as I was hearing the same information in the interviews. I believe this study's sample size permitted the right balance of conducting a deep, case-oriented analysis while gathering an understanding of participants' perspectives (Sandelowski, 1995).

Data Collection Methods

As the goal of a case study is to learn about a bounded system's activity and function, I had to seek observations about the case from others, and gather artifacts relating to the case (Stake, 2005). Details of the department were obtained by interviewing people (Stake, 2005). A semi-structure interview was created to identify change and cultural elements. The instrument drew on theoretical concepts discussed in the literature review of the study with the intent of encouraging staff members to provide a thorough description of their understandings and perspectives of change and culture in the department. The semi-structured nature of the interviews provided guiding questions, without being too formal or structured. This method ensured that similar questions were asked in each of the interviews but also provided flexibility in discussing context specific topics dependent on the participant.

The interviews were conducted in person at the location of the participant's choosing. To begin the interviews, I reviewed the letter of information with each participant and addressed any questions or concerns that they may have had. I ensured that the consent forms were signed and that the participants were comfortable with being recorded. During the interviews, I took notes to identify areas in which I wanted the participants to clarify or expand on. At the conclusion of each interview, I asked participants if they had anything else to share. In addition, I encouraged

participants to follow up with myself if they thought of anything else that pertained to the interview. The interviews were then transcribed.

Pre-Interview Activity. This study utilized a pre-interview activity. Pre-interview activities can be used to visualize interpretive inquiry (Macris, 2012). They help researchers understand expressed views about particular research topics. The pre-interview activity comprised of four options which participants were able to choose from. Each option required the participant to initially identify a departmental change initiative that affected him or her. Then the activity provided options of drawing a timeline of main events that impacted the participant, drawing and labelling a diagram that represented the participant's support systems for work, constructing a diagram showing how the participant's role has change and then using labels to indicate any associated working relationships, and drawing a diagram to illustrate how a participant's work experience has changed or stayed the same. The pre-interview activity was sent to participants approximately one week prior to their scheduled interviews. Participants were asked to complete one of the activities to bring and then discuss during the interview.

At the outset of each interview, participants were asked to present and explain their chosen activity. The presentation and explanation of the pre-interview activities helped to encourage participants to talk expansively about their experiences within the department (Ellis, Hetherington, Lovell, McConaghy, & Viczko, 2013). Ellis et al. (2013) found that visuals created in pre-interview activities helped participants reflect on the contrasts of before and after stories. The pre-interview activity helped to elicit participants' before and after stories which helped to explore the impact that change initiatives may have had on the departmental culture. (See Appendix B for the Pre-Interview Activity Instrument.)

Interview Instrument. The interview instrument was designed based on Dolbeare and Schuman's (1982) series of three interviews. Although, the series are meant to be performed over a course of three interviews with the same participant, my instrument integrated the three phases within one interview, which Seidman (2006) argues is possible to adapt in an interview. Bower and Hums' (2009) study aimed at exploring the reasons for mentoring women to advance within leadership positions demonstrated that the three-interview series can be modified to fit the circumstances of the phenomenon being studied. In the case of Bower and Hums study, the interviews took place in one setting, but were divided into three parts. Similarly, this study employed a modified version of the three-stage series by incorporating all three stages into one interview. This modification bode well based on the time constraints of the study.

Seidman (2006) explains the series of interviews as follows: the first interview establishes the context of the participant's experience; the second interview allows the participant to reconstruct the details of her experience within the context in which it occurs; and the third interview encourages the participant to reflect on the meaning her experience holds for her. After the participant had the opportunity to share her pre-interview activity, the first stage of the semi-structured interview instrument focused on the participant telling me as much as possible about herself from a work context (Seidman, 2006). By beginning an interview with a participant telling her story, it helped to establish an interactional relationship by demonstrating that I was engaged in making meaning with the participant (Brenner, 2006). As the study aimed to explore a participant's experience working in the department, this stage allowed the participants to reconstruct and narrate a range of events in their past, including work experience (Seidman, 2006). The types of questions asked focused on the "how" rather than the "why." This

stage also provided an opportunity for the participant to present and discuss his or her pre-interview activity.

The second stage of the interview focused on concrete details of the participant's work experience in relation to the topic at hand (Seidman, 2006). To elicit this information, participants were asked to describe the types of change initiatives they had experienced while working in the department. Additional questions that elicited stories about their experiences with change initiatives and also their relationships within the department were also posed.

Finally, the third stage of the interview focused on participants reflecting on the meaning of their shared experiences (Seidman, 2006). This stage addressed the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants' work experiences and change initiatives. Participants were asked to make sense of their experiences within the department. By having a participant explore the past and present of their work experience, it helped to clarify the types of change initiatives that had taken place (Seidman, 2006). (See Appendix C for the Interview Instrument.)

Trustworthiness

Stake (2005) explains that qualitative case researchers gather data on the nature of the case, historical background, physical setting, contexts, and informants whom know the case being studied. The subjectivity of the gathered data will often raise questions of validity. It is important to recognize that based on the interpretivist nature of this study, my goal was not to establish the truth of the participants' discourse, nor to establish the importance of one participant's discourse over another (Yanow, 2000). Rather, this framework recognized that meaning to participants is indeterminate and that multiple interpretations exist (Yanow, 2000). With this in mind, achieving trustworthiness was imperative, and it was done through the triangulation of data, member checking, and an interview pilot. Triangulation is defined as "a

validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Although, this case study focused solely on the information gained from participants' interview responses, triangulation could still be employed. This study utilized triangulation of data sources. This form of triangulation compares and cross-checks data collected from people with different perspectives. By including as many subunits as possible that met the criterion sampling, it ensured that different perspectives including employee type and unit were being included in the study.

Another strategy used to increase the trustworthiness of the study was to seek respondent validations during and after the interviews. During the interviews, I used a form of member reflection by rephrasing or summarizing a participant's response and then asking them to comment on whether my summarization was correct (Tracy, 2013). At the end of each interview, I provided the opportunity for each participant to add anything else about their experience with change initiatives and working in the department that they felt may not have been reflected in the interview. After transcribing the audio recordings of the interviews, I sent the transcripts to the participants for review to ensure their experiences were accurately portrayed. I was also sure to ask the participants if they had anything else to share, which allowed them the opportunity to clarify any of their responses or provide additional meanings that they may have missed, or that did not come out in the interview.

Finally, Merriam (2009) argues that it is important to ask good questions, which requires practice and experience. To better prepare myself for the interview process and to test the quality of my questions, I conducted a pilot interview, including a pilot pre-interview activity. Merriam also explains that the feedback received from a pilot interview can help to improve coherence

and clarity, which in turn can increase the trustworthiness of the interview instrument. In piloting the interview, I used the same techniques and protocols that I had proposed for the actual study. The difference was that I asked the participant to impart any issues that were identified during the process. The feedback was helpful in identifying an issue with the pre-interview activity, which was that there were too many activity options to choose from. To address the participant's concern I removed one of the original activity options to reduce the total from five to four. I followed up with the pilot participant and inquired whether any of the activity options were confusing or seemed out of place. The participant identified one of the options as being out of place, so I reviewed and determined that the option could be removed without impacting the goal of the pre-interview activity which was to provide the participants with an opportunity to visualize the interpretive inquiry.

Data Management Strategies

Interviews were conducted at a location of the participant's choosing and spanned over a period of four months, between September 2016 and December 2016. All interviews were recorded and lasted approximately 35 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes. All participants were asked to review and sign a written consent form and to indicate whether they consented to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the interview. Once the consent forms were signed, the interviews commenced.

During the interviews, an audio recorder was used to record everything that was said by the participant and interviewer. Audio recording was employed so that I could be fully engaged in the interview. I believed it would be difficult to record the discussions of the interview at the conclusion of the interview as I would most likely have had issues with recollection (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). I did however, take notes during the interview to allow for follow-up or

clarification of topics discussed by the participants so as to not interrupt the participants' train of thought.

Although, the volume of recorded data was large, I felt that personally transcribing the interviews provided me with an additional opportunity to listen to what the participants were sharing and to help identify themes. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that transcribing one's own interviews can help to generate insights and hunches related to the gathered data. Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) also recognized the value of transcribing one's own interviews as it is an interpretative act where meaning is created rather than simply putting spoken sounds on a piece of paper. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that the time spent transcribing informs the early stages of analysis as it allowed me to develop a far more thorough understanding of my data. Once an interview was transcribed, numbered notations were added to each line to allow for easy access during the analysis phase. The transcripts were anonymized by identifying the interviewee using a code and removing any names used during the interview. The transcripts remained confidential.

Data Analysis

Coding System. After transcribing each interview, I revisited my study's research questions, as the goal of data analysis is to find answers to those questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) explain that qualitative data analysis typically involves transcription, coding, categorization, and identification of themes. To begin the data analysis, I employed inductive open coding to the transcribed interviews. Notations were made in the margins of the transcripts that were of interest, relevance, or importance to the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Open coding ensured a process that would not disregard any data that may have been useful to the study. The open codes consisted of participants' words, my own

categories of what I believed to be important, and literature concepts. For each of the codes, I then extracted all pertinent data that demonstrated a reference to the code and then collated them together (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Once the transcripts had been coded, it was then time to make sense of the data by identifying reoccurring patterns, which Merriam and Tisdell define as, "conceptual elements that 'cover' or span many individual examples… of the category" (p. 206). To identify the patterns, or themes, I then refocused my analysis at a broader level (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All of the codes were sorted into potential themes using visuals such as tables and mind-maps. Once I had identified themes, I then had to refine them. For example, I recognized that some themes did not have enough data to support them, or that I could break some themes further down into sub-themes. Within each theme and sub-theme, I again reviewed the collated extracted data based on the codes to ensure that they formed a coherent pattern (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this point, I felt that it was important to re-read all of my transcripts with the goal of coding any additional data that fit within the themes that may have been originally missed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Once the themes were identified, I went on to conceptualize and analyze the data further. In applying my interpretive theoretical framework to the data analysis step, I performed a deductive analysis of the identified themes. I sought to categorize the themes based on both the research questions and my theoretical framework. Therefore, I identified the themes based on their connection to organizational change, organizational culture, and artifacts, such as locale and acts. The aim of this theme categorization was to identify interpretive communities.

Limitations

The study's research design did encounter a number of limitations including time, validity, and transferability of findings. Each limitation is described and addressed as related to the study.

Time. It may be difficult as a researcher to devote the amount of time required to complete a rich and thick description and analysis of a case (Merriam, 2009). The devotion of time for collecting data and completing a thick description of analysis was impacted by the program of study. This study was conducted as a requirement for a program of study with a time to completion of three years. Within those three years, students are required to complete course work, a thesis proposal, ethics approval, data collection, and a thesis. To ensure the completion of all program requirements within a timely fashion, only six months were dedicated to data collection and another six months to the analysis of the case. Although this may seem like a short amount of time, if a researcher is able to devote a great deal of time, the product may be too lengthy, detailed, and/or involved for others to apply to practice (Merriam, 2009). Sackmann's (1991) study which explored different methods for uncovering an organizational culture demonstrated that a case study can be a practical means of identifying a department's culture within a relatively short amount of time compared to that of an ethnography. By remaining focussed on key events, such as recent change initiatives, a great deal of in-depth information about the change and cultural context of the department was gained (Sackmann, 1991) within the allotted time frame of the program of study.

Validity. The products of case studies can be limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator, who is the researcher (Merriam, 2009). In order to collect data, the researcher is the primary instrument, which means that she must rely on her own instincts and abilities. Relying on a researcher's instincts and abilities could affect the results of the case study (Merriam, 2009). A common misunderstanding of case studies is that they contain a researcher's bias towards verification (Flyvberg, 2011). Flyvberg counters this misunderstanding by arguing that case studies contain, "no greater bias toward verification of the researcher's preconceived

notions than any other method of inquiry" (p. 21). Rather, instead of verifying preconceived notions, case studies often have a bias toward falsification of the researcher's preconceived notions. Seeing as the purpose of this study was to understand and learn about a department, the research was then a form of learning. Flyvberg argues that the most advanced form for understanding requires a researcher to place herself within the context being studied. This allowed for the understanding of viewpoints and behaviours of the social actors. The proximity to the social context that is afforded by a case study allows for more discoveries which can account for a researcher, "casting off preconceived notions and theories" (p. 21).

Transferability of the findings. Another limitation of a case study is that it is difficult to develop theories on the basis of one specific case (Flyvberg, 2011) and to then transfer and apply the findings to a different case. Rather than attempting to summarize this case study, the focus was instead on exploring a particular phenomenon. Therefore, the results of this case study can depend largely on how a reader interprets the final product. It comes down to how the reader applies it to his or her context (Merriam, 2009). The reader's knowledge, experience and understandings will also allow her to compare and contrast the presented case with her own experience (Mills & Gay, 2016). Merriam (2009) argues that a benefit of presenting a case study is that readers are able to learn vicariously from the narrative description, which can create an image of the bounded system in the reader's mind. This vicarious experience will allow a reader to extend their perceptions of similar occurrences and draw their own conclusions based on reference populations (Stake, 2005). Unlike quantitative or positivist research, a reader will be able to participate in extending generalizations of the study to their own reference populations.

Ethical Implications

In ensuring a ethically sound study, I needed to be cognizant of the ethical implications that are associated with case studies. As I explored the department, I became a guest in the private spaces of its members which demanded good manners and a strict code of ethics (Stake, 2005). The following ethical implications had been considered: exploitation of harmful information, power imbalances, biases, and informed consent.

Exploitation of Harmful Information. As a case study attempts to illuminate perceptions and circumstances, there are always possibilities that participants may be at risk of exposure, embarrassment, and loss of credibility, employment, and potentially self-esteem (Stake, 2005). As I listened to participant's thoughts, perceptions, and experiences (which provided a wealth of information) it become evident that some of the information was potentially sensitive (Creswell, 2014). To ensure participants that information would not be used in a harmful manner to them or others, I reiterated the purpose of study which was to explore the understanding and perspectives of change initiatives and culture in the attempt to help improve the department. I ensured that I made it clear to participants at the beginning of the study that they were able to withdraw any information they did not want to share, which was also detailed in the Letter of Information.

Power Imbalances. Another ethical consideration for the study included potential power imbalances (Creswell, 2014). My current role as a manager of a unit within the administrative department could have affected how I was perceived by the participants of the study. Even though I did not have managerial responsibility for any participants in the study, it may have been a difficult transition for staff and other managers to view me from a researcher's perspective, rather than a manager's perspective. This could have affected their level of honesty

in answering questions, as they may have felt that the shared information could have been used for other reasons. Although this was a challenge, it was mitigated by discussing the purpose of the study with the participants, in which I aimed to convey my personal interest in organizational culture and my hopes that the results of the study could help inform departmental leaders of areas of success and areas requiring improvements.

It should be noted that the department's leadership was approached at the outset of the study to gain approval. Senior administrators were also approached to create a sense of buy-in and to give them advance notice of potential staff participation in the study. Once email recruitments were sent out, a number of participants did inquire whether the department's leaders were aware of and had approved the study. It is possible that senior administrator's knowledge of the study may have affected participants' responses as they may have felt that their responses could be shared with their direct supervisors. Again, to mitigate this challenge, I was sure to explain the purpose of the study and to reassure participants that their responses would be confidential, meaning they would not be viewed by others, and that I would do my best to ensure any data that was used in the study would be kept anonymous.

Schein (2010) argues that the most difficult thing when gathering valid data about culture is that human subjects have a tendency to resist or hide data when they know they are a part of a research study. By being a part of the department and being an insider, I felt my involvement was not as disturbing to staff members. From my experience interviewing, I did not get the sense from any participants that they were trying to sound impressive or hide facts. I believe my reiteration of the purpose of the study, my explanation of coming from a researcher's perspective, and the buy-in from the senior administrators and other managers demonstrated to

participants that this was an opportunity for improvement rather than for catharsis, without the pressure of feeling forced into participating.

Biases. Merriam (2009) acknowledges that the researcher's biases can affect the final product. Based on the constructivist nature of this study, I am shaped by my own lived experiences, which will come out in the knowledge generated by a study (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Although my experience influenced the study, it was still my ethical obligation to do my best to ensure that my biases did not interrupt others from sharing their points of view. At the outset and during the study, I had to be aware of my own biases to recognize how they could have impacted the process. I recognized that my biases may have stemmed from having been a staff member and currently being a manager within the department. As a member of the department myself, I would have my own perspectives and experiences regarding the change initiatives in the department that if voiced to others could have affected participants' responses. To better understand my own biases, I kept a reflection journal which helped to gauge and differentiate my personal feelings after each interview.

