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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' ACCOUNTS OF CONFLICTS: AN ETHNOGRAPHICALLY-BASED, ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

CHRISTY L. KING
Norman, Oklahoma
2001

UMI Number: 3023445



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UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' ACCOUNTS OF CONFLICTS: AN ETHNOGRAPHICALLY-BASED, ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

BY

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Acknowledgments

This research project represents the culmination of a long-standing personal and professional goal. I am grateful to the people in my life who made it possible for me to fulfill this ambition. I thank the members of my doctoral committee for serving and advising me. I particularly appreciate the guidance and counsel of Dr. Larry Wieder. He is a master teacher, advisor, and a caring individual. His influence touched all of my work in the doctoral program from the summer I enrolled in his class on ethnography of communication through my dissertation research. During the dissertation process, his manner for suggesting areas for improvement without prescribing what those improvements must look like helped me to feel uninhibited and yet supported.

I thank the public school teachers who offered accounts of their conflicts to be used as data for this study. I maintain tremendous respect for public school teachers. Their professionalism, dedication, innovation, and courage make this world a better place.

My husband's parents, Eric and Linda King, graciously allowed me to commandeer their study for months and months while I worked on my dissertation. The solitude and space the office afforded me truly made the difference between completion and incompletion of the project. In addition, they offered kind words of support throughout the entire project and financial assistance with babysitting for our infant twins during a crucial stage of the process. I thank them for their continual love and support. I am very blessed.

I am also grateful to Ms. Pam Scott, my supervisor at Integris Health, who hired me with a partially completed dissertation in hand. Her unwavering support has allowed me to complete my dissertation while taking on a new and exciting challenge.

I thank my husband, Bryan, for his patience, support and his firm commitment to me. His sincere desire for me to be fulfilled and rewarded in life provides confirmation and encouragement to me in my endeavors. His respect and love gave me the strength and stamina to complete this lengthy process. He is a partner and a true companion.

I also acknowledge my son, Kyle, whose mom was in graduate school throughout his adolescence. He fended for himself on numerous occasions. I hope his experiences doing his own laundry and cooking soup will serve him well in college. I wish for him the self-awareness to know his life's desires and the opportunity to fulfill them. I also acknowledge our young twins, Beckham and Chapin. Their lives provide me with perspective about what is important and meaningful in life.

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Abstract

The data for this project are narrative descriptions or accounts of conflict episodes written by public school teachers. Two categories of research within the Language and Social Interaction tradition—the ethnography of communication (EC) and ethnomethodology (EM)—provide the conceptual framework for the study. The report divides the findings into descriptions of teachers' conflicts with fellow teachers and descriptions of teachers' conflicts with their administrators. The study reports some general features of accounted teacher conflicts including the typical subject matter of conflicts, who is involved in the conflicts, where they may take place, and the manner and tone with which they take place. Additionally the study identifies norms or rules regarding the conduct of persons in a school community that are derived from teachers' accounts of conflict. Finally, the study includes claims about teachers' accounts of conflict that demonstrate teachers' use of "conflict" as a cultural category, namely that teachers: (a) treat conflict as a negative event; (b) attend to the idea of closure or resolution; (c) orient to the issue of their culpability or blameworthiness concerning conflict episodes; (d) characterize conflicts in militaristic terms and focus on conflict outcomes in terms of winners and losers; (e) talk about conflict in a manner that displays their low-power status relative to administrators. The final chapter discusses the findings within the theoretical frameworks of ethnography of communication and ethnomethodology and suggests directions for further research.

Understanding Public School Teachers' Accounts of Conflicts:

An Ethnographically-based, Ethnomethodological Investigation

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

This document is a dissertation written to satisfy the requirements for a doctorate in Communication at the University of Oklahoma. This dissertation reports the results of research I conducted in an effort to understand conflict among teachers in public school settings as a communication event (Hymes, 1972). Prior to describing the format of the study, it is important to begin with introductory remarks about the general topic and the area of Communication research in which the study is situated.

Conflict and Communication

One aspect of social interaction to which social actors orient as a socially recognizable, account-able event or process is conflict[1]. In conflict interactions, social actors often display difficulty in coordinating with their interaction partners, and express dislike and even hatred for these types of interactions. Further, people commonly refer to conflict as something in social life that can be or should be controlled, resulting in a category of social reference known as conflict management. Because many individuals inside and outside of academia relate conflict and communication[2] (Roloff, 1987, Ruben, 1978), conflict interactions are a major area of research pursued by researchers with a disciplinary background in Communication (e.g., Folger & Poole, 1984; Hawes & Smith, 1973; Jandt, 1973; McCorkle & Mills, 1992; Nicotera, 1995; Nicotera, Rodriquez, Hall, & Jackson, 1995; Putnam, 1988; Putnam & Folger, 1988; Putnam & Holmer, 1992; Putnam & Jones, 1982; Putnam & Poole, 1987; Putnam & Roloff, 1992; Rogan &

Hammer, 1994, 1995; Sillars, 1980; Sillars, Pike, Jones, & Redmon, 1983; Sillars & Weisberg, 1987; Sillars & Wilmot, 1994; Smith & Eisenberg, 1987; Wilson & Putnam, 1989).

The general domain of this dissertation—the investigation of conflict interactions—is a vital research area in the Communication discipline. Nicotera, et al. (1995) provide an overview of the "checkered array of theoretical approaches to conflict" evident in Communication research on the subject. They point to three basic theoretical emphases: (a) theories of strategy and logic, such as game theory (Steinfatt & Miller, 1974); (b) cognitive theories dealing with either general predispositions/orientations to conflict (e.g., conflict managment styles, exemplified by Putnam & Wilson, 1982; Ross & DeWine, 1988; and Thomas & Kilmann, 1974) or individual processes that occur during conflict interactions (e.g., Social Judgement Theory, exemplified by Hammond, Rorhbaugh, Mumpower, & Adelman, 1977); and (c) institutional theories dealing with ways in which conflict management becomes a part of the functioning or culture of the organization (Tolbert & Arthur, 1990).

My main theoretical interest falls within the third area--the institutional theories. The institutional theoretical approach has intuitive appeal to me because it corresponds with the "social turn" taken by researchers operating in the tradition of Language and Social Interaction (LSI). LSI researchers have turned away from a focus on individual behavior (e.g., behaviorism) and individual minds (e.g., cognitivism) toward a focus on social and cultural interaction (Gee, 1999). Gee explains that research traditions in LSI[3] stress "the ways in which patterns of behavior, as well as cultures and institutions, are produced and reproduced as byproducts of 'on the spot,' moment-by-moment, adaptive

human social interaction" (p. 61). LSI researchers investigate "how 'language-in-interaction' constructs the local, institutional, and cultural contexts that simultaneously give it meaning (i.e., meaning and context are mutually constitutive)" (p. 62).

Implications of LSI Tradition for this Research Project

Adopting an approach to the study of conflict interactions that falls within the LSI tradition suggests (at least) two implications for the research. One implication of the LSI approach to investigating conflict interactions is that in order to understand conflict management in a particular setting, institution, or organization, one must understand that setting from a cultural standpoint. Operating within a cultural framework, investigators "examine the way individuals use stories, rituals, symbols, and other types of activities to produce and reproduce a set of understandings" (Littlejohn, 1996, p. 320). A cultural approach assumes that the organization consists of a constantly changing set of meanings constructed through communication. Those meanings are shared among members of the culture. The culture is created through a process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand events, situations, people, objects, and utterances in unique or culturally distinctive ways (Morgan, 1986).

A second implication of the LSI approach to investigating conflict interactions is that researchers will study direct representations of conflict that are exhibited in individuals' talk during conflict and talk about conflict. Hutchby (1999, p. 86) points out, "any claims we wish to make about 'what is going on' in a segment of social interaction must be grounded in an empirical demonstration that the categories applied in the analysis are practically relevant for the participants themselves." In other words, the interactants in a particular setting must show themselves (in a social sense) to be oriented

to conflict as a relevant phenomenon in the ongoing course of their interactions. One way to discover this orientation is to investigate the way the interactants talk about the phenomenon.

General Goals for This Research Project

We can conclude, therefore, that regardless of the specific institutional or social-environmental context for the study of conflict interaction, when investigating conflict interaction from a LSI perspective, one should have the following goals. The researcher should seek to describe the understandings and perceptions the interactants have about themselves, their culture, and the conflicts in which they are involved. Further, one should understand the ways in which those perceptions are enacted communicatively, and the ways the communicative behaviors influence the perceptions. The researcher should provide a description of the culture and discover ways in which the culture influences and gives meanings to interactants' conflicts. These general goals influence my design of this research project.

Contextual Background

Before describing the study in detail, it is necessary to provide some additional background information concerning both the programmatic context of the study within the discipline of Communication and the specific social-environmental context of the study.

Programmatic Context of the Study

The proposed study becomes coherent within and seeks to make contribution to two particular Language and Social Interaction programs of research in Communication: the Ethnography of Communication (EC), also known as the Ethnography of Speaking (ES) and Ethnomethodology (EM). A brief articulation of each research program follows.

Ethnography of Communication

While EC assumes the general philosophical posture of ethnography[4], it is a particular form of ethnography that concentrates on the communicative practices or ways of speaking in a culture. Gerry Philipsen, the pioneering practitioner of EC in the field of Communication (Philipsen, 1975; 1976; 1986; 1989; 1992; 1994), defines EC as a "report of a culture, as that culture thematizes communication and the ways that culture is expressed in some historical situation" (Philipsen, 1992, p. 9). Adapting Geertz's (1973) definition of culture, Philipsen (1992) states that culture is a "socially constructed and historically transmitted pattern of symbols, meanings, premises, and rules" (p. 7). Further, he suggests that in every speech community exists both a social pattern of language use and a cultural ideology—a collection of beliefs and prejudices about communication. These two phenomena working together in the life of a person or group constitute a distinctive social reality.

Wieder (1998b) explains EC in slightly different terms suggesting that ethnographers of communication attempt to acquire ethnographic information about and insight into the verbal and nonverbal communication practices within human groups and societies. Those conducting an ethnography of communication question how persons organize their speaking and communicating. They investigate, in detail, the rules or norms the cultural members follow and enforce concerning where one can speak in what ways, saying what to whom. The ethnography of communication assumes that there will be cultural variability in speaking practices, both between societies and within societies. Ethnographers of communication study that variability (Wieder, 1998b).

Carbaugh (1995, p. 277) summarizes the basic philosophical assumptions that guide ethnographic inquiries into communication practices as follows:

> The basic philosophy guiding EC then, holds that communication, when it occurs, exhibits some kind of system or order; that in so doing it constitutes and creatively invokes, in the occasion, social organization and cultural meanings; that it does this in ways that vary from people to people and place to place; that its nature, functions, and structures vary from place to place, thus its patterns and systemic organization need to be discovered (described, interpreted) in each case.

In presenting the philosophical underpinnings of the ethnography of communication, Carbaugh argues that the patterns, social organization, and cultural meanings should be discovered, described and interpreted in each case or example of a community. The focus of this dissertation research project is an investigation of conflict as it relates to the verbal and nonverbal communication practices within a particular organizational culture. Conducting an ethnography of communication of a particular culture provides both a way

of addressing the general goals listed above and a way to contribute to ethnographic communication theory by providing description and interpretation of yet another distinct cultural community.

A benefit of conducting an ethnography of communication is that it is a systematic, but flexible method which suggests several universal concepts a researcher can employ when investigating any cultural communicative situation (Carbaugh, 1995; Hymes, 1974; Philipsen, 1994; Salzman, 1993; Schiffrin, 1994; Sherzer &Darnell, 1972). Those concepts, first employed by Hymes (1972), serve to guide the researcher in understanding "what members of a culture know about how to 'make sense' out of experience and how to communicate those interpretations" (Shiffrin, 1994, p. 141). Hymes created a technical vocabulary known as the SPEAKING grid to guide such analyses (see Appendix A).

Ethnomethodology

Harold Garfinkel (1967), the founder of ethnomethodology coined the term ethnomethodology to refer to the study of "the body of common-sense knowledge and the range of procedures and considerations by means of which the ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves" (Heritage, 1984, p. 4). Related terms such as "ethnomedicine" and "ethnoscience" capture the notion of people's common-sense knowledge of what science and medicine do (de Beaugrand (1997). Garfinkel's term, ethnomethodology, purposively carries an open-ended reference to any kind of sense-making procedures as opposed to a delineation of a certain domain of knowledge (Heritage, 1984). Pomerantz and Fehr

(1997) explain, "It is a routine feature of our everyday lives that we can interact and coordinate our conduct with others." (p. 69). Ethnomethodology treats the conduct of everyday life as sensible, as meaningful, and as produced to be such. A distinction exists between conduct treated as "behavior" (as noise making and bodily movement) and conduct treated as "action" (as intelligible activity). For example, when a social actor attempts an everyday understanding of another person raising his or her arm, the focus is not on the fact that the arm which was down in now up (behavior). The focus is on the activity. Is the other person hailing a cab, stretching, greeting an acquaintance, or something else? (Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997). This meaningful conduct is produced and understood based on shared procedures or methods. Littlejohn (1996) refers to ethnomethodology as the detailed study of these shared procedures or methods—the ways people work together and create social organization.

Garfinkel recognized that a theory of language and communication must account for certain phenomena of human interaction—namely the ways in which social actors make observable their actions such that common, reciprocal meanings are established. The features on which these members base their efforts and actions are in the first instances observable, accountable phenomena (Blount 1975). Shotter (1984) understands this view to mean that what is important in social analysis is not the structure of the behavior itself, but the structure and function of the accounts of behavior that people give of themselves in their everyday social life. Shotter describes accounts as follows:

> An account of an action or activity is concerned with talking about the action or activity as the activity it *is*; it works, if it works at all, to render the activity to

> those who confront it or are involved in it, as something, 'visibly-rational-and-reportable-for all-practical-purposes, i.e., 'accountable,' as organizations of commonplace everyday activities' (Garfinkel, 1967, p. vii). In other words, an account is an aid to perception, functioning to constitute an otherwise indeterminate flow of activity as a sequence of recognizable events, i.e., events of a kind already known about within a society's ways of making sense of things.

Conducting an ethnomethodological investigation involves making practical actions accessible to study as 'pure' topics of inquiry (Wieder, 1974). The ethnomethodologist sees these practical actions, the activities of daily life that are generally perceived as mundane, as accomplishments. In investigating these accomplishments of social actors:

> Ethnomethodologists focus on the fundamental practices and bases of commonsense knowledge that actors utilize to both accomplish the order of social structures and in so doing display their competencies as members of the given culture. Thus, from the ethnomethodological perspective, all activity is ordered in some explainable manner—that is, explainable from the perspective of the participants (Prusank, 1993, p. 135).

Implications of Programmatic Contexts (EC and EM) for Current Research Project

Implications Concerning Primary Thematic Phenomena

As research traditions within language and social interaction studies, Ethnography of Communication and Ethnomethodology share a basic substructure or common ground[5] (Wieder, 1999). Referring to the commonalities among these and other language and

social interaction research traditions collectively as "the ethnography of interaction," Wieder asserts several points about the primary thematic phenomena targeted by researchers conducting studies within these programmatic research contexts. Wieder (1998a) states:

> The ethnography of interaction assumes a particular posture toward the activity of communicating. It takes the visible, account-able phenomena of communicating itself (such as the talking or gesturing) and it takes the circumstances and contexts of these activities of which the singular speaking activity (etc.) is itself a part (such as a conversation—an oral delivery of a report)—it takes these as its things, as its primary thematic phenomena (p. 7). Furthermore, it asks about them, "what are they (ontologically/ontically), and how are they organized for and by the speaker-listeners (p. 15).

In a related article, he further explains (Wieder, 1999, p. 166):

> These things exist only insofar as they function communicatively, as they are visible and recognizable to the participants.... These real interactional things are what they are in the way that they are treated: These cultural objects (e.g., a queue or a conversation) will not work, will not subsist, without the mutual orientation and treatment of participants.

Additionally, "social interactional things are phenomena that happen: They make their appearance as spatially and temporally specifiable moments of and within the very encounters of which they are reflexively account-able constituents" (Wieder, 1998a, p. 7).

Implications Concerning Research Methods and Claims

Wieder (1998a; 1999) lists other important implications of using the ethnography of interaction framework when conducting research. These language and social interaction research traditions are structural approaches that focus on "interaction or its things, or both, interaction's constituent activities and its context" as their units of analysis.[6] Consequently, it is important within these research traditions that the researcher be able to directly observe and analyze the interactional phenomena's own orderliness. "Because the phenomena are understood in this way, observational-qualitative methods of some sort are unmistakably suitable" (Wieder, 1998a, p. 8).

Further, because the phenomena of the ethnography of interaction are naturally occurring and because they unfold "in-situ," researchers must keep this in mind when referring to the "actual, the real, or the real worldly." And they must remember that these phenomena are not contained in the participants, but are interactionally worked out (Wieder, 1998a, p. 9). Consequently, ethnography of interaction studies "deflect interest from prediction and causal explanation of social interactional phenomena to explanations and understandings of them by locating them within, and as a coherent aspect of a structural configuration or contexture" (Wieder, 1999, p. 167).

Summary of Implications

Investigating conflict within the framework ethnography of interaction means that I will focus on some visible, account-able phenomena of communicating along with the circumstances and contexts in which it occurs. In other words, I will try to understand conflict as an account-able communication activity. Additionally, I will determine

whether or not the participants orient to conflict in a similar or shared manner. In short, is conflict a socially-recognizable, account-able communication activity for the participants? I will focus on conflict interactions and their constituent activities, understanding that the phenomena I am describing make their appearance as spatially and temporally specifiable moments within encounters rather than as situation-transcending entities that serve as representations of that which continuingly exists (e.g., entities such as attitude or personality). I will use qualitative methods, and my goal will be description and explanation of the ways in which the participants perceive, order, and coordinate conflict activities within the framework of their culture.

Wieder (1998a) suggests that organizations are prime candidates for an ethnography of interaction. "The work of every organization is account-ably channeled and achieved through that organization's own distinctive communication routines or formats...as these formats are coupled to the different personnel, tasks, and ecological segregation of some particular occasion in its regionally defined place" (1998, p. 2). Conducting an ethnography of interaction provides a format for generating research questions for the investigation of conflict interactions involving a distinct organizational community. In this case, I am emphasizing the two traditions of Ethnography of Communication and Ethnomethodology in conducting an ethnographically-based, ethnomethodological investigation. The particular organizational culture I have chosen for the proposed research project is the public school setting (with a particular focus on teachers in that setting).

Social-Environmental Context of the Study

It is important to reveal the reasons why I chose the public school setting as the social-environmental context of the proposed study. A particular set of experiences led me to choose this setting. An explication of these experiences will help the reader to understand my subjective standpoint as a researcher. In an article entitled, "In Search of Subjectivity—One's Own," Peshkin (1988) argues that researchers should systematically look for their subjectivity, not retrospectively when the data have been collected and the analysis is complete, but while their research is in progress. The purpose of doing so is to increase researcher's awareness of how their subjectivity may be shaping their inquiry and its outcomes. The experiences I had during a recent summer sparked my sense of wonder about this topic. My understanding of conflict in public school settings began during that time and has been enriched by a more formal study of the topic as the subject of my dissertation. It is important to note that although I am not a public school teacher, I have been a college teacher for a number of years. This fact allows me to share some commonalities with public school teachers (an emic perspective), while retaining an outsider's lack of experience with the day-to-day workings of public schools (an etic perspective).

Personal Background With Social-Environmental Context

In 1999, a couple of years ago, I became a certified instructor for a continuing education program designed to inspire and guide public school teachers. The program began as an effort to emulate the teaching philosophy and strategies of a renowned educator who developed a national reputation for her efforts at transforming underprivileged school children, who had been give little hope for success in the public

schools, into college-bound high-school graduates. The primary underpinning of the program's philosophy is the notion that children will respond to being treated with respect and being challenged to meet high expectations. Teachers are encouraged to do whatever it takes to teach students using an integrated, holistic curriculum. The goal is for students to become self-directed learners, productive citizens, effective communicators, critical thinkers, and cooperative contributors to the classroom as well as society. The majority of the teacher training occurs each year during the summer at week-long training sessions conducted on the campuses of several regional universities in a Midwestern state.

Upon entering the training program, the teachers first attend required courses covering the basic philosophy and methodology of the program. Next, they attend optional courses covering topics related to special strategies for teaching particular academic subjects (e.g., "hands-on" math) and topics designed for personal and professional development of teachers. The latter characterizes the course I offered one summer. The course was titled "Conflict Management." Although most of the instructors for the program are public school teachers and I am not, the administration of the program invited me to teach a course on conflict management because of my background and training. During my doctoral program, I focused much of my investigation and research on the subject of conflict management. Additionally, in 1997 I took graduate courses and received a Certificate in Alternative Dispute Resolution from the Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution at the Pepperdine University School of Law. These qualifications along with my interest in the public school setting and my social contacts with the some of the program administrators opened the door for me to teach for the

program. During that summer, I taught the 14-hour course two times each week (morning and afternoon) for seven weeks. Approximately 25 schoolteachers attended each session. Over the course of the summer, I interacted and facilitated discussions with approximately 300-350 teachers concerning the topic of conflict in the workplace.

The classes were very interactive and included numerous in-class discussions, informal group discussions and some private interactions after class. The participants included teachers from a diverse range of schools in several Midwestern states. Some were from major metropolitan and suburban areas; others were from small towns. Most, but not all, were women. My curiosity concerning teachers' conflicts at work began when I interacted with the first set of participants the first week. In a sense, I conducted an informal ethnography throughout the summer. During the day I interacted with the participants, and at night I interacted with fellow instructors, asking questions about their experiences with conflict in their workplace. While I did not take extensive field notes in the manner that I would if I were conducting a formal ethnography, I formed, over the course of the summer, several impressions about the subject of public school teachers' conflict interactions. These impressions provided a beginning point for a more formal inquiry into the subject. My informal impressions were as follows:

1. Teachers speak of conflict in a way that displays their assumptions that conflict is a socially recognizable, account-able event or process. They assume that it is an event or process that is such a part of their culture that they can all recognize the same episodes as instances of conflict.
2. Conflict is prevalent in the work lives of teachers.

3. Teachers report having conflicts with their administrators, fellow teachers, parents, staff, students, and occasionally the superintendent and school board.
4. Teachers report experiencing significant emotional pain resulting from the conflict interactions they have at work. Many point to these types of conflicts as the primary reason for job and career dissatisfaction.
5. Some teachers make a noticeable distinction between teachers and administrators; they exhibit a kind of "us versus them" orientation to their relationships with administrators.
6. The conflict interactions in a particular school seem to be significantly related to the personality and leadership style of the school's principal.
7. Many teachers report notable feelings of powerlessness concerning the conflicts they experience at work. They report believing that they have very few options concerning the process and outcome of conflicts.

My direct experiences with these public school teachers prompted me to study conflict interactions in this unique cultural setting. Over the summer I interacted with many teachers who were from a variety of schools and who taught a variety of ages, including pre-kindergarten, elementary, middle-school and high-school students. Although their stories included unique details and circumstances, I was amazed at many of the similarities that surfaced through the diversity. I could see that these people shared certain understandings and perceptions.

Need for Ethnographic Methods to Study Conflict

When I began a more formal study of this topic, I turned to the literature reported by the Education discipline to see if Education researchers have been interested in this subject. Although I discovered a substantial literature on the subject (Anderson & Blase, 1993; Blase, Blase, Anderson & Dungan, 1995; Blase & Kirby, 1992; Fullen, 1995; Gmelch & Parkay, 1995; Hord, 1992; Maxcy, 1994; Sirotnik, 1995; Travers & Cooper, 1996; Weiss, Cambone & Wyeth, 1992), the scholars writing this literature conceptualize conflict in a manner different from the way I am considering it in this project (i.e., as a socially recognizable, accountable event or process). They begin at a different place[7]. They assume that conflict exists and that everyone referring to it is referring to the same thing. The studies in this literature tend to identify the reasons why[8] teachers experience conflict, while I am looking for the ways in which conflict is composed within the narratives and experiences of the participants. While these studies may point to the fact that teachers experience conflict in the workplace and to some of the reasons for this conflict, they do not include data concerning the ways in which teachers perceive conflict, orient to conflict, talk about conflict, or even define conflict. However, that literature is written in a way that assumes and loosely implies that teachers do perceive conflict, orient to conflict, talk about conflict, and define conflict.

Some researchers have highlighted the absence of data on these matters. Blase and Kirby (1992) and Waite (1993) indicate that relatively little attention has been given to understanding teachers' perspectives of conflict in the workplace. "The literature tends to be quite abstract and often misses many of the important and concrete elements that make up the everyday world of the school" (Blase & Kirby, 1992, p. xv). (A notable

exception to this is Blase and Blase, 1994.) Further, Waite (1990, 1993) and others (Holland, 1989; Knapp, Putnam, & Davis, 1988; Pajak & Glickman, 1989; Wilson, 1977) have called for and used ethnographic methods such as discourse analysis and conversation analysis in studying conflict interactions in the workplace. The aim of these qualitative approaches is to describe and explain the essences of experience and meaning in participants' lives (Janesick, 1994). Concerning the interpretive work of ethnographers, Strauss & Corbin (1994) state, "that interpretation must include the perspectives and voices of the people whom we study. Interpretations are sought for understanding the actions of individuals or collective actors being studied" (p. 274).

Educational researchers interested in these inductive methods of studying teachers have recognized the importance of studying schools from a communicatively-based, interpretive perspective (O'Hair & Odell, 1993; O'Hair & Odell, 1995; McIntyre & Byrd, 1996). O'Hair & O'Hair (1996, p. 167) state, "We do not view communication simply as a tool for discovering the world of schooling or even, more narrowly, for describing field experiences, instead, communication is viewed as how the social world of school takes form and makes sense." Hale (1983), one of the few Communication scholars who has studied teachers' conflict interactions, points out that organizational (school) culture is created day to day in the lives of its participants. She suggests that researchers need to come to understand those communication processes through which the participants define their relationships and co-create their organizational culture. Mumby and Clair (1997) also describe a cultural or interpretive approach to the study of organizational discourse--an approach concerned with the relationship between discourse and the creation of social

reality. Pointing to the importance of communication or discourse in understanding organizational culture, Mumby and Clair (1997, p. 182) state:

> The cultural approach tends to operate largely at a descriptive level, and focuses on the ways in which organization members' discursive practices contribute to the development of shared meaning. As such, the principal goal of this research is to demonstrate the connection between shared norms and values of an organization on the one hand, and the means by which these norms and values are expressed on the other.

Data Resulting from Personal Experience with Social-Environmental Context

During the conflict management classes I taught to public school teachers at the training program that summer, I asked the class participants to respond to the following prompt: **Please write a description of a conflict in which you are/were one of the conflict parties.** I asked the participants to do this assignment as homework at the end of the first day of class. I provided 4 x 6 index cards on which they could record their descriptions. Of the 300 or so participants, about half of them chose to write about a conflict that was not related to their work. The other half, (approximately 150) chose to write about a specific work-related conflict. Each individual section of the class consisted of approximately 20 to 30 schoolteachers. (I taught 14 different sections over the course of the summer.) I collected these narratives so that I could better understand the participants and then tailor each section of the course to address the types of conflicts that were prevalent among that particular group.

At the time I collected the information, I did not consider using it as data. At the end of the summer when I decided to pursue this topic as the subject of my dissertation, I

realized the value of the narratives to answer some of my research questions. I wrote a proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Oklahoma asking for permission to use these narratives as archival data. The IRB granted approval for the use of the narratives only if I obtain a signed letter of consent from each participant whose narrative I intend to include in the data set (see Appendix B and Appendix C). Because I did not intend to use these narratives as data at the time I collected them, I did not follow standard data collection procedures. In fact, I can only identify the authors of 80 of the scenarios. I wrote to those participants asking for permission to include their narratives in the data set. Through initial requests and follow-up efforts, I received permission from approximately 50 of the participants. Since that summer, I have conducted several one-day courses on conflict management for the same training program. At those sessions I collected more narratives using the same set of instructions. The total number of narratives in this data pool is 82.

Narratives and accounts

Collecting participants' narratives to use as data is a relatively common research method (Bochner, 1994; Burnett, 1991; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Griffin, 1997; Littlejohn, 1996; McPhee & Poole, 1994). Several studies (Blase & Kirby, 1992; Pacanowsky, 1989; Prusank, 1993; Stamp & Sabourin, 1995) have elicited narrative accounts following the same procedure that I used to elicit the conflict scenarios from the schoolteachers. Riessman (1993, p. 2) explains narrative analysis:

> Narrative analysis takes as its object of investigation the story itself.... The purpose is to see how respondents...impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives. The methodological approach

> examines the informant's story and analyzes how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades a listener of authenticity. Analysis in narrative studies opens up the forms of telling about experience, not simply the content to which language refers. We ask, why was the story told that way?

In an ethnomethodological analysis of parental accounts of discipline interactions, Prusank (1993) asked parents to provide a written description of a recent typical discipline interaction in which they were the primary disciplinarian. She attempted to understand the sense-making experience of the discipline interaction from the parents' perspective. She argued that "such information can partially be derived from participants' recounting of (and thus "accounting" for) these episodes and further that a better understanding of how participants experience discipline episodes will bring to the surface the complexity of the processes involved in the production of discourse at both the macro and micro levels of the discipline context" (p. 134).

In the present study of teachers' conflict interactions, using the same logic Prusank (1993, p. 132) used to justify her study of parental discipline accounts, one could argue that the discourse acts in which teachers describe conflict interactions are actually accounts of those episodes. Teachers' use of accounting procedures can be taken to shed light on the methods and practices teachers use to make sense of their own and others' behavior within conflict episodes. An analysis of such accounts further serves to explicate several assumptions teachers make about their conflict partner and about the appearance of social order. An understanding of the features to which teachers attend in conflict interactions illuminates the processes through which the discourse of a conflict

interaction is co-constructed.[9] Burnett's (1991) chapter on narratives and accounts specifies several benefits of using accounts as data in interpersonal research. She indicates that account data is particularly useful when "accounting" is treated as a "communication activity and a means of making sense of the world, that is, where such active communicating and understanding themselves become the areas of study. Here accounting provides not just a type of data, but a whole social process, to be looked at as something people do...." (p. 125-126).

Primary Research Objective

The study reported here seeks to provide the kind of information requested by the scholars who called for more ethnographic methods to study conflict in public school settings. This study utilizes the framework of ethnography of communication and ethnomethodology and focuses on the speech community of public school teachers and the socially recognizable, account-able communication event of conflict. **In essence, this research project is an ethnographically-based, ethnomethodological investigation of teachers accounts of conflict in public school settings**. As an ethnomethodological analysis, this inquiry seeks to understand teachers' practical everyday procedures (their ethno-methods for creating, sustaining, and managing a sense of objective reality) with particular reference to conflict processes and events. During the analysis, I adopt a posture of "ethnomethodological indifference," which means that I seek "to describe members' accounts of formal structures wherever and by whomever they are done, while abstaining from all judgments of their adequacy, value, importance, necessity, practicality, success, or consequentiality" (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1986, p. 166). In other words, I do not focus on an "a priori or privileged version of social structure" but focus

instead on how members accomplish, manage, and reproduce a sense of social structure" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994, p. 264). I center my analysis on the "properties of practical reasoning and the constitutive work that produces the unchallenged appearance of a stable reality" (p. 264).

This ethnographically-based, ethnomethodological investigation will shed light on the methods and practices teachers use to make sense of their own and others' behavior during conflict episodes. It will provide insight into the teachers' perspectives concerning conflict interactions in their lives at work. It will contribute to ethnographic theory by "accounting for the distinctive pattern and uses of speaking in a particular speech community" (Philipsen, 1994, p. 1159). Finally, I trust that it will provide information to those who are interested in improving the deleterious effects of negative conflict interactions in the work lives of public school teachers.

Methods of Data Analysis

The data for this study are 82 accounts of conflicts generated by public school teachers in response to the prompt: **Please write a description of a conflict in which you are/were one of the conflict parties**. In considering how to analyze these data, I turned to the substantial literature on accounts for insight. This section of the dissertation includes a review of the accounts literature (including the strong ties to ethnomethodology), a discussion of narrative analysis (a research methodology), and the research questions that guided my analysis of the schoolteachers' narrative accounts.

Accounts

Social scientists have studied a phenomenon of human communication for over 30 years. This phenomenon, known in the literature as accounts or the process of accounting, concerns the ways in which we as social actors explain ourselves to others and to ourselves (Antaki, 1990; Buttny, 1985; 1993a; 1993b; Cody & McLaughlin, 1988; Cody & McLaughlin, 1990; Garfinkel, 1967; Goffman, 1971; Harvey, Orbuch & Weber, 1990; 1992; Heritage, 1988; Orbuch, 1997; Read, 1992; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Schonbach, 1990; Scott & Lyman, 1968; Semin & Manstead, 1983; Shotter, 1984; Stamp & Sabourin, 1995). In their recent appraisal of the accounts literature, Buttny and Morris (2000) suggest that the concept of accounts occupies a central place as "an important way of conceiving people's sense-making and remedial practices for maintaining or repairing interactional alignment and telling one's side of things" (p. 3). Harvey, Orbuch, and Weber (1992; and Harvey, Weber & Orbuch, 1990) provide a relatively broad definition of accounts as "story-like constructions that contain a plot or story line, characters, a time sequence, attribution, and other forms of expression such as affect" (p. 3). Characterizing accounts as "packages of interpretations and expressions occurring in story form," these authors trace the theoretical roots of the notion of accounts to Mills' (1940) "vocabulary of motive" and Burke's (1945) "grammar of motives," stating that accounts are related to these ideas in that they all refer to words, phases, and clauses that people use to justify action (Harvey, Weber & Orbuch, 1990). Acknowledging a variety of historical roots of the concept of accounts and both a broad and a narrow definition of the concept, Harvey and his associates indicate that in the field of social psychology, the work on accounts has

developed in close association to theory and research on attributional processes. They highlight Heider's (1958) research concerning how people understand one another and achieve coherence in their interpersonal relationships (i.e., Heider's classic "naïve psychology"—the commonsense psychology of the person on the street).

