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**ACADEMIC CHAIRS' PERCEPTIONS OF DEPARTMENTAL CULTURES:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
Department of Theory and Policy Studies  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the  
University of Toronto

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This thesis is dedicated to Dorothy Edge. Grandma, your spirit, friendship and your enthusiasm for my work encourages me everyday.

## ABSTRACT

### DEPARTMENT CHAIRS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR DEPARTMENTAL CULTURES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Master of Arts

1998

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To explore how academic department chairs' perceive the culture of their department, five department chairs at the University of Toronto were interviewed. The semi-structured interview instrument included questions about departmental goals, traditions, values and orientation practices. The chairs' responses were analyzed and presented in individual interview summaries. This study identified that chairs often interpret department culture in terms of the faculty members, research activities and traditional academic rituals. Several implications for future research on the role of the chairs and departmental culture are discussed.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 The Study

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This study will investigate how five department chairs at the University of Toronto perceive the culture of their departments. Despite the important roles that chairs play within the university, there has been little research in this area. There have not been any previous studies addressing how academic administrators interpret the organizational cultures in which they are embedded. This study represents an attempt to begin to explore the issue of culture through an analysis of interviews conducted with department chairs.

This chapter begins with a discussion of current external and internal conditions that are influencing both the university culture and the nature of academic administration. A brief overview of the literature will serve to situate the study within the literature and support an outline of the purpose and goals of the study. The nature of the administrative responsibilities bestowed upon department chairs and the organizational characteristics of University of Toronto will also be highlighted. In conclusion, the significance of this exploration for the future of academic administration and the university will be considered.

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## 1.2 Introduction

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The level of public funding allocated to Ontario universities has decreased significantly in the last few years. As a result, competition for external funding from granting agencies, industry and private donors at some universities is increasing. There is an internal emphasis on fiscal accountability and strategic planning. Externally, universities are touting their status as institutions of high caliber research and teaching. These factors are contributing to changes within the culture of the university.

Academic administrators are being called upon to navigate their institutions through these turbulent times. Administrators are continually being challenged to adapt to this increasingly competitive academic environment. While central administrators make formal statements on expectations for research and teaching excellence within departments, based on the information shared by the participants in this study, and my personal experience within the academy, there appear to be few formal structures designed to support departmental administrators in their task of ensuring these goals are met.

Several higher education researchers have noted the importance of the department, and the department chair, in terms of the overall success of the university. Success, of course, is frequently defined in terms of the academic rubric of quality research, teaching and community service. There are a number of reasons why the chair is viewed as an important figure. Chairs are often actively involved in research and are seen as peers and colleagues by faculty. The department is often where university policy is translated into practice; therefore, the chair's ability to effectuate change is integral. At the same time, chairs are the central interface between the senior administrative core of the university and the faculty.

At the University of Toronto, the administrative structure is relatively decentralized. Department chairs are charged with balancing the department budget, enhancing faculty research activity, establishing development and fundraising networks, addressing student needs and attracting research funding. At the same time they are conducting their own research programs, maintaining academic programs, encouraging their colleagues, recruiting students and supporting administrative staff development.

If the current climate is any indication, the future appears to hold many challenges for the academic administrator. Chairs will be required to do even more bureaucratic work with less support staff. They will be expected to encourage research of greater quality and quantity without access to additional financial resources. In addition, chairs will be expected to create links with alumni and conduct sophisticated fundraising campaigns.

Although there is growing pressure to support excellence in teaching and research at the department level, there are fewer resources with which to achieve these goals. What can academic administrators do to promote the aims of the university in this context? Recognizing the constraints and opportunities within their departments, what can they do to create an environment, or culture, that supports departments?

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### **1.3 Literature Overview**

#### **Organizational Culture**

There has been a considerable amount of research into the role an organization's culture plays in its success. There is also a body of research addressing the leader's role in creating and

changing the organization's culture. This literature addresses the need for leaders to be aware of and adapt to the culture in which they are embedded.

Due to the multiplicity of frameworks used to study organizational culture, a precise definition of this term has yet to emerge. This study will define organizational culture as the cohesive organizational ethos supported by the participants' shared values, traditions, rituals, orientation practices and physical structures.

The impact of an organization's culture on its success and productivity gained prominence in the 1980's with the release of *In Search of Excellence* (Peters and Waterman, 1982). This study focused on Fortune 500 companies that had developed reputations for their innovation and fiscal success. Peters and Waterman concluded that within each company there was a strong sense of shared values, traditions, structures and assumptions that supported all initiatives. These organizations had also developed formal practices to introduce and orient all new members of the company. The prominence of this study served to increase the level of interest in studying culture within business, education and organizational studies.