Informed Consent. Finally, I had to ensure that I had informed consent from all participants that were interviewed. I included my Written Consent Form in the Letter of Information that was sent to all potential participants during the recruitment phase of the study. In addition, prior to each interview, I reviewed the Letter of Information, asked if there were any questions or concerns, and then witnessed the participants sign the Written Consent Forms.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the theoretical and practical matters employed for constructing the research design of this study. The research was conducted at one university's administrative department in Ontario to explore how staff members understood change initiatives and to gain

insight on their perspectives of cultural shifts. I outlined the methodology, case and participant selection, data collection methods, trustworthiness, recruitment strategies, data management strategies, data analysis techniques, limitations, and ethical implications.

Chapter 4

Context of Change Initiatives

Prior to conducting the interviews, I performed my own informal investigation to get a sense of the types of change initiatives that the department had been exposed to. In amassing strategic reports and departmental communications, and referring to my own experiences and observations, a picture portraying the change initiatives came to fruition. This chapters provides a description of my perspectives of the identified change initiatives to which that the department had undertaken through the direction of senior administration.

Overview

The department is primarily a service department for the university as its units serve students, faculty, and staff. Specifically, the department is responsible for a wide range of administrative functions supporting the university's academic programs. The administrative department is comprised of nine units. Each unit has its own processes, tasks, and customers dependent on its function. Geographic differentiation is evident as the department is separated across two different locations and various buildings. The department is also differentiated by the customers that are served (students, parents, faculties) and the types of technologies employed (specialized software, automation of processes). As there are different services provided by the department, the units were further divided based on their functions. The department was established the same year as the institution and has been led by three different leaders. In addition to the leadership changes at the departmental level, the institution has also experienced changes in its most senior leadership roles, including Vice-Presidents.

Strategic Review and Resulting Change Initiatives

As a result of the change of one of the institution's most senior roles as well as the

department's leader, a strategic review of the department was initiated to identify areas of

improvement. In addition to the strategic review, a leadership cultural survey was conducted.

This survey was initiated by the department's leader as a way to provide staff with a forum to

share their thoughts and perceptions in relation to the changes they were experiencing. It may

have also been seen as opportunity to hear staff's opinions of the department as perceptions had

developed indicating that some viewed the department as hierarchical and secretive. Not too long

after the survey was administered, the department's leader implemented team building exercises

as well as a new approach to email messaging. More messages were sent out department-wise to

increase transparency and to ensure the flow of information across all the units. A process

examination report was also produced which identified areas of constraints and bottlenecks with

the department's processes. The identification of those processes helped to strategize as to which

processes would become a priority for assessing efficiency with the goal of improvement.

Implementation of a new customer-service model. As the department provides

different types of services for a number of customers, a review of the service model identified

areas for improvement. It was recognized that in the past, the department's customers were often

herded between different personnel depending on their questions or needs. A new customer-

service model was developed as a result of the leader reading an article that suggested that

shortline service was able to answer 85% of questions that were asked by customers. The new

customer-service model was packaged as a project that was initiated over two and a half years

ago and was implemented over different phases. The new service model was created based on

different customer-service models used in higher education. This change initiative resulted in the creation of a new unit, staffing role changes, and the reduction of two frontline locations to one.

Organizational structural changes. During the strategic review it was noted that there were only two layers of reports within the organizational structure of the department. The structural changes included reducing the number of direct reports to the departmental leader from six to five, increasing the number of units from seven to nine, and creating unit manager and team lead roles. The intent of adding more layers to the structure of the department was to address the issues of staff feeling as though they were flat lined in terms of their career progression, and to help empower staff to feel that they can make more decisions within their smaller teams. It was noted that the role out of the structural changes could have been managed differently in terms of providing more training for the new manager roles as well as the senior administrators to ensure proper work flows, and addressing of staff members' concerns. In addition to structural changes, there were also staffing changes. Staffing changes were described in different ways based on the context of the specific change. A high-level review revealed different frames for explaining staffing changes which ranged from pursuing different opportunities to underperforming.

Establishment a departmental mission, vision and credo. Another initiative that was implemented after the cultural survey was the establishment of a departmental mission, vision, and credo. Staff members' perceptions suggested that they felt there was a disengagement between their work and how they fit in with the goals of the department and the university. The departmental leader presented a coordinated strategic plan to show how the department fit with the strategic mandate of the university and then how each unit played a role in helping the department to achieve the mandate. In recognizing that the department comprised of some

creative staff members, the leader initiated a team setting exercise in which the department was involved in created a mission, vision, and credo.

Strategic focus on efficiency. As a result of the strategic review, it was realized that the department had over 170 projects in the queue for IT development. The projects were typically processes that were being automated to increase efficiency within the department. As this was an unrealistic number, each unit was asked to identify their top three projects. The top options were then discussed amongst a group and then prioritized based on a risk assessment, timing, and faculty/staff/students' needs.

Opportunities for professional development. As a result of the cultural survey and discussions, it was noted that staff wanted more professional development opportunities. Also, with the new structural levels, staff needed training in specific software (such as excel) to help them complete their tasks more efficiently. The departmental leader combined all units' professional development budgets into one centralized account (and tripled it) which allowed the department to be more strategic in terms of increasing the number of people that have the opportunity to attend professional development opportunities. In addition, it helped to ensure a more even distribution of opportunities across units, and to address specialized needs of some units and staff. All day department-wide professional development days were also initiated. The focus of these professional development opportunities ranged from customer service to change management.

Re-location of all the department's units to a single location. The negative impact of having units located at different buildings and locations was evident and recognized by the staff members and the departmental leaders. There was a need to bring everyone together to address issues of disconnection and to increase collaboration. It was also identified that having a single

location would save time and effort that were often lost as a result of either travel between the locations, or lack of collaboration on projects that touched on different units. A single location was also identified as being beneficial for providing a more comprehensive service to the department's customers. A new building is currently being built in which all of the department's units will be relocated to within a year.

Chapter 5

Stories of Change

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings of my research relating to change initiatives. This section begins with a description of what staff members of the department identified as the change initiatives that were important, followed by a description of how they understood the change initiatives. After discussions with my thesis supervisor, I decided that although I had a sense of the types of change initiatives that participants would have been involved in and would potentially discuss, it would be more beneficial to allow the participants to share what they believed to have been change initiatives rather than forcing my own observations onto them. The reason being that I did not want to influence the participants into discussing any change that may not have been important to them. Rather, I wanted to ensure an interpretivist approach in understanding the social context of change through the perspective of the different participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Also, I did not want to assume that my list of change initiatives was comprehensive as there may be other initiatives of which I was unaware. In retrospect, I feel this was the right decision as it reflected my interpretivist paradigm in that individuals interpret the world differently, which includes what they identify as change initiatives.

Reflecting on Change

One of the study's research questions was to understand which change initiatives had been significant for staff members in the department. The pre-interview activity and the interview instrument were framed in a way to elicit the perspectives needed to answer this question. The pre-interview activity provided participants with an opportunity to visualize my

interpretive inquiry (Macris, 2012). The pre-interview activity comprised of four options which were based on participants thinking about a departmental change initiative that affected them. When participants were asked to describe their pre-interview activity, many departmental changes were identified. During the interview, participants were also asked questions such as, "Tell me about a change initiative that you feel was significant to you while you have been working in this department?" This line of questioning helped participants to describe the types of change initiatives they had experienced. In reviewing the data, two main themes emerged in describing the change initiatives: shifts in the practices of leaders and rearrangement of the departmental structure. The changes to the practices of leaders was further expanded into subthemes which included behaviour, strategy and purpose, and unity. The departmental arrangement change was further expanded into subthemes which included staffing, structure, and role. In the following chapter, I build upon these themes to explore how participants understood the changes in leaders' practices and departmental arrangements.

Practices of Leaders. Organizations are comprised of many leaders, from top senior roles down to team leads. Yukl (1989) explains that a leader is "any individual that can influence task objectives and strategies, commitment and compliance in task behavior to achieve objectives, group maintenance and identification, and the culture of an organization" (p. 253). This includes individuals in roles that range from the most senior, such as the President, to the most junior, a team lead, for example. The following section describes what staff members understood as changes in the practices of leaders.

Leadership behaviour. The majority of the participants noted a change in leadership behaviour to one that is more supportive, fostering of autonomy, and transparent. In this following quote, a participant described a shift in leadership behaviour from one that merely

assigned a task with the expectation that it would be followed through without question to one that encouraged staff to ask questions with the understanding that support would be provided regardless of the decisions that were made.

> We have someone that understands what needs to be done, is involved with what needs to be done, and challenges me, especially, to ask specific questions on why I would make such decisions. And what that does for me is that before… [The department's leader would] give you something, you do it, you don't question it. If you question it, it's a problem… But when the leadership, new leadership came in, you know [my leader] challenged me to ask those questions. [My leader] encouraged me to- not only challenged me but encouraged me to ask those questions and to be authentic with my responses... And also… let me understand that leadership was going to back me up with whatever decision I made and that has helped me to develop my confidence in the role. (Q5)

By reinforcing the need for staff members to make sound decisions based on inquiry and conveying to them that they will be supported, this leadership behaviour created a more supportive environment which allowed staff members to think for themselves and to apply their skills, knowledge, and experience in addressing challenges. Talking further on how the leadership behaviour influenced the way that staff members would engage more fully in responsibilities, the same participant noted that "[The] leadership style lets you own it, and when you own something, you want to make it better" (Q5). In this case, the participant was referring to a situation in which a leader had approached them with an issue and allowed the participant to come up with and own a solution. Not only does this leadership behaviour encourage empowerment of staff members by letting them own a solution, it also creates an environment in

which they feel as though they can make a difference. Another participant echoed this sentiment by sharing that:

> [Leadership] trusts us to do the jobs because we're hired in this position for a reason. To make decisions and to do what we think is best. And I think in all of our jobs across the [department], that there's no cut and dry… You know you can try some things and see how it goes and try new processes. And sometimes things work and sometimes they don't. But the fact that that's allowed. (D6)

The supportive nature of the department's leader results in the trusting of the staff members' abilities to make their own decisions with the understanding that they will be supported whether it was the right decision or not. The same participant acknowledged that, "Leadership is now an ally who has our backs and lets us do our jobs" (D6).

Participants also felt that the departmental and unit leaders had become more supportive in terms of having the best interest of staff in mind. The supportive nature of leadership is illustrated through one participant's description of how a change in their direct unit's leadership resulted in improved departmental communications.

> I feel like I probably wouldn't have been able to say that before, but yeah it feels like the people that I immediately report to and work for are defending or looking out for my best interest and my unit's best interest and in terms of how things work and like because you're not always at that table but [leadership] usually is… And I just feel like [my unit's leader] probably listens a lot more or a lot better to what staff are saying about this affects us in this way and you can see tangible ways in which that's ended up filtering upwards, whereas before it kind of felt like you were kind of complaining and then it was a dead end and then you moved on with it… So I guess it's empowering cause you feel like if

you say something it's more likely to have an impact or yeah to be brought up to people

that it needs to. (D8)

This description provides a glimpse into the department's past practice in which staff's concerns

or feedback were not being heard by those that could address the issues. Whereas now, the

participant feels that their direct leader listens to what they say and ensures that it is passed along

to the individuals that need that information to make sound decisions for the well-being of the

department.

Participants also described how leadership is supportive of the career progression and

advancement of the staff. In discussing the supportive nature of their leader, one participant

shared:

[The department's leader] wants you to be able to grow and tryout new positions or

tryout being a manager if that's something that interests you… There's a lot of like

activities we do on top of the normal HR document that you have to fill out of what

would help you grow in your role or get to where you want to go to. And it doesn't matter

if that's in [the university] or outside, [the department's leaders] want to give you those

skills and help you grow. (D6)

By demonstrating to staff members that leaders want them to grow in their roles, leaders provide

opportunities for members of the department to feel valued and that their needs are being

considered. The supportive nature of the department's leaders was not always present as

evidenced by one participant who described contrasting experiences based on different leaders.

The participant explained:

One thing that I found was a different management style in that [my current unit leader

is] very encouraging and supportive. Like as far as like advancement… [My past unit

leader] wasn't really too much like that… Wasn't too much… About the advancement or

expanding… (U5)

The participant was referencing a time in which their past leader had declined an opportunity for

the participant to temporarily work in a different position with the goal of expanding knowledge

and experience. The same participant now believes that they have a more supportive leader in

terms of promoting and allowing opportunities for staff to gain additional experience which

demonstrated to staff that their potential and career goals matter. Although, most participants felt

that the department's leaders are more supportive of career progression, one participant depicted

a different story. In seeking information from their unit's leader about other opportunities that

may be available to help with their career progression, the participant explained, "When I've

spoken to my [unit's leader] about what opportunities there are, I've been told there are none"

(B2). By not feeling supported by the leader, the participant described the environment as being

not encouraging, suggesting the participant felt disadvantaged by not having opportunities to

learn about other roles at the university. While this participant's perspective is important to note,

based on the descriptions from most participants, the department's leaders have become more

supportive, although there are still instances where this feeling is not shared.

Participants felt that the department's leader employed a leadership behaviour that fosters

autonomy. Participants described the new found autonomy as, "Leadership gives us room to

work," (Q5) "leadership is not as controlling," (Q4) and "there's more freedom… And trust to do

your job" (Z1). One of the participants described the shift in autonomy by explaining that:

> I think we've moved from a system that was a little bit more micro to more macro. So
>
> under the old system, there was a lot of, I guess, micromanagement, so to speak. Whereas
>
> under the new system, that doesn't happen. There's a lot more trust in terms of people

have the ability and the resources to do their job. And there's not as much scrutiny there.

(Z1).

In discussing the benefits of a leadership behaviour that promotes the autonomy of staff

members, participants alluded to the past controlling leadership behaviour as having a negative

impact on their work experience. Rather, now that participants have experienced a leadership

behaviour that reinforces autonomy, it creates a sense of trust between followers and leaders. The

conception and impact of trust was sensed by one participant who reiterated the feeling of more

independence in the workplace by sharing that "leadership trusts us to do our jobs and to make

decisions based on what we think is best" (D6).

Finally, participants described a leadership behaviour that has become more transparent.

In discussing the ways in which senior leaders at the university have become more open and

receptive to sharing information, one participant shared that:

I feel like it's getting a lot more open. Like even from that level. There's a lot more

openness of this is why we're doing this… I think there's a lot more communication that

way. Letting people know what's going on and this is why we're doing things. So I think

that's really good. (D4)

Another participant shared that, "[The department's leader]… will call a spade a spade. Very

transparent… You know, you can be in a room and absolutely disagree… And [the leader is]

able to take it totally one hundred percent, constructively" (Q4). Both participants' descriptions

demonstrate the ways in which leaders at different levels (senior and departmental) have become

more transparent in sharing information about the university. When leaders share information

with their followers, it helps the followers understand things such as visions, strategies, and

directions that are set by the university's leaders. In addition, when leaders are open to feedback,

it gives staff members a sense that their ideas are being heard, even if they are not followed

through with. For these participants, knowing more about why decisions are made and having

receptive leaders helped them to feel involved and heard.

   Strategy and purpose. The majority of the participants identified a shift in the

department's leader's ability to strategize and establish a purpose. One participant explained that

leadership shifted the focus to looking at the big picture of where issues stem from rather than

implementing quick fixes. At the outset, the shift in leadership adopted a strategic approach, as

one participant explained that, "One of the first things that [a senior leader of the university] did

was implement a review, strategic review of all of the services" (Q4). The shift in focus on the

big picture and strategy led to the implementation of departmental goal setting. One participant

explained that, "We've been involved in, you know, what we want to see happen or what our

different goals are as [a department], or what we want to do for students and customer service"

(O7). Not only were staff members involved in the act of goal setting, but they were also

encouraged to share their goals amongst themselves. This was reiterated by a participant who

explained that:

>   The leadership change brought about… organizational behaviours that were apparent to
>
>   be successful as a team. For instance, having a strategy of what we want to do… So
>
>   having a team that now shares [its] goals among [itself] or presents [its] goals to the other
>
>   managers and having the ability to tap onto other projects that might involve them.
>
>   Engaging each other in what they're about to do and how they're going to do their goals
>
>   and having a strategic plan. One strategic plan as a team instead of having different
>
>   strategies being put together. This is actually having one strategic plan that we all agree
>
>   upon and are all working towards. (Q5)

Having a strategic focus brought together the different units within the department in a way that allowed them to collaborate on projects. The same participant went on to explain that the sharing of goals ensures that "the rest of the teams [have] an understanding of what each other are doing which means they have an understanding of what I am doing… They feel as if they are in it. I feel as if I'm part of the team now" (Q5). This reveals a shift in that the department's units have begun to operate as a team. Echoing this sentiment was another participant who described how the strategic focus helped staff to see not only the value in what they do but also how what they do connects to the strategic plan:

> I think we're starting to get some values. I don't think anyone knew that before. I don't think we had any. I really think there was a period for the first few years of my career that everyone was just coming to work to work and they didn't know why they were doing it. And I think we're doing a much better job now of connecting. I mean we had a meeting the other day of, 'okay, how are you connecting to the strategic plan?' Which I think is always hard for some staff members because it is hard to sometimes realize how like opening your files, or opening the mail relates to this bigger plan. So I think we're trying hard to get those. (D4)

Providing staff members with an understanding of how what they do helps the department to achieve its goals gives them a sense of importance. By being a part of the attainment of a goal, staff members feel more valued knowing that they are a part of the process.