According to Harvey, Weber, and Orbuch (1990), the first explicit treatment of accounts occurred among sociologists in the 1950s, 60s and early 70s. They specifically identify the writings of Goffman (1959, 1971), Garfinkel (1956, 1967), and Scott and Lyman (1968; Lyman and Scott, 1970) as the first theoretical developments of accounts. Harvey et al. explain that Goffman's insights on self-presentation provide conceptual groundwork for many current theories concerning the ways in which people strategically present themselves to others. They point out that in Relations in Public (Goffman, 1971), the influential theorist argues that a societal script for account-making is a part of the embedded routine of social interaction. When a person commits an offense, he or she must provide an account in order to nullify the negative implications concerning the offender's regard for the identity of the offended party. Offenses must be explained to avoid interruption of the flow of interaction (Harvey, Weber, & Orbuch, 1990).

While Goffman's contributions to the theory of accounts were conceptual and implicit, Garfinkel's contributions were explicit and revolutionary. Garfinkel's development of the concept of accounts will be reviewed extensively in the next section. In brief, the central tenant of Garfinkel's theory is that accounts, which are an ongoing feature of social interaction, involve how verbal or nonverbal behavior is used to render our activities understandable to others.[10] Persons account for their actions such that others

can make sense of what they are doing for all practical purposes (Buttny & Morris, 2000). Influenced by Weber (1947), Mills (1940), Burke (1945), and Parsons (1949), Scott and Lyman (1968, p. 46),[11] whose seminal article is invariably mentioned in reviews of literature on accounts, adopt a narrower scope when they define an account as "a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subjected to valuative inquiry." Accounts are proffered to make apparently "untoward" or "unusual" events understandable (i.e., justifications), or at least, to lessen the account-maker's responsibility for the negative events (i.e., excuses).

The perspectives of Garfinkel and Scott and Lyman represent two prominent ways in which social scientists refer to accounts. Buttny and Morris' review of the accounts literature summarizes these two views. The first, accounts **for** actions, involves remedial talk for some problematic or questioned act and the actor's verbal portrayal of it in response. In other words, the actor is answering for troublesome conduct. This notion is consistent with Scott and Lyman's and others' (e.g., McLaughlin, Cody, & O'Hair, 1983; Cody & McLaughlin, 1990; McLaughlin, Cody & Read, 1992; Schoenbach, 1980; 1992; Semin & Manstead, 1983) treatment of accounts. The second view, accounts **of** actions, concerns the actor's verbal sense-making, and focuses on events, such as relationships, personal crises, and other life changes. In other words, the actor is giving a description or narrative of events not necessarily involving troubles. This view is consistent with Garfinkel and others (Gergen & Gergen, 1987; Harvey, Orbuch & Weber, 1990; Shotter, 1984; 1987).

Both of these views highlight the ways in which people interpret and rhetorically reconstruct events through talk. The purpose behind accounts for actions is to prevent or repair problematic situations and restore social equilibrium among the interactants. The purpose behind accounts of action is to convey one's world to others. Buttny and Morris (p. 6) explain that at a basic level, these two views are compatible with one another.

> When a person's actions are not accountable by normal typifications or commonsense understandings, then this may be seen as unusual or problematic such that the person may be questioned by others and need to account in Scott and Lyman's (1968) sense for those actions. So the Garfinkel (1967) sense of accounts as ongoing, sensemaking procedures is ultimately consistent with the more circumscribed Scott and Lyman (1968) sense of accounts (Heritage, 1984).

While these two theoretical views of accounts can be reconciled to some degree, historically, the research programs spawning from each are quite varied. This divergence results from researchers asking different kinds of questions and using different methodologies and data in attempting to answer them. Buttny and Morris (2000) explain that those programs that look at the "social psychology" of accounts typically focus on cognitive components and use primarily quantitative methods. In contrast, the research projects operating within the language and social interaction paradigm take accounts as "language"—as talk-in-interaction—primarily using qualitative methods. Notable examples of this research are Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), Sacks (1972), Schegloff (1971), Drew (1978, 1984a, 1984b), Atkinson and Drew (1979), Pomerantz and Atkinson (1984), Watson (1978) and Wieder (1974). (See Holstein & Gubrium (1994) for multiple

examples of the variety of work carried out by researchers working within the ethnomethodological framework.) The current research project concerning conflict among public school teachers adopts the latter viewpoint. Specifically, the insights of Harold Garfinkel are central to an understanding and analysis of the data collected in this project. Therefore, the next section provides a summary of Garfinkel's work and the implications it has for the analysis of the data in this research project.

Ethnomethodology

Historical Context

In his comprehensive and instructive book about Garfinkel, Heritage (1984) explains that prior to Garfinkel's research initiatives, other sociologists and linguists had overlooked what was the focus of Garfinkel's inquiry—the nature of language use and of the practical reasoning that informs it. Garfinkel designed a research program aimed at uncovering how social actors make different kinds of social activity observable and reportable, or in Garfinkel's terms, account-able. He reasoned that during much of their daily lives, societal members engage in descriptive accountings of states of affairs to one another. Through this medium of ordinary description, societal members manage, maintain and act upon the social world.

Prior to Garfinkel's efforts, few social scientists or linguists asked questions about the detailed organization of practical reasoning in social interaction and the bases of institutionalized fact production. Garfinkel set about to understand the properties of the ordinary transactions through which real world events are described, sorted, and classified (Heritage, 1984). Garfinkel's contemporaries had marginalized these questions

of how social actors encounter and manage a social world in common and questions about the properties of actor's accounts of their everyday affairs. Instead, they (influenced by the representative view of language—a view which posits that the function of sentences is to express propositions about the world) focused on what ordinary actors report about their circumstances, experiences, attitudes, and intentions. These researchers treated informants as competent and properly motivated reporters about their everyday affairs. It was only when there was a doubt about the reliability and validity of these reports that many social scientists paused to inquire about the kinds of considerations that might have shaped an actor's utterances. In contrast, a primary focus of Garfinkel's inquiry concerned not what actors substantively reported, but what the actors might be accomplishing through their acts of reporting. Heritage (1984, p. 139) explains that according to Garfinkel:

> Understanding language is not "cracking a code which contains a set of pre-established descriptive terms combined, by the rules of grammar, to yield sentence meanings which express propositions about the world. Understanding language is not, in the first instance a matter of understanding sentences but of understanding actions—utterances—which are constructively interpreted in relation to their contexts. This involves viewing an utterance against a background of who said it, where and when, what, was being accomplished by saying it and in the light of what possible considerations and in virtue of what motives it was said. An utterance is thus the starting point for a complicated process of interpretative

inference rather than something which can be treated as self-subsistently intelligible.

For Garfinkel, the defining feature of an actor's membership of a society or collectivity is the "mastery of natural language." As such, these masters can produce and recognize adequate descriptive representations of ordinary everyday affairs. Social scientists should not regard descriptions as "disembodied commentaries on states of affairs." Because descriptions vary in the ways they make reference to states of affairs and because they occur in particular interactional and situational contexts, they should be understood as actions that are "chosen and consequential" (Heritage, 1984, p. 140).

While some social scientists might be interested in the truth value of social actors' depictions of their circumstances (i.e., to what degree are the depictions correct or faulty), Garfinkel is not at all concerned with this type of evaluation of the descriptions. Additionally, he does not afford any analytical privilege to the actors' depiction of their circumstances. In other words, he does not use the actor's description to validate or invalidate the investigator's theory about what is happening. Heritage (1984) explains that Garfinkel treats actors' descriptive accountings as "practical actions;" he does not judge their adequacy, value, importance, necessity, practicality, success or consequentiality. Instead, he focuses on how the accounts are used as components of the organization and management of social settings. Garfinkel proposes that questions about the evaluation, interpretation, and acceptance or lack of acceptance of mundane descriptions and the criteria and considerations used to answer these questions are empirical questions that social scientists must examine empirically rather than determine

beforehand with the a priori application of external standards. Garfinkel advocates placing "brackets" on these judgments about the adequacy of accounts when investigating them with naturalistic methods of study. This allows the descriptive accounts to become data that investigators examine to see how they "organize, and are organized by, the empirical circumstances in which they occur" (p. 141).

Commonsense Knowledge

Garfinkel posits that accounts are indexical—that is, the sense of an account depends greatly on the context in which it is produced. One who hears an account understands it by referring to a mass of unstated assumptions. In other words, the hearer must make out what is meant from what is said in keeping with methods upon which both the speaker and the hearer implicitly rely. "These methods involve the continual invocation of commonsense knowledge and of context as resources with which to make definite sense of indefinite descriptive terms" (Heritage, p. 144).

This commonsense knowledge comes to play in the following way. When a narrator provides an intelligible descriptive accounting of a state of affairs, his or her account must provide for three aspects. The first aspect involves the visibility, coherence, and recognizability of the reasons for making the descriptive reference rather than some other. Because descriptions are selective and not compelled by the state of affairs they describe, why this description rather than another was given must be available to the recipient. The second aspect involves the clarity of the means chosen to make the description. Do the means, in effect, consist of a vocabulary shared by recipient and narrators? The third aspect concerns the purpose or motive for producing the

description at a particular moment. Does the account make the (or at least, a) speaker's motive for providing the narration transparent?

In order to understand the speaker's descriptive accounting of a state of affairs, the hearer must have commonsense knowledge of the context in which the account occurs in addition to general knowledge about social relations and human purposes. "Thus, understanding a description involves a procedure in which the bringing of words and referents into correspondence with one another is integrated with a larger interpretation in terms of the wider social context and its relevant purposes" (Heritage, 1984, p. 151). Speakers hold one another accountable as competent users of natural language through reference to a network of "background assumptions." A result of the use of this commonsense knowledge is that speaking is inevitably understood as action. Actors always use context to determine the sense of a descriptive utterance, and the range of contextual features that may be invoked to make sense of an utterance is vast. Similarly, the range of possible contextual determinations about the account is also wide-ranging. Heritage (1984, p. 154) explains:

> A hearer may invoke one or another of these aspects of context so as to find that a description is intended to stand in a relationship of correspondence with what is described and that, in being so intended, the description is clear and definite, or alternatively, vague and ambiguous; that the description is truthful, objective or disinterested or, alternatively, false, biased or self-serving; that the speaker is claiming something, or alternatively, proposing it is an assured fact; that the description, in being incorrect is the product, alternatively, of a mistake or a lie.

> The hearer may invoke context in order to hear that a description is being produced as a complaint, an accusation, a slur, slander, rationalization, excuse or justification; or to hear that the speaker was talking euphemistically, tactfully, cryptically, metaphorically or ironically (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 29). All of these senses of a description and innumerably more are contextually determined. They are some of the 'endless ways' in which a descriptor elaborates its circumstances and is elaborated by them (Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970, p. 338).

Narrative Analysis

In her book Narrative Analysis, Riessman's (1993) assertions about narrativization mirror Garfinkel's assertions about accounts.[12] Whereas Garfinkel pointed to three aspects of accounts that hearers of accounts must be able to find in them: Why is the speaker (a) referencing that object, (b) in that way, (c) right now, Riessman indicates that human agency and imagination determine not only what parts of an event the account-maker includes or excludes in a narrative, but also the manner in which he or she plots the events and extracts meanings from the event. Narrators choose to emphasize and omit certain details, to portray themselves as victims or protagonists, to establish a certain kind of relationship between themselves as the teller and the hearer as audience. In short, through narratives, persons do more than relay information to others (or themselves) about their lives. Rather, individuals fashion past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives. Riessman cautions investigators to remember that informants' stories do not mirror a world "out there." The stories are "constructed, creatively authored, rhetorical, replete with assumptions, and

interpretive" (p. 4). In attending to experience, social actors make certain phenomenon meaningful. In telling about experience, the actor "re-presents" the events. In the telling, a gap between the lived experience and any communication about the experience inevitably arises. Further, the hearer influences the telling of the story. The narrator relays the story to a particular person; it might have taken a different form if someone else were the listener. Referring to Goffman (1959), Reissman points out that "In telling about an experience, I am also creating a self—how I want to be known by them.... Like all social actors, I seek to persuade myself and others that I am a good person. My narrative is inevitably a self representation" (p. 11).

In sum, if narrative analysis concerns how protagonists interpret things, then the job of researchers is to attempt to systematically interpret their interpretations. Another point to consider is that narratives reveal information about social life. "Culture 'speaks itself' through an individual's story" (Riessman, 1993, p. 5). Researchers must pay careful attention to the contexts that shape the creation of narratives and the worldviews that inform them. Reissman suggests a method for examining narratives that will help to avoid the tendency to read them only for content and the similarly unsatisfactory tendency to read them as evidence of a prior theory. She suggests beginning with the structure of the narrative and attending to how it is organized. The investigator should try to determine why a participant might develop his or her narrative this way with this listener. She recommends starting from the inside, from the meanings encoded in the form of talk, and expanding outward, identifying such things as the underlying propositions that make the talk sensible, including what is taken for granted by speaker

and listener. Further, she proposes that one must reflect on the social, cultural, and institutional discourses that influence an individual's narrative.

Like Riessman, Garfinkel also advises researchers as they examine social actors' accounts. Heritage (1984, p. 179) states:

> A major finding of [our examination of actions, accounts, and accounting in the last two chapters] was that the intersubjective intelligibility of actions ultimately rests on a symmetry between the production of actions on the one hand and their recognition on the other. This symmetry is one of method or procedure and Garfinkel forcefully recommends it when he proposes that
>
> > the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of ordinary everyday affairs are identical with members' procedures for making those settings 'account-able'. (Garfinkel, 1967a: 1)
>
> As we have seen, this symmetry of method is both assumed and achieved by the actors in settings of ordinary social activity. Its assumption permits actors to design their actions in relation to their circumstances so as to permit others, by methodically taking account of the circumstances, to recognize the action for what it is. The symmetry is also achieved and hence it is contingent. For the production and recognition of actions is dependent upon the parties supplying, and trusting one another to supply an array of unstated assumptions so as to establish the recognizable sense of an action. A final conclusion to recall is that the production of an action will always reflexively redetermine (i.e., maintain, elaborate or alter) the circumstances in which it occurs.

Social members engage in accounting practices. They make their behavior accountable to others and they, in turn, account for the behavior of others. Heritage (1984) explains that because there is great promise and trouble inherent in the possibilities of circumstantial elaboration, actors think about a range of "considerations" and "exigencies" when designing their accounts. Some of the possible exigencies may be particular to the specific interactants; they may be generic to certain kinds of activities such as complaining or making excuses; or alternatively, they may be "institutional" in that actors may refer to common understandings of the contextual determinations of accounts-within-classrooms, accounts-within-courtrooms, news interviews, bureaucratic agencies, etc.

These types of considerations and exigencies must be a part of any investigation that attempts to grasp the nature and significance of actors' accounts. Notwithstanding the researcher's firm proposition that the actors' accounts report independently existing fact and regardless of their claim that firm evidence and reasoned argument support the accounts, "these accounts—with their evidences and arguments—still await an analysis which situates them, with all their exigencies and considerations, within the socially organized worlds in which they participate as constituting and constituted elements (Heritage, 1984, p. 178). Heritage outlines the questions that social scientists must ask when conducting an investigation:

- What counts as "reasonable fact" in casual conversation, in a courtroom, a scientific laboratory, a news interview, a police interrogation, a medical consultation or a social security office?
- What is the nature of the social organization within which these facts find support?
- To what vicissitudes, exigencies and considerations are the formulations of these facts responsive?

Research Questions

An ethnomethodologically-based investigation carries certain implications for the analysis of the data in this research project. When looking at the teachers' accounts of conflict episodes, the important analysis does not involve determining the validity or truthfulness of the accounts and therefore, should not afford analytic privilege to the teacher's depiction of their circumstances. For that reason, when analyzing the data, I will not attempt to draw conclusions about the actual situations and circumstances of the teachers in the accounts. In other words, I will not evaluate the episodes from an analytical framework to determine such things as which person was right or wrong, accurate or inaccurate, or what caused the conflict or what might solve the conflict. Rather, I will attempt to understand what the teacher might be doing through the process of accounting for conflict episodes and what that might reveal about conflict in teachers' workplace. Additionally, I will attempt to understand what the account might reveal about what is a socially-recognizable, accountable instance of conflict. Further, I will

attempt to determine the commonsense knowledge—the mass of unstated assumptions—upon which the teachers rely in order to understand and interpret each other's behavior and their accounts of that behavior in conflict. I will attempt to understand any "institutional" considerations or exigencies that might be a part of teachers' accounts-of-conflict-at-school.

Using Heritage's (1984) and Wieder's (1998a) suggestions relating to ethnomethodological analyses, as well as the guidelines and concepts posed by the ethnography of communication,[13] and the exemplar set of research questions set forth in Pratt & Wieder (1993), the primary questions I will ask about teachers' conflict at work are as follows:

> What counts as a socially recognizable, account-able instance of conflict?
>
> What is involved in recognizing and in relaying information or stories concerning these account-able instances of conflict?
>
> What is the nature of the social organization, the public school setting, within which these facts find support?
>
> > What types of conflict do public school teachers experience on a daily basis? Who is involved in conflict? What is the subject matter of conflicts? In what settings do conflicts occur? In what manner or tone are the conflicts enacted?

What conventions are relevant here? What conventions are enforced, and how?

To what vicissitudes, exigencies and considerations are the formulations of these facts responsive?

Answering the Research Questions: Organization of Data Analysis and Results

In this chapter, I have provided the background information necessary to understand and evaluate this research project, including the domain of the investigation (conflict interactions), the contextual background (i.e., the programmatic contexts and the social-environmental context), the methods of data analysis, the primary research objective, and the research questions. The next two chapters report the data analysis and results. Chapter two focuses on teachers' conflicts with fellow teachers. Chapter three focuses on teachers' conflicts with their administrators. The final chapter reports my conclusions and suggests avenues for future research on this subject.

Although this research project is situated within a broad ethnographic framework (see footnote 4), it is not a standard ethnography. Ethnographers typically gain entry into settings and attempt to provide a first-hand, intensive study of the features of a given culture. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996, p. 608) indicate that ethnographic research has three major characteristics: (a) Its focus is on discovering cultural patterns in human behavior, (b) its focus is on the emic perspective of members of the culture, and (c) its focus is on studying the natural settings in which culture is manifested. Ethnographers attend to all aspects of the

setting that may reveal cultural patterns and pay particular attention to issues such as the physical environment and social organization of a setting. Then ethnographers relate their observations (etic perspective) concerning these issues to the culture members' emic perspectives of these settings. In ethnographic reports, a large section is devoted to the description of the natural settings in which the culture is manifested.

The primary data for this investigation is teachers' accounts of conflict interactions. I did not spend time in public schools in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the setting; however, included in the teachers' accounts is information about the setting—information that reveals ways in which the setting influences the conflict interactions within the setting (at least from the perspective of the teachers). Some of the information about the physical environment and social organization of the schools is reported in the descriptions included in the beginning of chapter two (see pages 42-51) and the beginning of chapter three (see pages 80-91). In order to make it easier for the reader to refer to a more general ethnographic description of the public school setting, I have provided that description is an appendix (see Appendix E).

CHAPTER TWO: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS--PART ONE

Teachers' conflicts involve four basic groups of people: **other teachers, administrators, parents, and students**. Of the narratives included in this data set[14], approximately 40 per cent describe conflicts between the teacher and another teacher or teachers; approximately 25 per cent describe conflicts between the teacher and an administrator; another 25 per cent describe conflicts between the teacher and a parent; and a small number describe conflicts between the teacher and a student. The following section of the dissertation will summarize the largest subset of the data—the narratives concerning teachers' conflicts with fellow teachers.

Conflicts Between Teachers

The goal of this section is to provide insight into teachers' perceptions about the conflicts they have with fellow teachers. The section is organized into three basic subsections. The first subsection includes a general description of teacher-teacher conflict—the answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how. The next section highlights teachers' shared knowledge concerning certain norms—norms, which if violated lead to conflict, and norms concerning how to behave during conflict episodes. The final section contains some claims about teachers and conflict that are derived from a narrative analysis of the conflict descriptions. This section also exhibits and highlights the teachers' vocabulary of conflict thereby exposing their folk concepts[15] for dealing with it.

Some General Features of Accounted Teacher-Teacher Conflict

To begin to understand teacher-teacher conflict, I asked the following questions: From the standpoint of teachers' narratives, who is involved in conflict; what is the subject matter of conflicts; in what settings do conflicts occur; and in what manner or tone are the conflicts enacted?

Who

The United States educational system is designed so that a single school building in a community contains at least one administrator, teachers for various grade levels, and support staff (counselors, secretaries, custodians, etc.). While all of the teachers in a building share a common culture associated with that school (and that district or community), teachers are also members of relatively standardized subgroups within their schools (Welch, 1998). Many schools utilize the concept of a teaching team consisting of all of the teachers from a single grade level. According to the narratives, teachers work more closely with their fellow team teachers than they do with other teachers in the school. Additionally, the narratives indicate that to some degree the administrator and other teachers view the teams as organizational units that are subject to evaluation. Teachers and administrators may make judgments concerning a teaching team's performance in addition to the actions of any individual teacher within the team. For example, one teacher reporting an incident in which another teacher explicitly violated the instructions of the administrator stated, "*If the principal finds out, it will look bad on the whole 'team'—not just the individual teacher*" (T-T: 29, line 9).[16] Some schools refer to these teams as pods. Also, teachers distinguish linguistically between fellow grade-

level teachers and other teachers in the school. Many of the teachers' narratives describe conflicts that occur between teachers who are on the same team.

Another way in which teachers group themselves is in reference to experience. Many of the narratives mention veteran or older teachers in contrast with teachers who are new to the profession or new to a particular school building. The status or position of the teacher is something to which teachers orient when describing certain teacher-teacher conflicts.

An additional way in which teachers make distinctions between each other within a school is in reference to their specific teaching duties. Some narratives distinguish between homeroom teachers and resource teachers, between regular teachers and special education teachers, between choir directors and athletic coaches, and between teachers and teachers' aides or assistants. Membership in these various groups and categories often occupies a central place in teachers' explanations or descriptions of conflicts.

Note this final point about who is involved in teacher-teacher conflict. I separated these narratives from the others based on the fact that the primary conflict partner of the narrator was another teacher. While these conflicts do include teacher-teacher conflict, in many instances, one or more teachers also involve an administrator in the problem. Although sometimes this is in an effort to get the administrator to mediate between the two teachers (e.g., "*I informed the principal of the problem and set up a meeting with the coach to confront him with the principal acting as a mediator;*" T-T: 7, line 9), more often it is an attempt to get the administrator to act as judge and authority figure over the conflict partner (e.g., "*Later that evening, I told my principal about the conversation. My*

principal said he would take care of it. He told me he called her on the carpet about it, but it has taken a really long time not to be angry with the other teacher;" T-T: 13, line 9).

What

I systematically analyzed the narratives, looking at each one to determine the subject matter of the conflict (or at least the subject matter of the conflict according to the narrator). Then I grouped the subjects and found that teachers experience conflict with other teachers over a variety of subjects such as:

- differences of opinion concerning teaching philosophies and curriculum choices;
- disputes over sharing school resources or personal resources;
- conflicts over duties and schedules;
- discord over priorities and values concerning extracurricular activities;
- tension over the extent to which the teachers comply with their administrator's or district's guidelines or policies;
- dissention among teachers from different groups and categories within the school (e.g., homeroom teachers versus resource teachers, regular teachers versus special education teachers, teachers versus teacher's aides, or choir directors versus athletic coaches);
- conflicts resulting from a teacher or teachers judging a fellow teacher to be incompetent or to lack judgment in dealing with students;

- struggles over issues relating to power, control, and whose opinions and ideas will prevail; and
- clashes over the manner in which teachers handle differences of opinion (e.g., verbal and nonverbal aspects of confrontations between teachers).

Where

The teachers' descriptions do not often indicate a setting for a particular conflict. Conflicts between teachers can occur in a classroom, the room in which a staff or faculty meeting takes place, the principal's office, a hallway, a field trip destination, at a ballgame or an any number of places. The primary distinction about where conflicts take place concerns whether the place is relatively public or private and whether or not others have the opportunity to witness the conflict. While some of the narratives describe conflicts that occur privately between the conflict partners, several of the teachers describe conflicts that take place in front of other teachers or students—a fact that influences the teacher's perception of and reported feelings about the conflict. This point will be addressed in the next section concerning the norms or rules pertaining to conflict among teachers.

How

According to the narratives, teacher-teacher conflicts can vary from calm, in-depth discussions between two teachers to shouting matches or situations in which one teacher "verbally attacks another teacher. In some cases, the manner or tone in which conflicts are enacted ceases to be a description of teachers' behavior as they struggle over issues and becomes the issue itself. For example, one teacher writes:

One conflict I've encountered deals with a new teacher in our building. This teacher has had loud verbal arguments (over various topics) with several teachers in the building. Without exception, her voice and demeanor escalate until the other teacher gives in or leaves. I know my turn is probably coming sometime in the future—but I'm not sure how I'll handle it. I'm not at all sure she's worth getting upset about—no matter what the actual topic may be (T-T: 11, lines 1-6).

Summary of General Features of Accounted Teacher-Teacher Conflict

Hymes' (1974) SPEAKING grid, created to aid ethnographic analyses, proffers a scheme for understanding speech in a particular culture. The scheme prompts researchers to describe aspects of the communication activities of the members of a community, things such as the setting (physical and psychological), participants, message form, ends, and key or tone (see Appendix A). I followed Hymes' suggestions to formulate and answer the questions considered in the preceding general description of teacher-teacher conflict. Taken as a collection, the narratives provide answers to the questions concerning what is the subject matter of teacher-teacher conflicts, who is involved in the conflicts, where do they take place, and in what manner do they take place. This description paints a basic picture of what teacher-teacher conflict is for public school teachers.

Recognizable conflict. Furthermore, this general description provides insight into the question: what counts as a socially recognizable, account-able instance of conflict. In an ethnomethodological analysis of parental accounts of discipline interactions, Prusank (1993) asked parents to provide a written description of a recent typical discipline

interaction in which they were the primary disciplinarians. She was attempting to understand the sense-making experience of the discipline interaction from the parents' perspective. She argued that "such information can partially be derived from participants' recounting of (and thus "accounting" for) these episodes and further that a better understanding of how participants experience discipline episodes will bring to the surface the complexity of the processes involved in the production of discourse at both the macro and micro levels of the discipline context" (p. 134). In the present study of teachers' conflict interactions, using the same logic Prusank (1993) used to justify her study of parental discipline accounts, one could argue that the discourse acts in which teachers describe conflict interactions are actually accounts of those episodes. Teachers' use of accounting procedures can be taken to shed light on the methods and practices teachers use to make sense of their own and others' behavior within conflict episodes. An analysis of such accounts further serves to explicate several assumptions teachers make about their conflict partner and the appearance of social order. An understanding of the features to which teachers attend in conflict interactions illuminates the processes through which the discourse of a conflict interaction is co-constructed.

Conflict setting. From the narratives, we can determine that the physical organization of the school influences the social organization. Teachers typically report engaging in conflicts with other teachers within their same school or building.[17]

"*A teacher in my building became angry with me...*" (T-T: 9, line 1).

"*One conflict I've encountered deals with a new teacher in our building...*" (T-T: 11, line 1).

None of the narratives in this data set refers to teacher-teacher conflict occurring between teachers from different schools. In fact, transferring to another building is cited as a solution to a conflict. "*This problem has come to the point that I have put in for a transfer to another building*" (T-T: 14, line 7). Additionally, the physical setting, the fact that all (or most) of the teachers working for a school are housed in the same building and that teachers in the same grade (on the same team) are typically located near one another, and are expected to work together shapes the ways in which the teachers orient to and refer to other teachers in the school. Consider the examples below taken from four of the narratives.

> *I have a conflict with the teachers I work with. There are four of us. We are the fifth-sixth grade teachers so we have to work together* (T-T: 20, line 1).
>
> *Some teachers within the grade level are privy to information given to them by our counselor about administrative decisions. They do not share this information with other grade level teachers until they have used it to secure more favorable situations for themselves. This advantage has led them to adopt a superior condescending attitude toward the other grade level teachers* (T-T: 24, line 4).
>
> *As a team member of hers, I usually knew the decision would go her way. She would begin by saying "This is how I think it should be" and usually others gave in and it was her way* (T-T: 19, line 3).
>
> *I've been at my school 10 years, but get shifted around quite a lot. I was moved to a new pod this last fall and had felt very good working with the other 3 teachers* (T-T: 8, line 1).

Additionally, the physical setting influences the recognition of conflict because there are certain places in the school that are public and some that are private. Because most of the areas are public and because there are norms governing the how teachers engage in conflict in public (see section on norms regulating conflict), teachers attend to where an episode takes place when interpreting the actions of fellow teachers and when determining instances of conflict. Where implicates who is party to the conflict and who witnesses it as direct audiences or mere over hearers. Note the following examples from three of the narratives.

> *She called me out of the room and screamed and blessed me all the way to a personal conference room and continued to put down my character, actions and anything she could think of* (T-T: 27, line 3).
>
> *The fall festival was upon us and I was ready to get involved. At the PTA meeting, I was given the responsibility of the 'pop walk.' So to make sure I had enough pop donations, I asked the students to bring liters to my room early. Everyone in the meeting heard me say it. The next day, I was told that I could not ask children to do that. So, I had to correct myself in front of the whole school during an assembly that morning* (T-T: 5, line 1).
>
> *She will call a team meeting and usually confronts in front of other team members* (T-T: 19, line 10).

Furthermore, the fact that there is one administrator overseeing all of the teachers in a building influences the social organization of the public school setting and consequently the socially recognizable instances of conflict. Unlike other organizations

in which there is a hierarchy of authority such that employees report to supervisors, who report to managers, who report to vice-presidents, and so on, public schools have a flat organizational structure such that employees (teachers) report directly to the administrator, who is the person with the highest decision-making authority in the immediate location. Additionally, each teacher is in charge of his or her own classroom, which translates into a perception that all teachers are relatively equal in status within the explicit organizational structure[18]. In other words, it is uncommon for one teacher to report to another teacher. Each teacher reports to the administrator. Even though this flat organization exists, the narratives indicate that teachers often develop an unspoken hierarchy in reference to the amount of experience a teacher has established through years of service. As the examples from six of the narratives listed below illustrate, this implicit chain of command operating amidst the explicit flat hierarchical structure influences the recognition of, perception of and accounting for conflict between teachers.

> *It was my first year at this school and I had no idea what had been done in previous years* (T-T: 5, line 8).
>
> *I have a conflict with the teachers I work with. There are four of us. We are all controlling and each of us wants to be the boss. There are other factors in the conflict. One is the oldest teacher of the group, which was my fifth grade teacher. Another thing is that two of the other teachers are coaches* (T-T: 20, line 1).
>
> *I have had 20 years of dance experience and she has zero. This makes it hard to work with me* (T-T: 2, line 5).

When I returned in the afternoon, I discovered that another teacher (who was always trying to take charge of everything) had taken it upon herself to get into my locked, confidential files, call and schedule an immediate meeting with the boys' mother and persuaded the mother to have him put in her class (T-T: 30, line 7).

Theirs [the other teachers'] *is a power play—'You can't make me!' and truly I can't, but in the mean time, the student suffers* (T-T: 15, line 17).

Three teachers were using an extra phonic program that was working well and two teachers were using no extra phonic program. The second grade teachers went to the office to complain about the two teachers' kids' skill level and their concerns about no extra phonics being taught. The two teachers stood firm about what they wanted to do. (These two teachers are the oldest ones in that level.) The first and second grade teachers looked at the new phonics programs and voted to go with a completely new program rather than switch to the program that was working so well for the three. Now the three of us teach both (T-T: 4, line 1).

In sum, the narratives provide some insight into the issues, characteristics, subjects, settings, and behaviors to which teachers orient in conflict and which constitute the social organization of the public school setting. In addition to the initial understanding of teacher-teacher conflict provided by this general description of conflict, a greater understanding of teachers' conflicts results from an examination of the norms or conventions that operate within the teachers' work place. These norms are explicated in the next section.

Corpus of Commonsense Knowledge

Part of understanding what counts as a socially recognizable, account-able instance of conflict is understanding the shared knowledge teachers have about certain norms or rules for conduct.[19] In other words, teachers have particular norms of interaction that govern their relations with each other. These norms operate as expectations about conduct—about what it means to be a competent member of the teaching community. Violation of these norms may not only lead to conflict, but may be what teachers use to recognize account-able instances of conflict. By examining the descriptions about teacher-teacher conflict, one can determine some of these norms that govern teachers' relationships. Following is a description of some of the norms that are either implicitly or explicitly stated in the narratives.

Three General Norms or Rules

Norm 1

Duties should be equally distributed. The norm could be stated as follows: Among teachers in a building or on a team, there should be fairly equal distribution of duties--that is, both the pleasant and unpleasant tasks associated with teaching should be divided in a manner that appears to be equitable. From the statements in the narratives, one can assume that teachers expect their fellow teachers to expend as much energy in the required aspects of the job as they do. "*My shortcoming with Miss "X" was/is that she didn't 'seem' to work as hard or have as many students as the rest of us*" (T-T: 32, line 2). The norm is that a teacher will teach approximately the same number of students as others in their grade level and that the distribution of difficult or remedial students to

be fairly equal among the various teachers within a grade. Teachers expect out-of-the-classroom duties such as playground duties to be shared equally. They remember when they have done a favor for another teacher by switching duties or tasks and they expect some type of repayment or at least remembrance of the favor.

> *We were left without a playground duty person at school one day. The person that was on duty was gone on a field trip. The second grade teachers had to do our own duty. I had switched duties with this person on two different occasions and I felt that arrangements should have been made on that day. My principal told us to 'just work with him a little' I felt I had 'worked with him' a lot already* (T-T: 1, line 1).

In short, this norm intimates that every teacher should pull his or her own weight. Teachers orient to violations of this norm as instances of conflict.

Norm 2

Be a team player. The norm could be stated as follows. If teachers are expected to function as a team, members of that team should cooperate with each other and maintain similar policies, curricula, and instructional activities. Some schools emphasize more than others the "team" concept in which grade-level teachers become members of a working organizational unit in the school. Additionally, some teachers report more favorable attitudes toward the team concept than others. However, in those schools where the administration requires teachers to function as a team, the expectation of the teachers is that the other team members should cooperate with that requirement. Consider the following examples.

My major conflict that I contend with on a regular basis is that two teachers on my team do not take roll on a regular basis. Our district has a ruling that after five absences or on the sixth absence, the student fails that nine-week period. This means that the student fails my class, but not theirs (T-T: 26, line 1).