Within the last decade there have been numerous applications of the organizational culture paradigm in the study of higher education. Tierney and Chafee (1988) examined the impact of organizational culture on recognition and encouragement of diversity within the academy. Volkwein and Carbone (1994) investigated the impact of departmental culture on student success. Quality of teaching within an engineering school was the focus of an organizational change project in Australia (Willcockson and Walker, 1995)

Based on this research, it becomes apparent that the culture of the department can significantly effect how members of the academy interact and work. Given the increasing pressures facing the university, including funding restrictions and increased competition for resources, perhaps a greater understanding of the culture of the university may assist academic leaders. An understanding of organizational culture, and the values and structures that underscore this culture, may provide academic leaders with a framework that can be used to interpret the context in which they work.

### Organizational Culture and Academic Administrators

There has also been a considerable amount of research on the role of the leader in creating, sustaining and changing organizational culture. Schein (1992) notes that while it is important for leaders to be aware of the elements that contribute to the culture of their organization, leaders need to develop the ability to transcend culture in order to successfully assist their organizations to grow and develop. Knowledge of the attributes of culture can assist leaders in understanding why their organization functions as it does.

In turn, there could be distinct advantages for the department chair who understands the culture of the department. The department's traditions, values and even its physical layout may have a significant impact on how change initiatives are received and how goals are achieved. The department administrator who understands how cultural attributes impact the overall culture of the department may be able to anticipate the challenges and opportunities.

These arguments underscore the importance of developing an understanding of how chairs perceive organizational culture.

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## **1.4 Purpose Statement**

Connecting the literature on organizational culture and academic leadership, this study focuses on how department chairs understand the cultures in which they work. It will also investigate how, if at all, chairs attempt to modify the culture of the department as a means of achieving their goals.

While six department chairs at the University of Toronto participated in the study, five provided usable interviews. Each chair participated in an individual semi-structured interview and was encouraged to discuss their interpretation of the department's cultural attributes. Interview questions related to these attributes and included departmental traditions, values, structures and orientation programs. Change initiatives within the department, if any, were also explored.

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## **1.5 The University of Toronto**

The department chairs participating in this research study were all employed at the University of Toronto. The University of Toronto (U of T) provides a unique opportunity to study the role of organizational culture and leadership in higher education. At the U of T,

department chairs have a significant degree of autonomy and responsibility. This is largely due to their stated position as “CEO of the department”.

The U of T is a medical/doctoral institution located in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It also offers a range of undergraduate and certificate programs. As Canada’s largest university, it has three campuses and over 2,000 professors and 60,000 students. The largest campus, St. George, is located downtown. The two satellite campus, Mississauga and Scarborough, are located in the west and east ends of the city, respectively.

Although some of the chairs participating in the study had some responsibilities for the programs offered at the satellite colleges, the interviews were focused on activities at the St. George Campus.

#### The Governance Structure

While most Canadian universities have both a senate and a board of Governors, the U of T is one of the few universities with a unicameral governance structure where all corporate authority is vested in a single Governing Council. In addition, there are several layers of administration at the University. Hardy (1996) notes that a line authority system creates a greater distance between the central administration and the rest of the university. For example, the chair reports to the dean who in turn reports to the divisional Vice- Provost. Only after this point does the line reach the vice-president and finally, the President. This approach to decentralization also means that chairs have been assigned certain clear responsibilities within the organization.

#### Communication & Hierarchical Networks

All centre directors, chairs, deans, and college principals are invited to a monthly information briefing. There are more than 200 people in attendance. Hardy (1996) notes those in attendance often feel this meeting is not an opportunity to participate but only a forum for receiving information on institutional decision making.

#### The Role of the Chair

Hardy (1996) reported that budgetary decision making is extremely centralized at the U of T and the Deans of each Faculty are not involved in negotiating their annual budgets. Although department chairs are allocated lump sum funding, they have exclusive decision making authority on its allocation.

The university has an extensive policy document that describes the selection, duties and responsibilities of the academic department chair. Chairs are viewed as the, "Chief executive officer of the department responsible for budgets, recommendations for appointments and, where appropriate promotions." (University of Toronto, Policy Document on Academic Administrators(PDAA), 3-3). Consulting with faculty members on all important matters is highlighted as one of the chair's duties. Accordingly, appointments to the position should be based on the chair's, "intellectual, and administrative abilities, devotion to education and research, judgment and qualities of leadership"(PDAA, 3-3). In addition, the policy states that chairs,

Should have the ability to create an environment conducive to the growth of intellectual life within the department and to maintain the confidence and co-operation of the teaching staff, administrative staff and students (PDAA, 3-3).