In addition to the goal setting and sharing, leadership also established a purpose for the department. One participant provided a glimpse into what the past purpose of the department may have been by explaining that:

There was a lot of emphasis back then on like 'let's get the students in, let's get the students in.' And now it's moving more to where it's, 'how can we keep the students' and focusing more on like student-centric practices. (C7)

Prior to the strategic shift, the department was more focused on bringing in students, rather than serving their needs. Another participant reiterated the shift from bringing students in to serving them better by sharing that, "I think it's much more student focused than it was… I really feel like we've gotten the focus back to what is best for the students. And much more student focused. Customer service focused" (D6). This new student-centered purpose was echoed by numerous participants. One explained that, "I would say that we are right now, we are very committed to the student and all of us are kind of on the same page with that" (L8). Another participant shared that:

I feel that everyone is working to serve the same purpose. Whereas before it was very separate, very divided. People did their own thing and fine, but, you know we all work for the university, we are all on the same team. (C5)

The same sentiment was echoed by one participant who revealed, "I would say the whole [department]… realizes that what we do, we do for students. So I think we have a sense of common purpose, which is a good thing" (M9). Having a common purpose helps staff members to work together in striving for the same things, such as ensuring success of the student. This is viewed as an improvement on the past focus of merely bringing students to the university.

Participants also noticed a change in strategic focus of being more efficient. Five participants noted that there is now a focus on improving efficiency. As one participant mentioned there is now "pressure from the institution to do things better and more efficiently" (M9). Not all participants described this change as a pressure, but rather they believed there has

been a shift in valuing efficiency. Specifically, participants noted that there has been a shift to automating processes, making them more accessible for students, and being more proactive in assessing processes. Efficiency is also tied to the student-centered focus in that staff members are looking to improve student services wherever possible. One participant explained that the shift to automating processes has "…made it way more efficient. I mean I think we're able to service students, I know I just said efficiently, but it is true. More efficiently and quicker and, you know, we don't have the delays" (C6). The same participant went on to explain that automation not only benefits the students, but also the staff, "We can work on projects that have been on the back burner for years because we just haven't had the time or the man power, but now we do because these simple services have gone online" (C6). Efficiency has not only benefited the students but also staff. The participant described how the automation of certain processes has provided more time to work on projects that have not been addressed in the past. In having time to work on projects rather than what felt like mundane processes, staff expressed enjoying having a different type of challenge that is often more interesting than the typical day-to-day tasks. In essence, it made their work more meaningful for them.

Unity. Almost half of the participants noted a change in the department's sense of unity. Participants acknowledged that the department and unit leaders were trying to bring the department's units together using different strategies such as team building and team bonding exercises, team meetings, workshops about embracing diversity, knowledge sharing sessions, and ensuring things were fair across all units. One participant explained:

It kind of changed from that [day in and day out work] to, we're a team, we work together, we work to serve the same purpose for the success of our students, for the happiness of our staff. We're a team. It became very obvious that that's what [the

department's leader] was promoting. Unity and I guess a team sense within the

[department]. (C5)

From the participant's perspective, the department's leader's intent in promoting unity suggested

that the concept of unity may have been absent in the past. The participant referred to the

absence of unity in the past as directly impacting their day-to-day job. Without feeling a

commonality across units, the participant noted that the focus was on staff members merely

completing their day-to-day tasks. Whereas now, with a focus on unity, the units can collaborate

in a way that better serves the department's purpose. Another participant described a unit

leader's promotion of unity through increased communications and advocacy of problem solving

together, which results in a feeling of being a part of a team rather than being segregated from

others.

[Our unit's leader] now is very good at you know trying to bring the team, other

departments together to figure out things or have solutions or communicate with one

another. That sort of thing which is great because before it was always segregated. (O7)

One participant made the association between leadership and the promotion of unity by sharing,

"The leadership that changed… stressed about working together as a group and having sessions

that made us understand the effectiveness of working as a group" (Q5). This change was felt by

other participants, including one that explained, "How we work together as teams, like trying to

break down silos of individuals, has been a huge change" (H3). Promoting unity among the units

of the department can be seen as a leader's plea in encouraging collaboration. Although units

have their own functions, often those functions are connected to and impact other units'

functions. By creating a sense of unity among the units, staff members see the importance of

collaboration with the intent to improve processes and ultimately the department's effectiveness in servicing its students.

Participants noted that the department's leaders have not only brought different units of the department together, but also helped the department to connect with other departments at the university. As one participant explained:

I've noticed that [the department's leader] kind of brings together [academic departments] and [our department]… Before… it felt like we were kind of different, or isolated from the rest of the university… I felt like we were kind of isolated whereas now there is more of, 'okay this is what we're doing,' and there's more knowledge sharing. (C7)

The department's leader constantly pushed managers and staff to want to become better in their roles. The focus on effectiveness was sensed by other departments at the university as they were taken into consideration when staff members implemented more effective processes. This demonstrated to the other departments at the university that staff members wanted to work together, which helped to build cross-departmental relationships that were nonexistent in the past.

Departmental composition. The departmental structural changes experienced by participants included changes to the department's staffing, structure, and roles.

Staffing. Nine participants noted a change in the department's staffing. Many of the participants described the staffing changes as specific people leaving the department as well as joining the department. It should be noted that specific quotations describing the arrival and departure of staff members were intentionally left out of this section as it would be difficult to ensure the anonymity of not only the participants but also past and present members of the department. There were two participants that talked at large about the turnover rate in the

department. The high turnover was described by one participant as a "mass exodus." The participant went on to explain that in the past the department,

> Lost some really good people, some really talented people…who could have been in a better organizational structure that espoused confidence and development in staff. These people could have been key players in the structure we have now. (Q4)

Another participant felt that "certain roles in the [department] have a lot of turnover… We had a lot of people doing lateral moves…" (C6). It should be noted that in this instance the participant was referring to a particular unit in the past in which many staff members had come and gone over the years. The participant attributed the high turnover rate of the unit to the presence of toxic elements. Staffing changes in any capacity can impact members of a department. On the one side, it can be seen as disadvantaging the department in the case where it loses quality members due to toxic elements. On the other side, it can be seen as advantageous to the department in the case where it is ridding itself of toxic elements. The difference here shows that there is complexity in how the participants viewed staffing changes. It was not straightforward but filled with tensions and contradictions, which is common in organizational life.

Structure. More than half of the participants noted a change in the structure of the department. As described by one participant:

> We've moved from what was previously a really flat organizational structure to more of tiered organizational structure… There's more of a structure than there used to be now. So primarily with the implementation of team leads, as well as managers… So it's definitely gotten less flat over the last couple years. (Z1)

Participants noted that the tiered structure had creates more opportunities for staff growth and succession planning. As one participant explained, "I feel like there's a lot more structure… Like

it just makes more sense and its created opportunities for growth. Like succession planning and that sort of thing" (L8). This was echoed by another participant who agreed that the new structure, "Gives more layers. It gives people opportunities to practice management roles and that kind of thing" (D6). These quotations are revealing in that they describe a past organizational structure that did not promote career paths for its staff. One participant explained that the new tiered system,

> Basically reliev[ed] the structural tension… that existed between kind of the ranks in the senior management, to allow people to feel like they can grow… [The tiered system] allowed for strategic thinking, collaboration, and just in general better operational efficiencies. (Q4)

The positive result of the tiered system also resonated with another participant who explained, "That tiered structure has really allowed us to focus on our portfolios and individual areas" (Z1). The shift from a flat to a more tiered organizational structure provides staff members with more opportunities for career progression, improves communication paths, and unit-level focus, which participants consider to be beneficial.

Role. As a result of the staffing and structural changes, almost two thirds of the participants described how their roles have also changed. The types of role changes described by the participants included feeling more challenged professionally, and having more responsibility and workload.

Participants described being challenged in different ways, such as learning new skills, getting to work on projects, and progressing in their careers. One participant described the shift in being challenged by explaining that, "Leadership is looking at what's best for a person's growth instead of keeping them chained to a desk doing data entry" (D4). The words used in this

quotation are particularly important as it shows that in the past staff may have felt stagnant in their roles. Participants were also being challenged to progress in their jobs and to take opportunities for further growth. Participants pointed out that leadership had created those opportunities by providing things like, professional development days, and encouraging secondments of other positions in the department or university to gain additional experience and knowledge. One participant explained,

> I really enjoyed [attending a conference]… And it's nice for a change of pace too. To go to conferences, to go to meetings, or PD days and stuff like that…. We're also encouraged that if ever there are opportunities that we should take them to do those kind of seminars and stuff like that. (C5)

The benefits of staff being challenged is that they are afforded an opportunity to learn something new and to apply it to their current roles with the intent of improvement.

Five participants experienced an increased level of responsibility, while three participants acknowledged that their volume of work has increased due to the restructuring of the department. Increased levels of responsibility and workload were a result of shifts in the departmental structure. Participants were affected by the re-structuring of units, including the new tiered system, and the staff arrivals and departures. Participants explained that, "The number of people sharing the work load decreased," (D8) and that "new things [were being] added to your list of responsibilities" (C7). Participants alluded to the idea that there were professional benefits of being challenged with more work and responsibilities. One participant explained that, "[Increased responsibility is going to] open other opportunities for me I believe and of course that's positive for me. That'll make me develop and you know a lot of personal goals I'll fulfill doing that, professionally" (O7). In discussing the impact of an increased workload and more

responsibilities, another participant shared, "The [work] volume's increased and… The kind of things that you have to do are also changing… You're constantly having to re-innovate yourself and your skill set too" (C7). Being challenged with a larger work volume and more responsibility can be seen as a disadvantage to some staff members. Rather, in this instance, participants described the changes in volume and responsibilities as being beneficial to their careers as it challenges them to develop their knowledge and skill sets. These changes were seen as being beneficial to staff members which aligns with the department's leaders' shift to challenging staff members to continue to progress professionally.

Finally, a participant concluded that, "[Leadership] provides that training, that mentorship, and kind of that mobility to… have a career within the [department]" (Z1). This quotation is a good summation of the types of leadership changes that have impacted staff members. It associated the increased opportunities for training, support, and career succession to the shifts in leadership.

Understanding Change: Frustration, Apprehension and Willingness

This section includes a description of the different interpretive communities that were identified based on how participants understood the change initiatives outlined in the above section. It should be noted that a participant may have described different understandings based on the type of change initiative he or she identified. To ensure anonymity of the participants and the current and past members of the department, the interpretive communities have been formed based on understandings of change initiatives overall, rather than a specific change. Three interpretive communities were identified: (a) community of frustration; (b) community of apprehension; and (c) community of willingness.

Community of frustration. After reviewing the transcripts and noting how participants talked about their understanding of change initiatives, shared feelings of frustration were identified among some participants. Specifically, participants discussed how change resulted in their experiencing feelings of frustrations related to the handling of change, how change was communicated, and the timing of change. When asked to describe their experience with a change initiative, one participant expressed frustration based on how the change was handled.

> At the time it was a horrible, horrible place to be. Everyone around was having very mixed reactions... But it wasn't a fostering environment. Like whether people were happy or negative, like it's still an office and it was bad… It wasn't a good head space… I think a lot of people didn't know what was going on… I think a lot of people… We're not as in tuned with [the change]… And I don't think from what I saw, when I was here, that it was handled very well. That change. I think it was good change. I think it was positive. I think it was needed. But I don't think that actual time was handled very well. (D4)

Specifically, the participant's description was based on a staffing change that had taken place in the department. The participant's frustration stemmed from the aftermath of a change and how supports and resources were not put in place to help with the resulting transition. The lack of information regarding the change also created frustrations within the department, which resulted in creating a negative environment. Similarly, one participant noted that the same staffing change could have been handled, "With a little bit more tact and consideration. And a recognition that not everyone feels the way [others] do about certain changes… Good or bad" (L8). The participant felt that there was a lack of tact and consideration in that some staff members openly expressed inappropriate comments regarding the staffing change that were not necessarily shared by other members. The frustrations with how a staffing change was handled was also echoed by

another participant who explained that, "[Change has] been a struggle… How it happened and how it went down because it caused a lot of ill feelings. And we had to start from scratch to trust" (H3). The way in which the change was presented and implemented had an impact on how it was experienced by staff members. When change was implemented with little preparation, and a lack of humility, staff members become frustrated. The participants were not necessarily frustrated with the change itself, but rather with how it was presented and framed. This resulted in a loss of trust in the department as well as it created a negative environment.

Another point of frustration for participants was the lack of communication regarding change. Some participants indicated that they wished they would have known more about the end goal, or understood the entire scope of the change. In describing their experience with the change in the department's service model, one participant concluded, "I guess part of me wishes that I would have understood more… What the plan was, as opposed to just what the steps are." (D8). One participant acknowledged that, "A lot of time change happens so quickly that the message is a couple steps behind… So that's always something that most teams need to work on" (D6). The participant was referring to change in general in the department and felt that often change occurred prior to the staff members being notified, or provided with enough context to understand the reason behind the change, again resulting in feelings of frustration. Another participant conveyed a different scenario in which communications regarding a change in locale were being shared with certain staff members. The participant went on to question why information regarding a change was not being shared from the top down to all units equally. The participant illustrated the imbalance of communications across units as, "My first thought was well why aren't we having that same meeting? Why is that information not being shared? We don't get top down information. It's very specific information that we get. Very few

communications" (B2). This participant was frustrated with the differences in the level of details regarding the change in locale that was being communicated among the units. Another participant echoed the sentiment regarding an imbalance in communications, "I don't think we hear much about [change] here, whereas people at [a different location], they all know what's going on… But for us… It's like, 'do you know anything? What's happening?'" (C5) Participants noted that there was a difference in the types of communications being revealed across the units, which led to feelings of frustration. When some units received more information than others, it resulted in some staff members feeling as though they are not being treated fairly as they were not provided with the same information as other units.

A number of participants described the timing of change as being unexpected. Words such as shocking, quickly, abruptly, and being thrown into it were used by participants to express their initial feelings when confronted with change. The feeling of abruptness connects with the way change was communicated in that perhaps not all participants were prepared for change. The following description was provided by a participant while discussing a staffing change that had taken place in the department:

> It was a horrible time of change. I'll be honest, it was horrible, it was rapid… It got to the point that now I can see all this, but obviously at the time you didn't know right, no one knew… It was so much change and it was, honestly horrible from my point of view. (D4)

In this situation, the participant depicted the difficulties associated with the staffing change as having to do with abruptness and lack of information. The participant felt that there were many people in the department that were not aware of or prepared for this particular change, in addition to it happening rapidly. As described by the participant, they felt that the situation was horrible simply because the change was not explained to the rest of the department in a way to

help them understand the reason for it. When staff members are not provided with enough information to make sense of a particular change, it is difficult for them to see the benefits or the intentions of the change.

In contrast to the frustrations surrounding the abruptness of change, some participants felt that change did not happen fast enough – though they did eventually recognize that the timing of change was appropriate. One participant shared, "Sometimes I wish [the changes would] happen faster but I think some things didn't happen as quickly as we'd like. Just because they needed to make sure they were making the right decisions" (D6). Another participant commented on the pace of change, "I can't fault where [the department is] at… Everything that's been done is totally- has been the right move. I have a tendency to do things faster that's all" (Q4).