A teacher in my grade level is going to pilot a new math program while knowing she is not supposed to. She had all of the materials sent to her home so that no one at school would know. My conflict is that when I found out, this other teacher asked me not to say anything to another teacher or administrator. If the principal finds out, it will look bad on the whole 'team'—not just the individual teacher (T-T: 4, line 4).

Our school has a rule that all teachers that teach a grade get together and teach the same things. She [another teacher] *on my team doesn't ever want to get together. She doesn't want to do the same thing. This is my second year to teach this grade. Last year was awful because it was a fly by the seat of my pants experience* (T-T: 10, line 5).

The norm is that if teachers are expected to function as a team, members of that team should cooperate with each other and maintain similar policies, curricula, and instructional activities. The authors of these examples indicate that it is the violation of this norm that is the focus of their conflict with the other teacher.

Norm 3

Maintain professional conduct toward students. This norm could be stated as follows: Teachers must act like adults and must behave in a professional way when

dealing with students. In other words, teachers cite harmful actions toward students on the part of another teacher as just cause to initiate a conflict with that teacher. Many teachers proclaim themselves to be protectors of children or students. These teachers report incidents of unprofessional conduct to those in authority.

> *I have a person I work with very closely. This person treats children horribly. She explodes on the children then makes the child feel guilty about whatever happened and the child ends up consoling the teacher. I have great problems with this and have spoken to the principal on numerous occasions* (T-T: 14, line 1).

Other teachers express discomfort with being in the same building with a teacher who is unprofessional toward students. One of the narrative descriptions concerns a teacher who considers a co-worker to be incompetent. The narrative author explains that the co-worker does not know how to "*handle the kids*" (T-T: 13, line 2) and the author avoids him and his classroom because observing his incompetence with the children is very stressful. According to the narrative, the situation disturbed the teacher so much that she decided to teach at another school rather than witness the co-worker's incompetence with the children. However, she chose to confront the co-worker first before transferring to another school.

> *I went to him because I had to know what his plans were so I could look for another job if necessary. We got into a very in-depth discussion and I told him how I felt. It may have been brutal, but I had to tell him. He had come up with every excuse in the book and I was tired of him blaming the kids for his lack of*

discipline. He ended up resigning and I don't have to worry again" (T-T: 3, line 8).

It was another teacher's violation of this norm of professional conduct that prompted the author of this narrative to consider leaving her job to avoid witnessing the other teacher's unprofessional and incompetent behavior. The author's choice of words suggests that because of the violation of this norm, she felt compelled to initiate conflict with the other teacher (e.g., "*It may have been brutal, but I had to tell him,*" T-T: 3, line 10).

Teachers also initiate conflict with fellow teachers in an effort to protect special education students. Many special education teachers refer to themselves as "advocates" for the students. One teacher describes her longstanding conflict with two "regular" classroom teachers who "*flatly refuse to identify their students who may need special education services*" (T-T: 15, line 3). The special education teacher asserts that students suffer because her co-workers will not follow the compliance procedures for special education. She accuses the co-workers of "*passive-aggressive behavior,*" "*attempts to pit parents against the special education system,*" and "*truly unacceptable behavior toward these particular students*" (T-T: 15, line 14). She attributes the lack of cooperation to a struggle of authority in which the special education teacher does not have the authority to require the compliance. "*Theirs is a power play—'You can't make me!' and truly I can't, but in the mean time, the student suffers*" (T-T: 15, line 17).

Another special education teacher describes herself as "*a soft-spoken individual*" who would "*rather grant the 'other person' his wishes than have a confrontation*" (T-T:

30, line 1). She tells of an instance in which her desire to defend a student was greater than her desire to avoid confrontation.

> *When I discovered these events, I was very angry and hurt. Even though I don't like doing this. I confronted this teacher. I knew that negotiating would not help. She had 'walked over me' many times and this time I had to stand up for myself as well as this student* (T-T: 30, line 13).

This norm requiring professional behavior toward students is one that provides a justifiable reason for initiating conflict, even among teachers who do not typically initiate conflict.

The narratives contain multiple direct and indirect references to the three general norms described in this section—duties should be equally distributed; be a team player; and maintain professional conduct toward students. Teachers recognize instances in which these norms are violated as account-able instances of conflict. Additionally, violations of these norms provide reasons for teachers to initiate confrontations and conflict episodes with fellow teachers. The norms described in the next section relate more specifically to teachers' behavior in conflict episodes.

Three Norms Concerning Behavior During Conflict

The three norms listed above govern everyday relations between teachers. The narrative descriptions of conflict contain hints of other norms that govern the ways that teachers do "being in conflict." These rules concern what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior for teachers who are in conflict with fellow teachers. Many of the narratives implicitly or explicitly refer to three norms about teachers' behavior in conflict. While

these norms refer to how to act when one is in conflict regardless of the subject matter of the conflict, a violation of these norms can become the subject matter of a conflict. These norms are discussed below.

Norm 1

Experience takes precedence. The norm could be stated as follows: When teachers are called upon to make decisions as a group, the opinions of the older, more experienced, "lead" or "veteran" teacher(s) should be followed. This norm contains the implicit assumption that teachers who must decide on a single policy or practice for their group will have conflicting opinions about the best policy, practice, or course of action. This norm may be explicitly required by a person in authority. "*The superintendent asked that I follow her lead because she is the veteran teacher*" (T-T: 10, line 4). In contrast, the norm can be self-imposed by the teacher.

> *I picked up pretty quickly on who the lead teacher was and was aware the other two teachers always deferred to this teacher's lead. I noticed times (several) that they weren't particularly happy with it, but nevertheless, they deferred. So, I did too—because it was easier* (T-T: 8, line 3).

The narratives contain many explanatory references to "*older*," (T-T: 20, line 4) "*veteran*," (T-T: 10, line 1) or "*experienced*" (T-T: 15, line 6) teachers, indicating that experience is recognized both by the veteran teachers as well as the newcomers. One teacher who was moved to a new "*pod*" (T-T: 8, line 2) writes about getting "*dressed down*" (T-T: 8, line 16) by the lead teacher who angrily accused the newcomer of not following her lead. While younger or more novice teachers often follow this norm and

defer to older teachers, they sometimes state that the veteran's experience results in a lack of innovation or being "*in a rut*" (T-T: 10, line 2).

Norm 2

Confrontations should be private. This norm concerns who is present when teachers have conflict with other teachers. Teachers do not want to be confronted in front of other teachers, students, the administrator, parents, or any other person. One narrative conveys an episode of conflict between two teachers. While in the presence of students, a teacher confronts the narrator in the narrator's classroom about some borrowed materials. The teacher writes, "*She grabbed the papers from my desk where she had put them and in the process, knocked off several things on my desk. Two students were present and saw it. Of course, I 'fibbed' to the students saying it was an accident*" (T-T: 32, line 7). Another narrative describes an incident in which a fellow teacher confronted the narrator at a ballgame in front of a crowd of people. "*I was embarrassed and I no longer feel comfortable or friendly with the lady*" (T-T: 6, line 4). Another describes an incident that occurred between two teachers in front of their administrator. "*I feel my teaching abilities were in question and I was embarrassed in front of my principal. I was attacked!*" (T-T: 18, line 23).

Embarrassment is a central focus of teachers who are confronted by other teachers in front of others. One teacher describes a situation in which another teacher confronted her in the hallway during school. The narrator states two times in the short description of the event that it occurred in front of the students. She explains that she turned and walked away from the confronting teacher because she did not want to "*bawl*" (T-T: 8) in front of

others. She went to the restroom to cry. She describes her feelings of embarrassment and humiliation. "*I was so embarrassed (more at my crying)(2nd most at my inability to defuse the situation)(3rd, that I'd let myself be put down this way)*" (T-T: 8, line 19-23). This teacher states that she expects herself to be able to handle a situation in which she is confronted in front of others without exhibiting an overly emotional response. Nevertheless, it is clear that the confronting teacher is breaking a norm by attacking her in front of colleagues and students. Another teacher explicates this norm very clearly in her description of a fellow teacher.

> *In the past, I had a co-worker with an extremely strong, leadership, win/lose attitude. She was confrontational and usually did this in front of others. She could snap at others, in front of others, confronting so to speak. She, however, did not like being confronted. I never knew how to approach her and avoided conflict with her. However, this was not always possible. She would always confront me in front of others—very difficult to handle when it happens in front of others—feel powerless and can't win with her. Or she would call a team meeting and usually confront in front of other team members* (T-T: 19, line 1).

In this description the teacher demonstrates the problems that occur when a teacher violates this norm. She explains that even those who violate the norm (either spontaneously or in a planned or manipulative fashion) recognize it as a norm.

Norm 3

Involving the administrator is an option. While teachers report that they do not want to be the recipient of a surprise confrontation in front of their administrator, they do

allow that many teachers will involve an administrator in teacher-teacher disputes. Teachers often speak to the administrator privately about a problem they are having with a fellow teacher. While some teachers view this at "tattling," it seems that it is an option that many teachers exercise when in conflict with a fellow teacher. Some teachers approach the administrator with an expectation that the administrator will discipline the conflict partner. Others approach the administrator with a desire for the administrator to be a mediator or a facilitator in the process of resolution. It seems that calling on the administrator is an option that teachers frequently employ when in conflict with co-workers. It does not happen in every circumstance; however, it does not appear to be a violation of a norm when it does.

Claims about Teachers and Conflict

To further understand teachers' perceptions of teacher-teacher conflict, I asked the following questions: What can we discern about teachers' perceptions of conflict with other teachers by looking at the narratives? Or more specifically, what do the narrative descriptions tell us about what is implicated when a teacher relays or describes a conflict event involving another teacher? A repeated examination of the narrative descriptions of teacher-teacher conflict prompts me to make three claims in answer to the above questions.

- Teachers perceive that the occurrence of conflict is a negative aspect of their professional lives.

- When reporting a conflict, teachers either strategically or naively describe the event in a manner that puts the narrator in the best light (i.e., shows his or her actions to be

reasonable, puts the blame for the conflict on the other or on a set of circumstances, and/or exhibits attempts to resolve the conflict).

- Concerning teacher-teacher conflict, teachers pay attention to or orient to the idea of resolution or closure.

In drawing these conclusions and exerting these claims, I examined the data with a certain mindset.[20] When looking at each description, I did not attempt to evaluate the truthfulness of the claims in the description nor to arrive at any conclusions about whether or not the episode or situation in question "really happened" in the manner the narrator described. Instead, I took each of the descriptions as "a telling" of a set of activities. Riessman (1993, p. 2) explains this type of narrative analysis:

> Narrative analysis takes as its object of investigation the story itself.... The purpose is to see how respondents...impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives. The methodological approach examines the informant's story and analyzes how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades a listener of authenticity. Analysis in narrative studies opens up the forms of telling about experience, not simply the content to which language refers. We ask, why was the story told *that* way?

When examining the narratives, I followed the methodological approach Reissman advocates. I asked: What is the teacher doing with this production of discourse about the conflict? Why is the story told this way? What environment is being projected? What conclusions can I draw about teachers' perceptions of conflict from the way in which this

story is told? In answering these questions, I assert the three claims listed above. In the following section, I will further explicate these claims and support them using examples from the narratives.

Claim 1

Teachers' talk about conflict demonstrates that teachers orient to it or treat it as a negative event. This claim may not be a particularly novel or innovative. Commonsense, it seems, tells us that conflict is something that is destructive, detrimental, or at the least undesirable. In American culture, most people impute a negative connotation to the word conflict. Wilmot and Hocker (1998) report that in a word association, people matched the word conflict with words and concepts such as stress, anger, pathology, fear, detrimental, injurious, tense, etc. It is this negative connotation of conflict that invites people to adopt avoidance strategies to manage it. If conflict is harmful, stressful, damaging, destructive, injurious, and so on, then avoiding conflict episodes can be a strategy for protecting oneself from the pain of conflict. A further cultural assumption stemming from the notion that conflict is negative is the assumption that if you find yourself in conflict, something must be wrong with you, the other person, the system, or something. People assume that harmony is normal and conflict is abnormal. Therefore, the conflict that occurs within one's system (family, school, workplace, church), signals that something is wrong or lacking in the individuals or the system.

The narratives indicate that teachers experience conflicts as negative occurrences in their professional lives. One teacher implies that conflict is difficult to handle. She describes herself as a "*soft-spoken individual who does not deal well with conflict*" (T-T:

30, line 1). She further states that she "*does not like*" (T-T: 30, line 14) the confrontation involved in some conflict episodes. Others associate conflict with "*hard feelings*" (T-T: 22, line 10), or being "*in tears*" (T-T: 33, line 7), or "*bawling*" (T-T: 8, line 21), with being "*dressed down*" (T-T: 8, line 16) or "*embarrassed*" (T-T: 8, line 21), and with being "*attacked*" (T-T: 18, line 23). One teacher explains that her conflict is a "*problem*" that calls for extreme measures. She states, "*This problem has come to the point that I have put in for a transfer to another building*" (T-T: 14, line 7). Still others characterize some conflicts as petty. "*This really causes a conflict because some of the teachers get upset about every little thing and they tell on [us] resource teachers to our administrator*" (T-T: 12, line 6). These examples of teachers' linguistic choices demonstrate that teachers perceive that conflict is negative.

The narratives provide additional support for this claim. Some teachers contrast their descriptions of conflict situations or episodes with statements about an ideal situation without conflict. One teacher describes a conflict that took a long time to resolve. She indicates that now that the conflict is resolved, "*We're looking forward to a more relaxing, productive year*" (T-T: 32, line 15). The narrator implies that the conflict was stressful and that it prohibited those involved from being productive. Another teacher explains that while they do have conflicts in their school, they do not have "*mutual respect and a sense of professionalism*" (T-T: 12, line 11). The contrast suggests that mutual respect and a sense of professionalism are goals that are not being met because of the conflicts among the teachers. Similarly, another teacher describes a conflict situation and specifies behaviors that are seen as promoting conflict, such as dismissing a valid idea because of a prejudice against the person who is presenting it, refusing to share

information with other grade-level teachers, and remaining cool toward adopting new ideas. These behaviors are contrasted with an ideal: a situation without conflict. "*In sum, we often lose sight of our goal of cooperating effectively to use our talents and strengths as teachers to improve instruction for our students and to support each other as educators*" (T-T: 24, line 10). By contrasting descriptions of conflict behaviors with descriptions of ideal situations that are free from conflict, teachers demonstrate their perception that the occurrence of conflict is a negative aspect of their professional lives.

Claim 2

When reporting a conflict, teachers either strategically or naively describe the event in a manner that puts the narrator in the best light (i.e., shows his or her actions to be reasonable, puts the blame for the conflict on another or on a set of circumstances, and/or exhibits attempts to resolve the conflict). The previous section established that the occurrence of teacher-teacher conflict is treated as a negative event in the professional lives of teachers. Additionally, the narratives indicate that teachers attend to another issue: Which person or event is responsible for the occurrence of the conflict and/or its resolution? When teachers describe conflict events, they fashion the description so that they (the authors or narrators) are seen in the best light, which means minimally that they lack culpability for its occurrence. The narratives provide examples of some ways of accounting for conflict that demonstrate that the narrator is not at fault. I have identified at least five methods of accounting for conflict—ways of telling the story—that place the blame for the conflict on someone or something other than the narrator.

- Some teachers tell event-sequenced stores about conflict episodes.
- Some teachers include statements about the character of the conflict partner(s) or attributions for the behavior of the conflict partner(s).
- Some teachers describe conflicts emphasizing the reasonableness of their position or their actions in the conflict.
- Some teachers portray themselves as victims of another's outburst or of a set of circumstances.
- Some teachers suggest that they are innocently drawn into conflict with a peer.

Following is an explication of these five ways of telling conflict stories (including examples from the narratives) that serve to depict the narrator as blameless.

Event-sequenced Stories

An analysis of the teacher-teacher conflict scenarios reveals that in about half of these narratives, the authors tell event-sequenced stories about what happened in the conflict. These accounts contain phrases that signal a beginning point to the story ("*Every year we have an open house...*" T-T: 13, line 1; "*A week or so before open house...*" T-T: 25, line 1; "*On this occasion...*" T-T: 30, line 5) and phrases that mark sequences of events ("*Later that evening...*" T-T: 13, line 9; "*As we talked...*" T-T: 9, line 4; "*I then informed...*" T-T: 7, line 9; "*I again explained my situation...*" T-T: 7, line 11; "*When I returned in the afternoon...*" T-T: 30, line 7; "*The next day...*" T-T: 22, line 9). They also contain some type of closing statement—an ending to the story. For example, one author concludes stating, "*Later, he not only apologized to me and the students, but became very*

interested in their progress in my class. I am satisfied with the resolution" (T-T: 7, line 12). Another ends the accounting by stating, "*She was never confronted..., but was moved the next year to another grade*" (T-T: 25, line 3). When reading these accounts, it seems clear that reporting the order or sequence of events is important to the narrator. Something about the explication of the order of events and the inclusion of certain details seems to serve a purpose. Consider the following example.

> *Every year, we have an open house for the 5th graders coming to our building as 6th graders next year. It is in the evening so the parents can come. We announced this at two staff meetings and asked that all 6th grade teachers be there for introductions and to say a few words. I knew a potentially difficult parent would be attending that had a special ed student. I went to double check with my special ed teachers. I asked if they were coming tonight and explained the situation. Both had made other plans but I asked them to be there. Later that evening, I told my principal about the conversation. He had a funny look on his face and said, "That's why Mrs. ____ asked if she really had to be here tonight." He told her "no" because she didn't tell him all of the information. Then the assistant principal said, "I guess they went over your head." My principal said he would take care of it. He told me he called her on the carpet about it, but it has taken a really long time to not be angry with the other teacher* (T-T: 13, line 1).

In describing this conflict, the teacher describes a certain sequence of events. Without attempting to ascertain the truth-value of the assertions of the teacher, it is possible to see that telling the events in this order portrays the narrator as blameless in this conflict episode. The narrator's sequencing of events sheds light on why she holds one of the

special education teachers accountable for knowing that she (the special ed teacher) was needed to meet a problematic parent before asking the principal if "*she really had to be (t)here*" (T-T: 13, line 10). The sequence of the story reveals the details that are essential in order to blame the special education teachers for the conflict and to hold the narrator blameless.

References to the Character of the Conflict Partner

Although many of the teachers describe conflicts using a narrative or story-telling scheme, many do not use the event-sequencing language prevalent in the accounts described in the previous section. Rather, they make statements about the character of the conflict partner(s) or make attributions for the behavior of the conflict partner(s). Consider these examples from four of the narratives.

> *The homeroom teachers tend to take advantage of the resource teachers because they believe that the resource teachers have a lot of extra time* (T-T: 12, line 4).

> *Another teacher is teaching the same grade. She is the veteran teacher who is very set in her ideas and actually in a rut. She doesn't want to do anything new, whether it's teaching concepts or field trips* (T-T: 10, line 1).

[Some teachers] *adopt a superior condescending attitude toward other grade-level teachers. They also are 'cool' toward adopting new ideas about activities and programs that they are not "in charge of"* (T-T: 24, line 8).

> *I attempt to remain calm, professional and focused on the students' needs. I am met with oppositional, passive-aggressive behavior...* (T-T: 15, line 12).

The authors of these accounts do not seem to be focused on the sequence of events in the conflict but on the attributes of the people involved in the conflict. These comments concerning the character, personality, or behavior of the other person become a part of the teacher's analysis of the reasons for the conflict. So, the report of the conflict in fact becomes an analysis of why the conflict exists (i.e., who is to blame for the conflict). These statements about the character of the conflict partner serve to focus the blame for the conflict on someone other than the narrator.

Portraying One's Actions as Reasonable

Describing one's actions in a situation as reasonable is a way of defending those actions against criticism from another person or an authority figure. The assumption is that acting in an unreasonable manner might spark a conflict or might contribute to the continuation or escalation of a conflict. As either the initiator or the sustainer of conflict, the person acting unreasonably bears the primary blame for the conflict. Consider the various examples of ways in which teachers portray their actions as reasonable in the conflict accounts.

One way a teacher puts forth the appearance of reasonableness when describing a conflict scenario is to indicate that other persons involved in the situation or involved in similar circumstances share the same feelings or would like to follow similar actions as the narrator of the scenario. One teacher describes a conflict she had with a fellow teacher whose mother was the supervisor of the narrator and the conflict partner at the time of the conflict incident. At the end of the description she writes, "*This* [conflict event] *only happened last year, but others have felt the same as myself, just were afraid to say*

anything, since her mother was our boss" (T-T: 32, line 13). Another teacher describes a situation involving a fellow teacher who "*treats children horribly*" (T-T: 14, line 1). She explains, "*I have great problems with this and have spoken to the principal on numerous occasions. The principal is very supportive. However, when confronted, the teacher will out and out lie. Other teachers have had the same problems I have found out*" (T-T: 14, line 3). The expression of statements about the feelings or experiences of others in similar circumstances demonstrates the reasonableness and correctness of the position of the narrator.

In another narrative, a teacher puts herself in a favorable light by explicating the reasons why her position is correct or reasonable. The narrator, a physical education teacher, describes a conflict with a fellow teacher who does not deliver or pick up her class at the designated time.

> *I needed the class to be there on time because my time was limited and space was unavailable the last 15 minutes of class. When the class came late, my objectives couldn't be met and kids had no area to finish activities. When the teacher doesn't pick up her class on time, I have to hold students in the cafeteria with no area while lower grades are entering the cafeteria and my class is in the way. OR I could dismiss her class without supervision to return to class alone. Also, when I was holding her class, she seemed to stay gone longer—knowing I would keep her kids. She always has an excuse for being late. She doesn't see any problem with being late* (T-T: 31, line 3).

The narrator gives logistic reasons for her position (space was unavailable) and instructional reasons for her position (my objectives could not be met). In contrast, she casts the conflict partner is a negative light by failing to give any acceptable reasons for the other's position and by characterizing her as manipulative and irresponsible. This way of telling the story shows the reasonableness of the narrator and the unreasonableness of the conflict partner.

In another example, a teacher's narrative includes statements that portray the narrator as someone who is not typically given to conflict behavior but who, on this one occasion, had to enter into conflict because of the severity of the deeds of the other teacher. She prefaces the description of the conflict event with the statement: "*...I would much rather grant the 'other person' his [or her] wishes than have a confrontation. However, I can think of one particular instance where I stood my ground even though I knew it would lead to conflict*" (T-T: 30, line 2). Next, she describes the upsetting events and concludes the account with a statement of why, in this instance, she felt compelled to enter into conflict with the other person.

> *When I discovered these events, I was very angry and hurt. Even though I don't like doing this, I confronted this teacher. I knew negotiating would not help. She had 'walked over me' many times and this time I had to stand up for myself as well as this student. Because I am not good at dealing with conflict, I did it in a very soft-spoken manner; however, this time I was very adamant about my desires...* (T-T: 30, line 13).

According to this teacher, conflict is a negative event and she lacks the requisite skills and motivations to "*deal well with conflict*" (T-T, line 30). However, she demonstrates her reasonableness by portraying herself as one who is compelled to enter into it "*on this occasion*" (T-T: 30, line 5) for a good reason: the severity of the deeds of the other teacher and the need to protect a student. In the conclusion of the narrative, she implies that her confrontation successfully resolved the conflict. She explains that the other teacher complied with her (the narrator's) request. She concludes, "*Needless to say, there have been no other similar instances*" (T-T: 30, line 18). The use of the words "needless to say" presumes that the reader knows the essence of the remainder of the statement before the narrator states it. One interpretation of this concluding sentence is: "You can tell by the way I have described this series of events and their outcome that my position was correct and my way of handling it was correct because I achieved the result I wanted and no other similar incidents have occurred." This way of telling the story (I am normally mild-mannered but had to protect a student) invites the reader to see the narrator as reasonable and sensible.

Portrayal of Oneself as a Victim

Some teachers cast themselves in a favorable light by explaining the reasonableness of their positions or actions in conflict scenarios. Others accomplish this by portraying themselves as victims in conflict scenarios. In other words, the narrator is the innocent recipient of another's verbal attack or is somehow being treated unfairly by others. For example, one teacher explains that she was attacked for something that another teacher did.

This day, one of the other two teachers had changed something in our schedule. (Always a sore point with the leader.) The kids were milling in the hall and I went out to see what was wrong. The one teacher was explaining to me what she'd done and I had just said it was fine with me. At this point, the lead teacher walked out and immediately turned to me to question what I was doing. Knowing her temper and temperament etc., I became flustered and tried to explain that I was really there to see what was going on. In front of all the kids, she immediately began to dress me down and to state we would do what I [author's name] *was wanting. I turned to the other teacher and asked her to please explain what it was she was wanting done and this really infuriated her* [/the lead teacher]. *She became angrier and of course all our students were watching. At that point, I knew if I stayed I'd burst into tears, so I turned around, walked into my room, and then walked back out again and down to the restroom to "bawl"* (T-T: 8, line 9).

In this description, the teacher indicates that she was in essence minding her own business when the lead teacher attacked her. She portrays herself as a flustered victim of the other teacher's temper.

Another teacher's account of a conflict portrays the narrator as an innocent victim of another teacher's aggression.

Once I was attacked in a surprise move by a grade-level colleague who accused me of saying a statement (which I did not say). She was beyond being rational and said a student told her and she believed him, not me. She called me out of the room and screamed and blessed me all the way to a personal conference room

and continued to put down my character, actions and anything she could think of. She continued to proceed with negative remarks trying to convince me of how bad I was and that she would have her husband come and stomp me to the ground. Gee, I was innocent and to this day, it's a mystery but I have decided she needed to get something off her chest and I was the chosen, lucky listener (T-T: 27, line 1).

The narrator in this account chooses words that relate to military warfare (e.g., attacked, surprise move, stomp me into the ground). The story paints a picture of an unknowing victim who receives unjust criticism, verbal abuse, and threats. The narrator describes the conflict event in a way that puts the entire blame for the conflict on the other teacher.

Through descriptive language, other teachers' portray themselves as victims. One teacher indicates that when she is in conflict with a co-worker, she feels "*powerless*" (T-T: 19, line 10) and that she "*can't win with her*" (T-T: 19, line 10). Another teacher explains that her friend was the recipient of another teacher's verbal attack. She states, "*I've really had to hold back because I really felt like jumping in to my friend's aid*" (T-T: 11, line 7). Another teacher explains that the homeroom teachers "*take advantage of*" (T-T: 12, line 4) the resource teachers in her school.

Innocently Drawn Into Conflict Episodes

In order to display their lack of culpability for conflicts, some teachers tell event-sequenced stores; some denigrate the character or personality of the conflict partner. Still others explain the reasonableness of their positions or actions in conflict scenarios. Some others accomplish this by portraying themselves as victims in conflict scenarios. Still

others fashion their stories to demonstrate that their involvement in a conflict episode occurred because they were innocently drawn into the conflict. It is as if the narrator is saying, "I was just trying to do my job and the other person got upset." In one scenario, a teacher explains:

> *A teacher in my building became angry with me because I went to a workshop and the presenter was someone who had caused her to have some serious health problems. I knew about the situation, but I was interested in the topic that was being presented. As we talked, I told her how badly I felt for her, but I attended the workshop to get more information that could possibly help my students* (T-T: 9, line 1).

In short, the teacher tells the story in a manner that relieves her from responsibility for the conflict because she was merely "doing her job".

In another scenario, a teacher explains that she was carrying out orders from her principal during a faculty meeting in which the principal was not in attendance. "*During an after school faculty meeting, the principal was on a phone conference with a parent and asked me to get things started*" (T-T: 22, line 1). The faculty members were making a decision about which teachers would attend a school field trip. The narrator explains that other teachers were unhappy with her comments and involvement in the decision despite the fact that she was doing what the principal had requested.

> *The next day (the day of the trip), very hard feelings were brought up by both of those teachers because the principal said that the teacher in question could go, but she preferred that he didn't. This is what I stated the previous day, however,*

both teachers stated to me that it was not my place to say anything during the meeting, and they were both upset with me (T-T: 22, line 9).

Again, the teacher's story is one of a person who is innocently drawn into conflict just because she was trying to do her job. Through the telling of the story, the teacher relieves herself of blame for the conflict.

Claim 3

Concerning teacher-teacher conflict, teachers pay attention to or orient to the idea of resolution or closure. Examining the narratives provides insight into the particular aspects of conflict teachers emphasize or those to which they orient or attend. In a majority of the narratives, the author reports something that he or she did to bring closure to the conflict. When reporting conflicts, teachers pay attention or orient to the idea of resolution or closure. The way in which each narrative is written provides insight into whether the person writing the account perceives that the particular reported conflict is **open**—unresolved and/or ongoing or whether the conflict is **closed**—resolved either satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily.

In certain instances, the author comments specifically on the issue of closure or resolution to the conflict.

Our conflict was not resolved because I was the one who did all the changing" (T-T: 5, line 13).

Later, he not only apologized to me and the students, but became very interested in their progress in my class. I am satisfied with the resolution (T-T: 7, line 12).

Even without these direct comments about resolution, in each of the narratives, one can speculate concerning the status of the conflict—whether or not it is still open or unresolved and if it is resolved, what brought about the closure. Consider the following example:

> *A week or so before Open House, a teacher from the same grade was coming into my classroom at night and copying my ideas and then putting them up as her own. She was never confronted (however, the principal knew what she was doing), but was moved the next year to another grade* (T-T: 25, line 1).

Although the author of the narrative states that neither she nor the principal confronted the offending teacher, the conflict is essentially closed because the two parties no longer have daily contact with one another.

In contrast, the following conflict description by a teacher who is not happy with the work habits of her teacher's aide does not express a sense of closure. In this example, the conflict appears to be ongoing and the teacher expresses continuing feelings of confusion and doubt.

> *The aide is pleasant, she is always on time, and I don't want to make an unpleasant situation unbearable. My conflict is within myself. I do alright at times, then when my job becomes stressful, I get resentful and mad at myself for not letting go. Why can't I be satisfied knowing I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing? I also feel guilty about resenting the aide. I'm just not spiritual enough to rise above this* (T-T: 17, line 19).

In some cases, teachers express hope that the situation will change and the conflict will be resolved. "*I would really like for everyone to understand that we all have special, important jobs in our schools. There needs to be a mutual respect and a sense of professionalism*" (T-T: 12, line 10). In other cases, teachers report believing that attempts at resolution could exacerbate the situation causing the conflict. "*I am not willing to take a chance to solve or work on problems with her for fear of making the situation worse*" (T-T: 17, line 3). In yet other cases, teachers' descriptions of conflict events end with references to their unresolved feelings of injury. In the following examples, these statements are the final sentences of the narratives.

> *I feel my teaching abilities were in question and I was embarrassed in front of my principal. I was attacked!* (T-T: 18, line 22).
>
> *At the end of the year, I was again moved but my own low esteem makes me feel somehow I've been judged and found wanting* (T-T: 8, line 25).
>
> *I think I'm more hurt because I helped her out with a personal problem and I deserved better than tha*" (T-T: 6, line 5).

The authors of these statements express hurt and injury with no indication that the conflict partner has done anything to repair the situation.

In sum, it seems that for a teacher who has had a conflict with a fellow teacher, part of reporting about or describing the conflict includes commenting on the disposition of the conflict. This could involve comments about what either the narrator or someone else has done to resolve the conflict.

Summary Comments About These Claims

An important question about these claims is: What are they claims about? It seems they are generally claims that address teachers' patterns of talk about conflict. As such, they help us to understand teachers' definition of conflict—what teachers "mean" when they refer to conflict. These claims could be taken as features of a cultural category (e.g., Katriel & Philipsen, 1981) for teachers—the cultural category of conflict. In chapter four, I will discuss this particular interpretation of these findings that originates in ethnography of communication theory and research.

CHAPTER THREE: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS--PART TWO

As mentioned previously, teachers' work-related conflicts involve other teachers, administrators, parents, and students. The largest segment of the narratives in the data set for this dissertation describes conflicts between teachers. Approximately one fourth of the data set describes conflicts between a teacher and an administrator. The following section of the dissertation will summarize and report the results of the analysis of the narratives describing teacher-administrator conflict.

Conflicts Between Teachers and Administrators

The goal of this section is to provide insight into teachers' perceptions about the conflicts they have with their administrators. The section is organized into three basic subsections. The first subsection includes a general description of teacher-administrator conflict—the answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how. The next section highlights teachers' shared knowledge concerning certain norms—norms, which if violated, lead to conflict. The final section contains some claims about teachers and conflict that are derived from a narrative analysis of the conflict descriptions.

Some General Features of Accounted Teacher-Administrator Conflict

To begin to understand teacher-administrator conflict, I asked the following questions: From the standpoint of teachers, who is involved in conflict; what is the subject matter of conflicts; in what settings do conflicts occur; and in what manner or tone are the conflicts enacted?

Who

The general organizational chart of most schools in urban areas includes teachers and staff who work within a single school building and who report to a principal. In turn, the principal typically reports to a superintendent who is the authority figure and decision maker for a number of schools within a district. The superintendent answers to a board of directors (an elected position), which is usually comprised of prominent citizens in the community. Variations on this structure occur at the secondary level in schools where one or more assistant principals supports the primary principal. Within this organizational structure, teachers typically resolve issues with their immediate administrator (principal). If a superintendent becomes involved in a conflict, it is often because the subject matter of the conflict requires it or because the principal has not been effective in solving the conflict. Similarly, if the school board becomes involved in a conflict, it is typically because the subject matter warrants it or the conflict is particularly difficult or longstanding.

In contrast, in schools in rural areas, it is common for a principal of a school to also serve as the superintendent for the entire district. It is also common for administrators to assume multiple other roles within the school community. The contact between the teachers and the superintendent is often more immediate and frequent than it is in larger districts. Further, in smaller communities, school board members are more likely to become involved in some of the day-to-day aspects of the school operations than they are in larger, urban communities.

In the narratives, teachers describe conflicts with their principals, their superintendents, and even board members. It is not possible to discern from the narratives the size of the community in which the author works. However, it seems evident that in many of the accounts, a teacher reporting a conflict with his or her superintendent is similar to the teacher reporting a conflict with his or her principal. In other words, in only a few of the narratives did the author describe the more formal hierarchical structure of teacher-principal-superintendent. In most of the accounts, a teacher-principal conflict compares to a teacher-superintendent conflict. In one account, the author explains that her superintendent is also her principal. Another teacher points out that the principal of her school is also the athletic director of the school.

Additionally, it is important to note that although a teacher may teach at a certain school for the length of his or her career, it is a common practice for principals to rotate from school to school within a district within a relatively short time frame. It is also common for principals to leave one school district to go to another as they follow a career path. Therefore, it is not uncommon for an intact and veteran group of teachers to experience relatively frequent changes in administration.