The document also establishes that chairs are responsible for fundraising and external support by stating,

They should be able to manage effectively and efficiently the external relations of their department, both within the university and in the wider community, so as to facilitate support for its educational and research activities(PDAA, 3-3).

The Policy clearly establishes the Chair's responsibility for promoting teaching and research.

The chair shall endeavour to promote the teaching, research and scholarship of the teaching staff of the department and to ensure an equitable distribution of work. He/she shall also endeavour to promote the career development of administrative staff (PDAA, 3-3).

The document establishes the role of the chair as one of independence, freedom and responsibility. As CEO of the department, the chair becomes the academic and administrative leader of that unit. This has implications for the culture of the department, of the faculty and the university. It also has implications for the role the chair can play in changing the culture of the department to meet its internal and external needs.

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## **1.6 The Research Questions**

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This study focused on the perceptions of department chairs related to issues of organizational culture and leadership and was designed to address four specific research questions.

First, how do chairs describe the cultural attributes of their departments? In order to address this question, it was important to design an instrument that would encourage participants to communicate their perceptions of the cultures of the department.

Second, do chairs use their knowledge of their department's culture to fine tune both their behaviour and the environment to promote their goals? For example, if administrative efficiency was the goal, were there changes to the actual structure of the unit that previously inhibited administrative success or were the changes superficial and unable to attract the root of the problem.

Third, how did chairs attempt to influence the cultural attributes of their department in order to effectuate change and achieve their goals? Looking at the initial goals that the chairs set and how they worked to achieve them provides an interesting example of how they perceive the department's culture. For example, if a chair is interested in improving teaching in the department and only initiates a training initiative for graduate students, he/she is probably supporting his/her assumptions about faculty development and learning.

The fourth question relates to the training chairs receive at the beginning of their administrative appointment. How does the university ensure that their academic administrators have the knowledge and skills necessary to create positive change in the department?

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### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

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The culture of an organization supports or negates certain elements of the performance, comfort and relationship amongst and between its members. Within the university, there are several different constituencies, each with their own needs and goals. Working with faculty, staff, students and other administrators presents an interesting and unique challenge for the academic leader.

This study will provide insight into how a group of academic administrators interpret the organizational culture in which they work. It will explore the experiences of chairs in order to obtain a better understanding of their perspectives on their roles.

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**1.8 Summary**

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This chapter has highlighted the current climate within higher education and its impact on the role of academic administrators. The value of organizational culture as a framework for understanding departmental culture has also been addressed.

There has little research on how chairs perceive the culture of their departments and whether they employ cultural frameworks when implementing change initiatives. This study will begin to explore how chairs perceive the culture of their department.

A review of the literature addressing organizational culture, within business and higher education and the research on academic administration is provided in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 focuses on the design of the study while Chapter 4 presents a summary of each interview. The research findings are discussed in Chapter 5.



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## Chapter 3 Methodology

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### 3.1 Introduction

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The literature reviewed in the previous chapter stresses the value of culture, and its attributes, as both a means of understanding and influencing organizational life. This chapter will focus on the evolution of the research questions and sample selection. The interview process will also be discussed.

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### 3.2 The Study

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Understanding current practice and perceptions are an essential precursor to theory development. This study explores how a group of experienced department chairs interpret the cultures of their departments. The chairs' awareness of the impact cultural attributes have on the overall department and their influence within the organizations will also be explored.

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### 3.3 Design

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In order to begin to understand how academic chairs interpret and acknowledge the cultures of their departments, it is important to explore their understanding of the departments. It was decided that the most direct way to understand how chairs interpret their departmental reality was to conduct a series of interviews. A semi-structured interview instrument was designed based on the current academic administrator literature and Schein's model of organizational culture. The questions were designed to investigate how chair's perceived their roles and responsibilities and the structure, values and traditions within their department.

The objective of the instrument was to encourage chairs to discuss their perceptions and understanding of a series of attributes frequently associated with organizational culture studies. These attributes included departmental history, traditions, rituals, and orientations practices. Both physical structure and administrative structure of the department were also included.

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### 3.4 Participants

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The research literature stresses the importance of the department and the role of the chair within the university (Weidman, 1979; Bennett 1983; Gmelch and Burns, 1993). As the local unit of administration, the department is where policy is transformed into practice. The role of the chair and the culture of the department may have a significant impact on the success of the unit in terms of teaching, research and student achievement.