Seven participants indicated that when change occurred, they initially felt frustrations due to the uncertainty caused by the change. Specifically, the uncertainty of how change in the department's structure and staffing was going to affect them directly. As one participant shared, "[Change] stressed me out. With so much [change], uncertainty was high" (C5). Another participant explained that,

> I was kind of left in a spot where I was like, 'what's happening to me?'... Just the
> uncertainty of it all was difficult to kind of just [say], 'okay well let's just go back to
> work,' because it's kind of looming over you. (D8)

In describing feelings of uncertainty as a result of the departmental structure change, one participant expressed how it felt stressful stating, "I noticed there was a lot of [change] within the office. So that stressed me out… [It was] pretty stressful" (C5). Similarly, another participant expressed the impact of having a new tiered structure in addition to staffing changes, saying, "At first it was a little bit, nervous, like I was nervous because I didn't know, you know, what

changes were go[ing to] happen cause you never know … So, fear of the unknown is always a big thing" (O7). Another participant echoed the sentiment of uncertainty caused by the departmental structural change by expressing, "There [was] a lot of uncertainty and I had a lack of training because of how that change was implemented" (H3). Finally, one participant explained, when asked how change made them feel, "It kind of makes you feel like, again, you don't have any control with anything, so, I don't think vulnerable is a good word but, kind of take what's just given to you. You don't have any choice" (U5). Participants explained that change caused uncertainty as a result of its implementation. Without proper preparation and clarification of change, participants experienced a sense of uncertainty, which caused anxiety and stress. Although participants felt anxiety and stress, they conceded that they did not have any control over the change, so the uncertainty was something that they had to endure.

  Community of apprehension. Another community was identified based on how participants talked about their understanding of change. I call this a community of apprehension, based on participants' initial encounter with change which resulted in immediate feelings of apprehension, which is different than fear, because with external interventions such as reassurance and time, the community felt there were positive outcomes of change. Participants described a number of strategies that leadership used to provide reassurance during the time of change. The first strategy was to involve the staff members from the start. One participant found it helpful being involved at the outset of change, in this case in the development of the department's vision:

> The changes that I can think about even in terms of the vision and all of that, I found that they actually involved all of us right from the start. And that's something that I've noticed even from my daily work where we have to implement something is that if you engage

the people who are actually going to be affected from the start it really helps. So, that's

one aspect that I thought was great. Because I felt like everyone's engaged. (C7)

Another strategy employed by the department's leader that was identified by participants

was to be open to discussing any concerns with staff, especially when it came to staffing

changes. As one participant explained,

I definitely think [the department's leader] took the right steps in making people feel like

you know, this is not what [the department is] about… And I think that was voiced to us.

I wouldn't say that anything was done wrong in that situation, and I do feel like we had

the opportunity if we wanted to ask questions, if we were concerned. (C5)

The initial feeling of apprehension that was felt due to a staffing change in the department, was

addressed by the department's leaders in that they clarified how the change should be viewed

from a positive perspective, rather than a negative one. The strategy of openness was identified

by another participant who shared that,

[The department's leader was] very open about [the staffing change], you know and [the

leader] said, 'I know that you're going to have some concerns, you know, we want to look

at the culture of the department and what's going to happen and you can meet with me

one-on-one if you want to discuss... What this means to you, or concerns.' (H3)

Again, the strategy of openness helped to alleviate apprehension as expressed by another

participant, "[The department's leader] had spoken to us about [staffing changes]. So, like,

somewhat reassured us. I think I knew a little bit on my own, but yeah it was nice for the

reassurance" (O7). A number of departmental changes, including structural and staffing, resulted

in feelings of apprehension. The department's leaders took steps in reassuring its staff members

through strategies such as engagement in the change and being open the about change. Getting

staff members to feel engaged in the process allowed them to feel as if they were a part of the change. Also, by being open about change, the department's leaders were able to address initial concerns, allowing staff members to feel reassured that change was being implemented with a positive intent.

Some participants were able to feel reassured through time. The following passage described how one participant initially felt apprehension but after time, and allowing the change to play out, there was a sense of reassurance:

> So at first I was kind of a little bit wondering about it. But as time has moved on and I've been given more roles… It's going to be different, or light at the end of the tunnel, I guess you could say. Like it's been more exciting for me, too. (O7)

Similarly, in describing their experience with staffing and structural changes, another participant explained that:

> It's all the same changes, but it's just now that some time has gone by, they don't seem so, yeah... Which is such an obvious lesson right, you think you could have told yourself back then like, 'change is good, it's just hard at first.' It's so simple but it made me feel very apprehensive, it made me feel kind of nervous... But it doesn't now. (D8)

Again, the same sentiment was shared by another participant who described the changing of location along with the concern of working in a different office culture as:

> At first I was a little bit hesitant… But then it actually worked out really great to be honest with you. So in the beginning I was kind of concerned, but yeah it really worked out in the end. (U5)

Another participant reiterated the idea that after time, staff members became more comfortable with change. "I think everybody is starting to get used to their roles… Change is always

challenging and nerve wracking. So I think people… Were nervous… But so far I feel like it's been good" (O7). In some cases, participants felt that the apprehension caused by staffing and structural changes only subsided after time had passed.

Community of willingness. Finally, a community of willingness was identified based on how participants talked about their understanding with change. This community was based on participants' willingness to accept change based on their internal motivation such as their change seeking nature, their trust in change, or their perceived positive outcomes associated with change initiatives. A third of the participants described themselves as change agents, or someone who is comfortable or seeks change. As one participant put it:

> I'm a lover of change. Like I love change. I've always been one of those people that you could call a change agent cause I just love it. I know like it has it's challenges and sometimes it's not always- it doesn't feel good, but I love new things. (L8)

Similarly, another participant echoed the sentiment of enjoying the challenging aspect of change by saying, "I'm good with change. I find that there will always be challenges in dealing with change. But I like being challenged" (M9). A participant took it even further in explaining that there is a personal need for change. This was evidenced by the statement, "I love change. Like I say if I'm not going through change here, I'm changing my house… Like I'm a big change person" (H3). Finally, one participant shared, "I'm someone who's open to change and usually I know that there's some logic behind the madness... For me overall, over the past couple of years I find that a lot of things have improved" (C7). Participants described a community that is open to, understands, and agrees with change, which makes its implementation easier.

Almost half of the participants indicated that they trusted the change at the outset of its implementation which made it easier to accept. For a number of participants, trusting the change

came easy because they agreed with the change. In discussing their experience with staff changes in the department, one participant explained,

> I know everything that went on. Whereas some people might not and they only know one side of the story, so I think that was a concern for some… So that was maybe… some people's concern but I think now that's gone. (C5)

When asked why this participant did not feel any concern about the staffing change, they replied, "I wasn't concerned because I anticipated those things" (C5). This reinforced the idea that participants were more accepting of change when they themselves anticipated and believed in it. "So I think a lot of people were a bit more hesitant… Like trusting [leadership]… I was pretty confident right away" (D6). The participant recognized that not everyone would be so accepting of a staffing change, but in their case, they were familiar enough with the new individual and was confident that their skills and abilities would make a positive impact on the department. In keeping with the topic of trust, one participant shared the following:

> I mean whenever a change takes place… If you were to involve everybody in those changes you'd almost have too many cooks in kitchen so to speak. And it's like you'll never actually get something done… [Leaders have] to know their staff and they have to know kind of the overall structure and feel of the office and know that whatever changes are being made are the right things to do. And have the confidence to… do that. (Z1)

Having trust in the department and unit's leaders allowed this participant to feel as though the decisions that were made were in the best interest of the department. The participant acknowledged that it can be difficult to have too many people voicing their opinions or making decisions, so ultimately it comes down to staff members having trust that their leaders recognizing their needs and are making decisions in line with those needs. In this case, leaders

created an environment where a member of the department felt that they were being taken into account which made the resulting change easier to trust and accept.

Finally, almost two thirds of the participants described their willingness to change based on positive outcomes associated with change. As participants experienced change, they came to see the positive outcomes, which helped them to be accepting of change. One participant explained,

I didn't realize the extent of the stress or how unhappy we were until we started being happy again and saw the contrast. I used to dread coming to work, but I don't do that anymore. I enjoy the environment I work in. (D6)

This illustrated the participant's recognition of positive outcomes that were experienced as a result of change. Other participants identified positive outcomes such as feeling valued, having more power to do things, and developing confidence. Participants also described how change eliminated barriers and negativity in the department. As one participant explained,

I think that since… [senior leaders have] made some changes… I think that those have been positive changes. I think that every single one of those has been [a] positive changes. Eliminating drama, toxicity… I definitely feel that they were positive change. (C5)

One participant described the change of their unit's direct leader as, "Kind of a breath of fresh air to be perfectly honest with you so… That's worked out really great" (U5).

Participants also recognized that experiencing positive outcomes of change helped staff members to become more accepting of future changes. As one participant described, "I feel like staff are more receptive whereas before it felt like everyone was in defense mode... I feel like

they're more open to more changes, like they're understanding that it's okay, it's for the better"

(C7). Another participant explained,

> [Past events of change] make me not be antsy about things that still need to change
>
> because I've seen so many positive changes already that I know the other ones are still
>
> possible… We have people who are committed to making them happen. (D6)

In discussing the benefits of experiencing positive outcomes of change, one participant shared,

"Every time your [leader] comes out and makes a change like that and it works out… When they

go to do something else you can go back and be like, 'okay, well they know what they're doing'"

(D8). The positive outcomes of change were perceived by staff members who then recognized

that change has the ability to improve things in the department. Often, change can be viewed in a

negative light, but based on participants' experiences with change, they recognized the benefits

of changes which makes the implementation of future changes easier to accept.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a description of what staff members of the department identified

as change initiatives as well as a description of how they experienced change. The results of the

research were based on the data originated from 16 interview transcripts. Based on the

exploration of the department, the participants identified the leaders' practices and the

departmental arrangement as the most significant change initiatives. Specifically, participants

identified three changes in leadership: (a) behaviour, (b) strategy and purpose, and (c) promotion

of unity. In addition to identifying change initiatives, participants came to understand change in

various ways. The communities of understanding included: (i) frustration, (ii) apprehension, and

(iii) willingness. The study's findings suggest that leaders need to be aware of what staff

members identify as change as well as the different ways in which they understand it.

Chapter 6

Transitioning Culture: Artifacts of Change

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings of my research relating to culture. The purpose of this study was not only to explore how staff members understood change initiatives but also to explore staff members' perspectives of any cultural shifts as a result of change initiatives. This section presents a before and after cultural analysis based on an account of how staff members described the departmental culture. While conducting the interviews and reviewing my transcripts, it became apparent that participants were describing the department's culture through before and after stories. Van Buskirk and McGrath (1992) found that the collected stories of an organization can set the groundwork for understanding aspects of change. Artifacts were also identified which were used to explore their effect on individuals and how they evoked emotional and physical responses (Yanow, 2000). Although it is difficult to associate a specific change initiatives with a change in culture, the stories and artifacts shared by the participants provided a glimpse into how the department's culture has changed from what it was to what it is. The departmental culture was deciphered through narrative analysis of the participants' before and after stories.

Past Departmental Culture

When describing the past departmental culture, the majority of the participants portrayed a past culture of division and conflict, toxicity, and disrespect. One participant's statement represented the feelings of many of the staff members when it came to the past culture:

The culture was terrible. There was fear. [The] structure was flat lined... [People] were

stripped of their responsibilities so that they could be more controlled. [People] were all

made to be very bored and felt very controlled, very quickly… What you found

happening was this antagonism… There was no direction, no strategic direction. No

plan… and it was hostile. Absolutely toxic, hostile environment. I had never seen so

many tears in my life… Some [people] would get asked how they were doing and they

would literally say their life is terrible. Like, it's that blatant. So it was a bad time and it

ruined the culture of this place. (Q4)

The following sections will describe the participants' depiction of the past culture of division and

conflict, toxicity, and disrespect.

Culture of division and conflict. Through their shared stories, ten participants described

a culture of division and conflict. The participants described how units were made to feel pitted

against each other, how conflict made them feel as though they had to choose sides, and how the

competitive nature of the department created animosity between staff members. Participants

noted that in the past, the department was segregated and that units did not interact or work

together. Participants described the relationship between the department's units as "very separate

[and] very divided," (C5) and how units were "actively working against each other" (H3). The

division of department was described by one participant as:

People in our [unit] were being, I don't know if it's bullied or victimized by other [units]

within the [department]. And that goes back to… The different cultures and, '[our unit is]

here together all the time, [your unit is] there together all the time, we do it this way, you

do it that way, and we don't get why you do it that way.' (D8)

In this case, there was a clear lack of understanding of each unit's role in the department and

how they relate to one another. The participants reflected that this division impacted the units'

abilities to interact and collaborate with one another. As one participant described,

Every [unit] didn't really interact closely or work together… [They] did their own thing.

In between everybody doing their own things, there was a lot of duplication in their tasks

and their efforts, also in their processes… Because they were not really working together

as a team… Everybody just kind of did their own thing and they got their work done…

They were ineffective as a group. (Q5)

Participants noted that a disadvantage of units working in isolation of each other is the

duplication of work. When units are unable to communicate and collaborate with one another,

opportunities are missed when it comes to amalgamating efforts, which often results in

ineffectiveness and a loss of time and resources. Communication and collaboration among the

units became even more strained when participants explained that units were discouraged from

interacting with each other. A participant shared,

One thing that was brought to our attention recently was that the [Unit B staff members]

were always afraid for lack of a better word, to come to the [Unit D staff members]

because it was engrained in their head that we're busy, we can't answer their questions.

They have to kind of deal with whatever issue it is on their own. (O7)

The feeling of being discouraged to interact among units lead to a belief that units were being

pitted against each other. As one participant expressed, "There was a belief that [units] were

against each other" (C5). This feeling was again echoed by another participant who stated,

"Everybody had their own little teams but they were one team against another team, not

necessarily working together all the time" (O7). Participants explained that the feeling of units

being adversaries then grew into a situation where units were intentionally working against each

other. "Before [the units] aversively tried to not help each other… It was awful. Like, inter-

department fighting, or people not assisting" (H3). Some participants noted that the division may

have even started amongst leadership. As explained by one participant, there was "tangible

animosity between leadership" (D6). The same participant went on to explain how the animosity

among leadership negatively impacted the staff members. "[Animosity] trickled down a lot. So,

we could really feel that increased negativity in the entire office" (D6). The negative impact that

the animosity had on staff members made some feel as if there were different sides of the

department. One participant shared, "That's how obvious [the conflict] became… I almost felt

like you know two parents are divorcing or fighting and you're the kid" (L8). This feeling of

being stuck between two sides was experienced by another participant who explained, "[Staff

members] basically put me in the middle of one their email fights… I was cc'ed on every single

one… so negative. It was awful. It was so awful" (D6). Reiterating the challenge of the

department's segregation, another participant described the difficulties of working in that type of

environment:

> I just wanted to do my job and do it as well as I can, and get along with everyone to
>
> whatever extent I can and it always sort of felt like you were being pulled to one side than
>
> the other and I don't really think anyone was exempt from that. (D8)

When staff members described the department as comprising opposing sides, it resulted in the

feeling of either having to choose sides, or being pulled in different directions. The difficulties

associated with this conundrum resulted in a breakdown of communication and lack of

understanding across the units, as well as missed opportunities for collaboration. When staff

members were made to feel that they were part of a unit that was against another unit, it further

developed into situations where units would work against each other.

Finally, participants noted that there were elements of competitiveness in the department that created division and conflict among staff members. One participant accounted for some of the division and animosity as being associated with competition between staff members:

There were people coming and going and so there was a lot of hiring going on as well. And that created a bit of animosity as well because you know, you'd have a few people competing for the same job. And that got a lot of negative feelings going as well. (D6)

Another participant felt that in the past the competitiveness in the department, which developed out of what they described as the university's conservative nature, created animosity between staff members as well. The participant illustrated the animosity by explaining,

[The university is] a very conservative university and we breed a competitiveness of, well I don't take lunches. And if you take a lunch, someone's like, 'oh, you get to take a lunch?' You know so, I feel that it's one where if we do have a culture it's one of, 'oh, that person took a 15-minute break? Must be nice.' One of competiveness, not one of support. (H3)

The depicted competitive nature of the department impacted staff members as it created an environment where they felt like they were adversaries. Rather than supporting one another, the units and staff members were competing against each other to try and prove that they that they had more worth or that they were more committed to the department. This division and conflict resulted in duplication of work, loss of communication and collaboration, and tension.

Culture of toxicity. Almost half of the participants discussed past situations that were unpleasant or harmful which resulted in a culture of toxicity. Four participants noted the negative impact that rumours had on the department. One participant explained that, "Something that happened in the past was the water cooler gossip and a lot of talking behind closed doors" (Z1).

Another participant shared that, "[There] was bickering… and you know there was gossiping throughout the entire department" (U5). Echoing the existence of toxicity was another participant who described the negative impact it had on the department:

> It was pretty toxic at times in the office as well. It was quite cliquey and was quite negative. Like there was a lot of, you know, just you could tell people talked about different things in the office, or even like just talked about other people in the office. It wasn't the best place to be. (D6)

The existence of rumours led to misinformation being shared across the department. Misinformation was often viewed as negative, especially when it was associated with individuals. This resulted in the creation of tension among staff members, and even led to confrontations between individuals. When rumours were heard or observed, it reinforced an adversary type environment which was unpleasant to work in.