In the narratives described in this section on teacher-administrator conflict as well as the narratives in the previous section describing teacher-teacher conflict and the next section describing teacher-parent conflict, the authors' depictions of conflicts often include mention of other school personnel and students. Therefore, when I analyzed the narratives and placed them into the categories of teacher-teacher conflict, teacher-administrator conflict, and teacher-parent conflict, I had to base the decision on some criteria. For example, in many of the teacher-teacher conflict scenarios, the author reports

that one or more of the parties in conflict presented the conflict to the administrator and asked for a resolution. And, in many of the teacher-administrator conflict scenarios, the narrator reports that his or her conflict with the administrator involves other teachers. Consequently, when categorizing the scenarios for analysis, I looked for clues within the narrative to the author's perspective concerning the primary conflict partners (i.e., was it a conflict between teachers or between a teacher and an administrator or between a teacher and a parent). For example, one teacher who is also the cheerleading sponsor at her school describes a conflict involving herself, two student cheerleaders, their mothers and the administrator. She begins the narrative by stating: "*This is the classic case of being given the responsibility but not being given backing by the administration*" (T-A: 4, line 1). This author provides a synopsis of the essence of the conflict—a teacher-administrator conflict. This type of introductory comment is a common appearance in the narratives. Consider the following examples of introductory statements from eight of the accounts that I categorized as teacher-administrator conflicts:

> *Conflict—Talking to an administrator about a problem, concern or question involving a student* (T-A: 7, line 1).
>
> *I worked for 7 years with a principal who did not like me at all* (T-A: 5, line 1).
>
> *This past school year we received a new administrator. She made it clear from the first day that she did not want to be there* (T-A: 6, line 1).
>
> *Our new superintendent's managerial style is very dictatorial* (T-A: 8, line 1).
>
> *The conflict is between my principal and myself over a discipline interaction which arose from a name calling incident between two students* (T-A: 16, line 1).

My main source of conflict for the past three years involves my principal's refusal to confront a problem teacher in my department (T-A: 2, line 1).

I have a conflict with my present boss (T-A: 3, line 1).

After my first year of teaching, we had a new superintendent as principal. The principal looked at my test scores and decided that I wasn't a good teacher (T-A: 12, line 1).

Although the body of the narratives that begin with the statements listed above often describe conflicts in which other teachers, administrators, parents, and students, are involved, these introductory statements seem to indicate that the author identifies the administrator as the main conflict partner. Now consider the following examples of introductory statements from eight of the accounts that I categorized as teacher-teacher conflicts:

Conflict: Teacher not bringing her class on time and not picking them up on time (T-T: 31, line 1).

Coaching dance team. I have a different perspective or coaching style as the other coach (T-T: 2, line 1).

One of my co-teachers is simply incompetent (T-T: 3, line 1).

I am a special education teacher by trade and choice, an advocate for these and all students. My long-standing conflict is with two regular classroom teachers...(T-T: 15, line 1).

I had a conflict with my teaching assistant concerning taking naps at school (T-T 16, line 1).

I have a conflict with the teachers I work with (T-T: 20, line 1).

My major conflict that I contend with on a regular basis is that two teachers on my team do not take roll on a regular basis (T-T: 26, line 1).

Although the body of the narratives that begin with the statements listed above often describe conflicts in which other teachers, administrators, parents, and students, are involved, these introductory statements seem to indicate that the author identifies a fellow teacher as the main conflict partner. When these types of introductory comments were present, I relied on them to identify an account as either a teacher-administrator conflict or a teacher-teacher conflict. When the account did not contain such an introductory comment, I attempted to determine the primary conflict partner and then categorize the account accordingly.

To summarize, although I categorized the conflicts in this section as teacher-administrator conflicts, when providing a general description of who is involved in these conflicts, it is important to note that other school personnel and students may play a part in the conflict or may be the subject matter of the conflict between the narrator and his or her administrator.

What

As with the teacher-teacher conflict scenarios, I systematically analyzed the teacher-administrator conflict narratives, looking at each one to determine the subject matter of the conflict (or at least the subject matter of the conflict according to the

narrator). I then looked for commonalities in the subject matter of the individual conflicts and found that teachers clash with administrators over a variety of subjects. Teachers and administrators experience:

- conflicts concerning discipline issues (e.g., lack of coordination between teacher and principal on implementation of disciplinary action, differences of opinion between teacher and principal about the form of punishment that is appropriate in a given situation, and disagreements over variations in disciplining techniques among different teachers within the same school);
- disputes over school policy issues, particularly in situations when an intact and veteran group of teachers receives a new administrator or superintendent;
- tension occurring when teachers perceive that the administrator is not consistent (e.g., administrator implements policy and then changes his or her mind without warning);
- dissention over the degree to which the administrator is involved in teacher-teacher conflicts;
- discord over the degree to which the superintendent is involved in teacher-administrator conflicts;
- clashes over teaching philosophies;
- conflicts resulting from teachers' perceptions that the administrator fails to support the teacher in front of parents of students during conferences;
- tension resulting from teachers' perceptions that they are "caught in the middle" when administrators have conflicts with parents of students;

- conflicts resulting from administrator's decisions concerning teachers who have been judged to be incompetent by fellow teachers or by the administrator;
- struggles over issues relating to power, control, and whose opinions and ideas will prevail; and
- clashes over the verbal and nonverbal aspects of administrator's interactions with teachers.

Where

According to the narratives, although teacher-administrator conflict can and does occur in a number of different locations within the school building, the primary location of teacher-administrator conflict is in the administrator's office. Most of the narrators who refer to location use a common phrase: the administrator or superintendent *"called me in"* to his or her office (e.g., T-A: 1, line 22; T-A: 5, line 12; T-A: 12, line 10; T-A: 13, line 3). Interestingly, for one teacher, this fact—that the administrator calls teachers in to her office—embodies a major part of her conflict with the administrator. She writes:

> *Another conflict. This principal loves to have conferences in her office with the door closed; she becomes God! I hope someday that this fear technique is outlawed!* (T-A: 3, line 12).

While this particular teacher explicitly states her conclusions about the administrator's motives for choosing her office for conferences, the other narrators merely make mention of the location of the conflict without providing commentary on it.

Alternatively, a couple of the narratives indicate that the teacher went to the administrator's office and confronted the administrator about an issue. Recall that in the previous section on teacher-teacher conflict, it was not uncommon for the narrator to mention that he or she went to the administrator's office to ask the administrator to get involved in a teacher-teacher conflict. However, in this section on teacher-administrator conflict, the majority of the narratives use language suggesting that the teacher was summoned to the administrator's office. While one might speculate concerning the administrator's reasons for calling a teacher to his or her office, one possible reason is that it does seem to provide a certain amount of privacy for conflictual interactions. Only one of the narratives states that a principal confronted a teacher in front of other school personnel and students. In fact, one teacher indicated in her scenario that the principal and assistant principal came to her office (when student were not around) and closed the door behind them before they confronted her about an issue.

How

According to the narratives, teacher-administrator conflicts can vary from calm exchanges of information and opinions to situations in which one or more of the parties becomes loud or animated. While the narrators do not always comment directly on this issue of the manner or tone of the conflict interactions, when they do, it is typically to say that the administrator was loud or aggressive.

> *The principal and assistant principal closed the door behind them and began to raise their voices on that topic* (T-A: 10, line 9).

I had two confrontational meetings during the year in which she literally yelled in my face about how lazy and irresponsible we at the high school are. I feel very proud of myself for defending myself and my colleagues (in spite of my tears). I need help with minimizing emotions and remaining calm and logical during face-to-face, one-to-one conflict (T-A: 8, line 4).

The following day or days later, administrator confronts either teacher or student in an aggressive manner—What is going on?! Why are you doing that?! What do you think you are doing?! (T-A: 7, line 3).

Summary of General Features of Accounted Teacher-Administrator Conflict

Taken as a group, the narratives provide answers to questions concerning what is the subject matter of teacher-administrator conflicts, who is involved in the conflicts, where do they take place, and in what manner do they take place. This description paints a basic picture of what teacher-administrator conflict is for public school teachers.

In the previous section on teacher-teacher conflict, after proffering the general description of teacher-teacher conflict, I looked at ways the general description of teacher-teacher conflict could provide insight into the question: what counts as a socially recognizable, account-able instance of conflict. I examined the ways in which the teachers' accounts shed light on the methods and practices teachers use to make sense of their own and others' behavior within conflict episodes. I will use this general description of teacher-administrator conflict for the same purposes--to discover the assumptions teachers make about their conflict partner and the appearance of social order—to discover what counts as a socially recognizable, account-able instance of conflict.

From the narratives, we can determine that the physical organization of the school (e.g., that there is one administrator overseeing all of the teachers in a building) influences the social organization. Teachers typically report engaging in conflicts with the administrator in their own school building. None of the narratives in this data set refer to teacher-administrator conflict occurring between a teacher from one school and an administrator from another school. In fact, teachers mention transferring to another school as a remedy for irresolvable conflicts with administrators. Yet, the some of the conflict narratives do involve a superintendent who has authority over several schools in the district. In urban districts, the superintendent's office is typically in a separate building located somewhere in the school district. Therefore, if a teacher is called to or chooses to go to the superintendent's office, he or she must go off of the school campus—a fact that highlights the hierarchical administrative structure of the school system.

The physical setting influences the conflict interactions between administrators and teachers. The narratives indicate that most conflict interactions between teachers and administrators occur in the administrator's office—a fact that may influence teachers' perceptions of and definition of teacher-administrator conflict. Certainly not all interactions between teachers and principals that take place in the principal's office are conflict interactions. However, according to the narratives, teachers make note of occasions in which they are summoned to the principal's office in contrast to those in which they choose to go to the principal's office.

Additionally, administrators move from school to school more frequently that teachers do. Therefore, teachers may experience a number of different administrators

during their tenure at a school. The narratives indicate that when describing teacher-administrator conflicts, teachers attend to the length of time that an administrator has been at their particular school.

> *I have spoken with our principal, who was hired in the middle of the year—her first year as principal* (T-A: 15, line 11).
>
> *This past school year, we received a new administrator...* (T-A: 6, line 1).
>
> *Our new superintendent's managerial style is very dictatorial...* (T-A: 8, line 1).
>
> *After my first year of teaching, we had a new superintendent as principal...* (T-A: 12, line 1).
>
> *We got both a new principal and superintendent this past year...*(T-A: 1, line 1).

By including these comments about the length of time the administrator has been at the school, the authors of these narratives provide insight into their perceptions of conflict with that particular administrator as well as their perceptions of teacher-administrator conflict in general. In sum, the narratives provide some insight into the issues, characteristics, subjects, settings, and behaviors to which teachers orient in conflict and which the social organization of the public school setting. In addition to the initial understanding of teacher-administrator conflict provided by this general description of conflict, a greater understanding of teachers' conflicts with administrators results from an examination of the norms or conventions that operate within the teachers' work place. These norms are explicated in the next section.

Corpus of Common Sense Knowledge

As was stated in chapter two on teacher-teacher conflict, part of understanding what counts as a socially recognizable, account-able instance of conflict is understanding the shared knowledge teachers have about certain norms or rules for conduct where administrators are concerned. These norms operate as expectations about conduct—about what it means to be a competent member of the public school community. Violation of these norms may not only lead to conflict, but may be what teachers use to recognize account-able instances of conflict. An examination of the teachers' narratives about teacher-administrator conflict can provide some of the information concerning expectations that teachers have for teacher-administrator relations. Following is a description of five rules of interaction for administrators that are either implicitly or explicitly stated in the narratives.

Norms of Interaction for Administrators

Norm 1

New administrators should pause before making policy changes. It was noted above that administrators change schools relatively frequently while teachers do not. Therefore, it is not uncommon for an administrator to begin working at a school with a group of teachers who are accustomed to each other and to certain ways of doing things. Teachers report that a new administrator will often (if not always) make changes in policy. "*We got both a new principal and superintendent this past year. Of course, this brought change in policy*" (T-A: 1, line 1). Several of the narratives report conflicts over

policy and staff changes initiated by new administrators. In each case, the author reports that the change resulted in problems.

> *This past school year, we received a new administrator. She made it clear from the first day that she did not want to be here. She changed quite a few things, including canceling 5th-grade graduation. My parents were extremely upset and turned to me to let off steam. ...I ended up being in the middle of a huge conflict with a lot of name-calling (parents and principal)* (T-A: 6, line 1).

> *After my first year of teaching, we had a new superintendent a principal. ...She set out to get rid of the old crew so that she could bring in a new bunch. Her tactics were successful with three of the seasoned teachers. One took early retirement, one died from a heart attack and one resigned* (T-A: 12, line 1).

> *Our new superintendent...made several changes before school even started her first year...before observing what was working and what wasn't* (T-A: 8, lines 1-3).

> *We got both a new principal and superintendent this past year. Of course, this brought change in policy. The principal called a meeting and told the faculty that there would be a change in the way we did our awards at awards assembly at the end of the year. He told us that we could only give one award per class. ...Several of us give one to six awards per class...however, some of us give no awards. Mr. Principal says that is where the problem is. He doesn't want some teachers giving none and some giving numerous awards. After a few days, I approached him privately and related that I didn't understand why administration would care how*

many awards I gave. After all, it was my classroom and I felt that I should have control over my own awards...I and one other teacher felt strongly about our awards, but he wouldn't budge! Second meeting in his office—both of us teachers together and principal—no compromise—HIS WAY. Few more days—I decide I must do it his way. I am not one to break policy. ...I told the students in my AP class...that I would be giving only one award due to new policy. I wanted them to know. Next day—I'm called to superintendent's office. He's upset—parents have called—I'm disloyal—etc. etc. verbal exchange. I explained my position. He explained his! I didn't tell students to be disloyal to administration. I told them so they would be prepared and not disappointed in the "only one award." Several weeks passed—faculty meeting—principal announces: go back to old way. You give as many awards as you want, but everyone must give at least one. MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING" (T-A: 1, line 1).

From these four examples, one can ascertain the shared knowledge teachers use concerning teacher-administration relations. Teachers expect that new administrators will make staff and policy changes. These changes often cause problems with school operations and school personnel. The administrator does not discuss the changes with the people who will be affected by the changes before announcing the changes. These changes are often not necessary and in fact, are counterproductive. Teachers report thinking that in some cases, administrators do not consider the ramifications of the policy changes and after a great deal of turmoil, decide to return to the original policy. Therefore, administrators should pause before making policy changes to consult faculty and staff and to consider ramifications of the changes.

Norm 2

Administrators should not use an authoritarian style of management, but should use a consultative style of management. In describing conflicts with their administrators, several of the teachers express dissatisfaction with their administrator's management style. In all but one of the narratives in this section, the teacher criticizes certain management behaviors of the administrator that could be labeled as authoritarian. Examples of these behaviors are as follows:

- the administrator makes changes without consulting those affected by the changes;
- when differences of opinion arise, the administrator insists that his or her opinion or solution be followed (i.e., is not open to discussion or compromise);
- during discussions or conflicts, the administrator raises his or her voice or yells at the faculty member; and
- the administrator gains compliance from the faculty or staff by threatening them with reprimands, written evaluations, or ultimately termination.

In some of the scenarios, the teacher refers directly to the managerial style of the administrator.

> *Our new superintendent's managerial style is very dictatorial...I had two confrontational meetings during the year in which she literally yelled in my face....This tension continues. Management through fear is very nonproductive and produces a lot of hurt among nonadministrative employees* (T-A: 8, line 1).

In other scenarios, the teacher mentions specific behaviors that in the context of the story suggest that the administrator is being authoritarian.

> *I continued to discuss with him my disgust with the decision and he began to get angry with me for questioning his authority....He said he did not have to explain anything to me and arguing with him will only hurt my situation. So I told him, 'how will I explain it to the class...?' He said it was none of my business or the other students' business* (T-A: 9, line 33).

In these examples, the authors indicate that they do not appreciate the management style of their administrators. In a few of the scenarios, the teachers make negative attributions concerning the reasons why their administrators have adopted an authoritarian style of management.

> *I worked for seven years with a principal who did not like me at all. ... I believe the problem started when the former principal told him how great I was and how much I did and how much of an asset I was. I believe he considered me a threat because I am a very 'can-do' person and he wanted total control* (T-A: 5, line 1).

> *I have a conflict with my present boss; she is the type you never know what mood she'll be in! She likes it that way! She does it on purpose. She never announces when she'll be showing up. I say this because she announced (when she became principal) that teaching 5-year-olds to write is NOT developmental! Nor is coloring! I've taught kindergarten more years than she—I've done about as much research as she. I could go on and on, but the point is: children entering school*

love to learn! To make a long story short, I chose two days out of the year (to try to get away with it) to teach 'writing.' She walks in, giving me her sickening smile. She DID put it on my evaluation for the year. Talk about CONFLICT! A principal can either make you or break you. This principal has broken me! (T-A: 3, line 1).

In the narratives, the teachers contrast the negative managerial behaviors of their administrators with the behaviors that they would like to see from the administrator. Examples of these positive behaviors are as follows:

- administrators should understand that employees' feelings and emotions are important;
- administrators should allow for diversity of opinions and perspectives and should attempt to accommodate those differences when possible;
- administrators should respect the experience of the teacher who is in the classroom everyday and should defer to the teacher in situations in which the teacher has more expertise or research knowledge about the disputed issue;
- administrators should be willing to compromise when faced with sound arguments from teachers concerning the reasons for their positions on subjects;
- administrators should consult with teachers before making decisions that affect them.

The majority of the narratives that addressed the management style of the administrator follow the pattern listed above. The exception is a narrative in which the author expresses disdain for an administrator who will not *"confront a problem teacher in my department"* (T-A: 2, line 2). The narrator describes the numerous ways she as department head has

documented problems, discussed the problems with the "incompetent" teacher, and reported the problems to the administrator. The author states that the results of these actions are very unsatisfactory—the administrator promises to intervene and to implement consequences, but fails to follow up with any action. The teacher states:

> *We put together a plan of action, and she [the problem teacher] fails to follow through. He* [the administrator] *tells her she should look for another job, but rehires her each April. In the meantime, she continues to make the same mistakes and kids and parents continue to flock to me for answers. I direct them to my superior—and nothing happens. This is not an overt conflict, but a great source of frustration and resentment. I have a good working relationship with this man, but I abhor his continual ineffective response to this matter* (T-A: 2, line 6).

In this case, the teacher criticizes the administrator's consultative management style and desires more authoritative action. Note that this situation involves the incompetence of another teacher, not the author of the narrative. In the earlier examples, the narrator reflects on the administrator's management style as it relates to the narrator. Nevertheless, in general, it seems to be a norm of teacher-administrator interaction that teachers do not want administrators to use an authoritarian management style.

Norm 3

An administrator should not change his or her mind without having good reasons for the change and without explaining the change to the faculty and staff. Several of the scenarios describe conflicts that occur because the teacher perceives that the

administrator changes his or her mind about an issue without providing warning or explanation. Note the following two examples:

> *Conflict—Talking to administrator about a problem, concern or question involving a student. An answer is given or a solution is worked out. Teacher implements what administrator has advised. The following day or days later, administrator confronts either teacher or student in an aggressive manner—What is going on!" Why are you doing that?! What do you think you are doing?! When teacher reviews previous conversation and solution discussed, the administrator will respond by saying—'No, that's not what I said! or No, you misunderstand me!' The administrator will then change the original solution causing an embarrassing situation for the teacher and student. The student is always caught in the middle* (T-A: 7, line 1).

> *The conflict I have is with both teachers and the administrator. Many times the teacher will come to me with a problem which we solve. Then the administrator will become upset because he/she was not involved. This causes everyone to feel uneasy to do anything without this administrator. Although if he/she is involved when the conflict is solved, he/she may change his/her mind or deny the involvement* (T-A: 14, line 1).

The teachers in these scenarios are describing situations in which the administrator appears to be inconsistent. The teacher expresses a certain understanding of the administrator's position in a situation only to find that the position changes without notice or explanation. From the scenarios, one may conclude that teachers do not like

changes that seem to be capricious. Further, it appears that teachers do not like to learn about the change in a public situation without any prior warning.

Norm 4

An administrator's actions should be consistent with his or her verbal statements.

In the scenarios, teachers express frustration when they perceive that an administrator is making statements to the teacher concerning what the administrator will do about a problem or what he or she will say to someone else concerning the problem and is not following those statements with consistent actions. Teachers expect administrators to follow through with their promises. One teacher writes: *"Each time I called them [students] on the carpet and reported my actions to the administration, I was given an OK, but behind the scenes, the parents were being told something else"* (T-A: 4, line 10). In an example in the previous section, the teacher criticizes the administrator for not acting on promises he made concerning an incompetent teacher. *"I have reported/discussed her incompetencies...on occasions too numerous to mention with the same results: promised intervention with consequences, but no action. ... Kids and parents continue to flock to me for answers. I direct them to my superior—and nothing happens"* (T-A: 2, line 3). In another scenario a teacher describes a conflict with her administrator concerning the punishment of some student athletes who got into a fight in her classroom and damaged the wall. The administrator, who is also the athletic director, assigned a punishment to the student athletes that was not in accordance with the school policy; it was a less severe punishment than called for by school policy. The teacher reports that she disagreed with the punishment and she became angry when the punishment, which was lenient, was not implemented.

The boys, who were supposed to be under his personal supervision during my hour, were goofing off, not working on assignments during that time, but were assigned to be office aides and played cards in his office. My wall was never fixed properly either...No apology was ever given verbally or in writing by any of the parties...The climate of the school was disrupted and respect was lost with the principal (T-A: 9, line 49).

When teachers involve the administrator in a problem or conflict, they leave the conversation with a certain understanding about what the administrator will do or say to others to resolve the problem. When the teacher perceives that the administrator's subsequent actions do not match with the teacher's understanding of what will happen, it is a source of *"frustration"* (T-A: 2, line 11), *"resentment"* (T-A: 2, line 12), *" disgust"* (T-A: 9, line 33), *"nightmares"* (T-A: 4, line 13), and *"loss of respect"* (T-A: 9, line 48). Teachers expect administrators' actions to be consistent with their verbal statements.

Norm 5

Concerning those interactions that include several parties (e.g., students, teachers, parents, and administrators), administrators should be loyal to or support the teacher. Even when a teacher and an administrator are at odds over an issue, teachers report that they expect the administrator to support the teacher and to provide a united front to students and parents. It is a violation of a teacher's expectations when an administrator talks to a parent or student about the teacher outside of the teacher's presence. One teacher reports that her principal set out to prove that she was not a good teacher by calling the parents of students to get the parents' opinions of the teacher's ability.

Another teacher reports that her administrator often sides with parents in situations concerning the classroom. *"Once a child lied; the parents told the principal; they even apologized to me for their son and yet the principal still called me in and told me I had mental problems"* (T-A: 5, line 11). Teachers report significant feelings of hurt and anger when they perceive that their administrator is not supporting them in a situation that involves a student or parents. If the administrator is faced with a choice concerning who he or she should support in a conflict situation, teachers expect the administrator to support them.

Summary

This section explicates five norms of interaction between teachers and administrators that became apparent to me as I repeatedly analyzed the teachers' narrative descriptions of conflicts with administrators. They are:

- New administrators should pause before making policy changes.
- Administrators should not use an authoritarian style of management, but should use a consultative style of management.
- An administrator should not change his or her mind without having good reasons for the change and without explaining the change to the faculty and staff.
- An administrator's actions should be consistent with his or her verbal statements.

- Concerning those interactions that include several parties (e.g., students, teachers, parents, and administrators), administrators should be loyal to or support the teacher.

In the examples included in this section, it seems clear that the teachers' narratives report the teachers' perceptions of situations and that the administrator in the story might have different perceptions and might tell the story differently. For example, an administrator who is seen as unsupportive by a teacher might carry the self-perception that he or she is supportive but also fair-minded in situations in which teachers are at odds with students or parents. The fact that administrators and teachers might carry differing perceptions about the facts of an event does not negate the fact that we can draw conclusions about the expectations that teachers have for teacher-administrator interactions. Reismann (1993, p. 64) points out that the historical truth of an individual's account is not the primary issue.

> Narrativization assumes a point of view. Facts are products of an interpretive process.... Individuals construct very different narratives about the same event.... It is always possible to narrate the same events in radically different ways, depending on the values and interests of the narrator. ... Individuals exclude experiences that undermine the current identities they wish to claim....

Reismann (1993) reminds us that narrators' constructed and creatively authored stories are replete with assumptions. Taken together, the teachers' narratives provide information concerning some of the shared knowledge that teachers have about teacher-administrator

interactions. Understanding these norms helps to understand the ways in which teachers identify socially-recognizable, account-able instances of conflict.

Claims about Teachers' Conflicts with Administrators

In the same manner that I approached teacher-teacher conflict in the last chapter, to further understand teachers' perceptions of teacher-administrator conflict, I asked the following questions: What can we discern about teachers' perceptions of conflict with their administrators by looking at the narratives? Or more specifically, what do the narrative descriptions tell us about what is implicated when a teacher relays or describes a conflict involving his or her administrator? A repeated examination of the narrative descriptions prompts me to make three claims in answer to the above questions.

- Teachers' linguistic choices when describing conflicts with administrators suggest that teachers characterize these conflicts in militaristic terms.

- Teachers' descriptions of conflict with their administrators suggest that teachers relate to their administrators from a low-power position.

- When reporting a conflict, teachers either strategically or naively describe the event in a manner that puts the narrator in the best light (i.e., shows his or her actions to be reasonable, puts the blame for the conflict on the other or on a set of circumstances, and/or exhibits attempts to resolve the conflict).

In making these claims (like the claims in the section on teacher-teacher conflict), I examined the data with a certain mindset (i.e., Riessman's (1993) suggestions for narrative analysis). I looked at the story itself, the way it is constructed, the linguistic and cultural resources that it depends on, and the way the author persuades the listener both

that something important happened and that this telling of the events is authentic. In making these claims, I did not attempt to evaluate the truth-value of the teachers descriptions. Instead, I asked: Why is the story told this way to this listener? What is the teacher doing with this production of discourse about the conflict? What environment is being projected? What conclusions can I draw about teachers' perceptions of conflict from the way in which this story is told? In answering these questions, I assert the three claims listed above. In the following section, I will further explicate these claims and support them using examples from the narratives.

Claim 1

Teachers' linguistic choices when describing conflicts with administrators suggest that teachers characterize these conflicts in militaristic terms. Many of the narratives in this section describing teacher-administrator conflicts contain linguistic references to events, concepts, and people associated with military operations. For example, one teacher suggests that her administrator perceives that she (the teacher) is a "*threat*" (T-A: 5, line 7) to the administrator. The teacher reports that the administrator told the teacher to change careers because she was "*unfit*" (T-A: 5, line 13) to teach. The teacher reflects that she should have never "*tolerated this treatment*" (T-A: 5, line 15) from the administrator. In another narrative, the teacher states, "*I stood my ground*" (T-A: 10, line 11) when the administrator "*backed me into a corner*" (T-A: 10, line 11). Another teacher describes a confrontation during which the administrator, like a drill sergeant, yelled in the teacher's face and called her and her fellow teachers "*lazy and irresponsible*" (T-A: 8, line 5). The teacher indicates that she had to *defend* herself and her colleagues. Another teacher states that the administrator "*stripped her of her*

coaching duties" (T-A: 11, line 4) without warning or provocation. Another teacher asserts that a new superintendent *"set out to get rid of the old crew"* (T-A: 12, line 5) and that her *"tactics"* (T-A: 12, line 6) were successful. In another narrative, the teacher indicates that her attempts to reason with her administrator were perceived as *"questioning his authority"* (T-A: 9, line 34). Upon being rebuffed by the administrator, she states, *"then I came after him with this..."* (T-A: 9, line 35) as she spells out her next line of reasoning.

The use of militaristic language paints two pictures. One picture is of a military operation, like an army, in which the teachers are soldiers and the administrators are commanders. This language metaphorically compares teacher-administrator interactions to soldier-commander interactions (e.g., yelled in my face, stripped me of my duties, declared me unfit for duty, do not question authority, get rid of the old crew). The second picture is of two armies fighting a battle for territory (i.e., I was a threat to her, I was backed into a corner, I stood my ground, she used certain tactics, then I came after him with this...). Wilmot & Hocker (1998)[21] suggest that the language persons use to refer to or talk about conflict or conflict interactions provides insight into the expectations those persons have about the relative power of individuals in the conflict, the possible outcomes of the conflict, and the likelihood the conflict can and will be resolved. If teachers' perceptions of their relationship to their administrators compares to the relationship between a soldier and a commander, the power structure of the relationship is unequal. The administrator is in a high-power position. Also, in authoritarian relationships like the one between a commander and a soldier, the outcome of the conflict

will likely be that the soldier does what the superior commands, whether or not the soldier agrees with the commander.

In battles or wars, it is assumed that one side wins and one side loses. The language in these narratives indicates that some teachers perceive teacher-administrator conflicts as battles that are to be won or lost. They paint a picture of opposing sides that are trying to defeat each other. This conceptualization of conflict allows for neither multiple methods of working through conflicts (e.g., negotiation, mediation, facilitated discussion) nor for other outcomes of conflict in which both sides can win or gain something. In a battle there is a winner and a loser. When conflicts are characterized as battles, the expectation is that someone wins and someone loses. The teachers' descriptions contain language and phrases that suggest that the choices for action in a conflict are either to take offensive or defensive action. There is little language suggesting a compromise, discussion, negotiation, or collaboration.

Claim 2

Teachers' descriptions of conflicts with their administrators suggest that teachers relate to their administrators from a low-power position. In providing a method for analyzing narratives, Reissman (1993, p. 61) suggests that the researcher identify the underlying propositions that make the talk sensible, including what is taken for granted by the teller and the receiver. She states that individuals' narratives are situated in both particular interactions and in social, cultural, and institutional discourses, which must be brought to bear to interpret them. In conflict situations, the relative power (both actual and perceived power) of the interactants is a significant factor in shaping conflict events

and outcomes (Folger & Poole, 1984). An individual who is in conflict with another person who has the ability to control the first person's resources (e.g., an employee with an employer, a student with a teacher, a child with a parent), may act differently than a person who is in conflict with someone who has a more equitable power base. The literature on conflict indicates that not only is the relative power of the conflict partners an important issue, but that those who perceive that they are in a low-power position in relation to the conflict partner are more likely to use destructive conflict management behaviors and are less likely to believe that the conflict can be resolved (Wilmot & Hocker, 1999).

Many of the teachers' narratives describing teacher-administrator conflict suggest that teachers relate to administrators from a low-power position. Support for this claim comes from looking at the use of language in the descriptions and determining what meanings are encoded in the talk. Further support comes from determining the underlying propositions that make the narratives sensible. Consider the following examples from the narratives and the picture of reality that they paint from the teachers' perspectives.

> *I was the librarian for two buildings for one half day each. There was a principal in each building. One principal felt I was expending more energy at the other building. She brought me into her office in May and told me this. She said she would rather I didn't come back next year if I didn't expend as much energy at her building. I didn't go back* (T-A: 13, line 1).

In writing this narrative, the teacher does not report any attempts to respond to the administrator (e.g., to disagree or to offer information to change the administrator's

perception). A person in a low-power position might choose to avoid a conflict rather than confront, engage, provide additional information, or otherwise respond to an accusation. One interpretation of this narrative is that the teacher operated from a low-power position.

In another narrative, the teacher indicates that she had an on-going, conflictual relationship with her administrator that lasted for seven years until the administrator moved to a different school. In her description, she indicates that she *"spent years of living hell with him"* (T-A: 5, line 14). She cites examples of times the administrator humiliated her and criticized her. She concludes the narrative with the statement, *"I now know I should have never tolerated this treatment"* (T-A: 5, line 15). This statement suggests that at one time in her career the teacher endured what she considered to be injurious treatment without openly responding, and that she would act differently if the same thing were to happen again. The use of language in this narrative and the fact that the relationship with the administrator was troubled for an extended period of time until the administrator left the school suggest that the teacher related to the administrator from a low-power position.

In two of the narratives, the authors indicate that their administrator manages through *"fear"* (T-A: 8, line 7) or *"fear techniques"* (T-A: 3, line 13). What underlying proposition makes this talk sensible? Some teachers believe they are in a low-power position relative to their administrators. In other words, an administrator can manage teachers by saying and doing things that make the teacher fearful—a situation that can only occur if the administrator has power over the teacher. One of the teachers explains that she broke a rule established by her principal and the principal noted the incident on

the teacher's yearly evaluation. The teacher states, *"A principal can either make you or break you. This principal has broken me!"* (T-A: 3, line 10). This comment suggests that this teacher's perspective is that the administrator is quite powerful in relation to the teacher. One interpretation of this comment might be: a principal has the ability to determine whether or not a teacher is employed. Another interpretation that has far-reaching implications might be: a principal has the ability to determine not only the employment status of a teacher but also the long-term career path, effectiveness, career satisfaction, and even happiness of a teacher. This same teacher concludes her narrative stating, *"This principal loves to have conferences in her office with the door closed; she becomes God! I hope someday that the fear-technique is outlawed"* (T-A: 3, line 12). This teacher compares the administrator to God. Clearly, the teacher relates to the administrator from a low-power position. The narrator suggests that she must rely on outside forces to declare the administrator's techniques as illegal. The teacher cannot stop the administrator from this behavior, perhaps someone else can.

In another narrative, a teacher describes a situation in a manner that makes her and other teachers appear to be powerless in relationship to administrators.

> *After my first year of teaching, we had a new superintendent as principal. The principal looked at my test scores and decided that I wasn't a good teacher. She even called a parent of one of my students to get her opinion of my teaching ability. After her investigation, she found out that I did the best I could with the class. She still set out to get rid of the old crew so that she could bring in a new bunch. Her tactics were successful with three of the seasoned teachers. One took early retirement, one died from a heart attack and one resigned. For the next two*

years, I did everything this woman asked of me. She required me to have 10 to 12 pages of lesson plans for each unit, a monthly plan, and copies of all worksheets and tests. Then she would call me in and go over my verbs in the lesson plans. I found out later that I was the only teacher required to do this. The next year, my husband became seriously ill and she advised me to resign to take care of him. I told her that I couldn't afford to resign, but she said I could make more on welfare by staying home. I still didn't resign, so the next year she broke our contract by reassigning me three days before school started and notifying me. I filed a protest through ___ [the state education association], *but nothing was done, so I resigned at the end of that school year. She is now superintendent of a small school district in* _____ *County which is always in the newspaper with negative stories* (T-A: 12, line 1).