Based on their position within the hierarchy of the university, the chair is the liaison between the larger university and the faculty. It is this position, especially within the context of the University of Toronto, that extends the potential ability of chairs to truly influence their departments.

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### 3.5 Sample Selection

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There were several factors that influenced the approach to sample selection employed in the study, including the relevance of the data, anonymity and the expertise of the interview participants.

#### 3.5.1 Relevance of the data

This exploration of department chair's perception of culture may serve as the foundation for further research on the role of the chair and the chair's influence on teaching, research and student cultures within the department. In order to collect data that would address the research questions identified in Chapter 1, it was decided that only departments with both graduate and undergraduate, teaching and research functions would qualify for the study. In order to provide similar foundations for comparison, it was decided to limit eligibility to the non-professional programs, therefore excluding such programs as including Music, Medicine, Law. Although the Faculty of Engineering holds Professional Faculty status, it was included in the study by reason of its primarily first-degree undergraduate student population and the traditional faculty member complement. Therefore, only departments within the Faculty of Arts and Science and The Faculty of Engineering qualified to participate.

Given that this is an exploratory study, it was decided to limit the sample size to six chairs. Based on the assumption that chairs working in departments of relatively equal size would be facing similar challenges and experiences, participation qualification was determined based on a minimum number of faculty members and full course equivalence (FCE)<sup>1</sup> offerings. Within the Faculty of Arts & Science, this meant selecting departments with fewer than 25 academic faculty and 3000 full course equivalent course offerings in the department; and, within the Faculty of

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<sup>1</sup> The FCE for each department, as provided by the central statistical office, is calculated by multiplying the number of students enrolled in each course by the number of courses offered.

Engineering, only departments offering more than 300 courses per year were included. These numbers were selected in order to provide a potential sample pool that was large enough to ensure the interview participant's anonymity.

### 3.5.2 Anonymity

The complete anonymity of the interviewees was deemed to be an essential component of the study. Interviewees needed to be able to participate freely in the process in order to ensure honest and thoughtful responses. The most pressing concern was that of masking each chair's departmental affiliations. It was decided that any comments or initiatives that could be linked to a particular department would not be explicitly described, though they could be considered in the analysis.

### 3.5.3 Length of Chair Service

In reference to the expert educational leadership literature (Leithwood, 1995) and the need to limit the sample size, it was decided that only chairs with at least two years experience in their current position would qualify to participate. According to the literature, problem solving and proactive leadership are both associated with more experienced leaders. It was assumed that more senior administrators would have developed the mechanisms to deal with the daily issues of departmental life and would be more apt to have considered the issues of relevance for this study.

### 3.5.4 Confirming participation

Initial contact with each department, that had met the selection criteria, was made by phone in order to ascertain the length of service of each chair. It was the administrative assistant to the chair who provided this information. Using this data to create a shortlist of potential participants, the next step was to create a balanced disciplinary representation. To this end, two chairs from Faculty of Engineering and five chairs from the Faculty of Arts and Science, were contacted. Within Arts and Science, representation from humanities, social science and science disciplines was ensured. A package of information about the study was delivered to the department office of each of the seven shortlisted participants. The package included an introductory letter, a list of potential interview questions and a consent form<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> see appendix A

Each recipient was phoned one week after having received the package in order to confirm their participation in the study. One individual did not agree to participate. Six chairs were scheduled for interviews during the following two week period in November 1997.

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### **3.6 Interview Instrument**

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The interview instrument was designed to promote discussion about departmental culture. Building on established literature dealing with the perceived roles and responsibilities of the chair, the instrument included questions about the professional development and history of the respondent. Questions related to their perception of their role, their goals for the department and the people and literature that had most influenced their professional development were also included.

Schein's (1992) description of organizational culture was used as the basis for the formulation of questions related to the chair's interpretation of departmental culture. Drawing on the cultural attributes that were frequently cited in the literature, the questions explored the new faculty and student orientation processes, the influence of departmental history and tradition, communication and staff development initiatives.

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### **3.7 The Interviews**

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Individual interviews were conducted in each participant's office. Each interview was between sixty and ninety minutes in duration. At the beginning of each interview, participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. They were also presented with a consent form and the anonymity of the process was reiterated. Interviews were guided by an expanded version of the question list<sup>3</sup> that had been previously sent to each chair. Although these initial questions were successful in soliciting participant responses, additional questions were added as the study progressed. For example, Chairs were free to discuss their experience and understanding of areas not listed in the official questions.