Participants also explained that there were some staff members who created toxicity by putting others down. As one participant noted, "I don't like throwing around the term bully, but I feel like this person would get really close to someone and try to like you know, put down other people" (C6). Another participant explained:

> It was a very toxic work environment. There was a lot of cattiness… That's always stirring the pot, that's always making drama with other people. And that made it a very toxic work environment. Because, you didn't know where you stood, you didn't know who was saying what or who was doing what… It wasn't a good place. (C5)

Feelings of victimization only added to the toxic environment by creating mistrust among the staff members. Some staff members felt as though the victimization caused stress and anxiety.

Four participants described how the controlling nature of the department also created a toxic environment. Participants felt that past leaders had the power to negatively influence their abilities to complete tasks. The impact of control on the department was described by one participant as follows:

> It was more of a command and control culture… It just destroyed morale. So that's where we got this kind of fear and anxiety piece… People were scared to come to work, yelling matches in the halls… Real anxious staff that felt like you know didn't want to come to work. Or felt like they were being played when they got here. (Q4)

The controlling nature of past leaders affected the staff members' morale. The negativity was so great that it deterred people from wanting to be at work. The negative impact of control on the department was further described by one participant:

> A focus on [leadership] issues… appeared to consume energy and take from investing in staff. In my observation, we were consistently stuck in completing or doing anything without approval or consent because of some of the issues that were happening at the higher level. Everything became a political move or you know everybody was insecure and afraid. Control kind of seemed to be the spirit of the department at the time. So it was just messy. And just uncomfortable. (L8)

In this situation, the participant was referring to the tension and issues that existed among senior leaders in the department. The tension created at that level was not isolated and eventually flowed down to the units' staff members. Staff members became a part of the political moves, which led to feelings of being stuck. In addition to feeling stuck, one participant expressed that, "There were roadblocks which impacted unit's abilities to develop and change" (H3). The controlling nature of the department not only made staff members feel trapped but it also

prevented them from developing. Without the ability to have some form of control over what they do, staff members were left in a position where they were to simply follow through with commands. This prevented any form of development in experience, knowledge, expertise, processes, and procedures.

Participants acknowledged that the toxicity took its toll on the department in that it made it a "horrible, horrible place to work" (D4). Other participants described the environment as negative, often leaving staff members in tears. In referencing the negativity observed among colleagues, one participant shared that, "I was sitting in my office crying my eyes out. I was like 'this is horrible'" (D6). An environment of toxicity, caused by the spreading of rumours, bullying, and the controlling nature of leaders created feelings of anxiety and discomfort for staff members. Participants described a loss of time and effort as a result of having to deal with the negative effects of toxicity.

Culture of disrespect. Seven participants shared past experiences that had reflected elements of disrespect. Participants described a clear lack of respect at the leadership level. As explained by one participant, "[A past leader] was not respected or liked" (H3). Another participant described the dynamics at the leadership level as, "There was a lack of respect. A huge lack of respect" (L8). Another participant shared that, "Antagonism existed at the boardroom table where like… people would actually not respond to [the department's leader]" (Q4). This lack of respect towards leadership and its impact on staff members was evidenced through one participant's quote, "When you have [leaders] rolling their eyes at other [leaders], and saying that person's useless, that's how the team's going to treat that whole other team" (H3). Another participant explained that, "Most of our meetings were aggressive, we're verbally not acceptable when I started. And it was just a lot of anger in the room and just very, very angry

people," (Q5) and, "There were yelling matches in the halls" (Q4). One participant added, "I saw how horrible people could treat one another. It was negative and awful" (D6). The result of staff members observing instances of disrespect at the leadership level had consequences. In observing individuals in leadership roles disrespecting other individuals in leadership roles, it gave the impression to staff members that that behaviour was acceptable. This resulted in situations where leaders were disrespected by their followers, which resulted in a loss of credibility.

In addition to individuals being disrespected, participants noted that there were situations in which the system was being disrespected by staff who were taking advantage of certain situations. As explained by one participant, "This is stuff that annoyed me… Sometimes the staff took advantage of [their unit's leader's absence]… Things that like you would see that would annoy you because you're not abusing the system" (C6). In this situation, the participant was depicting how particular staff members took advantage of the fact that they were not directly supervised by their unit's leader. The participant provided examples of staff members' abuse of the system and the impact it had on the department, "If I knew someone took a two-hour lunch and then I saw them leave a half an hour early… That really gives you a negative impact on that group of people" (C6). Another participant echoed the feeling of witnessing abuse of the system and it having an impact on the department:

> I noticed that some people would just kind [of] come into work for half a day, and they're gone for half a day, but it's like, is that even documented? And they can just do that every day? So, that I found very frustrating because then, the other people are here picking up the slack. (C5)

The same participant went on to explain that staff members taking advantage of the system made it feel as though some people were more privileged than others:

> I noticed that people were not treated the same way, some people had more privilege than others… I found that I still wasn't being treated the same way. Not necessarily, I was treated in a bad way, but some people would get other privileges then say I would. And I'm not somebody that cuts corners, or doesn't do things by the books… Coming into work was a little bit harder because it felt like a lot of things were going on behind the scenes and not everybody was aware of, and that affected how you worked with other people. So yeah, kind [of] took away the joy of working. (C5)

The feeling associated with witnessing fellow staff members taking advantage of the absence of a direct supervisor caused conflict among units. In this instance, staff from certain units that were abiding by the department's work policies felt that other staff members were taking advantage of a situation which created a sense of unfairness across units. This different treatment caused tension between units and even made staff members view other members in a negative light.

Current Departmental Culture

The current departmental culture was deciphered through the shared experiences of how participants discussed working relationships, the work environment, locale, communication, and traditions. Based on participants' stories, a culture of optimism, and the questioning of a culture of "us" were identified. Artifacts relating to each culture were also identified and described.

Culture of optimism. The majority of the participants described a positive work environment based on their shared stories and identified artifacts, such as celebrations, healthy initiatives, and mentors. Participants used words such as positive, happy, fun, and exciting to describe the current feel of the work environment. As one participant explained, "Things are

going really good, like the change that has happened over the last couple of months, like we're

kind of heading in a good direction. So I'm kind of happy about that" (O7). The participant

expanded on their description of the positive impact of change as,

> [Staff members] value work more because it's a happier place. They feel like they want to
> do well or that sort of thing if their given the positive reinforcement… I do feel that so far
> everything's moving positively… It's a little bit more positive… I think the culture is less
> tense. (O7)

Another participant shared that, "I enjoy the environment I work in. I enjoy the people I work

with and so that's been the biggest change for sure is just that culture… It's a good place to be

again" (D6). In discussing the shift from a toxic environment to one that is more positive, one

participant described it as, "The cloud has been lifted for sure" (U5). The same participant

further explained that, "I haven't heard anybody gossiping about anybody, and you know there

was gossiping throughout the entire department but there was no more gossiping… It's like a

magic wand was waved or something like that" (U5). A consequence of a toxic environment that

was exacerbated by gossip was that it created obstacles and tensions between units which

hindered collaboration. As the same participant explained, "[Gossiping] kind of created these

barriers with certain [units] within the [department], but now those barriers are kind of gone… I

think things are going well" (U5). Reiterating the benefits of removing toxic elements in the

department, another participant concluded that, "I find it's a whole different environment because

it's more relaxed" (O7). The participant used the word relaxed in positive way in that they found

it easier to collaborate with other units. Creating an environment in which staff members are no

longer exposed to toxic elements has helped individuals to feel happy and valued. Through the

analysis of artifacts, such as celebrations, initiatives, and mentors, the department's leaders

created an environment based on optimism and support. Some participants alluded to the idea that the artifact of traditions could help to reinforce the positive nature of the department, but that it is currently lacking department-wide.

   Artifact of celebrations. Participants noted that the department celebrated successes often, which helped to reinforce the positive work environment. The celebrations ranged from parties celebrating the end of another term, to holiday parties, to birthdays, and to showers. As one participant described,

> We do the sing and swarm, the embarrassing sing and stare, where we go and give them their card and sing to them publically… Once every semester, especially if, like a big project ends, we do a lunch, or breakfast… We do potlucks, we try to do a potluck every once and awhile. (H3)

Another participant shared that, "We do a lot of celebrating milestones together, so whatever that might be. Babies, marriage, grandchildren" (M9). These celebrations are viewed as valuable to staff members, as explained by one participant that, "[Celebrations] give us a sense of connectedness" (M9). Though it should be noted that celebrations do vary across units. One participant explained that, "I'd like to see more structure in how we celebrate things. Some units celebrate a lot and some don't" (D4). In having different celebrations across units, the participant noted that it could make staff members from other units feel left out or as if they are not getting the same things as other units. Some participants noted that the contrast in celebrations across units could cause tensions between the units, though overall celebrations have helped to create a positive environment.

   Artifact of healthy initiatives. Participants recognized the impact that department-wide initiatives aimed at improving health had in helping to create a more positive environment. Some

examples included dress-down days, fun Fridays, and ice cream treats. The department is also heavily engaged in fundraising and gets involved through holiday hampers, big bike rides, and chili bake-offs. A more recent initiative that was discussed by some participants had to do with healthy living. The healthy living initiative is run by a committee comprised of members of the department who put together healthy challenges in which staff members could win prizes. As one participant explained:

> The healthy living initiative in the [department], like we would have never seen something like that before. Like I don't think we've ever done something like that. And the fact that a) it's allowed to be fun and it's not like you know some boring work project, like read these articles about being healthy. It's fun and dynamic but it's also an important message. That like hey your own health, physical health, mental health, emotional health, are really priorities here. And so I think it's looking at us as entire people, rather than just employees. Because you don't leave your personal stuff and your health stuff at the door when you work. Like all of you comes to work. And I think right from the top that's really recognized and valued and supported. (D6)

Department-wide initiatives aimed at improving the physical, mental, and emotional health of staff members has resulted in creating a more positive environment. Through the initiatives, the department's leaders were able demonstrate that staff members' personal health was valued. This type of environment allowed staff members to feel happiness, enjoyment, and connectedness, which makes coming to work and performing more enjoyable.

Artifact of mentors. Participants described the benefits of having a mentor within the department. A third of the participants shared that they had a positive experience with a mentor throughout their time in the department. One participant described their leader as:

A mentor and at the same time [the leader], even though [the leader is] my manager, [the leader] doesn't micro-manage. [The leader] lets me do my thing… And there are times when [the leader] knows I'm taking a longer path and [the leader] knows there's a shorter path, but [the leader will] make me kind of figure it out on my own. But at the same time when [the leader] thinks that I'm not on the right track [the leader will] bring me back. So, [my leader] is a huge support system. (C7)

Another participant shared their experience with mentorship in the department as:

I've always personally felt like I've had mentors here. And maybe that's just the way I kind of came up through the system… I've always had good mentors here, who've helped me grow as a person and employee. (Z1)

One participant talked about how they could recognize that mentors were being developed at different levels within the department. "[The unit's leader is] being mentored… by [the department's leader]… [The unit's leader] knows the expectation of [the department's leader], and that's helpful. [The understanding of] expectations… helps their relationship" (Q5). Mentors at different levels of the department was also recognized by another participant who shared,

The mentoring [that our unit's leader] gives us… The support and the decisions [our unit's leader] makes on our behalf… Also going to bat with other departments when [our unit's leader] needs to… A lot of those skills that [our unit's leader is] learning comes from [other leaders], who [are] very much supported by [the department's leader] to give everyone those skills that they need. And they trickle down and you feel that. (D6)

Although a number of participants acknowledged they have been positively impacted by mentorship, there were some participants who felt there was a lack of mentorship in the department. One participant explained:

> In terms of the culture, and what I think hasn't changed, is the lack of mentorship, intentional relationship building, creating and developing projects aimed at specific strengths and cultivating teaching emotional intelligence and valuing experience and performance and not just performance. (D4)

The participant felt that they were not provided with the opportunity to engage in a mentorship type of relationship, although it was sought after. In describing the importance of mentorship, the participant continued, "All of us need that guidance and I've asked for it and I was told that the person can't give it to me now. So… I've accepted that. So I look for mentorship elsewhere, but it's definitely lacking in our department" (D4). Echoing that sentiment was another participant who sought mentorship but did not receive any, "when I've asked if they hear of anything outside or know how I can meet up with some people or get some mentorship or something like that I never heard back" (B2). For many of the participants, mentorship represented a form of support which helped create the positive environment as staff members felt like they could grow and learn from others. Although there were many instances of mentorship in the department, there were some staff members that felt that they were not afforded the opportunity of mentorship, which led to feeling disregarded and undervalued.

Questioning the Culture of "Us." Over half of the participants described a cultural shift in which staff, managers, and units within the department started working together as a team. Although there were many instances of the units' improved working relationships, there were still lingering feelings of separation as a result of locale and a lack of traditions. One participant provided an example of how leadership promoted a team mentality by establishing that elements of toxicity, including gossip talk, would not be tolerated. The participant explained:

[My unit leader's] one thing is like… A very, very important rule… an absolute non-

negotiable [rule]… [If the leader witnesses gossip], like there's going to be a problem…

It was like right from the get-go… in this new change that we're having, this is no longer

happening. Like we are a team. And if there's a problem, like we'll deal with it together.

But nothing's going to get solved if you go into someone's office, close the door, and just

spout off. So, that was a huge, huge change. Just in values. Like that was right from the

get go before any work stuff or student stuff, it was like let's fix what's going on just with

us in our team. So that was a big shift for sure. (D6)

The priority leadership placed on promoting a team mentality had a significant impact on staff

members. By bringing the concept of a team to the forefront, participants suggested that the

department's leader helped staff members to understand the importance and benefits of working

together. Participants went on to describe the impact of making team mentality a priority. As one

participant shared:

I think that when everyone was kind of still all in their little [units]… everybody had their

own little teams but they were one team against another team, not necessarily working

together all the time. It just feels like… we're trying to be all one big team within these

little [units]… We're not just segregated into our own little [units]. I think with the

[change] it makes it more like we're on the same team. People are happier. There's not as

much tension. You're not afraid… Staff maybe aren't necessarily afraid to make decisions

on their own, you know, have confidence in their decision. Back up one another. (O7)

Another participant observed departmental staff working well together which contrasted earlier

experiences of participants noting tensions created from conflict among the different units.

I find with the change… There's more transparency and… I see a shift in teams playing

well together, whereas before they aversively tried to not help each other… So I see a

change with the… inter-department fighting, or people not assisting, so that change had

to happen. So I see a positive change with the change… Because now [staff members] are

getting along and the teams are working better. (H3)

The department's leader's prioritization of teamwork impacted staff members as participants

recognized a shift in the way units worked together. One participant expressed how a sense of

trust in the department improved the working relationships:

It feels like more of a team, so it's not one person against another person, or, you know

that sort of thing... I think different staff members are maybe trusting each other more.

Knowing that we're all on the same team and at the end of the day want the best, you

know, workplace and service. (O7)

Another participant associated the team mentality to the sharing of information across the

department. As explained, "Information sharing is becoming a huge part of that collaboration…

Just knowing what other people are doing… You get an idea what the functions of the [units] are

and how all the pieces fit together." (D6) From the participants' point of view, by prioritizing

teamwork and sharing information, the department's leaders was able to create an environment

in which units began working together. As units shared their functions with other units, it helped

to increase awareness of what each unit was doing. It helped to identify situations in which units

could collaborate. The awareness of one another, and the collaboration amongst units, created a

sense of trust in the department.

The culture of "us" was also illustrated in how participants described the working

relationships within the department's units. Although the department is comprised of various

units with different functions, the way in which participants described the working relationships within their specific units was quite similar. One metaphor in particular, close-knit, was used a number of times to describe the close relationships that existed within the units. The following participant's description demonstrates the close-knit nature of their unit:

I think our culture in [our unit] is that we're extremely tight knit. And supportive of each other. We work hard and play hard I would say. We are really dedicated to our roles but we also like to have fun and do things as a team together. And we're very much in it together as co-workers but also like we just really are in each other's lives. (D6)

Another participant described the close-knit nature of their unit by saying, "We're a very tight knit group. We're close, we work really well together" (M9). This same mentality was shared by another participant who described their unit by saying:

We all support one another… We're friendly... We actually have a good team, like everybody's on the same page and supports one another. You know like within work and even out of work, which is great. It's important to get along with who you're working with. (O7)

Another participant described the working relationships in their unit as, "Incredible… I couldn't ask for a better team of people to work with" (B2).