In this description, the narrator paints a picture of an administrator who wanted to get rid of a number of teachers when she took over a new school and who successfully accomplished this by making life difficult so that the teacher's resigned or retired. The way the description is written makes the teachers appear powerless in the conflict with the new administrator. If one follows the story of the narrative, the author indicates that after the administrator successfully "got rid" of some of her peers, the narrator decided to try to please the administrator in order to keep her job (e.g., *"For the next two years, I did everything this woman asked of me"* [T-A: 12, line 8]). The narrator reports that even when she protested to the state education association (an attempt to exert some influence or power in the outcome of the situation), *"nothing was done"* (T-A: 12, line 16) and the

teacher ultimately resigned. This way of telling the story suggests that the teacher relates to the administrator from a low-power position in relation to the administrator.

Further support for the claim that teachers relate to their administrators from a low-power position comes from examining the actions teachers report taking in response to conflicts with their administrators. Taken as a whole, the narratives in this section on teacher-administrator conflict suggest that potential responses to conflicts with administrators are as follows. A teacher might seek a transfer to another school, wait for the administrator to transfer to another school, attempt to discuss the problem with the administrator, file a protest with the state education association, document events in writing, or acquiesce to the situation (i.e., continue on with no resolution to the problem). Most of these responses to conflict suggest that teachers relate to their administrators from a low-power position. The first five responses listed above can be found in one or two of the narratives in this section. However, the last response--to live with no resolution to the problem--occurs in many of the responses (e.g., *"I'm faced with the same problem this year,"* T-A: 15, line 7; *"This tension continues,"* T-A: 8, line 7; *"Most of my conflicts...have not been resolved,"* T-A: 11, line 1; *"There was no resolution,"* T-A: 4, line 15; *"My main source of conflict for the past three years..."* T-A: 2, line 1). These statements suggest that teachers often live with or endure conflictual situations over time without resolution. This indicates that some teachers perceive themselves to be in a low-power position in relation to their administrator.

Claim 3

When reporting a conflict, teachers either strategically or naively describe the event in a manner that puts the narrator in the best light (i.e., shows his or her actions to be reasonable, puts the blame for the conflict on the other or on a set of circumstances, and/or exhibits attempts to resolve the conflict). This claim also appears in the chapter describing teacher-teacher conflict. When I examined the narratives concerning teacher-administrator conflict, I discovered again that teachers attend to the issue of guilt or culpability in conflict. In their telling of the story, teachers either directly or indirectly address the issue: Which person or event is responsible for the occurrence of the conflict and/or its resolution? In most instances, the narrator fashions the description so that they (the authors or narrators) are seen in the best light, which means minimally that they lack culpability for its occurrence. The narratives provide examples of some of the ways of accounting for conflict that demonstrate that the narrator is not at fault. In the teacher-administrator conflict scenarios, I identified the same five methods of accounting for conflict—ways of telling the story—that place the blame for the conflict on someone or something other than the narrator that I identified in the teacher-teacher conflict scenarios.

- Some teachers tell event-sequenced stories about conflict episodes.

- Some teachers include statements about the character of the conflict partner(s) or negative attributions for the behavior of the conflict partner(s).

- Some teachers describe conflicts emphasizing the reasonableness of their position or their actions in the conflict.

• Some teachers portray themselves as victims of the administrator's actions or of a set of circumstances.

• Some teachers suggest that they are innocently drawn into conflict with a their administrators.

Following is an explication of these five ways of telling conflict stories (including examples from the narratives) that serve to depict the narrator as blameless.

Event-sequenced Stories

Of the narratives describing teacher-teacher conflict, about half contained event-sequenced stories about what happened in the conflict. While these event-sequenced stories occur less frequently in the teacher-administrator conflict scenarios, this way of telling the story seems to serve the same purpose—indicate that the narrator is not responsible for the conflict. Recall from the previous chapter that stories told in this manner contain phrases that signal a beginning point to the story, phrases that mark sequences of events, and ending statements that close the story. In examining these stories, it seems clear that the narrator places importance on the sequence of events and presents details to guide the audience to follow the sequence and determine that the narrator is not to blame for the conflict. Consider the following example. While the average word count for the narratives in this data set is approximately 200, the entire text for this example is about 850 words in length. The narrator provides a number of details as she describes the sequence of events. Some of the details serve to justify the teacher's actions or explain the teacher's interpretations of the circumstances in the conflict. These details are inserted as the story is laid out, event by event, for the listener.

I had an incident when I taught middle and high school. This particular incident occurred in my high-school choir class. During passing, my high school students were coming in. At the same time, a neighboring colleague came into my room to have a discussion with me. We never left my room the entire time of the incident. My students were in their first semester with me and they know the procedure: (1) put away books and book bags, (2) get music folder, and (3) have a seat before the tardy bell rings. They also know that when a colleague or guest is in the room, they are to wait to speak with me by sitting in their chair and I call their attention so they are not eavesdropping or standing over me. All of them followed this procedure except for two juniors—boys. I made the mistake of putting my back to them while having this discussion. These two boys take it upon themselves to use one corner of the vocal music room as a WWF ring. I finally realized what had and was going on by the reaction of the other students, who remained seated. As I turned to react, both of the boys stumbled on the carpet and one of them put his head through the wall—missing a stud by one inch. When he pulled his head out, the class laughed because of the debris on his head. As I approached them, the one with the debris lunged at his buddy and started shoving him really hard and called him every name in the book. I called a young man to help me separate them and they continued to use foul language. They

were trying to slug it out while I was in the middle. The young man and myself completely separated them and he helped me escort them to the office. The principal, who is the A.D. heard my story, in their presence. Mind you, these boys are in the heart of their football season. He asked me to leave so he could have a 'discussion' with them, so I honored his wishes. The punishment, though, was the major conflict! According to the handbook, they would have been suspended three days for their foul language, and destruction of school property is five days. Instead, he gave them 10 days of community service and they were removed from my room only for those same 10 days. I was required to make up separate assignments for those 10 days missed so they would not be ineligible. They had to complete the assignments or they would be zeros. Needless to say, I was very unhappy about his decision and met with him about it immediately. He said that it was fair and that my room would be repaired. He called their parents to inform them while I stood there. I continued to discuss with him my disgust with the decision and he began to get angry with me for questioning his authority. Then, I came after him with this: The week before, I had a senior boy pick on an 8th-grade boy in my class and the 8th-grader became angry, picked up his chair and threw it towards the senior. The chair did not hit a soul or harm anyone. He did not cuss and there was no retaliation, but the 8th-grader gets suspended

for 5 days because of his violent, destructive behavior. And he is not an athlete! When I explained this to the principal, he said that he did not have to explain anything to me and arguing with him will only hurt my situation. So I told him, "How will I explain it to the 8th grader and the class why these boys are not being suspended and they committed several crimes to get them suspended for 10 days?" He said it was none of my business or the other students'. I told him I would send the "other students" to him and he said okay. "So the athletes win and always get a discipline break just so the football team and games do not suffer," was my exiting reply. The result, the students were very angry (and I did not tell them the consequences) and the climate of the school was disrupted, and respect was lost with the principal. The boys, who were supposed to be under his personal supervision during my hour, were goofing off, not working on my assignments during that time, but were assigned to be office aides and playing cards in his office. My wall was never fixed properly either. They put up a piece of sheet rock that was uneven and never painted it. No apology was ever given verbally or in writing by any of the parties (T-A: 9, line 1).

At one level, this narrative is a description of a conflict between a teacher and administrator concerning the administrator's discipline procedures for student athletes. At another level, this narrative is a performance (e.g., "I must convince the listener that something important happened") and is a way of claiming a certain identity (e.g., "I'm a

well-respected teacher whose class was disrupted by some hooligans"), interpreting events (e.g., "The athletic director caused a school-wide disruption by failing to give student athletes the same punishment as students not involved in school athletics"), and constructing a life (e.g., "I champion the cause of students who are mistreated). Reissman (1993, p. 2) reminds us that "narrators create plots from disordered experience." They "give reality a unity that neither nature nor the past possess so clearly." Investigators must "respect respondents' ways of constructing meaning and analyze how it is accomplished." Consider lines 1-10 of this example. In this section, the teacher begins to tell about an "incident" that occurred in her high-school choir class. Before telling what occurred in the incident (line 11), the teacher provides some details about the situation. What is she doing when she states, "We never left the room the entire time of the incident"? By establishing that she and the colleague never left the room during the incident, she pre-empts possible questions in the listener's mind concerning whether or not the incident occurred because she had abandoned her post. By outlining the procedure the students are expected to follow when they enter the room and confirming that the students know about the procedure and are held accountable for it, she displays that she is a responsible teacher who has anticipated problems and has established preventive measures. By indicating that all of the other students (other than the two ruffians) followed the procedures, including remaining seated when the disruption occurred (see lines 8 and 14), the narrator demonstrates that she is in control of her classroom. In line 10, the author admits to "making a mistake." In other words, even though she is competent and in control of her classroom, she is also "human" and subject to human frailties. This "mistake" is what allowed the fight to continue as long as it did before the

teacher was aware of it. Because the other students followed the rule (remain seated when a colleague is in the room) and did not come to tell the teacher the problem, the fight developed apart from the teacher's awareness.

In this story, the main event that sparked the conflict is not revealed until line 11 and the teacher-administrator conflict is not mentioned until line 25. Although the story is told as a sequenced event (e.g., two student-athletes get into a fight; they are taken to the principal who is also the athletic director for discipline; the athletic director hands out discipline; the teacher disagrees with the disciplinary action; the teacher speaks to the athletic director/principal about her disagreement; the principal stands firm in his decision; the teacher argues and brings up a comparable incident that was handled differently; the principal stands firm in his decision; the teacher tells principal she is unhappy with decision; the students do not follow the discipline requirements; the teacher remains angry and resentful), in telling the story, the teacher makes claims about her identity. At one level, the story tells about a conflict event. At another level it is a self-presentation—a narrative about who the narrator is, what she values, and how she handles situations. She tells the story in a way that puts her in the best light. She does so by embedding the details that justify her actions in the sequenced events of the story. She displays that she is a competent, organized teacher whose students (for the most part) follow the rules and procedures (lines 1-11). She portrays herself as a fair-minded teacher who wants all students to be treated equitably (lines 25-39). She shows that she will confront the administrator when she disagrees and will try to persuade him to see things her way (lines 30-47). She illustrates that even when she disagrees with the administrator, she does not share that information with students (line 47-48). She demonstrates that her

interpretation of and predictions about the outcome of the principal's decision were accurate (line 47-52). All of these claims pertain to the teacher's identity and are asserted in the way she tells an event-sequenced story about an incident.

References to the Character of the Conflict Partner

A second way of accounting for conflict that puts the narrator in the best light is by including statements about the character of the conflict partner or negative attributions for the behavior of the conflict partner. If the conflict partner is a difficult, unreasonable, irrational, bad-tempered or power-seeking individual, then the blame for the conflict can be placed on their shoulders. Furthermore, if the narrator provides negative attributions for the conflict partner's behavior (i.e., explains why the other acted the way they did), the listener is invited to see the conflict partner as responsible for the conflict. In one of the narratives, the teacher accounts for the conflict by indicating that the administrator *"did not like me at all"* (T-A: 5, line1) and that the administrator considered the narrator *"a threat because I am a very 'can-do' person and he wanted total control"* (T-A: 5, line 7). In another narrative, the teacher states in the opening line that the new administrator *"made it clear from the first day that she did not want to be there"* (T-A: 6, line 1). She then describes a conflict that concerns a change in policy by the new administrator. Why does the author include the statement about the new administrator? It paints a picture of an unhappy individual whose unpopular decisions to change policy can be attributed to a bad attitude rather than to logical reasons.

In another narrative, a teacher describes an incident in which she broke a rule that the principal had put in place at the time she became the principal of the school. The

principal witnessed the teacher breaking the rule and reported the incident on the teacher's evaluation. Without evaluating the accuracy of the teacher's description of the events (i.e., the teacher's creation of a plot from disordered experience), in the description, the teacher reveals that she knew about the rule and that she intentionally broke the rule. Nevertheless, the teacher's description—the way she tells the story—negatively characterizes the administrator and makes negative attributions for the administrator's behavior.

I have a conflict with my present boss; she is the type you never know what mood she'll be in! She likes it that way! She does it one purpose. She never announces when she'll be showing up. I say this because she announced (when she became principal) teaching 5 year olds to write is NOT developmental! Nor is coloring! I've taught kindergarten more years than she—I've done about as much research as she. I could go on and on, but the point is: children entering school love to learn! To make a long story short, I chose two days out of the year (to try to get away with it) to teach "writing." She walks in, giving me her sickening smile. She DID put it on my evaluation for the year. Talk about CONFLICT! A principal can either make you or break you. This principal has broken me! Another conflict. This principal loves to have conferences in her office with the door closed; she becomes God! I hope someday that the fear-technique is "outlawed!" (T-A: 3, line 1).

In this narrative, the teacher indicates that she intentionally broke a rule that she knew to be in existence. However, in telling the story she places the blame for the conflict on the administrator. The administrator is at fault because she is unpredictable (line 1), sneaky (line 3), calculating (line 2), uninformed (line 5), incorrect (line 6), haughty (line 8), and overbearing (line12).

In another narrative, the teacher does not describe a conflict over a specific incident or event, but instead describes their new superintendent's way of relating to the faculty and attributes an on-going conflictual situation to the administrator's managerial style.

> *Our new superintendent's managerial style is very dictatorial. Her decisions are very much power over. She made several changes before school even started her first year...before observing what was working and what wasn't. ... This tension continues. Management through fear is very nonproductive and produces a lot of hurt among nonadministrative employees. I need help with minimizing emotions and remaining calm and logical during face-to-face, one-to-one conflict. How do I convince her that employees' feelings and emotions are important...that people with differing opinions and perspectives can be productive employees?* (T-A: 8, line 1).

This description of a conflict situation characterizes the conflict partner as narrow-minded, cold, domineering, and threatening. It attributes the on-going conflict situation to the administrator's managerial style and thoughtless decisions. The narrator tells the story in a way that aligns all of the "nonadministrative employees" against the administrator.

This way of telling the story places the blame for the conflict on the administrator and puts the narrator in the best light.

Describing One's Actions as Reasonable

As was mentioned in the chapter on teacher-teacher conflict, describing one's actions in a situation as reasonable or providing reasons why one acted a certain way serves to defend those actions against criticism from another person or an authority figure. The assumption is that acting in an unreasonable manner might spark a conflict or might contribute to the continuation or escalation of a conflict. As either the initiator or the sustainer of conflict, the person acting unreasonably bears the primary blame for the conflict. Consider the various examples of ways in which teachers portray their actions as reasonable in the conflict accounts.

One way teachers portray their actions as reasonable is by comparing their actions to those of another person in the same circumstances or to some established norm or rule. One teacher describes a situation in which her principal and assistant principal criticized her discipline techniques. She explains that she copied the discipline techniques of another well-respected teacher.

> *The second year of teaching. It was a rowdy bunch of students. The truth is, I was not doing very well. Some of the boys walked around at will. Their parents were school employees. An occasional girl or two would defy instructions, or even walk out of my class. Perhaps the band director's methods would work for me. But then, he had been here for years and everyone knew he had high expectations. So I tried. I began to assign push-ups to the students with too much energy to sit still.*

One girl had a cast on her arm, so I assigned sit-ups instead. The next day, I was in my office. The principal and the assistant principal came in and closed the door behind them and began to raise their voices on that topic. I stood my ground (backed into the corner)... (T-A: 10, line 1).

This teacher points to the practices of another teacher (the band director) as a way of making her actions appear reasonable. In order to describe this conflict with the administrator, the teacher must admit that she was having discipline problems with the students. In telling about the discipline problems she indicates that she was *"not doing very well."* This admission allows some of the blame for the discipline problem to be placed on the teacher. However, she characterizes the students as *"rowdy"*—shifting the blame to the students. Further, she indicates that some of the defiant boys' parents were school employees. Why include this information in the story? One possibility is that the teacher is stating that the boys were defiant because they expected special treatment as children of other teachers in the school, not because she did not have control of her classroom. In other words, there were extenuating circumstances that provide explanation for the discipline problem.

In another narrative, the teacher (who is also the cheerleading sponsor) explains that her position in a conflict is reasonable because she is following an established rule or norm.

The scenario was this: Two of the cheerleaders ...were out of control. They were rude, crude, loud, and totally unprofessional at all sporting events. I assumed that this was unacceptable behavior because it said so in the cheerleading contract.

Each time I called them on the carpet and reported my actions to the administrations, I was given an OK, but behind the scenes, the parents were being told something else... (T-A: 4, line 6). By explaining that the cheerleading contract prohibited the disreputable behavior of the cheerleaders, the teacher shows that her position was reasonable. It was not a matter of her personal displeasure at the behavior; it was a matter of a rule-violation.

Another way teachers portray their actions as reasonable is by explaining the reasons why they held a certain position or they acted in a certain manner. Providing this rationale persuades the listener that the narrator is not at fault in the conflict. Consider the following example:

We got both a new principal and superintendent this past year. Of course, this brought change in policy. The principal called a meeting and told the faculty that there would be a change in the way we did our awards assembly at the end of the year. He told us that we could only give one award per class—in other words—one classroom award per class. Several of us give one to six awards per class—"Most Outstanding" or "Most Improved," etc. However some of us give no awards. Mr. Principal says that is where the problem is. He doesn't want some teachers giving none and some giving numerous awards. After a few days, I approached him privately and related that I didn't understand why administration would care how many awards I gave. After all, it was my classroom, and I felt

that I should have control over my own awards. I also felt that if other teachers gave no awards—that was his problem—not mine. Why should I decrease mine? He should make them give some. (But--it was their classrooms and shouldn't they be allowed to give or not give as they deemed necessary?) Plus—I felt that these awards were important to the students' resumes (for potential scholarships). I and one other teacher felt strongly about our awards, but he wouldn't budge. Second meeting in his office—both of us teachers together and principal—no compromise—<u>HIS WAY</u>. Few more days—I decide I must do it his way. I'm not one to break policy. I have an open classroom with my students. I have worked in this system for 7 years, so I told the students in my AP class (over-achievers) that I would be giving only one award due to new policy. I wanted them to know. Next day—I'm called to superintendent's office. He's upset—parents have called—I'm disloyal—etc. etc. verbal exchange. I explained my position. He explained his! I didn't tell the students to be disloyal to administration. I told them so they would be prepared and not disappointed in the 'only one award.' Several weeks passed—faculty meeting—principal announces: go back to old way. You give as many awards as you want, but everyone must give at least one. MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING. Administration viewed this as a power struggle. My true motive—as always—my students' best interests. I think the principal should have

30 *handled this and the superintendent shouldn't have gotten involved* (T-A: 1, line 1).

In this description, the teacher provides multiple reasons why she holds her position in the conflict. She reports that she considers teachers to be in control of their classrooms regarding decisions that affect students (line10-11); she reports that she believes that awards help student's get scholarships (line 15); she indicates that her control of her classroom should not be relinquished because of the actions of other teachers in the school (line 11-12). In other words, she outlines several reasons why she holds her position in the conflict. Interestingly, as she tells the story and as she makes an argument for her position, she makes a claim: teachers should be in control of their own classroom awards (line 11-12). However, as she continues her argument she makes an additional claim: the administrator should force slacker teachers to give awards (line 12-13). She acknowledges the incompatibility of these claims in a parenthetical question (line 13-14). This contradiction ultimately supports her position concerning the awards assembly program—let each teacher do what he or she deems appropriate. In other words, do not change the policy.

This story indicates that there were in fact two conflicts, one over the decision concerning the awards and one over the teacher's decision to tell her students that there would be only one award because the administration had changed the policy. In the second part of the narrative, the teacher provides reasons for her behavior—her decision to inform her students of the change in award distribution. She reveals that she did decide to comply with the policy (line 18). In other words, she explains that her choice to tell the students was not a manipulative way of getting around the policy (i.e., tell the students,

knowing they will tell their parents and the parents will complain). Another reason she told her students is that she has an open classroom (line 19). Another reason she told them is so they would not be surprised or disappointed (line 25). Finally, her reason for her position in the conflict and her behavior in telling students about the change in policy is that she is acting in her students' best interests, not because she is struggling for power or control with the administrator and superintendent (line 28-29). Regardless of whether or not this narrative accurately depicts a set of events, the way the story is told paints the teacher in the best light; it demonstrates her reasonableness in the conflict and places the blame for the conflict on the new principal and new superintendent.

Portraying Oneself as a Victim

Some teachers cast themselves in a favorable light by explaining the reasonableness of their positions or actions in conflict scenarios. Others accomplish this by portraying themselves as victims in conflict scenarios. In other words, the narrator tells the story in a way that suggests that he or she is in a conflict with the administrator because the administrator is treating the teacher unfairly. Although this same approach occurred in the teacher-teacher conflict scenarios, in these teacher-administrator scenarios, the teacher is not the victim of another teacher's actions but is the victim of their administrator's actions—the person who makes decisions concerning the teacher's employment. The full text of several of the scenarios that are written in this manner appears in other places in this document. Consider, however, the following phrases from four of the narratives. One teachers states, *"It seems there was nothing I could do right.... I spent years of living hell with him"* (T-A: 5, lines 9 &14). In other words, I was a victim of the arbitrary demands of my administrator. Another teacher writes, *"The principal*

looked at my test scores and decided I wasn't a good teacher.... After her investigation, she found out that I did the best I could with the class. She still set out to get rid of the old crew so that she could bring in a new bunch" (T-A: 12, line 2). The teacher portrays herself as the victim of the incorrect judgment and callous actions of her administrator. Another teacher writes, *"She wanted to take away my coaching duties without coming to me first. She stripped me of them. To this day I have not confronted her"* (T-A: 11, line 3). The teacher is a victim of the arbitrary actions of the administrator. Recall the account in which the teacher states, *"This principal has broken me"* (T-A: 3, line 11). The teacher is the victim of the actions and attitudes of her administrator.

In each of these instances, through descriptive language, the teacher portrays himself or herself as a victim. This way of telling the story places the blame for the conflict on the administrator. The powerlessness expressed in these phrases indicates that the teacher could not be responsible for the occurrence of the conflict.

Innocently Drawn Into Conflict Episodes

In order to display their lack of culpability for conflicts, some teachers tell event-sequenced stories; some denigrate the character or personality of the conflict partner. Still others explain the reasonableness of their positions or actions in conflict scenarios. Still others fashion their stories to demonstrate that their involvement in a conflict episode occurred because they were innocently drawn into the conflict. The narrator indicates that he or she became involved in a conflict when certain circumstances made it difficult if not impossible to avoid the conflict. In the scenario in which the cheerleading sponsor

describes her conflict with the cheerleaders, their parents, and the administration over the behavior of the cheerleaders, the teacher begins the scenario as follows:

> *I became cheerleading sponsor because no one else wanted the responsibility. The prior sponsor had resigned after being sick with hives most of the previous year. Literally, no one else would do the job. I was new and did not realize the politics of the situation. After I was informed, it was too late* (T-A: 4, line 2).

The teacher tells the story to show that she had no choice but to accept the position and insert herself into a situation that was wrought with conflict. In other words, she was innocently drawn into conflict. In another scenario, a teacher tells that the new administrator in her school changed several things, including canceling 5th-grade graduation. She writes:

> *My parents were extremely upset and turned to me to let off steam. My parents decided to have their own graduation party on a weekend. I told them I thought it was a wonderful day and would love to attend. I approached my administrator with our new plan. Her response was that she didn't care what any of us did on our own time. The very next day, she approached me. She went on to say that she'd been thinking it over and decided the parents could have it, but I could not attend. She told me to tell my parents that I could not attend due to the fact I didn't want to go against my principal. My parents and students were very upset. I ended up being in the middle of a huge conflict with a lot of name-calling (parents and principal)* (T-A: 6, line 4).

The teacher states that she was drawn into a conflict between the parents and the administrator. Although she aligns herself with the parents and students (e.g., *"my parents and my students"*) against the new administrator, she tells the story in a way that suggests that by some force, not her own, she *"ended up"* being in the middle of a conflict.

Another teacher describes a set of circumstances in which she is drawn into an on-going conflict. She explains:

> *I'm a new teacher and was hired too late to order any materials for class. I was told the other two first-grade teachers would share their materials with me. This did not happen. When I would ask for something, they would tell me when they get time they would get it for me. After asking for things over and over and never receiving anything, I became very frustrated. The teacher that was supposed to share her materials is also in charge of Title 1, which pays for my salary, so I'm faced with the same problem this year, still not able to buy materials I need because she decides what I need. She informed me to make copies or have a parent make copies of other teacher's materials. I spent many late hours making copies last year. I have spoken with our principal (which was hired in the middle of the year. Her first year as principal). This story is still twisted because this teacher who was supposed to share was married to the principal who was relieved of his duties. This gets very complicated* (T-A: 15, line 1).

This teacher describes a set of circumstances—an on-going conflict—that she is drawn into without any knowledge or awareness. She suggests that she is just trying to do her

job but that the others around her who are in conflict are making it difficult for her not be a part of the conflict.

Summary Comments About These Claims

As with the claims discussed in chapter two concerning teacher-teacher conflict, it seems that these claims about teacher-administrator conflict also help us to understand teachers' definition of conflict—what teachers "mean" when they refer to conflict. As I argued in chapter two, these claims could be taken as features of a cultural category (e.g., Katriel & Philipsen, 1981) for teachers—the cultural category of conflict. In chapter four, I will discuss this particular interpretation of these findings that originates in ethnography of communication theory and research.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this final chapter of the dissertation, I provide a summary of the research findings and then situate the research findings within the theoretical frameworks outlined in chapter one—the ethnography of communication and ethnomethodology. Next, I suggest certain implications of this research project for communication scholars studying conflict. The data for this project, the teachers' accounts of conflict, are rich and fertile. Although my extensive reading and re-reading of the accounts produced certain findings, there are many other findings that can be gained by my further or perhaps fresh analysis and by the analysis of others working within an ethnomethodological and/or ethnography of communication framework. Accordingly, I provide suggestions for future work.[21]

Research Findings

The research project reported in this dissertation is an ethnographically-based, ethnomethodological analysis of teachers' accounts of conflict interactions. The data for the project are narrative descriptions of conflict episodes written by teachers in response to a request by their instructor in a course on conflict management. This dissertation reports findings of my analysis of two categories of accounts—those reporting teacher-teacher conflict and those reporting teacher-administrator conflict. Those findings, reported in chapters two and three, are reported in three parts.

Description of Some General Features of Accounted Teacher Conflicts

This description provides information concerning the nature of the social organization of the public school setting with particular reference to conflict interactions,

including the typical subject matter of the conflicts, who is involved in the conflicts, where they may take place, and the manner or tone with which they take place.

Corpus of Commonsense Knowledge—Norms

I provide an explication of certain norms or rules regarding the conduct of persons in a school community that I derived from repeated readings and appraisals of the accounts, and that are offered by teachers as explanations for their perceptions, expectations, and behavior. For teacher-teacher conflict, I identify three general norms or rules, the violation of which could lead to conflict: (a) duties should be equally distributed; (b) be a team player; and (c) maintain professional conduct toward students. I also identify three norms concerning behavior during conflict: (a) experience takes precedence; (b) confrontations should be private; and (c) involving the administrator is an option. For teacher-administrator conflict, I identify five norms or rules for interaction that apply to administrators: (a) new administrators should pause before making policy changes; (b) administrators should not use an authoritarian style of management, but should use a consultative style of management; (c) an administrator should not change his or her mind without having good reasons for the change and without explaining the change to the faculty and staff; (d) an administrator's actions should be consistent with his or her verbal statements; and (e) concerning those interactions that include several parties (e.g., students, teachers, parents, and administrators), administrators should be loyal to or support the teacher.

Claims About Teachers' Accounts of Conflict

I assert claims about teachers' accounts of conflict that demonstrate teachers' use of conflict as a cultural category, namely that teachers: (a) treat conflict as a negative event; (b) attend to or orient to the idea of closure or resolution; (c) orient to the issue of their culpability or blameworthiness concerning conflict episodes; (d) characterize conflicts in militaristic terms and focus on conflict outcomes in terms of winners and losers; (e) talk about conflict in a manner that displays their low-power status relative to administrators.

In chapters two and three, I present findings or conclusions that resulted from my analysis of the data. I support those conclusions with excerpts from the accounts and attempted to make a logical argument for those conclusions. In an effort to put these findings into a theoretical framework, in the forthcoming two sections, I return to concepts and commitments of the ethnography of communication (EC) and of ethnomethodology (EM) and discuss possible interpretations of the findings. I do this in a linear fashion, first, EC and then EM. In each instance, I provide possible ways of interpreting or drawing conclusions about the findings. In a research project such as this that uses a mixture of theoretical approaches (see pages 10-13), one could imagine a number of ways to frame or discuss the findings. Poole and McPhee (1994, p. 65) make this point about methodology in interpersonal communication. They state, "each perspective sensitizes the researcher to some concepts or phenomena and de-emphasizes others, determining the role he or she adopts, what can be discovered, and the form the findings can take." Furthermore, although there are features of these frameworks that are held in common, the two do not exactly overlap and the vocabulary and resulting

concepts of each is distinct (Wieder, 1999). Therefore, I have chosen to discuss possible interpretations of the research findings within each theoretical framework separately.

Ethnography of Communication

In his comprehensive documentation of the Ethnographic Communication Theory of Gerry Phillipsen and his associates, Carbaugh (1995) states some of the main assumptions of the theory. One premise is that communication exhibits systemic organization. Another premise is that knowledge about the nature, functions, forms, situations and meanings of communication must be constructed through a careful examination of local systems of practice. "The logic is this: each such communication system requires discovery, and this process of discovery provides access into the communicative life of a people in their place" (p. 271). Additionally, Carbaugh (1995) indicates that ethnographic claims about communication often take the form:

> X (the cultural practice of communication) is granted legitimacy (if X is a norm) or coherence (if X is a code) by participants in communication system Y (the speech situation or community). This is a claim about the qualities of a cultural practice of communication that actually occurs in a context. It is an "emic" kind of claim; that is, making the claim involves a description of the practice and an interpretation of what the practice means to those who participate with it, what it enables for them and what it constrains them from doing (p. 277).

Using this framework, the claim resulting from this research project is: Conflict is granted legitimacy and coherence in the communication system of public school teachers. In other words, conflict is a type of cultural practice of communication among public

school teachers that has certain features. Many of those features were outlined in pages 60-76 and 97-123 in chapters two and three, including the subject matter of conflicts, who is involved in the conflicts, where they take place and the manner in which they take place.

Another assumption of EC is that to "speak" is fundamentally, to speak culturally (Philipsen, 1992). In other words:

> If communication has something to do with meaning making, and meanings have something to do with participants' point-of-view, and participants' points-of-view have something to do with their particular cultural orientations, then communication creatively evokes cultural meaning systems (Carbaugh, 1995, p. 274). ...While creatively invoking cultural meaning systems, communication also socially positions persons (through roles or identities) and creates relations among them (e.g., from egalitarian to hierarchical). In this way, communication is a prominent site for ordering social life (p. 275).

Consequently, researchers operating within the EC framework attempt to study and explicate those cultural meaning systems. One method of doing this is to invoke an "analytic-interpretive scheme" in order to discover and develop a grounded theory concerning unique cultural categories in the speech of a certain cultural group (Philipsen, 1990). An example of this type of inquiry is Katriel and Philipsen's (1981) investigation of "communication" as a cultural category in some American speech. Philipsen (1990, p. 96) explains the process he and Katriel went through to establish "communication" as a cultural category.

> Our working model...includes attention to the key terms from which culturally significant utterances are constructed, relations of contrast, substitutability, and co-occurrence among key terms, situational contexts of use of these terms, dimensions of meaning, metaphorical meanings, and the use of generic cultural forms as heuristic frames.

Carbaugh (1990) explains that understanding and describing cultural meaning systems involves capturing a system of folk beliefs by interpreting the hierarchical relations between and among cultural terms and domains. The researcher asks: "What does this native act, symbol, or symbolic form commonly mean? For example, Katriel and Philipsen (1981) discovered that in some American speech, the cultural category "communication" refers to "close supportive and flexible speech between two or more people, and that it can be contrasted with "mere talk," which is relatively more distant, neutral and rigid" (p. 309).

Using the EC framework outlined above and the data of this study, it is possible to consider "conflict" as a cultural category in the speech of some public school teachers. Describing conflict as a cultural category helps to identify the cultural meaning systems of this distinct group of people and provides insight into their social organization and into their folk beliefs (or what school teachers "mean" when they refer to "conflict").[23]

One possible feature of conflict as a cultural category is that teachers' reference to conflict often denotes a negative occurrence that is contrasted with more ideal situations in which conflict is not present. Additionally, teachers' reference to conflict often includes an assessment of whether the conflict is resolved or unresolved and who was the winner and who was the loser in the conflict. Teachers' reference to conflict includes an

assessment of who is to blame for the occurrence of the conflict. Additionally, teachers' reference to conflict involving administrators often denotes a social position of low power in relation to administrators.

To claim that conflict is a cultural category for public school teachers is to claim that conflict has a certain or distinct definition in this context. This statement does not deny that conflict is a cultural category for a broader culture (e.g., American culture or western culture) and as such carries these same features. However, that claim would have to be made using additional data. The claim that conflict is a cultural category for public school teachers indicates that when referring to or describing conflicts in their work place, there is a shared code or system of meanings that carries the folk beliefs of teachers concerning conflict. In providing a teacher's definition of conflict, we can begin to see ways that that definition is a cultural creation and thereby compare it to other definitions of conflict in other cultures.

Finally, the ethnography of communication holds that communication is fundamentally a socio-cultural practice and partly constitutive of socio-cultural life. Specifically, Philipsen (1992) indicates that "everywhere there is a distinctive culture, there is a distinctive speech code." Further, that code is "inextricably woven into speaking." Additionally, speech codes (historically transmitted, socially constructed systems of symbols and meanings, premises, and rules, about communicative conduct) implicate models for personhood, society, and strategic action. In other words, says Philipsen, (1992, p. 15). "in every cultural way of speaking is a distinctive answer to the questions (1) What is a person? (2) What is society? and (3) How are persons and societies linked through communication?" In the narratives of the public school teachers,

we find norms that speak to these questions. By looking at these norms, we can determine teachers' definitions concerning "What is a teacher?" For example, we can conclude that a teacher is: one who adequately performs his or her assignments and duties, who does a fair share of the communal work, who cooperates with and conforms to group requirements, and who maintains professional conduct toward students. We can begin to understand teachers' definitions of their work society including their identification with small groups within the society as well as their interpretation of the society as a whole. Finally, we can understand how teachers' positions of status and hierarchy in the society are manifested through their talk.