At the conclusion of the interview, participants signed the consent form and were made aware of the opportunity to verify the final transcripts of the interview. While they had twice been

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A

presented with the information about the anonymity of the process and the final product, four of the six interviewees stated that they would never have said anything that they did not want repeated or associated with their name.

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### **3.8 Recording**

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With the each participant's consent, interviews were recorded with a hand-held tape recorder. All but one of the recordings provided accurate representations of the conversation. It was decided that the interview that had not been clearly and fully recorded would be omitted from the rest of the analysis.

Full transcripts of the five complete interviews were then produced by a third party and submitted to the participants. Due to a family emergency, I was unable to review the transcripts prior to returning them to the participants. It became apparent that there were inaccuracies both in detail and information presented in the data. Some participants were concerned by the quality of the transcriptions.

Upon reviewing the written transcripts and comparing them to the original audio recordings, it became clear that the transcriber had omitted approximately five full pages of conversation. There were also inaccuracies in the original transcriptions. When these omissions and corrections had been made, the transcripts were returned to the participants for their review.

Personal notes were kept and referred to throughout the data analysis process. A personal log of interview experiences was also kept and referenced throughout the analysis period of the study.

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### **3.9 Verification**

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In order to allow the participants to reflect on their statements, as noted, the full transcripts of our recorded interview were returned to each chair. As stated in our initial agreement, each participant had the opportunity to remove, add, highlight or change any part of the transcription. Participants also had the opportunity to decline the review process and let the transcripts stand.

Two participants returned the transcripts without changes. Two made minor changes. One chair was unsure of the relevance of his comments and did not understand the purpose of the study. His participation was secured pending his approval of the specific quotations and ideas that

would be present in the study. Throughout the coding process, relevant quotations made by this chair were recorded and the collection of information was E-mailed to him and approved. This deviation from the standard methodology was justified in order to maintain the size of the sample and the disciplinary balance of the interviewees.

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### **3.10 Coding**

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When this verification process was completed, a final copy of each transcript was produced. Based on the process described by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), each interview was read to isolate common and dissimilar themes. Following this initial reading, each transcript was reread and a list of themes and comments were recorded. A semi-final list of thematic codes was then compiled. This list of codes was then subdivided according to different categories. Interviews were then read again and coded accordingly.

It became apparent that there were two clear distinctions between the themes. There were some that were directly related to the issues surrounding the notion of departmental culture and others that were more aligned with the more general and personal ideas.

At this point, two main categories were established. The general and personal information category was comprised of 12 individual themes. The second category, comprised of the departmental culture themes, was comprised of 11 individual themes.

Direct quotations and comments from the individual interviews were then collated according the aforementioned categories and themes. As per Leithwood (1998), individual tables were then used to enumerated, contrast and compared the thematic data both by theme and by participant. Data from the study is presented, in the form of individual interview summaries, in chapter 4.

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### **3.12 Summary**

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This exploratory study gathered data from five department chairs regarding their perceptions of the cultures of their departments. The data from these interviews was coded according to many of the cultural attributes previously discussed in the literature. In the next chapter, in order to better understand each chair's perceptions, the data will be presented in the form of individual interview summaries. While each summary follows the same structure, there

are differences and similarities between the chairs' perceptions. The similarities and differences will provide the foundation for the discussion in Chapter 5.



## Chapter 4 Interview Summaries

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### 4.1 Introduction

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Interview summaries for the five participating chairs are presented in this chapter. The chapter begins with a summary of the demographic data on the chairs who participated in the interview process. According to the themes discussed in Chapter 3, summaries of each interview are also included. The relationships between the chairs and their interpretations of their cultures will be presented within Chapter 5.

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### 4.2 Demographic Information

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Within the sample, 3 of the 5 Chairs had previously held academic administrative appointments. A fourth chair had held senior positions within a major national funding agency. The average number of years they had served in their current position was 5.5 years. Although each Department had different Chair term lengths, this average indicates that some chairs had served more than one term. Four of the five suggested that the only reason they had entertained accepting the position was because of their respect and personal relationship with their respective Deans. In each case, it had been the Deans who had asked them to stand for the appointment.

While four of the interviewees expressed their satisfaction with their current role as chair, one participant declined to comment. Similarly, those chairs whose retirement was not imminent expressed interest in accepting another administrative appointment. Only one chair categorically declined to entertain the possibility of continuing his career as an administrator.