Participants shared that the relationships in their units were built on respect, friendship, and support. One participant explained that, "It's nice working with people that you get along with. There's no drama, there's no animosity, we all get along. And we're all friends. Which makes coming to work much better" (C5). Another participant explained, "It's a lot easier to work with people you enjoy being around… I think [my unit] does get along really well." The participant further explained that having those close working relationships were important

because, "you spend so much of your day with these people" (C6). Participants explained that the support for each other is felt when staff within the units acknowledge one another's work and show appreciation for it. Staff often work with one another to ensure schedules are covered and to resolve issues that come about. In addition, some participants felt that their unit, "Supports one another within work and outside of work" (O7). As one participant puts it, "Everyone is supportive of each other. We work together as a team, we accomplish as a team, we fail as a team" (C5). The close-knit nature of the units stemmed from the unit's staff members creating a friendly and supportive environment. As noted by one participant, much of everyone's day is spent at work, so it is important to ensure that the environment is conducive to making individuals feel comfortable and supported. Being friends with co-workers helped to create a connection among unit's staff members which has strengthened the team mentality.

Although many participants described a cultural shift towards more of a team mentality, there were some participants that felt there was still a sense of separation among the units. When one participant was asked what it felt like to work in the department, they replied, "I don't feel like I work in the whole [department]" (B2). This feeling of separation was illustrated by one participant when asked to describe the culture of the department:

> I think it's a good and healthy place but I feel like it's still a little distant. Like the relationships are just not quite there because we work most often in our smaller units so when we come together we remember we are part of a bigger department. You focus some much on your unit that sometimes it feels like the other units are against you. I find the collaboration still isn't quite there. I do find it's a good place to work, but there are still some areas where we need to grow. We need to bring the focus back to who we are as a big group. (D6)

The feeling of separation was echoed by another participant who acknowledged that there were initiatives put in place to help bring the units together, but without constant reinforcement units reverted to operating on their own. As explained, "[The units] do tend to operate in [their] own cycles… I don't know if I would say siloed so much… Sometimes I see us as separate entities…" The participant went on to explain:

> We are still a little bit segregated in terms of work at times. Although, you know, individually one team will work with another team… So we do interact, but I think that sometimes we are still a bit- I don't want to use the word siloed, because I think we're getting better than that but still a little bit separate. (M9)

The recognition of the team mentality having not quite come to fruition was recognized by another participant who deduced that, "I think it's getting there. I still think that there's not [working relationships] on a personal basis… But… [the department] I think is slowly getting there, but I don't have a lot of interaction with other [units] really" (O7). Not all participants shared the sense of unity among the units as one participant shared that they felt the department had become more separated. "It almost feels like when we have all [departmental] team meetings, it's almost like it's all these different [units] coming together. Rather than one big team… It just seems like we're a bit more divided up now" (D6). Participants expressed that the lingering feelings of separation among the units resulted in a loss of collaboration and a sense of detachment.

Artifacts of locale: Division created by location. Though the majority of participants described a shift to a culture that emphasized team work, there were still some who felt that there was still a sense separation between units. Many participants alluded to the impact that locale had in creating the feeling of separation among the units. Through their stories, participants

depicted an artifact of locale, which for them that represented the department's lingering feelings of separation and division. Many of the department's units are stationed at different locations, including campuses and buildings, which significantly impacts their ability to communicate, collaborate, and build relationships. Almost half of the participants identified a challenge with the difference in physical location of the department's units. As units are stationed at different locations, it caused feelings of exclusion and isolation. As one participant remarked, "It doesn't feel like I work for a bigger [department]… Because we don't see the other staff on a daily or even weekly, sometimes even a monthly basis" (C6). In discussing the impact of the department being situated at different location, another participant explained that, "It's really hard [to function as a department] when we're divided over two campuses and two very different spaces" (D6). When asked what some of challenges were in the department, one participant responded:

> I think one of the biggest challenges with the [department] is the separation. The physical separation between departments… Because being physically located at different [locations] can sometimes make it more difficult to collaborate and work with kind of the other areas within the [department]. (Z1)

Not only do the separate locations make collaborating a challenge, they also intensify the separation of the units, "Sometimes the physical distance between units created the feeling of two very different teams. Which also caused a comparison of one to the other, creating a negative dynamic" (D6). The resulting division of the units was also observed by another participant who reiterated that, "I noticed that [the difference in location] caused a rift, well not really a rift, but like there was definitely separation between the people that worked at [one location] and [the people that worked at another location]" (C6). Often, tension was created solely because units from one location had access to activities that others did not. One participant

gathered that, "I think [location] causes a bit of a rift if the team that's [at one location] doesn't get included in all the activities at the [other location], which can cause some tensions or you know feelings of not being included" (H3). The isolation between units even prevented the maintenance of existing working relationships. As explained by one participant, "When you don't see each other it's harder to maintain those [working] relationships" (M9). One participant went a step further in associating the difference in location to being a human barrier.

> We even have some of the team that doesn't even sit in the same [location] right. So, that in itself brings just human barrier. You don't get to talk to people. How can you build a workplace culture with those people? (Q4)

The different locations of the units have impacted the way in which staff members communicate, collaborate, and bond. It is difficult for units to create a sense of connectedness with one another when they are not in close contact. Participants acknowledged that much of the sense of disconnection between the units is a direct result of being situated in different locations.

Although, the department's units are currently situated in different physical locations, there will soon to be another change that would result in the re-location of all units to one centralized building. As one participant explained:

> I think since I've been in the [department], we've been in many different locations. We've been moving around… Every year has changed in some way… It'll be nice to just kind of get a system going and everybody be on the same page and help out one another. (O7)

This sentiment of yearning for more stability when it comes to location was also shared by other participants. Participants revealed that the department being situated at a single location would have its benefits, including improved working relationships. One participant explained that "Getting to see people face-to-face and build a relationship with them is beneficial as it helps to

share information more freely" (B2). Another participant shared that "It's a lot easier to build relationships when we're at the same location. You can build as a team because you're together" (O7). This was echoed by another participant who explained, "We see each other every day so it's easy to work together and maintain relationships, or even identify when something starts to go wrong" (M9). In addition, being in the same location also, "Allows everyone to have the same information" (B2).

Though there are clear benefits to bringing the units of the department to one location, participants did share their concerns regarding the change. A one participant noted a challenge of:

> Just learning to work together again, that dynamic. Because we had that once, but it's been a really, really long time. And a lot of people have never experienced that. Because we haven't really all been in one space since... 2008? (D6)

One participant echoed this sentiment by explaining that, "We're going to have teams, quiet teams and not quiet teams all working in the same space. So it's going to be, it's going to be a challenge for everyone I think to work in a different environment" (M9). Another challenge noted by participants was not only the change in location, but also the change in the location set up. As on participant explained:

> I know that a lot of people aren't happy about [the re-locating of the units to one location] and it's the open environment but I don't see it that way… Maybe it's not ideal but it is an opportunity for us to get to know the rest of the team, understand what other opportunities are available, understand their- what they do a lot better. And how that relates to what we do. (B2)

Another participant echoed the benefit of an open environment by explaining, "You kind of hear what's going on, you can kind of collaborate a little bit better and I think that maybe that could have been because of the setup, right" (U5). Similarly one participant described the challenge of staff members being situated in offices as, "We didn't really know what other people were doing because you were in your own office by yourself most of the day" (C6). Although, there are challenges associated with the re-location of the department, most participants are looking forward to the change. As participant concluded:

> I think that moving into the new location, although I think there will be challenges in terms of the way people work, I think it'll be better for us in that we will also see the way other people work and you know maybe do a bit of rubbing off on each in terms of how we work together. (M9)

The artifact of locale represented the department's lingering feelings of separation and division. By creating a human barrier, units being situated at different locations prevents the establishment and maintenance of working relationships. Notably, the department's leaders may have recognized the impact that locale has on the department, as a new centralized location is currently being constructed. Participants felt that the centralization of the department's location will help to create working relationships and opportunities for collaboration, ideally eliminating any lingering feelings of separation.

Traditions: The missing artifact. Although, there have been many changes that have led to participants' descriptions of a more positive environment, a number of participants noted that there were still areas that required more work. The main area that was described as needing further attention was the establishment of a defined departmental culture. Almost a third of the participants noted that there is not distinct culture in the department or that the establishment of a

distinct culture is not a priority. When asked if there were any changes they would like to see in the department, one participant specified that:

> I think we need to, as a whole, address- actually you know what? We would need to define what culture we want to see here… See words all the time, like let's build a culture. Well what culture do you want to build? (H3)

In describing the resulting improvements that change has had on the department, one participant was adamant in expressing persistent concern with the lack of focus that the department's culture has been afforded. The participant explained, "With respect to culture… I don't think we've really improved upon or we focus on- because I don't think we see it as it important, right. As long as stuff gets done, it's all good" (L8). Another participant admitted that they do believe there is a culture, but that it still requires a lot of work. "Culturally, I think there is one. I guess there was before, but it's just not toxic anymore. Still has a long way to go" (Q4). Another participant agreed with the sentiment that there is potential for a more developed culture,

> I think there's a lot of opportunity to have a really good culture. And I think if we had time to focus on it, there's some really key people who could build a really strong, great culture. I fear that it's being put on the backburner of a lot of people's plates at times. Or, it's on the forefront of the mind of people who can't do things about it sometimes. (D4)

Some participants acknowledged that there have been exercises and encouragement within the department to begin developing a distinct culture but that it will not be an immediate implementation. As explained by one participant:

> I've definitely seen a lot of encouragement on that front in terms of creating [the department's] mission, vision, credo, etc. And I think people are on board, but looking at the overall behaviour, I think it's a change that needs to happen over time. As opposed to

something that, if we introduce a new credo for instance, it's not something that's going to

happen immediately. It's something that people will read, they'll reflect on, they'll kind of

carry it out in their own individual way… Changes like that take time. So it's not

necessarily an immediate thing. (Z1)

Participants were unable to articulate the culture of the department because they suspect it has

not been established and that not enough efforts have been placed into establishing it. Without a

well-defined culture, the department is left with a lack of identity, and therefore the absence of

something for the members to feel a part of.

Although a positive environment had been created in recognizing milestones, celebrating

successes, valuing personal health, and mentorship, many participants noted that there is lack of

well-defined traditions in the department, which may attribute to a lack of a defined culture.

When asked to describe a departmental tradition, one participant responded, "I don't think there

are any huge ones... I think there should probably be some. [Department]-wide, I don't think

there are any." (D4) This sentiment coincided with that of another participant who deduced:

One thing that I feel is a little bit lacking in terms of having traditions within the office.

We do have a few key individuals who are really good. They're the party planners and the

people who really try and get those kinds of things going. But I still think we have a ways

to go on that front… I think we're, in terms of getting along with our co-workers and that

kind of stuff, I think that's not an issue at all. I think we all get along, we're all good with

one another. But even getting involved kind of outside the office walls is something that

could be a little bit better. (Z1)

The participant went on to explain the benefits that could result in having traditions:

I think usually what happens is if you can get to know somebody outside of the office,

that it improves your relationship within the office as well. So if there's a project you're

collaborating on, whatever the case may be there's a higher likely hood that someone may

be willing to help out or lend a hand or lend their… So it kind of creates that personal

connection. (Z1)

The potential of traditions creating opportunities for collaboration and relationship buildings was

reiterated by another participant who explained that, "[Traditions give] us a sense of

connectedness." (M9) Although the department's environment had shifted to one that is more

optimistic, there are still areas in which participants noted could be improved. Most notably, that

of defining department-wide traditions as participants felt it could help to create a bond between

staff members, resulting in improved working relationships and increased opportunities for

collaboration.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a before and after cultural analysis based on an account of how

staff described the departmental culture. The results of the research were based on data

originated from 16 interview transcripts. Based on the cultural analysis, a past and current culture

was depicted. The findings portrayed a past culture of division and conflict, toxicity, and

disrespect. The findings also portrayed a current culture of optimism, but at the same time

questioned the culture of "us." The study's findings suggest that leaders should be aware of their

department's culture and the possibility of a cultural shift.

Chapter 7

Discussion and Analysis

The intent of this chapter is to provide my interpretative insights on the main findings of my study. The purpose of this case study was to identify how staff members of an administrative department at an Ontario university understood organizational change and departmental cultural shifts. By exploring the staff members' involvement in change initiatives, this study aimed to create an understanding of how members understood organizational change in addition to investigating cultural shifts. This chapter presents my understanding of the findings as well as a reflexive analysis based on the reviewed literature. The first section provides historical context of the department's culture leading up to its most recent exposure to change. The second section depicts the different ways participants understood change by presenting three interpretive communities, including frustration, apprehension, and willingness. The third section describes the cultural shift that was perceived based on participants' stories and depiction of artifacts. The findings suggest that although there has been a cultural shift from one of division and conflict, toxicity, and disrespect to one of optimism, lingering feelings of separation still exist among staff members, which may be reflective of the artifacts of locale and traditions.

Leaders' Role in Interpretive Communities

After listening to the stories of 16 participants from the department, it became apparent that the department had undergone a cultural shift. In analyzing the cultural shift and reflecting on interpretive communities, the context and substance of changes was gained by acknowledging interpretations, experiences, and sensemaking (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008) of the members of the department. Interpretive communities can be helpful in understanding how leaders themselves help to frame, or make particular cultural practices meaningful within organizations.

The past culture was described by participants as having elements of division and conflict, toxicity, and disrespect. To better understand how these cultural elements came to exist, it may be beneficial to review the evolution of the department up to that point. The department's founding and early growth stage can be traced back to just over a decade ago as that is when the department was formed. Schein (2010) explains that at this stage, the main cultural thrust comes from the founders and their assumptions. The original leader of the department was described by one participant as being skilled at start-ups and an advocate of mentorship. In describing the culture of the department during this stage, one participant explained that there was a sense of willingness to try new things, or to at least be open to new ideas. The participants in the study drew attention to the role of the leader in placing importance and significance on mentorship and innovation, which helped staff members to frame the culture as welcoming and open.

Often, when a founding leader departs, there is an opportunity to change the direction of the cultural evolution based on the successor (Schein, 2010). Seeing as the department was still young and evolving there was opportunity for a new leader to instill direction and an understanding of the department's role in the institution. The participants' reflection on the changes that were brought about in the organization were not meaningful for positive change. In fact, based on the stories told by participants, the changes in the department were interpreted negatively and led to elements of division and conflict, toxicity, and disrespect. In describing the negative culture in the department, one participant explained that managers were stripped of responsibilities causing feelings of frustration and antagonism between them, which ultimately trickled down to their staff.

In addition to the department's change of leader, differentiation was materialized as a result of the increased number of students the department served, staff it required, and services it

offered. To address these increased demands on the department, smaller units were created. The smaller units in the department were mostly differentiated based on the functional nature of the staff, the geographical location of the unit, and the differentiation in hierarchical level. Lester (2015) explains that the fragmentation of tasks, roles and responsibilities observed in a higher education institution often results in the existence of subcultures. Research suggests that subcultures can exert more influence on employee commitment than the larger organization's culture (Bowditch & Buono, 2005). In Egan's (2008) study of how subcultures influence employee motivation, he found that subcultures were the greatest environmental influence on employee application of learning and that leaders could utilize direct reports and followers of those groups to influence and motivate them. In the case of the department, the leader's influence over the subcultures in the department were not positive, as participants reported that the leader did not have buy-in nor a good relationship with the direct reports of those smaller units.

An emergent culture. In describing the department's cultural strength based on Schein's (1990) work, one may classify it in the weak category. Schein explains that strong cultures arise when groups of individuals are relatively similar to one another, have been together for a long period of time, and have confronted a number of survival issues which they have been able to resolve. Alternatively, weak cultures describe groups whose memberships are unstable, have not been together for a long period of time, and have not been through a major survival issue. This positivist characterization of cultural strength has been challenged by Kummerow and Kirby (2014) who question whether there is a difference between a weak culture and a non-existent culture. The authors contend that high turnover rates, and a lack of shared history would mitigate against the formation of a culture in the first place. Although, the founding and early growth, and

midlife stages brought about membership changes and a limited period to develop a history, it does not mean that the department had a weak culture, but rather the culture was emergent.