Ethnomethodology

An interpretation of the research findings of this study using an ethnomethodology framework varies from the set of interpretations listed in the last section using the ethnography of communication framework. Ethnomethodology, like ethnography of communication, is interested in the orderliness of social activities, but is based on slightly different premises. Lynch (1993) decomposes the concept of accountability "into a set of proposals" (p. 14). Lynch does this by providing a "distilled, simplified, alliterative rendering of Garfinkel's various recitations of ethnomethodological policies." He outlines the basic ethnomethodological proposals concerning accountable social-communicative life as follows (p. 14-15):

1. Social activities are orderly. In significant aspects they are nonrandom, recurrent, repeated, anonymous, meaningful, and coherent.

2. This orderliness is observable. The orderliness of social activities is public; its production can be witnessed and is intelligible rather than being an exclusively private affair.

3. This observable orderliness is ordinary. That is, the ordered features of social practices are banal, easily and necessarily witnessed by anybody who participates competently in those practices.

4. This ordinarily observable orderliness is oriented. Participants in orderly social activities orient to the sense of one another's activities, and while doing so they contribute to the temporal development of those activities.

5. This orientedly ordinary observable orderliness is rational. Orderly social activities make sense to those who know how to produce and appreciate them.

6. This rationally oriented ordinary observable orderliness is describable. Masters of the relevant natural language can talk about the order of their activities, and they can talk in and as the order of their activities.

With these premises in mind, in chapter one, I asked the question: For public school teachers, is conflict a socially-recognizable, account-able event or process? In other words, is conflict a part of their culture such that all or most teachers can recognize the same episodes as instances of conflict? The narratives suggest that the answer to this question is yes. That the participants were able to respond to my request (please write a description of a conflict in which you are/were one of the conflict parties) without asking for clarification or further instructions suggests that teachers have knowledge of and orient to certain aspects of conduct that could be labeled as instances of conflict. Further,

the fact that a general description of conflict can be crafted from the teachers' narratives suggests that conflict is an event or process that is such a part of their culture that they can all recognize the same episodes as instances of conflict.

At the end of chapter one, I asked a slightly different, but related question: For public school teachers, what counts as a socially recognizable, account-able instance of conflict? Chapter two's general description of teacher-teacher conflict (pp. 42-46) and chapter three's general description of teacher-administrator conflict (pp. 77-85), which were generated from an ethnography of communication framework using Hymes' (1974) concepts (i.e., setting, participants, message form, ends, and key or tone), provide insight into the subject matter of teacher-teacher and teacher-administrator conflicts, who is involved in the conflicts, where they take place, and in what manner they take place. Additionally, knowing teachers' vocabulary in reference to conflict (e.g., their specialized use of "team," "pod," "grade-level," "veteran," and "building") highlights their folk concepts or native concepts concerning conflict. This information helps non-teachers understand what teachers' attend to and what information they share in common as they recognize and refer to instances of conflict.

Additionally, the data analysis sections highlighted the fact that the setting of a conflict may play a part in teachers' shared recognition of episodes as instances of conflict. Teachers typically report engaging in conflicts with other teachers or with the administrator within their same school. Teachers report that conflicts often occur between members of the same team or grade-level. Teachers attend to where an episode takes place (i.e., public or private) when interpreting the actions of fellow teachers and when determining who is party to the conflict and who is witnessing it as a direct audience or

mere over hearer. Teachers report that most teacher-administrator conflicts occur in the administrator's office. In interpreting interactions with administrators, teachers orient to whether they were summoned to the administrator's office or whether they chose to go there. Additionally, that there is an implicit chain of command among teachers (an unspoken hierarchy of authority among teachers based on years of service) influences the recognition, perception of, and accounting for conflict between teachers. Finally, teachers often identify the length of tenure of the administrator when reporting teacher-administrator conflicts, making note of the fact that an administrator is new to the school. These findings help to articulate what counts as a socially recognizable, account-able instance of conflict. Through the narratives, the teachers' descriptive and accounting practices, we can begin to see different aspects of their social order.

An ethnomethodological framework prompts me to make another conclusion about the data in this study. I conclude that the teachers' descriptions of conflict (i.e., the discourse acts in which teachers describe conflict) are actually accounts of those episodes. As such, they function to make visible the rational nature of the teacher's own conflict behavior. They provide the methods by which teachers may account, and thus provide evidence for their competence as members of both the teaching community and of society at large. Additionally, as accounts, the narratives are reflexive and indexical.

Reflexivity and indexicality are central commitments of ethnomethodology that have not been explicitly discussed to this point in this paper. Because they are important conclusions about the teachers' accounts, I will briefly discuss these two concepts now. Additionally, because the explication of the concepts and their implications requires

careful and precise language, I will rely on Handel's (1982) lucid exposition (account) of the definition of these two terms.

Reflexivity. Handel (1982, p. 35-39) explains reflexivity:

> Ethnomethodologists argue that all accounts have a reflexive relationship with themselves and take some action upon themselves, regardless of their content and regardless of the medium in which the account is expressed and regardless of their grammatical structure, if any. To understand how every account stands in a relationship with itself or acts upon itself, we must be very careful about the reference of an account—what it is about. I shall suggest that accounts do not more or less accurately describe things. Instead, they establish what is accountable in the setting in which they occur. Whether they are accurate or inaccurate by some other standards, accounts define reality for a situation in the sense that people act on the basis of what is accountable in the situation of their action. Later, if it becomes inconvenient to act on some account, the content of what is accountable changes. The account provides a basis for action, a definition of what is real, and it is acted upon so long as it remains accountable. ... Accounts establish what people in a situation will believe, accept as sound, accept as proper—that is, they establish what is accountable. ... We can now understand how every account is reflexive. Accounts establish what is accountable in a setting. At the same time, the setting is made up of those accounts. ... Accounts are always in this reflexive relationship with themselves because they are the medium of definition and accountability and because they make up the defined, accountable world at the same time. ... If social settings are made up entirely of

accounts, then the processes by which accounts are offered and accepted are the fundamental social process. The formal structure of accounts is the fundamental social structure.

Indexicality. Handel (1982, p. 40) explains that indexicality refers to the influence of the setting on the meaning of accounts. "In general, the participants in a social situation will have particular purposes, particular time references, particular resources available, and particular skills. All these matters...will affect what will be accepted as an adequate account." While scientists and philosophers have treated indexical linguistic expressions specifically and indexicality in general as a problem for their work—a "blemish" on the white wall of language that should be removed, ethnomethodologists want to highlight and examine this aspect of the social world. They want to understand the formal structure of commonsense accounts.

Handel (1982, p. 43) explains, "Any information, carried by any medium of communication, is considered as an account. It is assumed to have the characteristic formal structure of accounts; it is considered to have all other information as its context and to be context for all other information. Any account is reflexive. Insofar as it draws its meaning from its context, its meaning changes as the context changes. Any account is indexical." In sum, social circumstances or realities are self-generating (Holstien & Gubrium, 1994). The meanings of objects and events are equivocal or indeterminate without a visible context and the circumstances that provide the context are themselves self-generating. "Interpretive activities are simultaneously in and about the settings to which they orient, and that they describe" (p. 265).

That the teachers' narrative descriptions of conflict are accounts and are therefore reflexive and indexical, has implications for how we treat the findings. We should understand that findings such as those listed on the first two pages of this chapter are not lists of rules that teachers should or do follow. Rather, they are a list of accounting methods. They demonstrate what these particular teachers consider to be accountable in each setting. They demonstrate the reasoning procedures teachers use as a basis for action in conflict and they provide methods by which teachers can make their own behaviors visibly sensible and rational.

That the various accounts contain similar "rules" or accounting methods suggests that there is some commonality in the teacher culture concerning what is accountable where workplace conflict interactions are concerned. We should take that commonality as an indicator of the formal social structure and formal social processes rather than as a prescription for behavior. (This point will be further developed in the subsequent section.) When teachers invoke a rule or norm in their accounts, it serves as a frame by which they interpret the behaviors that surround them. Once this interpretive template is placed on the situation, the teacher's behavior in response to the circumstances and actions of the other further constitutes the episode as a conflict interaction. Additionally, the framework stands as support for the teacher's competence in an episode of this type—a conflict interaction. Thus the utility of the implicit or explicit reference to a rule or norm within an account or within an interaction lies in the reflexive nature of the action itself. (Prusank (1993) made this point about discipline interactions. See footnote 17).

Further, concerning indexicality, we must note that the meanings of objects and events in the accounts are dependent on the context. These accounts were produced by

teachers in response to a request from me, their instructor, in a course about conflict management. This provides a certain context for understanding the accounts. They were writing for a specific audience, someone whom they did not know well, in fact had just met, and someone who claimed to have some expertise on the subject of conflict. Both the events and happenings reported in the accounts and the accounts themselves (i.e., the relaying of the stories) might have different meaning with a different audience. The meaning the stories have for me are likely different that they would be for another public school teacher or a principal or a computer programmer. Additionally, if the teachers were producing an account for someone else, their spouses, their non-teacher friends, or their therapist, the meaning of the account and the method of establishing what is accountable in the setting might be different. Perhaps the fact that the account was produced for a person who claims to have some expertise in conflict management influenced the degree to which the narrators tried to relieve themselves of culpability in the conflict situation. The answers to some of these questions could be gained by gathering or observing accounts that occur in daily interactions and/or by having another person obtain the written narratives.

A third interpretation of the findings resulting from an ethnomethdological analysis is that teachers' accounts of conflict episodes display the existence of a corpus of commonsense knowledge (i.e., what everyone knows about the practical actions of everyday life particularly in relation to conflict) and they demonstrate ways in which teachers' orient to that knowledge and display its use through talk and action in order to appear as a competent member of the teaching community. Chapters two and three contained lists of norms that I derived from an analysis of the narratives. If one accepts

my inference process in naming these rules, that is, if I have convincingly demonstrated their existence as norms pertaining to teachers and conflict in the workplace, the question remains: How is this information used to understand teachers' experiences of conflict?

One possibility is to use these norms to explain and predict behavior. A conventional sociological analysis of the norms would seek to do just that. Wieder (1974, p. 29) explains that the idea that human action can be explained by showing that the actors follow rules which "predict" and explain their action is foundational for a variety of disciplines but is of particular interest to sociology and anthropology—disciplines that both conceive of rules as open to observation and also base scholarly conceptions of rules on the members' understanding of those same rules. Wieder (1974, p. 37) summarizes this basic conceptual scheme of rules that is used in almost every sub-field of sociology:

> The attempt to account for the formal structures of everyday activities typically leads the sociologist to search for an appropriate normative culture in terms of norms, values, and cultural categories. The very way in which norms and normative culture are conceived provides for counting them as formal structures as well. Norms and values serve as instructions to the actor, and their contents must be empirically established. The actor's motivation to comply with the norms and values must also be established. These motives are found in the demonstration that the actor has internalized the normative elements, and, therefore, compliance with them is a condition of his capacity to count his own action as morally correct, and/or the actor can be found to comply with normative

elements as a condition of his position within his community, i.e., a condition of retaining the respect of others and a condition of receiving rewards.

Wieder (1974) points out that ethnomethodologists question the feasibility of explaining action by reference to rules. One reason for this skepticism results from empirical investigations concerning the ways in which rules are actually employed. Wieder explains that findings by Garfinkel (1967), Leiter, (1969), Wieder (1970), and Zimmerman (1970) suggest that "the claim that an ensemble of actions which occurred in a variety of occasions is explained by the discovery of a rule which was complied with by the actors in those occasions is a weak assertion, because the rule can vary in its sense from occasion to occasion. One could not 'deduce' or 'predict' a pattern of behavior from such a rule" (Wieder, 1974, p. 40).

In contrast to conventional sociology's notion that behavior is rule governed or motivated by shared values and expectations, ethnomethodology (with its emphasis on understanding how members accomplish, manage, and reproduce a sense of social structure) seeks to observe how social actors describe and explain conduct with reference to rules, values, and motives. Zimmerman (1971, p. 233) explains that members' "reference to rules might then be seen as a common-sense method of accounting for or making available for talk the orderly features of everyday activities, thereby making out these activities as orderly in some fashion." Consequently, Wieder and Zimmerman (1970) suggest that researchers study norms as a pure topic. Wieder (1974) explains that in order to do this, the analyst must disengage from the assumption that social-conduct is rule governed. The analyst must also "notice that the regular, coherent, connected patterns of social life are described and explained as regular, coherent, and connected by

showing their relation to rules (or related concepts) by laymen and professional sociologists alike" (p. 41). Finally, when the analyst encounters the appearance of behavior as being a consequence of a rule, he or she should treat it as just that—the appearance of an event as an instance of compliance or noncompliance with a rule. The focus is on the members' use of rules, values, principles, and the like as sense-making devices. In an ethnomethodological analysis, the aim is not to provide causal explanations of patterned behavior, but to describe how members recognize, describe, explain, and account for the order of their everyday lives (Zimmerman & Wieder, 1970).

In Wieder's study of inmate conduct in a halfway house (a shelter designed to aid ex-prisoners who are in poverty), he explicates a set of norms called the "convict code." This code is the "classical or traditional explanation of those forms of deviant behavior engaged in by inmates, convict, or residents of rehabilitative organizations" (p. 113) and is used by analysts to explain behavior patterns of prisons and other related organizations. Wieder demonstrates ways in which the code (treated as maxims of conduct that residents follow and enforce upon one another) is used to account for resident behavior. An example of this use of the code follows: "If residents comply with the maxim, 'Show your loyalty to the residents,' then they would be motivated to avoid spending time with staff, avoid lively conversation with staff, and by the use of Spanish and other conversational devices, would exclude staff from their conversations" (p. 118). Wieder asserts that using this more traditional sociological treatment of the code as he found it at the halfway house, he could explain the patterns of deviance that he observed there (p. 120). However, Wieder did not stop with this analysis of the code. He also conducted an ethnomethodological analysis of the convict code. He discovered that "telling the code"

was an important interactional event between staff and residents. He examined the convict code as an interactional event, exploring the

> ways in which the activity of 'telling the code' in a behavioral environment accomplished (or created and sustained) a particular kind of social reality for those who witnessed the scene. 'Telling the code' in an environment of other behaviors gave witnesses a schema whereby the environment appeared to display sensible, factual, and stable properties. That is, hearing the code and employing it as a 'guide to perception' gave behaviors of residents a specific and stable sense (Wieder 1974, p. 131).

These two ways of analyzing norms within cultures, the traditional sociological analysis and the ethnomethodological analysis can also be applied to the norms and rules that are explicated in this research project concerning teacher-teacher conflict and teacher-administrator conflict. Considering the study as a whole, a portion of my conclusions about teacher-teacher conflict and teacher-administrator conflict is the assertion of the presence of certain norms. In order to generate these norms, I attended to explicit statements in the narratives about norms ("*Our school has a rule that all teachers that teach a grade get together and teach the same thing;*" T-T: 10, line 5), and I also attended to statements that indirectly refer to a norm ("*My shortcoming with Miss "X" was/is that she didn't 'seem' to work hard or have as many students as the rest of us;*" T-T: 32, line 2). Once established, one could use these norms to explain teacher behavior and to predict the occurrence of conflict. Use of the norms in this way would likely require further ethnographic studies using participant-observer, observational, and interviewing techniques to verify the existence of the norms and to document behavior

that could be explained by referencing them. In other words, it would require different or additional data.

In contrast, however, an ethnomethodological analysis of the norms (i.e., an analysis that seeks to observe how teachers' conduct is described and explained with reference to rules or norms) is possible using the teachers' accounts of conflict on their own and on their own terms. Taking the accounts as descriptions of conflict produced by teachers for a particular audience, one can examine the accounts to see the ways in which teachers invoke the norms to serve as an interpretive template for the situation. That is, once the corpus of commonsense knowledge has been established, much like the convict code that Wieder uncovered, then one can begin to look for ways that teachers "tell the code" or refer to the norms as a "guide to perception" for the audience. While this form of analysis can be done starting with the data for this study, it is a slightly different analysis than the one that was done to establish the existence of the norms because it embeds the narratives in the interactional context in which they are told. It is an analysis that I would like to do as a part of my continuing research in this area. Uncovering ways in which teachers invoke norms (or in this case, the norms derived from this data set) as an interpretive template for the situation—a guide to perception for the hearer—could also be done by studying actual conflict interactions between a teacher and another and actual interactions in which a teacher is describing or accounting for a past episode of conflict to another person.

In my review of literature for this research project, I came across one other article that attempts, like mine, to enumerate norms or rules that are a part of teachers' conflict culture. The paper by Mary Hale (1983) reports her efforts to uncover these types of

rules. Although her methodology was different (she analyzed school documents and conducted 45 minute interviews with the principal and seven of the eleven full-time teachers in an elementary school), she attempted to extrapolate remarks relevant to understanding the organizational image and derive from the participants' comments the "particular elements of this image which could be translated into rules prescribing how conflict should be managed" (p. 6).

Once she established the explicit rules of the school concerning conflict interactions (i.e., those that clearly fit the widely-accepted and explicitly-stated organizational image), she established, through observation of teacher behavior, the implicit rules—those rules which are "tacitly known and shared by the participants, but which may not be congruent with the organizational image and thus would not be articulated as a part of the organization's master contract" (p. 6). Although it was the discovery of the implicit rules of the organization that Hale cited as the most significant finding of her research, for our purposes, the listing of the rules is noteworthy and meaningful. She establishes the presence of the following explicit rules:

R-1: If you are a teacher/principal in this school, the educational and personal welfare of students must be your highest priority (p. 9).

R-2: If you are a teacher in this school, you must exhibit a high level of competence and creativity (p.9).

R-3: If you are a teacher/principal in this school, you must cooperate and collaborate with others (p. 9).

R-4: If you are a teacher/principal in this school, you must exhibit open and flexible communication behaviors (p. 10).

R-5: If two teachers are in conflict, they must manage the conflict themselves in a "mature" rather than a "childish" manner (p. 10).

R-6: If a conflict with another teacher arises, one or both of the involved teachers should initiate an attempt to work out the conflict (p. 10).

R-7: If the conflict has not been managed satisfactorily after the first attempt, several more attempts should be made by one or both of the involved teachers (p. 10).

Hale then explains that these explicit or master contract rules do not take into consideration the leader's attitude about conflict, or the history of the school, or the power relationships between the principal and teachers and among the teachers themselves. According to Hale (1983, p. 18), "Given the three significant influences upon teacher and principal behavior outlined above, we can now elaborate and understand the implicit rules that explain what actually happened in many conflict situations in this particular school." She then outlines several implicit rules.

R-8: If two teachers are unable to resolve a conflict using R-6 and R-7, and if the conflict is "too petty" to take to the principal, teachers must manage their conflict by whatever means are effective, as long as the principal is not involved (p. 19).

R-9: If there is a "major problem" in which the principal should be involved, and if a conflicting teacher believes the principal perceives him/her as low

power, then he/she should abide strictly by the master contract and avoid taking the problem to the principal (p. 22).

R-10: If there is a "major problem" in which the principal should be involved, and if the conflicting teachers believe they are in good standing with the principal and are of relatively equal power, then they should go beyond the master contract by approaching the principal and seeking his intervention (p. 22).

Hale's study, like my study, inductively establishes the presence of some rules of interaction for schoolteachers in conflict situations. However, Hale's study varies from mine in some important ways. First, Hale sets out to "determine the master contract of (an) elementary school organization and to develop hypotheses specifically about its conflict-related rules" (p. 5). Secondly, she observes actual conflicts and conducts follow-up interviews with previously-interviewed teachers to establish the existence of implicit rules that are accepted by the faculty but are not a part of the master contract. Hale's study is an example of the traditional sociological analysis of norms or rules within a culture (see above). She adopts Shimanoff's (1980) conceptualization of a rule as "followable prescription that indicates what behavior is obligated, preferred or prohibited in certain contexts" (Hale, 1983, p. 6). After explicating the master contract rules that she derived from her investigation, she states,

> These rules, readily articulated by the teachers, do, in general, govern the behavior of teachers in this school when they initially encounter a problem with another teacher. For example, two teachers described separate situations in which

> excessive noise from an adjoining class created conflict between the parties involved. Both teachers indicated that they had made more than one attempt to work out the problems with the other teacher, and had been successful (p. 11).

Hale does not take the teachers' talk about the conflict as an account of the conflict; instead, she takes the teachers' talk as representing what really happened in the situation as opposed to adopting the posture or attitude of "ethnomethodological indifference" (see footnote 20). She calls for "further studies based on observations and interpretations of discrepancies between the rules which participants claim to govern their behavior and the rules which actually guide their behavior" (p. 27, emphasis mine). Although I prefer an ethnomethodological analysis of norms to the traditional sociological analysis Hale uses, her findings have significance for my research project because they uncover some rules that teachers "claim to govern their behavior." In other words, the norms or rules that Hale explicates could be taken together with those put forth in my study and used as the beginnings of a code or set of norms or commonsense knowledge that could then be used to discover ways in which teachers tell the code or reference the norms during conflict interactions or reports of those interactions.

Implications of Findings for Communication Research on Conflict

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I identified the general domain of communication study that provides the context for this research project—Language and Social Interaction (LSI). Assuming an LSI research stance implies that in studying conflict, I will not focus on individual behaviors or individual minds, but will instead focus on social and cultural interaction (Gee, 1999). Specifically, I will attempt to

understand conflict from a cultural standpoint and I will focus on direct representations of conflict that are exhibited in individual's talk about conflict (see page 3). Further, I will not be interested in a conception of phenomena that includes "atemporal, self-sufficient, isolatable, independent, propertied substances standing out there over and against engagement with them (e.g., motive, goal, attitude, self, personality, relationship, etc.)" (Wieder, 1999, p. 165). Nor will I regard those entities as having a "situation-transcending continuing existence" such that I would interpret certain events as signs or indicators of their continuing existence (p. 165).

Historically, communication researchers have not studied conflict from an LSI perspective. Nicotera, Rodriguez, Hall and Jackson (1995) indicate that communication scholars often adopt a psychological perspective. Consequently, "predispositions and cognitive orientations to conflict are considered to be important ingredients for the understanding of communication in conflict" (p. 29). Metts, Sprecher, and Cupach (1991) explain that traditionally, conflict has been studied with experimental (e.g., the prisoner dilemma games) and quasi-experimental designs (e.g., hypothetical scenarios and role-playing) and observational methods. Metts, et al., provide common questions that communication researchers ask about conflict. For example: What do couples perceive to be the causes of their conflict? Researchers investigate this question by generating "topics" (terms and phrases) that couples associate with their conflict episodes and by looking at deeper relational "issues" embedded within topics. Another question that researchers commonly ask is: How do partners perceive they manage conflict episodes, both in terms of individual behaviors and in terms of dyadic patterns? This question is studied by focusing on cognitive processes.

> Researchers assume that people develop characteristic responses to conflict and employ them with little variation across situations and interactional partners (Hocker & Wilmot, 1985; Sternberg & Dobson, 1987). When people report what they "typically" do in recollected conflict situations or would "most likely" do in hypothetical situations, they are reporting their perception of their conflict style. Several scales have been developed and widely used to study behavioral predispositions in conflict episodes... (Metts, et al., p. 171-172).

Researchers also attempt to answer this question by studying how certain variables (e.g., demographic personality variables such as gender, relational variables such as satisfaction or type of relationship, and cognitive processes such as causal attributions) moderate the strength of conflict styles. These approaches typically begin by "providing respondents with a list of tactics (specific communication behaviors), each followed by response scales measuring frequency or likelihood of use" (p. 172). Then the researchers factor analyze these tactics to yield a smaller set of strategies.

Metts and her colleagues pose other questions that communication researchers have asked about conflict. For example: How does the level of conflict change over relationship stages? and How is conflict related to relationship qualities such as love, satisfaction, and stability? To answer this question, researchers have used the Retrospective Interview Technique wherein "respondents are asked to call to mind specific previous stages in their relationship and then to complete a battery of scales for each stage." p. 173. (Refer to Metts, et al. and Nicotera, et al. for a thorough description of the history of communication research on conflict.)

Most of these inquiries described above are theory-driven rather than data-driven (Bochner, 1994; Tracy, 1991). However, Nicotera et al., report a study by Nicotera (1993) in which she uses grounded theory to develop a model of conflict handling behavior from descriptive accounts of organizational conflict. Hutchby (1999) reminds us that if we are to make claims about what is going on in a social interaction segment, we must empirically demonstrate that the categories applied in our analysis are "practically relevant for the participants themselves" (p. 86). In traditional communication studies of conflict, the researcher has regarded the concept of conflict as meaningful. As McPhee and Poole (1994) point out, many researchers have raised objections to this notion (e.g., Cicourel, 1964 and Garfinkel, 1967). The point is that once a construct such as conflict is defined, it often becomes a taken-for-granted feature of the world. "For researchers, constructs like attitude, norm, or attraction become second nature, and it is easy to confuse the construct measured by a set of technical rules with the phenomenon itself" (McPhee and Poole, 1994, p. 67). If researchers studying conflict reify it—treat it as if it has concrete or material existence—they may present a "static picture of a construct that is negotiated or 'in process'" (p. 67).

Additionally, researchers must take care not to impose (either purposefully or naively) their own constructs and models on participants and substitute the researcher's insights for actors' processes and understanding. "This often occurs out of the awareness of the researchers, because they take social scientific constructs for granted and do not consider that they may only reflect professional discourse and not subjects' perspectives" (McPhee and Poole, 1994, p. 68). Zimmerman (1974) and Wieder (1974) make a similar argument referring to scientists' use of the "procedure of idealization" to organize

relevant aspects of the phenomena they address. An idealization is an "abstract construction which is assumed to represent some constellation of factors which lie behind and generate certain features of observed behavior" (p. 20). According to Zimmerman (1974, p. 22):

> From an ethnomethodological point of view, idealizations found in many of the human sciences are misplaced. They lead the theorist to treat his subject matter in such a way as to all but foreclose the investigation of certain fundamental features of human behavior—specifically, they obscure the possibility that idealization itself is a constituent feature of the activities of human beings in shaping their interpersonal environments. ... Though ethnomethodologists must themselves idealize their phenomena in some fashion when pursuing an analysis, their approach differs from current constructive theorizing in that their idealizations attempt to incorporate the view that, from the outset, societal members recognize and accomplish the orderly structures of their world (cf. Garfinkel and Sacks, 1970) via the use of idealizations.

Accordingly, researchers interested in conflict must ask themselves questions such as: Is the way I am conceptualizing conflict consistent with how participants view or experience conflict? Do the participants (in a social sense) show themselves to be oriented to conflict as a relevant phenomenon in the ongoing course of their interaction? Is my focus on incompatible goals of the conflict partners, or scarce resources in the situation, or the conflict style of the conflict parties issues on which participants focus? Do conflict partners attend to the "cause" of their conflict during the course of interaction?

In this research project on teachers' accounts of conflict, I have attempted to start with important questions: Is conflict a socially-recognizable, accountable event? and What counts as a socially-recognizable, account-able instance of conflict? By starting at this point, I am making an effort to avoid the "idealization" of conflict and to discover the meaning of both the term and the activity for the teachers involved. In doing so, I have initiated a description of what is accountable in conflict interactions for teachers. This description can be taken as an account of teachers' culture and as a beginning point for further understanding of how conflict is enacted in teachers' daily lives. Other communication scholars studying conflict in various contexts should be careful not to assume that the participants' definition and view of conflict is the same as the researcher's view. A good beginning point for an investigation is a determination of whether or not conflict is a socially-recognizable, accountable, event or process for the individuals within the culture and a determination of the accountable features of the event, rather than assuming apriori that it is such an event.

Future Directions

As I indicated above, the data for this project are rich and fertile and contain more information that what I have uncovered in this analysis. Also, as I mentioned in the previous section, now that I have established some of the norms that might be a part of the teacher conflict culture, I would like to go back to the same data set and look for instances in which teachers "tell the code" (to use Wieder's terms) in order to define or describe a real environment of events—to create an interpretive template, and look at how that action might be consequential.

Another possible investigation of these same narratives involves the "other" meaning of or definition for accounts that is prevalent in communication literature—the one that takes accounts as a means through which actors can relieve themselves of culpability for untoward or unanticipated acts (see discussion on page 26-27). To the extent that conflict is viewed as a failure event and to the extent that participants have an interest in controlling the meaning of that event, they may provide accounts to reframe the event by creating a context in which to interpret the event.

Stamp and Sabourin's (1995) analysis of males' spousal abuse narratives included this type of investigation. Their analysis of the narratives participants generated when asked to describe the most recent episode of violence in their relationship resulted in one of their conclusions—that "the men in this study accounted for their violence through excusing their behavior, justifying their behavior, minimizing their behavior, and denying their behavior" (p. 293). This type of analysis on the teachers' conflict scenarios may not be possible because of the difference between typical episodes of conflict at work and spousal abuse. In Stamp and Sabourin's study, the participants who generated the narratives had been arrested and sent to a treatment center. Because of the nature of violent behavior in married relationships (i.e., evidence of its occurrence is often physically visible), then accounting for (explaining, excusing, justifying, denying) their behavior may be an important part of the abusers' self presentation. The conflict episodes described by the teachers did not include the presence of physical violence, and therefore, the accounts may be qualitatively different.

An additional reason that this may not be a fruitful analysis is that teachers do not offer excuses or justifications for their behavior because they are telling the story in a

way that holds them blameless for the episode. However, there is evidence in at least a few of the accounts that the narrator is offering a justification or explanation for his or her behavior—one that might be categorized under this alternative definition of accounts (see account on page 91). Consequently, a fresh analysis of the narratives as accounts for actions rather than accounts of actions might provide interesting findings.

Additionally, this dissertation covers two categories of conflict, teacher-teacher conflict and teacher-administrator conflict. I collected some accounts that I would categorize as teacher-parent conflicts and others as teacher-student conflicts. I have many more teacher-parent conflict narratives than teacher-student narratives. I would like to perform the same sort of analysis on that data set as I did on the ones reported here. My cursory look at that data reveals that many of the findings reported in chapters two and three also apply to the teacher-parent data set. However, the data also indicate that because of the nature of teacher-parent conflict (i.e., that the teacher and principal are employees of a school district that is funded in part by tax-payer money; that the parent is not a boss or supervisor to the teacher but is also not a disinterested party to what happens at the school; that teachers interact with students on a daily basis but only interact with the parent(s) of that student on a limited number of occasions; that historically the reasons for teacher-parent interactions have been because there was some kind of "trouble;" that the teacher must rely on parents as "partners" in the education process of the child via homework and other projects that are completed at home; that teachers and parents often have different philosophies about learning, discipline, and achievement, etc.), the findings about norms and the claims about the accounts of these types of conflicts could be somewhat, or even substantially, different from the claims

about teacher-teacher and teacher-administrator conflict. I look forward to an analysis of the teacher-parent data set. I do not currently have enough teacher-student accounts to do an adequate analysis. If I attempt to analyze this category of conflict, I will have to gather more data.

Another direction for future research that I have eluded to in this chapter is an analysis of how teachers and their conflict partners co-construct accounts of the interactions they are in as those interactions are unfolding. That teachers point to certain features of the social structure to establish what is accountable for a particular setting is evident in their accounts. However, unlike Wieder's (1974) study of the convict code, how the accounts are utilized in the sequence of the interaction is not known. When are the norms produced in discourse, and how are they produced? (Prusank (1993) makes this same point about her conclusions concerning parent-child discipline interactions that were derived from parents' accounts of those episodes.) Conflict interactions, like discipline interactions and all other forms of discourse, are inherently coordinated events. "Each party has choices to make in regard to what actions he or she will take, and each party must make sense of the unfolding scene in process, to do so" (Prusank, 1993, p. 145). Actions reflexively and accountably redetermine the features of the scene in which they occur. During interaction, both conflict parties are put in a "situation of choice" with each interlocking utterance and the choice each makes has serious consequences for each participant simultaneously (Prusank, 1993). While the analysis of this dissertation provides a starting point for a better understanding of what it is that researchers are viewing when they witness conflict interactions, a focus on how teachers make sense of

conflict interactions as unfolding scenes is important to fully understanding conflict as a socially recognizable, accountable event.

I discovered one article in the Education literature in which the author attempted to do the type of analysis I am describing. It is an excellent article by Duncan Waite (1993) in which he uses ethnographic methods and conversation analysis to examine five teacher-supervisor conferences and their contexts. He demonstrates how three teacher conference roles—passive, collaborative, and adversarial (that are often highlighted in the academic literature of supervision, teacher socialization, and mentoring) were constructed, face-to-face and moment-by-moment. Waite explains the process he went through to reach his conclusions:

> To develop an understanding of what it means to "do supervision," I held three interviews with each supervisor and shadowed them as they interacted with teachers. Informal ethnographic interviews...were held with the teachers involved. ... The observation techniques I used ranged from nonparticipant observation (while in the schools) to participant observation (while in university environs). In total, five supervisory conferences were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. ... Conference tapes were transcribed using a conversation analysis transcript notation protocol.... Excerpts of these conferences provide the basis of the discussion to follow. The observations and the interviews...will be treated as secondary material—meant to explicate understanding of the conference talk. ... During the early stages of fieldwork, I began to rethink my assumptions: I found I had as much unlearning as learning to do. My teachers—the supervisors, and classroom teachers participating in this study—insisted that I understand them and

> their interactive world. ... The transcription process, and the close examination of the conversational processes it captured and later revealed, added a dimension to my understanding of supervisory conferences that would have been unavailable through casual observation, interviewing, and reflection (pp. 679-681).

Waite draws conclusions about teacher-supervisor conferences. He states that we should no longer view supervision as a one-way phenomenon. He indicates that supervisor-teacher face-to-face interactions demonstrate that both parties have resources on which they may draw—neither is defenseless and both are responsible for the environment, the context, they co-construct. He states further that teachers influence the trajectory of all conferences, but only one of the three roles (see above) allows teachers to co-construct, with supervisors, a positive image of self and other. Using his conversation analytic findings, Waite goes so far as to instruct supervisors to record, analyze, and reflect upon their conference behaviors. He suggests that in conference, supervisors "may give the floor to the teacher and his or her concerns by allowing the teacher to begin the conference, by pausing more often and longer, by using more acknowledgment tokens, and by modeling some of the behaviors exhibited by the more collaborative teachers discussed in this research: active listening and incorporating what the other speaker says in one's own talk" (p. 689).