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#### 4.3.1 Chair A

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##### Goals and Philosophy

Chair A began our interview by describing the chair as a position of leadership within the department. He outlined the importance of this leadership function for staff, faculty and students. Chair A entered the position with a clear picture of what he wanted to accomplish. Establishing a solid administrative core and improving the quality of teaching within the department topped his list of priorities. Forecasting that fiscal management and downsizing would greatly impact the department, Chair A ensured that his actions supported his goal of developing a soundly run administration.

I came in with the vision of the department that should be well run administratively and turned over the administrative structure of the department by hiring a business manager and replacing a lot of people.

Chair A enthusiastically shared his philosophy on teaching and his goal to establish discussions about teaching and “trying to establish a climate where teaching is important and rewarded.” He elaborated,

For as public an act as teaching is, it is one of the most private things here at the university. You go in and close the door and no one knows what you are going to do in there. Its very rare for someone to go into the classroom and watch them teach. It is unusual for people to share or have someone come and visit in the classroom while they are teaching where as in research it happens all the time.

### **Role of the Chair**

According to A, marshaling resources and promoting the needs of the whole department are two of a chair’s most important roles. More specifically, he highlighted that motivating department members to “see the collective totality of the department rather than their individual self interest” as one of the chair’s most significant contributions. Acknowledging the spirit of individualism amongst faculty and the relative lack of power embedded in the position of chair, Chair A champions feedback and persuasion as the means for building community and morale within the within the department.

Using a metaphor for his leadership style and approach, Chair A sees himself as “a nurturer, a facilitator and often an arbitrator. Kind of trying to goad people without startling them.”

Although describing the view as a slightly theatrical over- simplification, Chair A outlined his philosophy on academic administrators in the role of chair. He believes there are two contrasting types of chairs: “Initiators” and “Maintainers”. Viewing himself in the former category, Chair A elaborated on his conceptualization.

Most chairs assume the role because it is a responsibility, a duty. They see themselves as sacrificing themselves to the department. For the most part they do a very good job. They try to keep things on a even keel and rarely see themselves initiating radical new changes for the department. They are maintainers. They keep things going and incremental changes where needed but probably not too many major changes unless they’re caught up in circumstances. Then there are initiators who come in with ideas about how the department should change and they are really trying to do a lot to change what has been done in the past. They try to energize the direction of the department.

### **Professional Development**

#### **Chair Training**

Chair A elaborated on the one day training program for new academic administrators that was presented by the university’s central administration. He briefly outlined the agenda, in which

officers of the university made presentations on the areas of interest to new administrators. In reviewing the session, he believed that the success and applicability of the session was mixed. It was helpful, however, "mainly because of the networking, where you could get phone numbers and contacts.....less about the content. It was more the people you were introduced to."

#### Personal Development

Reflecting on his professional development experiences, A discussed how his experience has made him a stronger leader. The characteristics he now brings to the job include, "More patience, a better sense of how to change things in a department, more tolerance. I've learned when to apologize. I try to be open and not too rigid. I have learned with experience and increased confidence."

#### Literature

Chair A was familiar with the body of academic literature that addresses the role and best practice of academic administrators. This literature has not influenced his practice. "So much [of academic leadership] has to deal with your own personality and your experience. Some of the rules are so common sensical that I just haven't found them to be insightful."

#### Role models

Research on academic leadership did not have a significant place in chair A's professional development interests. Chair A spoke freely and passionately about his role models and their influence on his administrative practice. He stated that his primary role model "taught me how to lobby, how to organize faculty in a way that ensures that things get done....how to marshal people's talents and energies." Chair A also mentioned how this mentor had skillfully modeled successful implementation strategies that had inspired him in his own administrative endeavours.

#### Faculty Development: Teaching and merit

Chair A wanted to establish a climate in which excellent teaching was encouraged and expected. Acknowledging that mere lip service to the importance of quality teaching would not provide an incentive for change, he actively sought a mechanism by which to encourage faculty to improve their teaching. The result was a change to the department's traditional merit and evaluation ratios. Within A's department teaching and research are now equally weighted and equally considered when annual merit pay is doled out.

In support of this commitment, all faculty are required to submit their course outlines, syllabi and tests. All are reviewed as part of the year end teaching evaluation merit process.

New faculty are also supported in their development of their teaching portfolios. Chair A outlined his approach and rationale for concentrating his efforts on developing excellence in teaching practice within the junior ranks.

I have to work from the ground up. I work with the junior faculty. The senior colleagues are very experienced and are good teachers. I don't have much influence on them. They are set in their ways. But I can have an impact and use some of these [resources] with the junior members.