Alvesson and Sveningson (2008) explain that organizational culture can either facilitate or obstruct the implementation of change. I posit that because the department did not have a distinct culture, it was in a position to facilitate, rather than obstruct change. Change requires people to unlearn something as well as learn something (Schein, 2010). Yet, there is tension in the literature about how culture relates to learning. Schein explains that many consultants and theorists assert that strong cultures are desirable as they elicit an effective and lasting performance. However, in contrast to that belief, Schein challenges that a strong culture's stability tends to make organizational change hard. Schein further explains that strong cultures can become a liability as they do not allow for the flexibility and learning that is required to prepare for the challenges of the ever changing world. In evolving his stance on cultural strength, Schein now suggests a culture that is by nature learning oriented, adaptive, and flexible. This is especially true for higher education institutions. In the context of higher education institutions, which operate in complex ways due to the global economy, public investment and accountability, diversity of student, the corporate campus environment, competitive markets, new learning theories, technology, and internationalization (Kezar, 2014), a stable culture would make it difficult to implement transformational change.

What changed? The finding that the department's culture was considered emergent could be seen as advantageous when considering transformational change. The instability of the department could help to facilitate change as there would be less resistance as routines and identities had not yet been established. Based on the disequilibrium of the department and its primed position to encompass change, a cultural shift was in the making. Seeing as leadership

commitment plays a crucial role in quality culture development (Bendermacher et al., 2017), and it was identified as a change initiative by most participants, the department's change in leadership practices was explored as the most significant organizational change experienced by the department that could be associated with a cultural shift. The specific changes to the practices of leaders identified by staff members included behaviour, strategy and purpose, and unity. Although, there were additional departmental changes identified as staffing, structure, and roles, those changes are also related to leadership as the leader of this department had the authority and resources to influence those aspects.

The change in leadership brought rise and authority to two senior administrators who had enough influence and power (Kotter, 1996) to initiate a strategic review of the department as well as to change the departmental structure as required. In this case, Bendermacher et al. (2017) identified working mechanisms including commitment, shared ownership, knowledge, and empowerment that influence higher education staff favourable for the development of a quality culture. While the leader at the time tried to create a meaningful strong culture around differentiation and segmentation, this change was interpreted quite negatively by participants. However, what this negative culture meant for participants was the need to work towards more collaborative environments and practices. Thus, these change initiatives by the leader quickly developed the fertile grounds for accepting and building other changes that were more meaningful for the participants when a new leader was appointed. That is, a culture of learning, adapting and being flexible emerged.

In reviewing the stories of staff members, it became apparent that during the start-up stage of the department, the focus was on bringing the students into the university. The department's change in leadership brought about a change to this vision. The new vision was a

commitment to the students' success. The change in vision was explained by a number of participants as being more student focused. By having a vision that was supported by staff members, it helped them to learn how they fit within the overall direction of the organization. This prioritization of the department's commitment to the students created an environment in which staff members recognized the need to work together for the good of the students. As explained by one participant, the commitment to the student along with the leader's promotion of unity, helped the department realize the importance of working together. The shared commitment to student success created a sense of congeniality and collaboration within the department, which is reflective of a quality culture's shared ownership mechanism (Bendermacher et al., 2017). A benefit of shared ownership is providing staff members with opportunities to learn from one another with the intent of increasing best practices (Bendermacher et al., 2017). This was evidenced by one participant's description of how their leader's focus on team work had created an environment in which staff members collaborated with an aim at improvement. The increased collaboration across the units helped to break down silos and increase information sharing. The sharing of information helped staff members to improve practices and processes (Bendermacher et al., 2017). The department's leaders wanted the units to work together effectively and they provided the means to achieve that by having team building sessions and creating opportunities for the units to collaborate. Ultimately, the focus on unity was a way for the participants to work towards removing the obstacles between the units so that they could come together and work towards the same vision (Kotter, 1996).

Finally, the new leadership adopted a behaviour that participants reported as being more supportive and trusting of staff members, which helped them to feel empowered. As explained by one participant, they felt that the leader challenged them to ask more questions in order to

fully understand why decisions are being made. Challenging the status quo is a transformational leadership practice outlined by Kouzes and Posner (2002) which requires the leader to innovate, grow, and improve. In this case, the leader used a creative deployment of their self to do what was best for the department, which was to let the staff members make decisions regarding their specific roles (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). The leader created an environment in which staff members could take risks and learn from their mistakes. This supportive environment also stimulated staff members to be creative and innovative (Avolio, 1999). In affording staff members the opportunity to make decisions and solve problems, the leader enabled them to act while being supportive of their decisions (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). As explained by one participant, the leadership's supportive and trusting nature allowed them to feel as though they owned a decision. As rationalized by Bendermacher et al. (2017), it was the feeling of empowerment that allowed change to be achieved through the involvement of staff members.

The leadership change can also be viewed as what Avolio (1999) describes as idealized influence. In this case, a new leader was able to provide a new vision and a sense of mission for the department which resulted in increased trust and respect with the followers (Avolio, 1999). The leader's promotion of unity also created a sense of trust in the department, and it was achieved by the leader following through with what they said they were going to do (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). The development and communication of a new vision and strategies that aligned with the commitment to students' success is reflective of one of Kotter's (1996) steps in his change management model. Although aspects of Kotter's (1996) change management model were present, such as creating a guiding coalition with power and influence, developing and communicating a vision, removing obstacles, and encouraging new ideas, they did not necessarily materialize in that order nor did participants identify all of the steps involved in

change. This finding aligns with that of Pollack and Pollack (2014) who found that Kotter's model was too linear to address the complexities involved in change.

Understanding Change

Much can be learned in exploring how staff members of the department understand change. When faced with change, this study's findings suggested that participants understood change in different ways resulting in different interpretive communities including those of frustration, apprehension, and willingness. In exploring how staff members understand change, leaders can gain valuable knowledge which can be used to address any lingering resistance of change or to inform future change implementations. Jones et al. (2008) argued that examining how members of a department understand change could reveal perceived undesirable outcomes of change or the process of change, which can then be used to predict future change perspectives.

Frustration. The first way in which staff members understood change was represented by a community of frustration. This community comprised of participants who experienced feelings of frustrations related to the handling of change, how change was communicated, and the timing of change. One of the key changes that resulted in many feelings of frustrations in the department was staffing changes. Staffing changes were perceived as being mishandled based on lack of support and resources made available after the changes as well as the lack of tact and consideration in relation to respecting individuals and their privacy. These frustrations align closely with what Jones et al. (2008) identified as emotional and attitudinal issues as a result of the process of change. The emotional response of frustration was associated with the way in which the staffing changes were presented and implemented as it had created negative feelings and a negative environment. Dasborough et al.'s (2015) also found that there were feelings of resentment in relation to perceived injustices, and inappropriate consultation associated with

change. When change was implemented with little preparation, and a lack of humility, staff members displayed an emotion of frustration.

In relation to how change was communicated, participants indicated that they wished they would have known more about the end goal, or understood the entire scope of the change. A number of participants described a sense of frustration as a result of the timing of change. Words such as shocking, quickly, abruptly, and being thrown into it were used by participants to express their initial feelings when confronted with change. The feeling of abruptness connects with the way change was communicated in that perhaps not all participants were prepared for change. The frustrations associated with the lack of communication regarding change and the timing of change were supported by Dasborough et al.'s (2015) understanding that change is potentially a threat that needs to be carefully managed. The authors also found that participants expressed distress when there was a lack of consultation and insufficient disclosure leading up to a change which resulted in feelings of surprise or shock. Frustrations associated with the communication and timing of change also align with Jones et al.'s finding that the processes of communication and involvement were key issues experienced by their participants. The staff members' frustrations with communication also related to Bartunek et al. (2006) findings of participants' perceptions of inconsistencies or contradictions with the intent of the change agents. Some staff members felt that there were inconsistencies with the changes that leaders were implementing. For example, in creating more hierarchical layers, leaders did not ensure that the new roles were explained and understood among the staff members. This resulted in staff members who held those new roles to become frustrated as they felt that they did not have any influence or authority.

The identification of the community of frustration can be of value to leaders as it highlights a form of resistance to change. Del Val and Fuentes (2003) describe resistance as any set of intentions and actions that slows down or hinders the implementation of change. In this case, although there were not any forms of sabotage identified, some participants did describe resentment-based resistance behaviours and attitudes such as frustration (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008). Wegener, Petty, Smoak, and Fabrigar (2004) consider these attitudes to be based on high levels of information processing, which generate scrutiny and render recipients less susceptible to persuasion. The advantage of having staff members that demonstrate high levels of information processing is that in changing their attitudes, it results in highly committed and motivated partners throughout the implementation of a change (Kim & Mauborgne, 2003). In the case of this department, the frustration associated with staffing changes, if left unresolved, could affect the implementation of future change (Reichers, Wanous & Austin, 1997). Tomlinson, Deineen, and Lewicki (2004) contend that in this situation, the restoration of trust is required. Similarly, Oreg, Vakola, and Armenakis (2011) found that leaders should invest in creating a supportive and trusting organizational culture if they want staff's support and cooperation with continuous change. Leaders can adopt practices such as extensive communication, resource allocation, and the development of strong working relationships (Kotter, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 1993) in an effort to create a supportive and trusting environment.

Apprehension. The second community that represented how participants understood change was that of apprehension. This community was based on participants' initial encounter with change which resulted in immediate feelings of apprehension, which is different than fear, because with external interventions such as reassurance and time, the community felt there were

positive outcomes of change. The initial feeling of apprehension relates to Bartunek et al.'s (2006) perceived personal impacts of the change. Participants understood change based on how it impacted them personally. As change was being implemented, the direct impact was often difficult for staff members to assess. Although change caused feelings of apprehension, with reassurance and time, participants of this community were able to see the positive outcomes of change. This outcome is supported by Dasborough et al.'s (2015) findings that with change there are initial concerns but those concerns can be overcome by the benefits of the results of the change. The authors found that when participants were privy to complete information leading up to the change it resulted in their positive outlook and lack of concern. This study demonstrated that when participants felt that their concerns were recognized, the meaning of change also morphed to a more accepting attitude towards change. In addition, an open dialogue in which staff members could approach leaders with any concerns was a meaningful part of change. The department's leaders' creation of an open environment for addressing concerns provided staff members with a forum in which to voice their concerns, which helped to alleviate feelings of apprehension.

There were also staff members who were able to feel reassured through time. One participant described an initial feeling of apprehension but after time, and allowing the change to play out, there was a sense of reassurance. This community of apprehension demonstrated that when change was implemented, participants tried to understand it based on how it impacted them personally. When there was a lack of information, it was difficult for participants to comprehend how they were going to be affected. Only after more detailed information regarding the change was shared did participants begin to feel more reassured about the personal impact of the change. Similar to the community of frustration, this community of apprehension initially displayed high

level of information processing attitudes such as anxiety and fear. Though, after implementing

practices such as communication and opportunities for staff involvement, as described by Kotter

(1996) and Kouzes and Posner (1993), leaders were able to help staff accept change. This

community provides an example of how leaders can mitigate resistance to change (in the form of

high level information processing attitudes) and help staff to come to accept change.

Willingness. The final community that represented how participants understood change

was that of willingness. In this community, participants' willingness to change was based on

their internal motivation such as their change seeking nature, their trust in change, or their

perceived positive outcomes associated with change. A third of the participants described

themselves as change agents, or someone who is comfortable or seeks change, which aligns with

Dasborough et al.'s (2015) findings that the meaning of change for some participants is one of an

"exciting opportunity to look forward to" (p. 583). Having staff members that are self-identified

change agents allowed for a focus on realized improvements, which resulted in hope and

optimism. Cunningham et al. (2002) found that individual's confidence in their ability to cope

with organizational change was positively related with readiness for change, and participation in

change processes. The authors went on to argue that employees who are confident in their ability

to cope with change are likely better equipped to contribute to the change process, which is

valuable information for leaders. In this case, if a leader knows that they have a community of

participants who are receptive to change, they could help to support a change process.

A number of participants felt that trusting the change came easy because they agreed with

the change. This reinforced the idea that participants were more willing to accept change when

they themselves anticipated and believed in it. It became apparent that this community of

participants recognized a need for the change initiatives.

Participants in the community of willingness described their ease of accepting change based on the positive outcomes associated with change initiatives. In discussing their experience with change and the results of change, one participant explained that they did not realize the impact of the past negative culture until they experienced happiness again. This illustrates the positive outcome that was experienced as a result of change initiatives. Another participant described experiencing change as being a breath of fresh air. Reflecting Dasborough et al.'s (2015) feelings of anticipatory hope, participants of this community also recognized that experiencing positive outcomes of change helped staff members to become more accepting of future changes. Participants explained that it is now a more open environment and that staff members are more receptive to change because they have seen so many positive changes and recognize that more are possible. This attitude toward change is related to what Bouckenoogh (2010) describes as openness to change. Bouckenoogh explains that openness to change is comprised of both willingness to support change and positive affect about the potential consequences of change. In this situation, staff members felt that the change would be beneficial in some way, making them more receptive to change.

The exploration of how participants understand change can be useful in two ways. The first is in identifying high level information processing attitudes (such as frustration and anxiety). In identifying these forms of resistance to change, leaders can adopt practices such as communication and opportunities for involvement in a change to help staff members overcome their resisting attitudes. If a leader can better understand the reasons why a community has resisting attitudes towards a change, it can help them to formulate a strategy for addressing the resistance.

The second way in which participants' understandings of change can be useful is for leaders to take stock of communities that are ready for change, such as the community of willingness. As noted earlier, higher education institutions are impacted by continuous change, which requires an ongoing, evolving, and cumulative understanding of change (Bouckenooghe, 2010). For this type of change to be successful, it must be embedded in the daily practices of organizational members (Bouckenooghe, 2010). Leaders can build on already existing communities of willingness as these employees demonstrate positive attitudes towards change and are more likely to engage in. Leaders can use members of these communities to help facilitate change (Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011) and ultimately create an environment that is receptive to continuous change.

A Cultural Shift

Based on participants' stories, the current departmental culture was described as having elements of optimism, yet still question the culture of "us." In exploring this case, I interpret that the change in leadership instituted cultural elements, such as shared values and a commitment to improvement which helped the department shift from a culture of conflict, toxicity, and disrespect, to one of optimism. Although the department had also experienced a shift to a culture of "us," there are still challenges which perpetuate the lingering feelings of separation.

The department's change in leadership practices brought about a new vision, promotion of unity, and a supportive environment. Instituting a vision that focused on the commitment to student success provided a purpose for staff members. The successful implementation of the vision was due to the buy-in from leadership towards student success. Bendermacher et al. (2017) argued that commitment to education and the student must start from the top for it to be passed down hierarchical paths in the department. In recognizing the new vision, staff members

realized that they needed to work together for the good of the students. It also helped staff

members to see the value in the work they did and to understand how they connected with the

achievement of the vision.

Along with instituting a new vision, the department's leaders also promoted unity among

the units, which resulted in a shift to a team mentality. Unit members recognized the importance

of working together in order to achieve the new vision. A key strategy used by leadership was to

create information sharing opportunities in which units could learn more about each other's

functions and identify areas for collaboration. These types of learning community initiatives

created opportunities for staff to learn from one another (Bendermacher et al., 2017).

As observed through the artifact analysis of celebrations, initiatives, and mentors, the

department's leaders were able to create an environment based on optimism and support.

Optimism denotes a tendency to hold positive expectations of the future (Bennett, 2011).

Participants noted that the department celebrated successes often, which helped to reinforce the

positive work environment. The celebrations ranged from parties celebrating the end of a term, to

holiday parties, to birthdays, and to showers. Recognition of accomplishments allows leaders to

build a community of spirit (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). The healthy initiatives that have been

implemented in the department is reflective of Avolio's (1999) individualized consideration, in

which the department's leaders provide a supportive environment for staff members to share

their needs. Building on individualized consideration, the department's mentorship focus allows

leaders to act as coaches and advisors in the commitment to help staff members reach their full

potential (Avolio, 1999). Although the artifacts of celebrations, initiatives, and mentorship have

helped to create a positive environment for staff members, some participants alluded to the idea

that the artifact of traditions could help to reinforce the positive nature of the department, but that

it was lacking department-wide. The lack of department wide traditions may stem from the lingering feelings of separation caused by the artifact of locale.

Although, the change in leadership brought about congeniality and teamwork to the department, which reduced feelings of conflict, it did not completely eliminate feelings of separation. Participants described lingering feelings of separation among the units and members of the department as a result of the artifact of locale. The units of the department are situated in different buildings and campuses, which makes it difficult to collaborate and to build working relationships. In discussing some of the challenges of the department, one participant concluded that they still felt that a barrier for the department was the physical separation of the units. Schein (2010) reminds us that space is a subtle aspect of organizational culture that is often taken for granted. For staff members, space has powerful symbolic meaning, and in this case participants associated the different locations of the department as an exacerbation of the divide between units. Schein explains that the physical layout of a department serves as a symbolic function as well as a guide for the behaviour of members which results in building and reinforcing norms. Participants noted that the physical layout (separation) of the units, was impacting the unit's ability to collaborate and build working relationships.