Waite's research, while on a slightly different subject, exemplifies the type of research I am referring to in this conclusion. Prusank (1993) reminds us that the people do not only exhibit accounting behavior when they are asked to do so. The practice of accounting is a visible feature of all actions in progress and thus of all discourse as it is co-constructed. Therefore, researchers in the area of conflict should understand these

interactions better by focusing on how teachers and their conflict partners co-construct accounts of the interactions they are in, as these interactions are unfolding.

Concluding Comments

Part of being a good qualitative researcher is to reflect on the research process and to illuminate the steps of the process, the subjective experience of the researcher throughout the process, and the conclusions reached during the process (Bochner, 1994). The summer that I taught the conflict course to public school teachers, I did not intend to study teachers' experiences of conflict. In fact, my tentative dissertation topic at that time was an investigation of conflict at small, private, church-related universities. When I collected the initial materials that lead me to gather the data that I used in this research project, I did not have this research project in mind. I collected the data so that I could better understand my participants and tailor the course to their specific needs.

During the course of the summer, I became fascinated with the subject of conflict in the public school setting. In talking to the teachers, I witnessed and empathized with the extreme emotions that accompanied their discussions of conflict in their work lives. Many of the teachers reported feelings of sadness, anger, frustration, dissatisfaction, bitterness, and burnout—feelings they attributed to dealing with conflicts at their work. At the end of the summer, when I began reflecting on the accounts as a whole, I began to look at them as a data set. I began fashioning a research project in which I could use the narratives as data. At that time, I had almost no understanding of ethnomethodology. I had encountered the idea briefly in a qualitative methods course, but could not articulate any of its theoretical commitments. Also, it was at about this time that I ran across the

chapter by Prusank (1993) in a book I had purchased in the first year of my doctoral program but had not touched since I purchased it. The fact that Prusank's data (narrative descriptions of discipline interactions produced by parents) were so similar to mine was encouraging to me. However, at that time I did not understand her ethnomethodological analysis of the data.

When I first began to look at the data and write about it, I found myself taking the traditional sociological viewpoint that is described earlier in this chapter. Through careful guidance by my chair, I began to see how I could look at the data another way. However, that "other" approach was not a part of me. I could only tentatively grasp what consequences an ethnomethodological approach would have for my data analysis. At that point, I dedicated myself to a study of accounts and ethnomethodology—a sort of self-taught crash course. Although I became familiar enough with the concepts to see how they would affect my data analysis, I was not familiar enough with them to articulate them in my own words. Ultimately, I am still working on being able to do that. It has been through the writing of the dissertation that the concepts have become clearer. Coming to understand the theoretical commitments of ethnomethodology has had a profound impact on many aspects of my life. I am just now coming to grips with all of the ways in which this research project has been consequential for me. Bochner (1994) suggests that in narrative research:

> A reflexive connection exists between the researcher's own life history and the stories of 'subjects' or informants. The researcher's life history inevitably has an effect on the descriptions, interpretations, and characterizations he or she tells about the other persons and groups. Every depiction of an "other" necessarily

implies a definition of self. As a result, in narrative studies, the researcher as a self is repositioned (p. 32-33).

As I reflect on it, I believe that during this process I have had a sincere desire to understand the data and to analyze and report it without purposefully inserting my preconceived ideas. However, I know that this research has been a subjective process. Reissman (1993) summarizes the researcher's plight:

> Meaning is ambiguous because it arises out of a process of interaction between people: self, teller, listener, recorder, analyst, and reader. Although the goal may be to tell the whole truth, our narratives about others' narratives are our worldly creations. There is not a "view from no where" (Nagel, 1986), and what might have seemed nowhere in the past is likely to be somewhere in the present or future. Meaning is fluid and contextual, not fixed and universal. All we have is talk and texts that represent reality partially, selectively, and imperfectly (p. 15).

Although my work is subjective, I still desire it to be trustworthy. Reisman (1993) suggests that a researcher can provide information that will make it possible for others to determine the trustworthiness of his or her work by (a) describing how the interpretations were produced, (b) making visible what he or she did, (c) specifying how successive transformations were accomplished, and (d) making primary data available to other researchers. In chapters two and three, I attempted to include many excerpts from the narratives to support my conclusions. Additionally, I have provided the full text of all of the narratives referenced in this dissertation in an appendix. I invite others to look at those same narratives and to determine if I have been trustworthy in my interpretations.

One of the most satisfying aspects of this research project for me personally was the process of turning a mass of stories into a coherent description of a culture. And, there is so much more that can be done with the data. I leave this stage of my research project with the belief that I have been enriched and forever changed by the process. I also believe that the findings and conclusions reported here comprise a trustworthy picture (or at least the beginnings of a picture) of the formal social structure of the work world of teachers with particular reference to their conflict interactions.

Footnotes

1 The term "socially recognizable, account-able event or process" refers to the concepts originally put forth by Garfinkel (1967), the founder of ethnomethodology.

2 People relate conflict management to communication as an action (i.e., the verbal and nonverbal exchange of messages or the coordination of meaning) and to communication as a field of study. Sillars & Wilmot (1994, p. 186) suggest that "interpersonal and intimate conflicts are best described in terms of the communication patterns that unfold between the conflict participants."

3 While an exact definition of the Language and Social Interaction (LSI) approach may not be something upon which scholars can agree, Gee (1999, p. 61) provides a list of separate "movements" within a number of disciplines which could be considered in some respect to be included in the LSI research tradition. His list includes: "ethnomethodology (Heritage, 1984) and conversational analysis (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990), the ethnography of speaking (Gumperz, 1982; Hymes, 1974), discursive psychology (Harre and Gillett, 1994), sociohistorical psychology (Wertsch, 1998), situated cognition (Lave & Wenger, 1991), anthropological psychology (Strauss & Quinn, 1997), cultural psychology (Cole, 1996), science & technology studies (Latour, 1991), modern composition theory (Bazerman, 1989), evolutionary psychology (Clark, 1997; Dawkins, 1982), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992), and sociocultural literacy studies (Barton, 1994; Gee 1990/1996)."

4 According to Atkinson and Hammersley (1994), ethnography usually refers to forms of social research having a substantial number of the following features (p. 248):

1. A strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them;

2. A tendency to work primarily with "unstructured" data, that is, data that have not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories;

3. Investigation of a small number of cases, perhaps just one case, in detail;

4. Analysis of data that involved explicit interpretation of the meanings and function of human actions, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations with quantification and statistical analysis playing a subordinate role at most.

5 Wieder's article explicates the conceptual grounds, roots, and intertwining of four related traditions within language and social interaction studies: Ethnomethodology (EM), Conversation Analysis (CA), Goffman's Microanalysis (MA) and the Ethnography of Speaking (ES).

6 This is in contrast to the variable analytic view that focuses on the isolatable individual person and its properties as the unit of analysis. See Wieder (1999, p. 165) for further discussion of the differences between ethnography of interaction research which treats phenomena as "creatures of participants' actual engagement with something" and research conducted from other perspectives (e.g., experimental social psychology research practiced in psychology departments that represent phenomena as "atemporal, self-sufficient, isolatable, independent, propertied substances standing out there over and against engagement with them").

7 Wieder (1999) points to distinctions between the prominent conventional schemes employed in communication, psychology, sociology (and in this case education) and those employed by researchers operating from a social interaction framework. Wieder (1999, p. 165) explains:

> The concepts of the prominent conventional schemes...(such as motive, goal, attitude, self, personality, relationship, group, organization and society) represent phenomena as atemporal, self-sufficient, isolatable, independent, propertied substances standing *out there* over and against engagement with them....These concepts contrast with the ...sets of social interaction concepts...such as turn at talk, turn in a sequence, lived orderliness, communication practice, speech act, sequence of speech acts, speech activity, conversation, encounters, speech event, social occasion, speech situation, gathering, and the interaction order.
>
> The temporal mode of being of the entities projected by such concepts as attitude, personality, and group have a situation-transcending continuing existence that motivates the interpretation of present appearances or events as signs, indicators, or representations of that which continuingly exists. The relative transient entities referred to by social interactional concepts are creatures of participants' actual engagement with something, particularly their engagement with one another....
>
> The spatiality of social interactional things makes the ecology of the setting within which they occur always relevant. This ecology of communicative events invariably bears on what can be attended to, the possibility of mutual monitoring, and boundaries that would prevent it.

8 The Education researchers regard the following as a list of challenging and complex aspects of teachers' jobs that contribute to the amount of conflict teachers experience in the workplace.

1. Traditional teaching and leadership roles in schools are changing (Gmelch & Parkay, 1995; O'Hair, & O'Hair, 1996; Weiss, Cambone & Wyeth, 1992).

2. Teachers are required to deal with diverse groups of people such as students, administrators, colleagues, parents, and community groups, requiring a certain amount of political expertise. (Anderson & Blase, 1993; Blase & Kirby, 1992; Fullen, 1995; Hale, 1983; Sirotnik, 1995).

3. There is an increase in the diversity of the student body (Gmelch & Parkay, 1995; Hord, 1992).

4. Disruptive behavior and violence in school are increasing (Gmelch & Parkay, 1995; Travers & Cooper, 1996).

5. Society increasingly holds teachers accountable for addressing social problems (Fullen, 1995; Gmelch & Parkay, 1995; Travers & Cooper, 1996).

6. Schools have inadequate resources for the teachers to discharge their duty (Gmelch & Parkay, 1995; Travers & Cooper, 1996).

These studies provide a picture of public school teachers as employees who are called on to adapt to changing roles, changing authority relations, and increased involvement with outside entities without receiving specific training in handling these situations. Teacher education programs rarely address these types of situations. University degrees in Education train teachers to teach academic subject matter to children of different ages. Yet, teachers face these difficult, conflict-ridden situations, which require them to interact with adults from inside and outside of the school.

9 However, the narratives that teachers wrote for me are not the discourses that organized the conflicts they describe from within that same conflict. Angry exchanges of letters, e-mails, and remarks in a verbal fight would be discourse of that sort. Aspects of the conflict that are explicit in the teachers' narratives are very likely to be less explicit in an exchange of letters or e-mails, etc. Exchanges of letters, e-mails, and angry remarks would also be much more difficult to collect.

10 Garfinkel's writing is more concerned with account-ability, especially reflexive accountability, than it is with accounts. In addressing account-ability, however, he necessarily comments on accounts.

11 According to Wieder, both Scott and Lyman were students of Goffman and members of the "Berkeley Circle," a group of graduate students in sociology in the early 60's who, though they were at Berkeley, studied the published and unpublished writings of Harold Garfinkel The members included Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Shegloff, David Sudnow, Roy Turner, and others. Personal communication.

12 Assuming the broad definition of accounts offered by Harvey, et al., (1990; 1992), the similarity between theory and research on accounts and theory and research on narratives emerges. Harvey, et al., (1992) define accounts as story-like constructions (containing a plot or story line, characters, a time sequence, attributions and other forms of expression such as affect) for all types of events occurring in a variety of social situations. The standard definition of narrative includes the notion of an individual telling his or her story. The authors state, "To the extent that the concept of narrative may be broadened to encompass other forms of expression and even mental representation, we do not believe that the ideas of account and narrative need to be differentiated in any formal sense. (p. 37).

They explain that this definition allows one to embrace a fuller gamut of processes as revealed in account-making than would be possible if one focused mainly on situations involving the protection and maintenance of self-esteem. The authors (1992, p. 5) state an interest in the following motivations that persons might have for making an account in a given situation. They want to learn about

- how people give accounts as justifications for their behavior;
- how people develop accounts to understand and feel a greater sense of control in dealing with their environment;
- how people develop accounts to engage in emotional purging or catharsis;
- how people use accounts as ends in themselves (e.g., a form of reaction to unfinished business; and
- how people develop accounts to stimulate an enlightened feeling and greater hope and will for the future.

With these interests in the motivations for accounts and with a broad definition of accounts, Harvey and his associates make little distinction between the ideas of account and narrative.

Although narratives are often spoken, written narratives are also included in many data sets of research projects on accounts (Harvey, et al, 1990).

They further explain that accounts used as data may be sets of reported thoughts and feelings and as such may contain constituent responses such as attributions of responsibility and blame, attributions of causality, trait evaluations of self and other, and the like. The narratives or accounts collected in this research study contain these elements.

13 According to Wieder (1996) one method of organizing research questions for an ethnographic study is to use a method called the **conceptual net** (named after the fisherman's net). The conceptual net consists of an ensemble of research questions at different levels of abstraction. Some of the questions in the net are alternatives to other questions on the list. This provides a solution if one discovers, during the research process, that any or several of the questions prove to be unfeasible or point to uninteresting answers. More questions are included in the net than will actually be answered in the research. The conceptual net helps the qualitative researcher who wants to outline the research questions while continuing to remain open to new or modified directions that arise during the collection and analysis of data. The questions in the conceptual net, however, are not typically the questions the researcher directly asks the participants or informants.

When preparing a conceptual net, Wieder (1996) suggests that the researcher include a reference to the major concepts from the ethnography of communication that are highlighted by particular questions in the conceptual net. I have included in **Appendix D** an extensive conceptual net. In the conceptual net, the ethnography of communication concepts (see Appendix A) appear underlined at the end of the questions. Sherzer and Darnell (1972) suggest an outline guide for creating questions for an ethnography of communication. The questions in the net that arise from Sherzer and Darnell's outline guide are marked with the Sherzer and Darnell citation.

14 Throughout this dissertation, I will use the words "narratives," "descriptions," "accounts," and protocols" to refer to the data set. The descriptions vary in length. While the shortest description is about 60 words in length and the longest is about 850 words, the average word count of the descriptions is about 200 words.

15 These are also referred to as native concepts and cultural categories.

16 In chapters two and three of the dissertation, I use italics to indicate direct quotations from the teachers' narratives. **Appendix F** contains the full-text version of all of the teachers' accounts that are quoted in this dissertation. The accounts of teacher-teacher conflict are listed first in the appendix; the accounts of teacher-administrator conflicts are listed second. The teacher-teacher conflict accounts are numbered and each is designated with the label "T-T" along with the specific number of the account. The teacher-administrator conflict accounts are numbered and each is designated with the label "T-A" along with the specific number of the account.

In addition, the lines of text in Appendix F are also numbered so that the reader may easily find a reference. In the text of the dissertation, each reference to an account gives the reader the T-T or T-A designation, the number of the

account, and the line number within the account where the particular quotation can be located. Therefore, the reference on page 42 tells the reader that the quote: *"If the principal finds out, it will look bad on the whole 'team'—not just the individual teacher"* can be found in its narrative context in Appendix F under Teacher-Teacher Conflict Account number 29 at line number 9. This same format is used for all of the quotations from both the teacher-teacher conflict accounts and the teacher-administrator conflict accounts that are found within the text of the dissertation

17 Note that the use of the word building to designate a community of teachers and to differentiate them from other groups of teachers and from other people outside the program can also be found in the vocabulary of researchers writing about teachers and public school settings. For example, Welch (1998, p. 30) repeatedly uses the phrases "professionals in the building" to refer to any community of teachers at a single school. Sigford (1998) states that administrators must enforce district mandates and the enforcement "creates fallout in the building that must be dealt with" (p. 52).

18 Some writers (Hale, 1983; Welch, 1998) note this physical and social circumstance of schools and reference schools as "egg-crate institutions."

19 The use of the word norm here matches Carbaugh's (1990, p. 7) explanation of the term. His explanation follows:

> By exploring how persons discursively describe "what is proper" in their performances, and especially how they evaluate moments of impropriety, [researchers] demonstrate the use of norms in communicative action. For example, consider the following norm: When in the presence of one's peers, a Teamsterville male, if he is to be judged "manly," should respond nonverbally to an outsider's insult about his wife, such as by physical fighting. On the basis of this norm, one cannot of course predict that a male will fight. One can however predict a moral and discursive standard to which a Teamster male's public performance can be held accountable. Such a claim of maleness is granted legitimacy as a moral claim in this community. Note that the concept, norm, is being used in this way to identify stateable imperatives, which can be used by participants to instruct, regulate, and evaluate their communication conduct. This use of norm is distinct from others who claim to identify a behavioral regularity, or a typical actional sequence. What is being identified, through a more discursive conception of norm, is a communication of morals, a system of ought statements that participants can use as bases for instructing, regulating, and evaluating social action. Moral systems, so conceived, are situational and contingent, contestable, variously organized, and speak of various cultural identities....By positing systems of communication norms, [researchers] describe particular bases for

coordinating conduct. In such moments, one can hear standards for acting properly being displayed.

20 Garfinkel and Sacks (1970, p. 166) refer to this mindset as "ethnomethodological indifference," that is, the researcher seeks to "describe members' accounts of formal structures whenever and by whomever they are done, while abstaining from all judgments of their adequacy, value, importance, necessity, practicality, success, or consequentiality." See page 23 in chapter one for more explanation.

21 This section does not represent a complete metaphoric analysis of teachers' perception of conflict. Wilmot and Hocker (1998) suggest methods for conducting such an analysis.

22 In thinking about and articulating the conclusions for my research project, I referred to and borrowed from Prusank's (1993) article on parents' accounts of discipline interactions. I am indebted to her for her clear and lucid explanation of her findings and the way she situated them in an ethnomethodological framework.

23 While this study points to some possible features of conflict as a cultural category, it should be noted that these features were generated from descriptions in which the narrator was one of the conflict partners. Further examination of this same data and of additional data generated by narrators who are either observers or third parties in a conflict might generate different or additional features.

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Appendix A

The SPEAKING grid (as explained by Carbaugh, 1995, and Shiffrin, 1994) is summarized below:

S Situation is the setting (physical circumstances) and scene (subjective definition of an occasion);

P Participants are personalities, social positions, or statuses, relations (e.g., speaker/sender/addressor and hearer/receiver/audience/addressee);

E Ends are the purposes, goals and outcomes;

A Acts are the message content, form, sequences, dimensions, and types of illocutionary force;

K Key is the tone or mode;

I Instrumentalities are the channel (verbal, nonverbal, physical) and/or media;

N Norms are of interaction (i.e., specific properties attached to speaking) and interpretation (i.e., interpretation of norms within a cultural belief system);

G Genre are native and formal (e.g., categories such as poem, myth, tale, proverb, riddle, curse, prayer, oration, lecture, commercial, form letter, editorial, etc).

When conducting an Ethnography of Communication, the researcher uses the concepts implied by the SPEAKING grid to formulate questions about the communicative activities of the members of a community. Other researchers have used slightly different terminology to refer to the descriptive categories.

A list of additional Ethnography of Communication concepts along with definitions (derived from Salzmann, 1993) appears below. The definitions are all exact quotations. The page number of each definition is noted for each term.

Ethnography of Communication: The study of communicative behaviors in relation to the socio-cultural variables associated with human interaction (p. 194).

Communicative competence: The knowledge of what is and what is not appropriate to say in any specific cultural context (p. 193).

Speech community: Those who share specific rules for speaking and interpreting speech and at least one speech variety (p. 194).

Speech/Communicative situation: The context within which speaking occurs--that is, any particular set of circumstances typically associated with speech behavior (e.g., family meal, birthday party, seminar meeting) (p. 195).

Speech/Communicative act: Minimal unit of speech for the purpose of an ethnographic analysis (e.g., a greeting, apology, question, compliment, self-introduction, and the like) (p. 196).

Speech/Communicative event: Speech acts that follow each other in a recognized sequence and are governed by social rules for the use of speech...the basic unit of verbal interaction (e.g., conversation, interview, dialog with a salesperson) (p. 196).

Participants: Includes not only the sender of the message, and the intended receiver of the message, but anyone who may be interested in or happens to perceive the message--the audience. The number of participants may vary from only one to many thousands (p. 197).

Setting: Any communicative act or event happens at a particular time and place and under particular physical circumstances--that is, it is characterized by a particular setting. Settings are likely to vary somewhat from one instance to the next even if the events are of the same kind, but the variation has culturally recognized limits (p. 197).

Scene: The psychological setting.

Purpose: Motivation for communicative behavior (p. 198).

Acoustic channel: Verbal and nonverbal channels of communication (e.g., spoken words, drum beats, salutes) (p. 198).

Message form and message content: How something is said is part of what is said. (p. 199).

Register: A variety of language that serves a particular social situation (e.g., vernacular English or standard English) (p. 199).

Genre: Speech acts or events associated with a particular communicative situation and characterized by a particular style, form, and content (e.g., prayers, sermons) (p. 199).

Key: Tone, manner, or spirit in which an act is done (e.g., sarcasm) (p. 200).

Rules of interaction: Guide communicative activity. Members of a speech community know what is and what is not appropriate. When rules of interaction are broken or

completely neglected, embarrassment results, and unless an apology is offered, future contacts between the parties may be strained or avoided (p. 200).

Rules of interpretation: Judgment as o what constitutes proper interaction. Vary from culture to culture sometimes only subtly, but usually distinctly (p. 200).

Context: Denotes the interrelated conditions under which speech and other forms of communicative behavior occur. Another term used is contextualization to signal that context is a process. It is something that develops and perhaps even changes significantly while two or more individuals are interacting rather than something that is given or fixed (p. 206).

Appendix B

Informed Consent
for the study titled
Teacher's Perspective of Conflict in Public School Settings

This study is being conducted under the auspices of the University of Oklahoma--Norman Campus. This informed consent is to be used by participants in the above named study. The principal investigator and person responsible for this project is:
Christy King, Department of Communication, Univ. of Oklahoma, Norman OK 73019

The purpose of this study is to provide a description of conflict in public school settings from the perspective of the teacher. Participants in this study will write a brief description of a specific work-related conflict. The instructions to the participants are as follows: Write a description of a specific work-related conflict in which you are one of the conflict parties. Participation will require approximately 20 minutes.

For the participants in this study, no foreseeable risks beyond those present in normal everyday life are anticipated.

The academic literature on the study of conflict in public school settings provides relatively few instances of research on the teacher's perspective concerning conflicts that are a part of the teacher's work environment. This study will fill a void in the research in this area. Results from this study could benefit teachers, administrators, students, and planners of the educational curriculum for prospective teachers.

This study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older.

All information and records that identify participants will be kept confidential and secure. At no time will the researcher relate the identity of any participant when reporting the results of the study.

By agreeing to participant and signing this form, you do not waive any of your legal rights. If you have a problem, complaint, or concern about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Administration at (405) 325-4757. For general questions about the study, contact me at the above phone number, or Dr. Sandra Ragan at the same address above or (405) 325-3111.

I hereby agree to participate in the above-described research. I understand my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Appendix C

The University of Oklahoma

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

December 8, 1999

Ms. Christy King
805 Owens Avenue
Edmond OK 73013

Dear Ms. King:

Your research application, "Teachers' Accounts of Conflict in Public School Settings," has been reviewed according to the policies of the Institutional Review Board chaired by Dr. E. Laurette Taylor, and found to be exempt from the requirements for full board review. Your project is approved under the regulations of the University of Oklahoma - Norman Campus Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research Activities.

Should you wish to deviate from the described protocol, you must notify me and obtain prior approval from the Board for the changes. If the research is to extend beyond 12 months, you must contact this office, in writing, noting any changes or revisions in the protocol and/or informed consent form, and request an extension of this ruling.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Susan Wyatt Sedwick

Susan Wyatt Sedwick, Ph.D.
Administrative Officer
Institutional Review Board

SWS:pw
FY00-121

cc: Dr. E. Laurette Taylor, Chair, Institutional Review Board
Dr. Sandra Ragan, Communication

1000 Asp Avenue, Suite 314, Norman, Oklahoma 73019-0430 PHONE: (405) 325-4757 FAX: (405) 325-6029

Appendix D

The Conceptual Net

I. What counts as a socially recognizable, account-able instance of conflict? What is involved in recognizing and in relaying information or stories concerning these accountable instances of conflict?
speech community; speech event or
What counts as a recognizable, account-able instance of conflict?

A. How is conflict defined communicatively? How is it defined behaviorally?

B. What types of conflict do public school teachers experience on a daily basis?

1. Who is involved in conflict? participants

2. What is the subject matter of the conflicts? message form

3. In what settings do the conflicts occur? communication situation; setting; scene; context

4. In what manner or tone are the conflicts enacted? key, register, channel

C. What are the norms concerning appropriate ways to handle conflicts at work? rules of interaction

1. How are the norms learned?

2. How are the norms communicated? norms of interpretation

3. Are there explicit and implicit norms?

4. Is there agreement among the teachers concerning the norms?

5. What happens when someone deviates from the norm?

6. Do norms change from school to school? setting

7. Who or what influences the norms?

D. From the standpoint of teachers, do particular ways of communicating with others during, prior to, and/or after conflict help to define people who are held in respect or disrespect? communication competence

E. From the standpoint of teachers, does a manner of communicating in conflict help other teachers to define someone as a leader or a good conflict manager?

1. From the standpoint of teachers, what is it about the performance of the message that makes it good or effective? (Sherzer & Darnell, 1972)

2. From the standpoint of teachers, what personal characteristics of participants make them good or effective communicators in conflict? (Sherzer & Darnell, 1972)

F. What does it mean to communicate effectively in conflict? communication competence

G. What communicative behaviors are viewed with like and dislike?

H. Is communicating during or about conflict encouraged or discouraged and by whom and under what circumstances?

I. Do teachers draw a distinction between teachers of different subjects (e.g., math/science or language arts) or different grade levels (e.g., elementary, middle school, and high-school? Do these distinctions influence conflict interactions and do teachers think that they do? subculture

II. What meanings do teachers attach to conflict episodes?

A. In what ways does the teacher's perception of his or her role in the educational process, the community-wide school system, the individual school system, the faculty, and/or the classroom relate to the meanings teachers attach to conflict episodes? participants; personal identity

B. What are the teacher's thoughts and emotions concerning various types of conflict that arise as a part of the teacher's working environment? societal reality

1. To what (e.g., causes or sources) do teachers attribute conflict?

2. What are teachers' perceptions concerning the outcomes of conflict?

3. Do teachers have a belief concerning whether or not conflict is inevitable or preventable?

4. What are the teachers' beliefs about the role of power and status in conflict?

5. What comfort level do teachers display in dealing with conflict?

a. What aspects of communicating in conflict are considered satisfying? (Sherzer & Darnell, 1972)

b. Is communicating in or about conflict more satisfying under certain circumstances or for certain groups of people? (Sherzer & Darnell, 1972)

C. Do conflict partner, subject matter, setting, and context affect the teachers' perceptions, thoughts, emotions and/or behavior concerning conflict?

III. What communicative behaviors (or avoidance of behaviors) do teachers enact to deal with conflicts on a daily basis? strategic action

A. In conflict, when are teachers taciturn or voluble? (Sherzer & Darnell, 1972)

1. What personality traits or personal characteristics are associated with differences on this dimension? (Sherzer & Darnell, 1972)

2. Are there differences associated with different roles or categorizations? (Sherzer & Darnell, 1972)

B. In the course of their training, are teachers taught how to communicate in conflict?

1. If so, who is involved in the training?

2. What theoretical bases are used to train teachers concerning conflict?

C. In the course of their training, are teachers prepared to expect conflict in their workplace?

Appendix E

General Ethnographic Description of Public School Setting

Although this research project is situated within a broad ethnographic framework (see footnote 4), it is not a standard ethnography. Ethnographers gain entry into settings and attempt to provide a first-hand, intensive study of the features of a given culture. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996, p. 608) indicate that ethnographic research has three major characteristics: (a) Its focus is on discovering cultural patterns in human behavior, (b) its focus is on the emic perspective of members of the culture, and (c) its focus is on studying the natural settings in which culture is manifested. Ethnographers attend to all aspects of the setting that may reveal cultural patterns and pay particular attention to issues such as the physical environment and social organization of a setting. Then ethnographers relate their observations (etic perspective) concerning these issues to the culture members' emic perspectives of these settings. In ethnographic reports, a large section is devoted to the description of the natural settings in which the culture is manifested.

The primary data for this investigation is teachers' accounts of conflict interactions. I did not spend time in public schools in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the setting; however, included in the teachers' accounts is information about the setting—information that reveals ways in which the setting influences the conflict interactions within the setting (at least from the perspective of the teachers). In order to make it easier for the reader to refer to a more general ethnographic description of the public school setting, I have provided a brief description in this appendix. In order to create this description, I utilized information in the teachers' accounts, information from

academic resources, and my own knowledge of public schools derived from personal experience, visits, and conversations with school personnel.

The United States educational system is designed so that a single school building in a community contains at least one administrator, teachers for various grade levels, and support staff (counselors, secretaries, custodians, etc.). The teachers and staff report to the administrator, who, in turn, reports to the superintendent—the authority figure and decision maker for all of the schools within a district. While each school building in a district houses a distinct range of school grades (e.g., elementary schools, middle schools and high schools), the superintendent is over all of the schools in a defined geographical area or school district.

The size and type of school determines the number of teachers and staff that are housed at that location. Most schools have a set of administrative offices located near the front door of the school. The principal, vice-principal, secretarial staff, and school counselor reside in the administrative offices. Each teacher in the school has a separate classroom. In lower grades, the classrooms of teachers of the same grade are typically located near one another. In upper grades, the classrooms of teachers of the same subject matter are located near one another. The teacher typically stays stationary while students move from classroom to classroom to receive instruction in various subjects. Each teacher has a desk in his or her classroom, and the classroom serves as a place to teach as well as a place to office. The teachers in a school also have access to a room that serves as a lounge or break area in which teachers can relax when they are not teaching or planning their lessons. Teachers also often make use of a common workroom or supply room.

The physical organization of the school has many implications for the work that goes on in the school. First, each teacher typically performs his or her required duties (i.e., teaches) while out of the presence of peers or supervisors. Unlike other employment environments in which workers' duties require both continual interaction with fellow employees and the performance of work duties in the presence of co-workers, the public school environment calls for the teacher to perform a majority of his or her duties in a closed classroom (Dunlap & Goldman, 1990; Irwin, 1990; Lumsden, 1998).

Second, teachers may choose to spend non-teaching time in areas that are designated as group areas (e.g., the administrative offices, the teachers' lounge, the workroom), or they may spend their non-teaching time in their own classrooms in relative isolation from other teachers or administrators. Teachers are afforded a planning period during the workday. Some teachers stay in their rooms during their planning periods; others go to the lounge, workroom, or another teacher's classroom during this time. Teachers also have non-instructional time before the students arrive at school in the morning and after students go home in the afternoon. These are additional times when teachers may stay in their own rooms or spend time in the common areas.

Third, the physical organization designates some areas of the school as public and some as private. These designations change as the situations and circumstances change. For example, the administrative offices have areas that are both public and private. The area around the secretaries' desks is public and serves as a contact point for visitors, parents, teachers, students, and other staff members. The administrators' offices are private areas in which persons enter by invitation or appointment. While the teachers' lounge and workroom are public for teachers and staff, they are typically off-limits to

students and visitors and can therefore be the setting for private meetings or conversations between staff and faculty. The teachers' classrooms are public at certain times of the day when students are moving throughout the school changing classes and such. Nonetheless, the teachers' classrooms are private at certain times when the teachers are not actively teaching. Teachers often use their classrooms for private meetings with fellow teachers, students, parents, or administrators. Most school employees regard the hallways that connect various classrooms as public areas. Other public areas include the cafeteria, the playground, the media center, and the auditorium. In sum, because of the physical layout of the school and the schedule of the educational activities, one must consider a number of factors when determining whether an area of the school is public or private.

Fourth, the physical layout of the school mirrors the hierarchical structure of the school's organizational system. Unlike other organizations in which there is a hierarchy of authority such that employees report to supervisors, who report to managers, who report to vice-presidents, and so on, public schools have a flat organizational structure such that employees (teachers) report directly to the administrator, who is the person with the highest decision-making authority in the immediate location. Some writers (Hale, 1983; Welch, 1998) note this physical and social circumstance of schools and refer to schools as "egg-crate institutions." Additionally, each teacher is in charge of his or her own classroom; it is uncommon for one teacher to report to another teacher. Each teacher reports to the administrator. Dunlap and Goldman (1990) indicate that teachers "historically have been vigilant in protecting the integrity of their own classroom and generally have not been willing to trespass on their colleagues' classrooms" (p. 7).

Fifth, teachers must share the resources of the school (Dunlap & Goldman, 1990). These resources include furniture, books, curriculum materials, supplies, playground equipment, and materials for specialty classes. It is often the case that resources of different quality must be divided among teachers. For example, some teachers may have relatively old student desks or chairs while others have newer ones. Some may have a set of matching desks and another may have a mixture of sizes or shapes. One teacher may have relatively old textbooks while others have newer ones. In some schools, the assignment of the various resources to each teacher is the sole responsibility of the administrator. In other schools, teachers must negotiate and collaborate to determine who gets which resources (Sigford, 1998). Additionally, the school's resources rarely suffice all the teachers' requirements for their classrooms. Therefore, teachers commonly pay for additional resources from their own personal funds. This fact may result in an inconsistency in the appearance of classrooms in a single school.

Because the playground and cafeteria areas in most elementary and middle schools are not big enough to accommodate all of the students at once and because there is value in having students of the same age range interact together at lunch and recess, teachers must share these resources as well. This makes it necessary to adjust the schedule so that some lunch and recess time slots are relatively early in the day and some are relatively late. Teachers often designate certain time slots for lunch and recess as more desirable and others as less desirable. This is another issue that must be either determined by the administrator or must be worked out by the teachers.

The basic goal of this description is to acquaint the reader with the physical and social setting of public schools. While this description is brief, it provides background

information important to understanding the data of this research study—teachers' accounts of conflict. Additionally, although this description provides a general framework, in any given school, one might discover variations from this description. Many factors influence the physical and social setting of the school, including age and location of the building, grade levels housed within the building, size of community in which building is located and other similar factors.

Appendix F

Full-Text Narrative Accounts of Teacher-Teacher Conflicts

T-T: 1

We were left without a playground duty person at school one day. The person that was on duty was gone on a field trip. The second grade teachers had to do our own duty. I had switched duties with this person on two different occasions and I felt that arrangements should have been made on that day. My principal told us to "just work with him a little." I felt I had "worked with him" a lot already.

T-T: 2

Coaching dance team. I have a different perspective or coaching style as the other coach. She has moved to the H.S. squad and the girls are not working well with her. I am sad about the loss for the H.S. girls. I am also sad for the other coach who is not having a pleasant experience.