### **Organizational Structure**

Acknowledging the fiscal and planning challenges the department would face, Chair A reorganized the departmental governance structure to improve internal communications. A schedule of regular meetings was instituted and a clear division of labor and delegation was established. The Chair also held additional meetings with different segments of the faculty in order for them to be able to more freely discuss their needs and apprehensions. For example, Chair A would meet with just the junior faculty at times.

Chair A capitalized on his understanding of the culture within the department by recognizing the ability of the junior faculty to catalyze change efforts. "The senior faculty would criticize one another, they are less likely to criticize a junior faculty."

### **Organizational Change**

In order to promote and support change within the department, Chair A communicates personally with all faculty members throughout the department to discuss how the proposed initiative will benefit them and their students. Addressing the most significant change within the department, Chair A outlines,

The major event during my tenure (as chair) was when we had the downswing. The department's response to that included a whole sale reorganization of itself in a new faculty complement plan. It was a major rethinking of the role of the department and vision of the future.

Chair A described how the department had reacted, participated in and adapted to change by outlining some aspects of the planning process. He returned to the notion of using junior faculty to facilitate change.

In response to the changes, there are always a few that provide difficulty but on the whole they are a cooperative group. The process worked by breaking the problem down and delegating and consulting and

working very hard with the junior faculty to initiate the draft because it was a fractious exercise and it most likely that they're to be more open to the process.

### **Orientation To The Department**

When new faculty arrive in the department, Chair A's communicates his teaching expectations in their initial meeting. He also provides a guided introduction to his favorite selections of the teaching literature. Faculty have access to his mini-library, which contains information about course planning, setting examinations and marking. Each new faculty member also receives a copy of *Mentor in a Manual*. This book addresses both teaching and research in a manner designed to assist new faculty in their quest for tenure.

Within the department, new faculty are given their own reconditioned space and immediately introduced to colleagues working within their area of specialization. First year teaching loads are reduced to allow new faculty to establish their research programs. In addition, new faculty in Chair A's department do not receive any important administrative tasks until they have "cut their academic teeth" for a year or two.

Chair A championed the value of mentoring new faculty within the department. This initiative in developing a mentoring program for new faculty preceded the university mandated policy on mentoring. He explained, "Each new faculty is assigned a mentor who takes responsibility for acclimatizing them to the faculty and the culture of the department in terms of research, grantsmanship and even in the areas of teaching." When discussing the role of senior colleagues as mentors, Chair A believes that it is "an abdication of faculty responsibility if they absent themselves from this important role."

Although there was little discussion of student orientation programs, Chair A described their recruiting practices for undergraduate students. The department has designed a careful program to introduce top first year students to the opportunities within the Department.

### **Department Traditions & Values**

When discussing the formal departmental traditions, Chair A remarked, "What strikes me is the lack of receptivity to ritual and tradition. We are remarkably individualistic." Although there is a host of traditional activities, including retirement and festive season get-togethers, Chair A highlighted the dominant theme within the department: Individualism. He explained,

We are very collegial in the professional work scene. I thought I would have liked to form a stronger social cohesion but I tried in the beginning and it didn't work that well. Our lounge rarely gets used. The social culture is really people working together in research groups.

Standard departmental traditions also include the weekly colloquia that are a staple on the Department's calendar.

According to Chair A, faculty are highly individualistic, research orientated and serious academics. "Research, research, research," epitomizes the predominant value set within the department. His final thoughts on the Department's values addressed not only those of the collective but also how he modifies his actions to ensure that progress is made,

Anything you can do that supports research is good. Anything that takes people away from that, is questionable. What you have to do is convince people that teaching is an extension of the research enterprise.

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### **4.3.2 Chair B**

#### **Goals and Philosophy**

During our interview, Chair B did not mention his original goals for the Department although he discussed the strength of his commitment to the faculty, staff and students within the department.

#### **Role of the Chair**

Chair B was strongly committed to his role in building a sense of community within the department and "encouraging all the efforts of my colleagues to continuously engage in high quality research and publishing." He also outlined his "responsibility for the maintenance of graduate and undergraduate programs."

He addressed his approach to bringing faculty together and improving the department. Acknowledging how his personal experience has influenced his practice, Chair B stated, "as a member of the university and this faculty for a very long time, it seems to me that the best way to achieve your goals is seeking the advice and support of your colleagues."

Chair B argued that the chair's only way to support faculty endeavours is by using encouragement. In these times of increasing fiscal constraint, non-monetary support becomes even more important. The only additional comments on his role as chair were almost directly quoted from the University's document addressing academic administrative policy.