Finally, even with a shift to a positive work environment, participants still felt that the department needed to develop a well-defined culture, as reflected in their identification of a lack of traditions. As mentioned earlier, I posited that the department's cultural strength was neither strong nor weak, but rather was best described as being emergent. I believe the department is still impacted by structural and staffing changes and has not shared a long enough history to have developed a distinct culture. This was evidenced as most participants were unable to articulate

the culture of the department because they suspected it had not yet been established and that not enough effort had been placed into establishing it.

The cultural shift described above demonstrates that the department's culture is evolving, though it has not quite evolved into something tangible. There are cultural elements, such as optimism and learning, which if further developed could help to establish a distinct culture. In addition to further developing optimism and learning, issues such as separation and prioritization of establishing traditions need to be addressed as they are currently viewed as obstacles preventing development of a distinct culture.

The intent of this chapter was to present a reflexive analysis of my understanding of the findings based on the reviewed literature. The findings demonstrated that staff members understand change initiatives in different ways. Some staff members demonstrated resisting behaviours, such as frustration and apprehension. Although, with reassurance and time, those who were apprehensive were able to see the benefits of change initiatives which helped to resolve anxiety and uncertainty. The findings also suggested that there is a community of staff members that demonstrates a willingness to accept change, which can be seen as advantageous in facilitating a change initiative. In addition, the intent of this chapter was to present a historical evolution of the department, which helped to explain the department's cultural shift from one of division and conflict, toxicity, and disrespect to one of optimism. Although, negative cultural elements have been addressed, the findings indicate that there still exists lingering feelings of separation which may be a result of the artifacts of locale and traditions.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Final Conclusions Drawn from the Findings

For this study, I asked participants of an administrative department at an Ontario university to share their understanding of change initiatives through semi-structured interviews. This thesis intended to uncover what staff members of the department identified as change initiatives, how they understood change, and their perceptions of cultural shifts within the department. In this chapter, I discuss the findings based on the study's research questions, present limitations of my study, consider the implications for practice, and suggest areas for further research.

Based on the exploration of the administrative department, participants identified the practices of leaders, including behaviour, strategy and purpose, and unity, and departmental arrangements, including staffing, structure, and role as the change initiatives that have been the most significant. Three interpretive communities including community of frustration, community of apprehension, and community of willingness were identified based on how participants understood the change initiatives outlined above. In the community of frustration, participants discussed how change resulted in their experiencing feelings of frustrations related to the handling of change, how change was communicated, and the timing of change. In the community of apprehension, participants' initial encounter with change resulted in immediate feelings of apprehension, which is different than fear, because with external interventions such as reassurance and time, the community felt there were positive outcomes of change. Finally, in the community of willingness, participants' acceptance of change was based on their internal

motivation such as their change seeking nature, their trust in change, or their perceived positive outcomes associated with the change initiatives.

The findings from the cultural analysis of the department suggest that staff members perceived a cultural shift. The participants described a past culture of division and conflict, toxicity, and disrespect. Although the leader at the time tried to create a meaningful strong culture around differentiation and segmentation, the associated changes were interpreted quite negatively by participants, resulting in elements of division and conflict, toxicity, and disrespect. This negative culture led to the participants working towards more collaborative environments and practices which developed the fertile grounds for accepting and building other changes that were more meaningful for the participants when a new leader was appointed.

Staff members also described a cultural shift to one of optimism, but at the same time questioned the culture of "us." The majority of the participants described a positive work environment based on their shared stories and identified artifacts, such as celebrations, healthy initiatives, and mentors. Although the department had experienced a shift to a culture of "us," there were still challenges which perpetuate the lingering feelings of separation. Participants described lingering feelings of separation among the units and members of the department as a result of the artifact of locale. The units of the department are situated in different buildings and campuses, which makes it difficult to collaborate and to build working relationships. Lingering feelings of separation were also reflected in participant's identification of a lack of traditions. The department's cultural strength was neither strong nor weak, but rather can be described as being emergent. I believe the department is still impacted by structural and staffing changes and has not shared a long enough history to have developed a distinct culture.

Both the methodology of the study as well as the findings may be of interest to other institutions of higher education that are also experiencing a high volume of change initiatives in response to internal and external challenges. Educational leaders may see value in incorporating discussed strategies and tools in helping them identify departmental cultures as well as to explore how staff understand change. Exploring both culture and understandings of change can help educational leaders implement change initiatives and respond to resulting interpretive communities.

As a member of the department and a reflexive researcher, I have developed a deeper appreciation for how staff members understand change as well as the types of cultural shifts that can occur. I had anticipated before conducting the study that there would be significant resistance to change. However, this was not the case. I hope to share my understandings of this study with colleagues to further develop the department's culture and my own leadership knowledge.

Limitations of my Study

In discussing my study's findings and linking them to previous studies of organizational culture and change, I have demonstrated that my findings have applicability in other organizational contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One area that may be seen as a limitation is the generalizability of the study's findings. As this intrinsic case study explored a specific department, the findings may not be easily generalizable across other contexts. It could be that other departments experience similar challenges to those of this case, but the participants themselves may express different perspectives.

In addition, although the intent of the study was to explore how staff members understood change over a period of time, it is acknowledged that my study only examined

organizational change at one point in time, and retroactively. This could impact the different ways in which staff members understood change. A longitudinal study of the department may help to corroborate the original findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of how staff members understood change as well as to determine any further impact that change may have on the department's culture.

The neoliberal environment in which higher education institutions are exposed to continuous change and push towards student or client driven orientations is a constant (Brown, 2015). The extent to which participants themselves saw their readiness to adapt to change or willing to take it on may very well be a function of their exposure to the pervasive reach of neoliberal principles into the everyday practices in higher education. While this study did not examine this phenomenon in particular, more research with a critical orientation could be conducted into the ways in which staff members in administrative units are neoliberal subjects in their willingness to have to adapt and change.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

A number of implications can be drawn from my study's findings. First, my findings support the interpretation that staff members of a department understand change in different ways (Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011; Bouckenooghe, 2010). As higher education institutions are experiencing continuous change as a result of the external and internal challenges of the sector (Kezar, 2014; Jackson, 2010), leaders need to be aware of the types of interpretive communities that form as staff make sense of change. The identification of communities that are either ready for or resistant to change can help leaders adopt strategies and practices aimed at addressing resistance and advancing readiness within an organization.

Second, my findings in this qualitative study support the interpretation that leaders need to recognize that the success of failure of change lies with their ability to understand, manage, and if necessary, reshape their organization's culture (Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Denison, 2001; Kotter, 2002; Schein, 1985). The change in leadership practices understood by the staff members brought about elements of commitment, shared ownership, and empowerment. In establishing a shared vision, the department's leader was able to create a common purpose between the staff members. The leader also promoted unity among the units which helped them to collaborate and to learn from one another.

Finally, the leader created a supportive and trusting environment by allowing staff members to make decisions, try new things, take risks and to learn from it all. All of these strategies aligned with Schein's (2010) arguments for creating a culture that is more learner focused and more responsive to continuous change. Although participants described improvements in respect to the culture shifting from one of division and conflict, toxicity, and disrespect to one of optimism, there were still obstacles in place preventing the department from establishing a distinct culture, which include the separation based on the physical location of the units and the prioritization of cultural development by senior leaders.

In response to the study's findings, three recommendations can be made to build on the already identified improvements to the department. The first recommendation is for leaders to thoroughly consider the implementation and communication plans for future change initiatives in the department. The findings suggested that there is a community of staff members that felt frustration towards change initiatives as a result of the way in which the changes were implemented and communicated. This community demonstrated that some staff members require more information relating to change initiatives, which could help them to become more

accepting of changes in the future. Leaders may not be able control how staff members understand change initiatives, but they should recognize that they can control how change initiatives are implemented and communicated, which may affect how staff members make sense of change.

The second recommendation would be to build on the culture of optimism that has been created based on the change in leadership practices, such as the empowerment of staff members and the building trust within the department. Staff members indicated that they still felt that the department was in need of traditions, which is something that the leaders could place an emphasis on creating. It was noted that there are many creative staff members in the department, so engaging those types of individuals may help in building momentum towards establishing traditions. Also, by engaging staff members in the process, leaders may be able to demonstrate to the rest of the department that they see value in establishing department-wide traditions.

Lastly, the department and leaders may benefit from exploring the staff members' understanding of change when it comes to the re-location of the units to one centralized building. The participants indicated that the re-location of the units to a new building was a change initiative on their radar and provided initial understandings of that change. Once the re-location takes place, it may be in the leaders' interests to follow-up to see if the initial understandings of the change initiative have shifted in any way. As change initiatives have been perceived to result in cultural shifts, another cultural analysis department may also be informative.

The study of organizational change and culture can benefit from further studies exploring the socially constructed meaning of change for staff in the higher education sector. In addition, the exploration of transformational change may help to identify a culture's adaptability to the challenges faced by higher education institutions, rather than focusing solely on planned change.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies may help to explore how interpretive communities shift over a

period of time, rather than focusing on one specific point in time.

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Appendix A – Recruitment Email and Letter of Information

E-mail Subject line: Invitation to participate in research

Dear <Name>,

You are being invited to participate in a study that we, myself and Melody Viczko, are conducting. Briefly, the study involves participants taking part in an interview that will last approximately one to one and half hours. The interviews will be conducted at the ▮▮▮▮, or a location of a participant's choosing.

I am contacting potential participants for my study which aims to identify departmental cultures and the potential impact of change initiatives on culture. I am currently seeking volunteers from the ▮▮▮▮ to participate in this study.
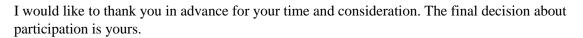
I have attached a copy of a letter of information about the study that gives you full details. You can stop being in this study any time during the interview and afterwards up to December 3rd 2016.

This study has been approved by the ▮▮▮▮ on August 18th 2016.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact:

Western Office of Human Research Ethics ▮▮▮▮
Telephone: ▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮
E-mail: ▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮

I would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration. The final decision about participation is yours.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at ▮▮▮▮ or ▮▮▮▮

Sincerely,

Kristen Boujos

Western

Project Title: Impact of Change Initiatives on Organizational Culture

Principal Investigator:
Melody Viczko, Ph.D., Faculty of Education, Western University
Email: ▮▮▮▮
Phone: ▮▮▮▮
Student Researcher:
Kristen Boujos, MEd, Student Researcher, Western University
Email: ▮▮▮▮
Phone: ▮▮▮▮
Letter of Information

Invitation to Participate
You are being invited to participate in this research study about the impact of change initiatives on organizational culture of the ▮▮▮ because you are a continuing full-time employee within the ▮▮▮.

Purpose of the Letter
The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

Purpose of this Study
The purpose of this study is to conduct a cultural analysis to explore the impact of change initiatives on the organizational culture of the ▮▮▮.

Inclusion Criteria
Individuals who were employed in the ▮▮▮ prior to June 2013, are currently in a continuing full-time position within the ▮▮▮, and work within the ▮▮▮ departments are eligible to participate in this study.

Exclusion Criteria
Individuals who were not employed in the ▮▮▮ prior to June 2013, do not hold a continuing full-time position within the ▮▮▮, and are not staff members within the ▮▮▮ departments are not eligible to participate in this study.

Study Procedures
If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to be involved in an interview. It is anticipated that the interview will take one hour to one and a half hours. The interview will be conducted at the ▮▮▮, or a location of the participant's choosing. It is anticipated that there will be a total of up to 25 participants. The interview will be audio-recorded. The audio-recording of the interview will be mandatory.

Possible Risks and Harms
There are no foreseeable potential risks or harm from participation in this study.

It should be noted that the Student Researcher is a manager of a small department (two staff members) within the ████. This department is excluded from the study.

Possible Benefits
A possible benefit of this study may be that staff members could view a researcher asking questions about their experiences as the department's management taking interest in their opinions. The shared experiences may positively affect the welfare of the department through the advancement of cultural knowledge. Also, it may help managers to identify any issues that are causing employee dissatisfaction.

Compensation
You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

Voluntary Participation
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future employment. Withdrawal of data is possible until December 3rd 2016.

Confidentiality
All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If the results are published, your name will not be used.

All collected data will be stored electronically. Consent forms will be collected as a hardcopy once it is signed by the participants. The data will either be locked in the Student Researcher's office or home office. The laptop and files will both be password protected. In addition, all transcript files will be password protected. Only the Student Researcher will have access to the password. In addition, all files and folders will be encrypted if they include identifiable information.

The data will be retained for five years. After the five years, the data will be deleted. Associated documents, including audio-recordings, will be deleted and destroyed from the personal laptop and external storage drive.

Indirectly identifying information will be collected including years of work experience in the department, and departmental sub unit association. In addition, participants' interviews will be audio-recorded and could be considered indirectly identifying information. A master list will be used to link participants' indirect identifying information (years of work experience, department subunit) with their data.
While we do our best to protect your information there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. The inclusion of your years of work experience in the department and subunit associations may allow someone to link the data and identify you.

Please note that if you choose to withdraw before December 3, 2016 from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Contacts for Further Information
If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Kristen Boujos, ████, ████.

This study has been reviewed and cleared by the Western Research Ethics Board and the ████.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact:
Western Office of Human Research Ethics ████
Telephone: ██████ ████
E-mail: ████ ████

Publication
If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact Kristen Boujos.

Consent
Participants will consent to the study by completing the written Consent Form. You do not waive any legal rights by consenting to this study.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Western

Consent Form

Project Title: Impact of Change Initiatives on Organizational Culture

Principal Investigator:
Melody Viczko, Ph.D., Faculty of Education, Western University
Email: ▮▮▮
Phone: ▮▮▮

Student Researcher:
Kristen Boujos, MEd, Student Researcher, Western University
Email: ▮▮▮
Phone: ▮▮▮

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to be audio-recorded in this research.

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

☐ YES ☐ NO

Participant's Name (please print):
_____

Participant's Signature: Date:
_____   _____

Researcher's Name (please print):
_____

Researcher's Signature: Date:
_____   _____

Appendix B – Pre-Interview Activity Instrument

Choose a change initiative(s) that has/have been significant to you in the ▮▮▮▮. *Based on the change initiative(s), complete one or more of the activities listed below prior to the interview:*

- Draw a timeline of the main events that were important to you and that had an impact/influence on what it is like to work in your department.
- Draw a diagram and label it to show where your support systems for work come from.
- Construct a diagram showing how your role has changed and label it with words or phrases to indicate any important connections of relationships.
- Draw a diagram that would illustrate how your work experiences have changed or stayed the same based on the identified change initiative(s).

Appendix C – Interview Instrument

Stage One – Focused Life History
1. Tell me about yourself and how you came to work in the ▮▮▮▮.
2. Explain the pre-interview activity you have completed.
3. How would you describe what it's like to work in the department? In the ▮▮▮▮?

Stage Two – The Details of Experience
4. Tell me about your job within the department.
5. Tell me about a change initiative that you feel was significant to you while you have been working in this department.
6. Tell me about any key events related to change initiatives that have taken place in the department. (Behaviours, values, climate, rules)
7. In what ways was has the change initiative impacted your department? The ▮▮▮▮?
8. How would you describe the culture in the department? In the ▮▮▮▮?
9. Describe the working relationships that exist within your department.
10. Describe for me any traditions in your department. In the ▮▮▮▮.
11. Describe for me a good day working in your department.
12. Describe for me a bad day working in your department.

Stage Three – Reflection on Meaning
13. Describe how the change made/makes you feel?
14. Are there aspects of that change initiative you would have wanted to be different?

Appendix D – Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

2017	**Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership**
	Western University – London, Ontario

- Thesis-based

2010	**Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Administration**
	Northern Arizona University – Flagstaff, Arizona, USA

- Emphasis: Higher Education
- Graduate assistantship scholarship recipient
- Graduated with distinction

2008	**Bachelor of Arts in Communications and Mass Media Studies**
	California State University, Fullerton – Fullerton, California, USA

- Concentration: Public Relations
- Minor: Radio, Television and Film
- NCAA Woman of the Year Nominee

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

February 2016 – Present
Manager, Scheduling and Convocation
███████

January 2015 – January 2016
Quality Assurance Policy Analyst
███████

August 2013 – December 2014
Institutional Research Analyst
███████

May 2012 – August 2013
Scheduling Officer
███████

March 2011 – May 2012
Scheduling Officer
Centennial College, Toronto, ON

UNIVERSITY TEACHING

September 2011 – Present
Sessional Lecturer
███████

COMM 1050 – Technical Communications; COMM 1610 – Interpersonal Communication;
COMM 3610 – Persuasion, Argumentation and Negotiation; SSCI 1470 – Impact of Science and
Technology on Society