I have 20 years of dance experience and she had zero. This makes it hard for her to work with me. She "acts like" an expert due to the success of the team since I became a coach also.

T-T: 3

One of my co-teachers was simply incompetent. He did not know how to handle the kids, plan a lesson, or even use a gradebook to take attendance. I and many of the other teachers had given him tips, suggestions, even lessons, none of which did any good. It got to the point that I avoided him and his classroom at all costs because seeing him with the kids just stressed me out.

Toward the end of the year, I got to thinking about the upcoming school year. It came down to either he had to go, I had to go, or I put up with him again the next year. I went to him because I had to know what his plans were so I could look for another job if necessary. We got into a very in-depth discussion and I told him how I felt. It may have been brutal, but I had to tell him. He had come up with every excuse in the book and I was tired of him blaming the kids for his lack of discipline.

He ended up resigning and I don't have to worry again.

T-T: 4

First grade. Three teachers were using an extra phonics program that was working well and two teachers were using no extra phonics program. The second grade teachers went to the office to complain about the two teachers' kids' skill level and their concerns about no extra phonics being taught. The two teachers stood firm about what they wanted to do. (These two teachers are the oldest ones in that level.) The first and second grade teachers looked at new phonics programs and voted to go with a complete new program rather than switch to the program that was working so well for the three. Now the three of us teach both.

T-T: 5

The fall festival was upon us and I was ready to get involved. At the PTA meeting, I was given the responsibility of the "pop walk." So to make sure I had enough pop donations, I asked the students to bring liters to my room early. Everyone in the meeting heard me say it.

The next day, I was told that I could not ask children to do that. So, I had to correct myself in front of the whole school during Rise and Shine that morning. (The liter of pop is that student's ticket to get in... and it had been that way for years.) It was my first year at this school and I had no idea what had been done in previous years.

"They" wanted to see me fail because I was young and enthusiastic. Plus, "they" weren't able to hoard their pop in their closets for class parties if I had the pop in my room.

Our conflict was not resolved because I was the one who did all the changing. Plus, "they" sneaked pop in their closets anyway. I have paid for this conflict all year long.

T-T: 6

I was asked to work a game; the game was moved to another date. I was given a message during class and later I forgot to write down the date. I missed my turn to work and the person confronted me at a ballgame in front of the crowd. I was embarrassed and I no longer feel comfortable or friendly with the lady. I ignore her when I see her. I think I'm more hurt because I helped her out with a personal problem and I deserved better than that.

T-T: 7

I had a couple of male athletes in my show choir class last year. They were not only fine athletes, but also wonderful singers/performers. The coach made fun of the boys for singing and dancing, which embarrassed them so much they were reluctant to participate in the performances. I talked to the students about it to make sure this was the only reason they wouldn't perform. I spoke to the coach about it and he considered the whole situation a big joke. I tried to relate to him that not only was he making it hard for me but he had shaken the confidence of the students and this could even affect their game. The situation continued after we spoke. The students wouldn't even sing in class. I then informed the principal of the problem and set up a meeting with the coach to confront him with the principal acting as a mediator. I again explained my situation. After we talked a bit, he said he would correct the mistake he made. Later, he not only apologized to me and the students, but became very interested in their progress in my class. I am satisfied with the resolution.

T-T: 8

This conflict occurred the beginning of the last 9 weeks. I've been at my school 10 years, but get shifted around quite a lot. I was moved to a new pod this last fall and had felt very good working with the other 3 teachers. I picked up pretty quickly who the leader was and was also aware the other two teachers always deferred to this teacher's lead. I noticed times (several) that they weren't particularly happy with it, but nevertheless, they deferred. So, I did too--because it was easier. Once in awhile I would interject a suggestion, but not often. (Sorry, but I always have to explain things.)

This day, one of the other two teachers had changed something in our schedule. (Always a sore point with the leader) The kids were milling in the hall and I went out to see what was wrong. The one teacher was explaining to me what she'd done and I had just said it was fine with me. At this point, the lead teacher walked out and immediately turned to me to question what I was doing. Knowing her temper and temperament, etc. I became flustered and tried to explain I was really there to see what was going on. This, in front of all the kids, she immediately began to dress me down and to state we would do what I (author's name) was wanting. I turned to the other teacher and asked her to please explain what it was she was wanting done and this really infuriated her. She became angrier and of course all our students were watching. At that point, I knew if I stayed I'd burst into tears, so I turned around, walked into my room, and then walked back out again and down to the restroom to "bawl." I was so embarrassed (more at my crying)(2nd most at my inability to defuse the situation) (3rd, that I'd let myself be put down this way.) She caught me later and told me how rude I'd been to walk away form her when she was speaking to me. Again, I tried to explain to her, but this time I was crying and she still was angry. At the end of the year, I was again moved but my own low esteem makes me feel somehow I've been "judged and found wanting."

T-T: 9

A teacher in my building became angry with me because I went to a workshop and the presenter was someone who had caused her to have some serious health problems. I knew about the situation, but I was interested in the topic that was being presented. As we talked, I told her how badly I felt for her, but I attended the workshop to get more information that could possible help my students.

T-T: 10

Another teacher that is teaching same grade. She is the veteran teacher who is very set in her ideas and actually in a rut. She doesn't want to do anything new, whether its teaching concept or field trips. The superintendent asked that I follow her lead because she is the veteran teacher. This is my second year to teach this grade. Our school has a rule that all teachers that teach a grade get together and teach the same things. She doesn't ever want to get together. She doesn't want to do the same thing. This last year was awful because it was a fly by the seat of my pants experience. She smiles when she disagrees, giving the impressions she is trying to work with me, which is totally wrong.

T-T: 11

One conflict I've encountered deals with a new teacher in our building. This teacher has had loud verbal arguments (over various topics) with several teachers in the building. Without exception, her voice and demeanor escalate until the other teacher gives in or leaves. I know my turn is probably coming sometime in the future--but I'm not sure how I'll handle it. I'm not at all sure she's worth getting upset about--no matter what the actual topic may be. She's the perfect example of "conflict is drama." I've really had to hold back because I felt like jumping in to my friend's aid as the verbal attack occurred. But so far, I have just stayed silent.

T-T: 12

Our school seems very divided. I believe it was going on long before I arrived for my first day of work.

The resource teachers work very hard to accommodate for all the extra duties there are to do in our school. The homeroom teachers tend to take advantage of the resource teachers because they believe that the resource teachers have a lot of extra time. This is not the case. This really causes a conflict because some of the teachers get upset about every little thing and they tell on the resource teachers to our administrator. Clearly, we as the resource teachers try very hard and would like for our administrator to support us more than what she is.

I really would like for everyone to understand that we all have special, important jobs in our schools. There needs to be a mutual respect and a sense of professionalism.

T-T: 13

Every year, we have an open house for the 5th graders coming to our building as 6th graders next year. It is in the evening so the parents can come.

We announced this at 2 staff meetings and ask that all 6th grade teachers be there for introductions and to say a few words.

I knew a potentially difficult parent would be attending that had a special ed student. I went to double check with my special ed teachers. I asked if they were coming tonight and explained the situation. Both had made other plans but I asked them to be there.

Later that evening, I told my principal about the conversation. He had a funny look on his face and said, "That's why Mrs. _____ asked if she really had to be here tonight." He told her "no" because she didn't tell him all the information. Then the assistant principal said, "I guess they went over your head."

My principal said he would take care of it. He told me he called her on the carpet about it, but it has taken a really long time to not be angry with the other teacher.

T-T: 14

I have a person I work with very closely. This person treats children horrible. She explodes on the children then makes the child feel guilty about whatever happened and the child ends up consoling the teacher. I have great problems with this and have spoken to the principal on numerous occasions. The principal is very supportive. However, when confronted, the teacher will out and out lie. Other teachers have had the same problems I have found out. This problem has come to the point that I have put in for a transfer to another building.

T-T: 15

I am a special education teacher and by trade and choice, an advocate for these and all students. My long-standing conflict is with two regular classroom teachers who flatly refuse to help identify their students who may need special education services of any type. Their philosophy is "these kids never qualify at the 2nd grade level and the paperwork is too time-consuming."

These are both experienced teachers, but neither will follow compliance procedures for special education. I have attempted in-services (large and small group) to orient my faculty regarding rights and responsibilities for all parties concerned. I have shared sympathy and empathy regarding the "paperwork" requirements, I have even volunteered to help and/or complete the paperwork myself.

I attempt to remain calm, professional and focused on the students' needs, help for the classroom teacher, etc. with no resolution. I am met with oppositional, passive-aggressive behavior, attempts to pit parents against the special education system and myself, and truly unacceptable behavior towards these particular students.

Theirs is a power play--"You can't make me!" and truly I can't, but in the mean time, the student suffers.

T-T: 16

I had a conflict with my teaching assistant concerning taking naps at school! She was constantly saying she wanted to take a nap--every afternoon. This caused a problem with me. I got tired of hearing it every day. Finally, one day she <u>did</u> actually take a nap in her van at lunch. As my afternoon kindergartners arrived, they saw her in her van and banged on the window and yelled at her to wake her up. She didn't wake up. The children came in to class and she continued to sleep. She eventually woke up and came in to class about an hour late. She immediately asked me "Why didn't you wake me up?!" I told her that the children tried to wake her up and they couldn't, so I figured I couldn't. Before this happened, I don't think I really let her know how much it bothered me. <u>After</u> the nap—I did discuss it with her. She realized how I felt and has never taken a nap at school since. Occasionally, she will say "I want to take a nap." now we can laugh about it. But we both know how each of us feels about the subject. I respect that she may be sleepy, but she respects that I can't let her nap in class.

T-T: 17

My conflict is silent. I am trying to take responsibility for all parties involved. My aide at school does not work up to me expectations and I cannot accept that nor am I willing to take a chance to solve or work on problems with her for fear of making situation worse. I want her to help with preparation for classroom activities, answer phone when I'm teaching and take messages, and teach 15 a day of music.

I don't feel she has been successful at any of these, except answering phone. She has demonstrated that her priorities are different than my own for her. The aide's priorities are reading for pleasure and leaving everyday 45 minutes early to teach piano for her own monetary gain. This has gone one for all my 9 years of work and I don't know how long before that.

I understand her wanting the best deal for herself. But I resent her and feel she is a disservice to the two teachers she is supposed to be helping and the students.

This conflict is silent because the other teacher, my peer, is the aide's niece. I did report this to my principal after 3 years, but I feel he uses this information for his own gain. Not only do they occasionally socialize at times, but now he calls the aide to OK things that affect my classroom.

The aide is pleasant, she is always on time, and I don't want to make an unpleasant situation unbearable. My conflict is within myself. I do all right at times, then when my job becomes stressful, I get resentful and mad at myself for not letting go. Why can't I be satisfied knowing I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing. I also feel guilty about resenting the aide, I'm just not spiritual enough to rise above this.

T-T: 18

I had a transfer student in my class who had experienced a serious kidney ailment during the summer and was on medication. He had been labeled at his previous school with learning disabilities. He had been in special classes at his other school In our school, he expressed the desire to be in the normal classroom environment. I watched him closely as he adjusted and liked the classroom. He was anxious to read aloud and verbalize answers. However, he did not complete his assignments or study for his test. I help a conference with him and talked about the normal classroom requirements. He did have a few classes with the Special Ed teacher. He was on an IEP schedule. The Special Ed. teacher had him doing 3rd grade work with no challenge. She asked me during lunch in the cafeteria how he was doing. I told her that he was not giving me any effort. She immediately asked me how I managed his IEP and reprimanded me because I didn't have him reading on the 3rd grade level. I felt I was helping his esteem by insuring he was enjoying the normal classroom. His reading skills were normal and a little low for a sixth grader (according to my observances in the classroom.)

We were studying the Hitler era--we read orally, discussed, watched a video, and viewed a live play production, and completed several worksheets. Test time: we reviewed orally and I gave him a copy of the test to study. I was called into the principal's office. The Spec. Ed teacher got up out of her seat and put the test in front of my face and asked if I could answer the questions. I excused myself from the meeting by saying I was on duty. I now avoid this person and sometimes it is hard in a small school. I feel my teaching abilities were in question and I was embarrassed in front of my principal. I was attacked!

T-T: 19

In the past, I had a co-worker who had an extremely strong, leadership, win/lose attitude. She was confrontational and usually did this in front of others. As a team member of hers, I usually knew the decision made would go her way. She would begin by saying "This is how I think it should be" and usually others gave in and it was her way.

She could snap at others, in front of others, confronting so to speak. She, however, does not like being confronted. I never knew how to approach her and avoided conflict with her. However, this was not always possible. She would always confront me in front of others--very difficult to handle when happens in front of others--feel powerless and can't win with her. Or she will call a team meeting and usually confronts in front of other team members.

T-T: 20

I have a conflict with the teachers I work with. There are four of us. We are the fifth-sixth grade teachers so we have to work together. We are all controlling and each of us wants to be the boss. There are other factors in the conflict. One is the oldest teacher of the group, which was my fifth grade teacher. Another thing is that two of the other teachers are coaches. (The old coach and the new coach). We have moments of togetherness and major battles.

I try to keep the peace at times and then there are times when I am in the middle of things. I feel my thoughts and opinions count for something and I should be heard every once in a while. They believe they should be heard all the time.

T-T: 21

The conflict I have is with both teachers and the administrator. Many times the teacher will come to me with a problem which we solve. Then the administrator will become upset because he/she was not involved. This causes everyone to feel uneasy to do anything without this administrator. Although is he/she is involved when the conflict is solved, he/she may change their mind or deny the involvement.

T-T: 22

During an after-school faculty meeting, the principal was on a phone conference with a parent and asked me to get things started. The only item on the agenda was a school trip to Celebration Station for the students who earned the privilege over the course of a semester. We were to decide which teachers were going and which were staying from each of the three teams and elective. During the discussion, a teacher was not in attendance, but the "team" said he wanted to attend. I spoke up and said that they might want to visit with the principal first because it was my understanding that this particular teacher wasn't to be going. Another teacher from that team volunteered to attend instead. The next day (the day of the trip), very hard feelings were brought up by both of those teachers because the principal said that the teacher in question could go but she preferred that he didn't. This is what I stated the previous day, however, both teachers stated to me that it was not my place to say anything during the meeting, and they were both upset with me. I told them to both go or both stay, or do whatever, because it really didn't matter to me. They then were upset with me for several days, but oh well. They got over it.

T-T: 23

I'm a new teacher and was hired too late to order any materials for class. I was told the other two first grade teachers would share their materials with me. This did not happen. When I would ask for something, they would tell me when they get time they would get it for me. After asking for things over and over and never receiving anything, I found myself going to other teachers and people and begging for things. I became very frustrated. The teacher that was supposed to share her materials is also in charge of Title 1, which pays for my salary, so I'm faced with the same problem this year, still not able to buy materials I need because she decided what I need. She informed me to make copies or have a parent make copies of other teacher's materials. I spent many late hours making copies last year. I have spoken with our principal (which was hired in the middle of the year. Her first year as principal). This story is still twisted because this teacher whom was supposed to share was married to the principal who was relieved of his duties. This gets very complicated.

T-T: 24

In making decisions about instruction and related activities, we have conflicts because of the differing personalities and leadership roles within the group (cliques). Sometimes a valid idea is dismissed because it has been proposed by an "opposing" grade- level teacher. Also, some teachers within the grade level are privy to information given to them by our counselor about administrative decisions. They do not share this information with other grade level teachers until they have used it to secure more favorable situations for themselves. This advantage has led them to adopt a superior condescending attitude toward the other grade level teachers. They also are "cool" toward adopting new ideas about activities and programs that they are not "in charge of." In sum, we often lose sight of our goal of cooperating effectively to use our talents and strengths as teachers to improve instruction for our students and to support each other as educators.

T-T: 25

A week or so before Open House a teacher from the same grade was coming into my classroom at night and copying my ideas and then putting them up as her own. She was never confronted (however, the principal knew what she was doing), but was moved the next year to another grade.

T-T: 26

My major conflict that I contend with on a regular basis is that two teachers on my team do not take roll on a regular basis. Our district has a ruling that after 5 absences or on the sixth absence, the student fails that nine-week period. This means that the student fails my class, but not theirs. They have no record of the absences. The students ask those teachers why they failed my class and not theirs. They tell the student that they felt because the student had such a high grade that they just couldn't fail them.

T-T: 27

Once I was attacked in a surprise move by a grade-level colleague who accused me of saying a statement (which I did not say). She was beyond being rational and said a student told her and she believed him not me. She called me out of the room and screamed and blessed me all the way to a personal conference room and continued to put down my character, actions and anything she could think of. She continued to proceed with negative remarks trying to convince me of how bad I was and that she would have her husband come and stomp me to the ground.

Gee, I was innocent and to this day it's a mystery but I have decided she needed to get something off her chest and I was the chosen, lucky listener.

T-T: 28

I started (along with the P.E. teacher) an honor (show) choir for 5th and 6th grade students who wanted to do a choreographed program. The students would practice two specific days each week during their lunch recess.

A copy of the students' and the practice schedule was given to each 5th and 6th grade teacher for their approval. As we progressed closer to our concert time, many students would miss practice because their teacher would decide a student had to come to their room during this time to finish work, for punishment or in one case, to read to the teacher.

I felt the teachers could have asked them to come in the three other days of the week since we had prearranged this special practice time for music.

The home-room teachers felt that any student who had trouble in any of their subjects should not be allowed to be in an "honor choir." I felt that they should be allowed to be in honor choice, because this may have been their area to excel in.

T-T: 29

In our school, we currently use a newly adopted math program. We have all asked our principal if we can use another specific math program. We have all been told only is we supplement with it.

A teacher in my grade level is going to pilot a new math program while knowing she is not supposed to. She had all of her materials sent to her home so no one at school would know.

My conflict is that when I found out this other teacher asked me not to say anything to another teacher or administrator. I feel that when the parents talk, they will wonder why all of us are not using the same program. And if the principal finds out, it will look bad on the whole "team"--not just the individual teacher.

T-T: 30

Because I am a soft-spoken individual whom does not deal well with conflict, I would much rather grant the "other person" his wishes than have a confrontation. However, I can think of one particular instance where I stood my ground even though I knew it would lead to conflict.

On this occasion, I happened to be on a 6th grade field trip when one of my students (a special ed. student on an IEP) got into trouble. Our principal was called to pick up this student and return him to school. When I returned in the afternoon, I discovered that another teacher (who was always trying to take charge of everything) had taken it upon herself to get into my locked, confidential files, call and schedule an immediate meeting with the boys' mother and persuaded the mother to have him put in her class (even though the boy nor his mother were eager to do this).

When I discovered these events, I was very angry and hurt. Even though I don't like doing this, I confronted this teacher. I knew that negotiating would not help. She had "walked over me" many times and this time I had to stand up for myself as well as this student. Because I am not good at dealing with conflict, I did it in a very soft-spoken manner; however, this time I was very adamant about my desires and she quickly returned the student to me. Needless to say, there have been no other similar instances.

T-T: 31

Conflict: Teacher not bringing her class on time and not picking them up on time.

Differences: 1st) I needed to class to be there on time because my time was limited and space was unavailable the last 15 minutes of class. When the class came late, my objectives couldn't be met and kids had no area to finish activities. 2nd) When teacher doesn't pick up her class on time, I have to hold students in the cafeteria with no area while lower grades are entering cafeteria and my class is in the way. OR I could dismiss her class without supervision to return to class alone. Also, by holding her class, she seem to stay gone longer--knowing I would keep her kids. This seems to be my problem.

Her conflict: She always has an excuse for being late. Doesn't see any problem with being late.

T-T: 32

Miss "X" and I teach in the same building, same subject, Special Education. Her mother was the Special Ed. Director at the time. My shortcoming with Miss "X" was/is that she didn't "seem" to work as hard or have as many students as the rest of us. At one point, she handed me a new referral for testing, explaining that, and I quote, "I know she's MR anyway. So you do the initial paperwork." I explained it wasn't in my job description and that she had always done them in the past since she didn't have to teach any students. She grabbed the papers from my desk where she had put them and in the process, knocked off several things on my desk. Two students were present and saw it. Of course I "fibbed" to the students saying it was an accident. Miss "X" marched out of my room. Basically, we haven't spoken since. We're not unpleasant. We just don't mix. I don't have bad feelings, especially since she now has to actually "teach" several classes. By the way, her mother has since retired. This only happened last year, but several have felt the same as myself, just were afraid to say anything, since her mother was our boss. We're looking forward to a more relaxed, productive year.

T-T: 33

As Mrs. H (1st grade teacher) finished phonics program worksheets with her students, I borrowed them to use with my special ed. students. On my check out day (at the end of the year) I was no way ready to check out and had not returned the phonics program to Mrs. H. She came to my room in a rage looking for them. I took responsibility for my negligence and apologized. She came back 3 times that afternoon to tell me how angry and upset she was. I apologized again each time and went home in tears.

The next year, I found out late in the year that she had been bad-mouthing me all year for the things that were either untrue or that I had no idea were sore spots.

I made a mass request in faculty meeting for people to please let me know if they had a problem with me or the way I operated my program so I could take steps to correct--no response from Mrs. H. The next year, I requested to work with upper grade students and have done so ever since.

T-A: 1

We got both a new principal and superintendent this past year. Of course, this brought change in policy. The principal called a meeting and told the faculty that there would be a change in the way we did our awards at awards assembly at the end of the year. He told us that we could only give 1 award per class--in other words--1 classroom award per class. Several of us give 1 to 6 awards per class—"Most Outstanding" or "Most Improved," etc. However, some of us give no awards. Mr. Principal says that is where the problem is. He doesn't want some teachers giving none and some giving numerous awards. After a few days, I approached him privately and related that I didn't understand why administration would care how many awards I gave. After all, it was my classroom, and I felt that I should have control over my own awards. I also felt that if other teachers gave no awards--that was his problem--not mine. Why should I decrease mine? He should make them give some. (But-it was their classrooms and shouldn't they be allowed to give or not give as they deemed necessary?) Plus--I felt that these awards were important to the students' resumes (for potential scholarship). I and one other teacher felt strongly about our awards, but he wouldn't budge! Second meeting in his office--both of us teachers together and principal—no compromise—HIS WAY. Few more days--I decide I must do it his way. I'm not one to break policy. I have an open classroom with my students. I have worked in this system for 7 years, so I told the students in my AP class (over-achievers_ that I would be giving only 1 award due to new policy. I wanted them to know. Next day--I'm called to superintendent's office. He's upset--parents have called--I'm disloyal--etc. etc. verbal exchange. I explained my position. He explained his! I didn't tell the students to be disloyal to administration. I told them so they would be prepared and not disappointed in the "only 1 award." Several weeks passed—faculty meeting--principal announces: go back to old way. You give as many awards as you want, but everyone must give at least one.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Administration viewed this as power struggle. My true motive--as always--my students' best interests. I think the principal should have handled this and the superintendent shouldn't have gotten involved.

T-A: 2

My main source of conflict for the past three years involves my principal's refusal to confront a problem teacher in my department. As first her mentor teacher and as her department head, I have reported/discussed her incompetencies; poor judgments; lack of vision, planning, and professionalism on occasions too numerous to mention with the same results: promised intervention with consequences but no action. We put together a plan of action, and she fails to follow through. He tells her she should look for another job, but rehires her each April. In the meantime, she continues to make the same mistakes and kids and parents continue to flock to me for answers. I direct them to my superior--and nothing happens.

This is not an overt conflict, but a source of great frustration and resentment. I have a good working relationship with this man, but I abhor his continual ineffective response to this matter.

T-A: 3

I have a conflict with my present boss; she is the type you never know what mood she'll be in! She likes it that way! She does it on purpose. She never announces when she'll be showing up. I say this because she announced (when she became principal) teaching 5 year olds to write is NOT developmental! Nor is coloring! I've taught kindergarten more years than she--I've done about as much research as she. I could go one and one, but the point is: children entering school love to learn!

To make a long story short, I chose two days out of the year (to try to get away with it) to teach "writing." She walks in, giving me her sickening smile. She DID put it on my evaluation for the year. Talk about CONFLICT! A principal can either make you or break you. This principal has broken me!

Another conflict. This principal loves to have conferences in her office with the door closed; she becomes God! I hope someday that the fear-technique is "outlawed!"

T-A: 4

This is the classic case of being given the responsibility but not being given backing by the administration. I became cheerleading sponsor because no one else wanted the responsibility. The prior sponsor had resigned after being sick with hives most of the previous hear. Literally, no one else would do the job. I was new and did not realize the politics of the situation. After I was informed, it was too late. The scenario was this: Two of the cheerleaders (unofficial leaders of the school--mother is a teacher in the system, other was a prominent member of community) were out of control. They were rude, crude, loud and totally

unprofessional at all sporting events. I assumed that this was unacceptable behavior because it said so in the cheerleading contract. Each time I called them on the carpet and reported my actions to the administration, I was given an OK but behind the scenes, the parents were being told something else. After using the avoidance tactic, no major incidents took place. I certainly had nightmares before it was over.

There was no resolution. The only thing resolved was that I will never be cheerleading sponsor for another organization again. I also received a very valuable lesson in local politics.

T-A: 5

I worked for 7 years with a principal who did not like me at all. I stayed in the school because of all the wonderful friends I taught with. It is an incredible school. I vowed that if he remained in the school, however, that I would seek a transfer. He was moved to another school at the end of that year.

I believe the problem started when the former principal told him how great I was and how much I did and how much of an asset I was. I believe he considered me a threat because I am a very "can-do" person and he wanted total control.

It seemed there was nothing I could do right. He removed me from all prior committees I had been on and would side with parents in situations concerning the classroom. Once a child lied, the parents told the principal, they even apologized to me for their son and yet the principal still called me in and told me I had mental problems. He suggested I leave teaching because I was unfit.

I still do not understand all of this today. I do know that I spent years of living hell with him. I now know I should have never tolerated this treatment.

T-A: 6

This past school year we received a new administrator. She made it clear from the first day that she did not want to be there. She changed quite a few things, including canceling 5th grade graduation. My parents were extremely upset and turned to me to let off steam.

My parents decided to have their own graduation party on a weekend. I told them I thought it was a wonderful day and would love to attend.

I approached my administrator with our new plan. Her response was that she didn't care what any of us did on our own time. The very next day, she approached me. She went on to say that she'd been thinking it over and decided the parents could have it, but I could not attend. She told me to tell my parents that I could not attend due to the fact I didn't want to go against my principal. My parents and students were very upset. I ended up being in the middle of a huge conflict with a lot of name calling (parents and principal).

T-A: 7

Conflict--Talking to administrator about a problem, concern or question involving a student. An answer is given or a solution is worked out. Teacher implements what administrator has advised. The following day or days later, etc. administrator confronts either teacher or student in an aggressive manner--What is going on!? Why are you doing that?! What do you think you are doing!? etc.

When teacher reviews previous conversation and solution discussed, the administrator will respond by saying--"No, that's not what I said! or No, you misunderstand me!" The administrator will then change the original solution causing an embarrassing situation for the teacher and student. The student is always caught in the middle.

Solution--Teacher uses designated notebook and writes down questions, concerns, or problems. The notebook is sent to the office and the administrator must respond by writing down an answer, solution, etc. The notebook is returned to the teacher for review. The notebook may be sent back and forth until a final decision is made and all responses are written down. Teacher schedules a meeting with principal and student to discuss and finalize solution and all information is documented.

T-A: 8

Our new superintendent's managerial style is very dictatorial. Her decisions are very much power over. She made several changes before school even started her first year...before observing what was working and what wasn't. I had 2 confrontational meetings during the year in which she literally yelled in my face about how lazy and irresponsible we at the high school are. I feel very proud of myself for defending myself and my colleagues (in spite of my tears).

This tension continues. Management through fear is very nonproductive and produces a lot of hurt among nonadministrative employees.

I need help with minimizing emotions and remaining calm and logical during face-to-face, one-to-one conflict. How do I convince her that employees' feelings and emotions are important...that people with differing opinions and perspectives can be productive employees.

T-A: 9

I had an incident when I taught middle and high school (5-12). This particular incident occurred in my high school choir class. During passing, my high school students were coming in. At the same time, a neighboring colleague came into my room to have a discussion with me. We never left my room the entire time of this incident. My students were in their 1st semester with me and they know procedure: (1) put away books and book bags, (2) get music folder, and (3) have a seat before the tardy bell rings. They also knew that when a colleague of guest is in the room, they are to wait to speak with me by sitting in their chair and I call their attention so they are not eavesdropping or standing over me. All of them followed this procedure except for two juniors--boys. I made the mistake of putting my back to them while having this discussion. These two boys take it upon themselves to use one cornier of the vocal room as a WWF ring. I finally realized what had and was going on by the reaction of the other students, who remained seated. As I turned to react, both of the boys stumbled on the carpet and one of them put their head through the wall--missing a study by one inch. When he pulled his head out, the class laughed because of the debris on his head. As I approached them, the one with the debris lunges at his buddy and starts shoving him really hard calling him every name in the book. I call a young man to help me separate them and they continued to use foul language. They were trying to slug it out while I am in the middle. The young man and myself completely separated them and helped me escort them to the office. The principal, who is also the A.D., heard my story, in their presence. Mind you, these two boys are in the heart of their football season. He asked me to leave so he could have a "discussion" with them, so I honored his wishes. The punishment, though, was the major conflict! According to the handbook, they would have been suspended three days for their foul language and for destruction of school property is five days. Instead, he gave them 10 days of community service and they were removed from my room only for those same 10 days. I was required to make up separate assignments for those 10 days missed so they would not be ineligible. They had to complete the assignments or they would be zeros. Needless to say, I was very unhappy about his decision and met with him about it immediately. He said that it was fair and that my room would be repaired. He called their parents to inform them while I stood there. I continued to discuss with him my disgust with the decision and he began to get angry with me for questioning his authority. Then, I came after him with this: The week before, I had a senior boy pick on an 8th grade boy in my class and the 8th grader became angry, picked up his chair and threw it towards the senior. The chair did not hit a soul or harm anyone. He did not cuss and there was no retaliation, but the 8th grader gets suspended for 5 days because of his violent, destructive behavior. And he is not an athlete! When I explained this to the principal, he said that he did not have to explain anything to me and arguing with him will only hurt my situation. So I told him, "How will I explain it to the 8th grader and the class why these boys are not being suspended and they committed several crimes to get them suspended for 10 days?" He said it was none of my business or the other students'. I told him I would send the "other

students" to him and he said okay. "So the athletes win and always get a discipline break just so the football team and games do not suffer," was my exiting reply. The result, the students were very angry (and I did not tell them the consequences) and the climate of the school was disrupted, and respect was lost with the principal. The boys, who were supposed to be under his personal supervision during my hour, were goofing off, not working on my assignments during that time, but were assigned to be office aides and playing cards in his office. My wall was never fixed properly either. They put up a piece of sheet rock that was uneven and never painted it. No apology was ever given verbally or in writing by any of the parties.

T-A: 10

The second year of teaching. It was a rowdy bunch of students. The truth is, I was not doing very well. Some of the boys walked around at will. Their parents were school employees. An occasional girl or two would defy instructions, or even walk out of my class. Perhaps the band director's methods would work for me.

But then, he had been here for years and everyone knew he has high expectations. So I tried. I began to assign push ups to the students with too much energy to sit still. One girl had a cast on her arm, so I assigned sit ups instead.

The next day, I was in my office. The Principal and the assistant principal came in and closed the door behind them and began to raise their voices on that topic. I stood my ground (backed into the corner). I documented it and turned it in to the superintendent of schools. Since then, we have made friends again and we seem to be OK around each other most of the time.

T-A: 11

I have been in many conflicts. Most of my conflicts with adults have not been resolved. One in particular is still in the back of my mind. It was with a board member. She wanted to take away my coaching duties without coming to me first. She stripped me of them. To this day I have not confronted her.

T-A: 12

After my first year of teaching, we had a new superintendent as principal. The principal looked at my test scores and decided that I wasn't a good teacher. She even called a parent of one of my students to get her opinion of my teaching ability. After her investigation, she found out that I did the best I could with the class. She still set out to get rid of the old crew so that she could bring in a new bunch. Her tactics were successful with three of the seasoned teachers. One took early retirement, one died from a heart attack and one resigned.

For the next two years, I did every thing this woman asked of me. She required me to have 10 to 12 pages of lesson plans for each unit, a monthly plan, and copies of all worksheets and tests. Then she would call me in and go over my verbs in the lesson plans. I found out later that I was the only teacher required to do this. The next year, my husband became seriously ill and she advised me to resign to take care of him. I told her that I couldn't afford to resign, but she said I could make more on welfare by staying home. I still didn't resign, so the next year she broke our contract by reassigning me three days before school started and notifying me. I filed a protest through OEA but nothing was done, so I resigned at the end of that school year. She is not superintendent of a small school district in _____ County which is always in the newspaper with negative stories.

T-A: 13

I was the librarian for two buildings for one half day each. There was a principal in each building. One principal felt I was expending more energy at the other building. She brought me into her office in May and told me this. She said she would rather I didn't come back next year if I didn't expend as much energy at her building. I didn't go back.

T-A: 14

The conflict I have is with both teachers and the administrator. Many times the teacher will come to me with a problem which <u>we solve</u>. Then the administrator will become upset because he/she was not involved. This causes everyone to feel uneasy to do <u>anything</u> without this administrator. Although if he/she is involved when the conflict is solved, he/she may change his/her mind or deny the involvement.

T-A: 15

I'm a new teacher and was hired too late to order any materials for class. I was told the other two first grade teachers would share their materials with me. This did not happen. When I would ask for something, they would tell me when they get time they would get it for me. After asking for things over and over and never receiving anything, I found myself going to other teachers and people and begging for things. I became very frustrated. The teacher that was supposed to share her materials is also in charge of Title 1, which pays for my salary, so I'm faced with the same problem this year, still not able to buy materials I need because she decides what I need. She informed me to make copies or have a

parent make copies of other teacher's materials. I spent many late hours making copies last year. I have spoken with our principal (which was hired in the middle of the year. Her first year as principal). This story is twisted because this teacher whom was supposed to share was married to the principal who was relieved of his duties. This gets very complicated.

T-A: 16

The conflict is between my principal and myself over a discipline which arose from a name calling incident between two students. I had a major problem with the choice of actions taken. For one student, this was an ongoing problem with many other students. For the other student, this was a first-time incident.

I felt the discipline should have been more severe for the one student than the other. My principal felt they deserved the same discipline for the incident.