**Attitude toward administration**

During his discussion of his thoughts on the administrative side of university life, Chair B spoke of his sense of commitment towards the University of Toronto. He suggested that his administrative experience has enhanced his sense of loyalty. He also noted his perception of faculty members' sentiments towards the university.

For many colleagues in this department's culture, the sense of partnership between the faculty and the university is less strong than my own. My colleagues have in the past have seen themselves as unique. I would prefer to think that we have a responsibility to serve the university mission as a whole.

Chair B spoke to faculty members' suspicion of an academic who enjoys administration and planning processes. Addressing the chair's increasing role in long term and strategic planning, B expressed his enjoyment of the process. He strongly felt that ,

There is something quite exciting about it as its an opportunity to look inward and ask ourselves....where are we going? Why do we want to go in this direction? Why do we want to do here? Why are we making these choices?

**Professional Development****Chair training**

Chair B had participated in the central administration's training program for new academic administrators. He spoke highly of its value. He also highlighted the great spectrum of activities that are available for chairs to facilitate their involvement with their administrative colleagues from across the university. B was firmly committed to the value of this network in enhancing the performance of academic administrators.

**Personal Growth**

Echoing Chair A's sentiments about his personal administrative development, Chair B felt that his development had been influenced by a number of sources. Chair B credited his network of administrative colleagues within the university and throughout the country as his most essential source of professional development. Participating in international seminars on graduate education and the training of future faculty were also viewed as having influenced his thinking and approach to his job.

**Role models**

Chair B's role models have had an impact on his approach towards his administrative duties. He highlighted their influence on his "thinking about the responsibilities of this kind of

academic leadership, the importance of encouraging and enhancing scholarship, innovation and quality teaching.”

#### Faculty development

Chair B felt strongly about his role in supporting faculty development efforts within the Department. He attempts to encourage all faculty members to participate in both Faculty and University sponsored development opportunities. He also provides financial assistance where possible, “to broaden the base of our teaching material, adding to our ability to present material from computer based and film based learning resources.”

Chair B noted that the Department initiates relatively few professional development activities for faculty. His sense is that traditional academic conferences provide the best opportunity for faculty to share their teaching experiences with their disciplinary peers and develop best practice.

#### Staff Development

Chair B outlined his responsibility for creating “opportunities for our administrative colleagues in their careers through the administrative staff structure of the university.”

#### Organizational Structure

##### Departmental structure

Chair B discussed his perception that the most prominent structural characteristic of the department was the “long tradition of collegial engagement in its leadership working through a structure of committees.” Chair B also discussed the importance of the delegation of work within the Department.

Chair B attributes the Department’s social culture to the demographic career stage of the faculty. “I think we have more of our own patterns as our lives change, as we in turn don’t grow any younger. We tend to be more social as colleagues in our younger years and have more compelling family and other commitments as lives and hopefully our scholarship matures.” He hinted that this would change over time with the influx of new hires to replace retiring faculty.

#### Teaching and merit

Chair B voiced his commitment to teaching, “I take [teaching] with the utmost seriousness and do it as thoroughly as possible, and if we have a problem, it is identified and we deal with the problem.” He emphasized the value that the entire department places on teaching. This is



demonstrated by ensuring that “experienced and senior faculty” teach first and second year undergraduate courses. The Department also is committed to maintaining the “traditional tutorial system”.

### **Organizational Change**

In our discussion of Departmental planning and change initiatives, Chair B was quick to mention his method when dealing with their faculty complement plan. “My approach to this responsibility was to seek their advice, support and assistance, as we together made our plans, established our more particular goals and took them to the Department for their support.”

### **Orientation to the Department**

#### **New faculty**

Chair B discussed the, as of yet, unexplored potential of the department’s orientation program for new faculty. He explained that although there is a mentoring program in place, many of the newer faculty members have expressed their interest in having a more comprehensive orientation process. He also highlighted the Department’s version of the mentoring program.

What we attempt to do, with a lot of support from the faculty, is to provide, what is formally called mentorship to new faculty by pairing them with a senior member. It is an informal way for new faculty to acclimate themselves to this environment and this system of instruction is beneficial.

Chair B also noted the student orientation efforts within the Department.

We do, at the moment, a more thorough and impressive job with the entering graduate students. A large part of that is carried by the graduate students’ society. They see every single new student who comes into the department and they have social events to bring each of these talented young people into our Department.

### **Departmental Traditions & Values**

When discussing departmental tradition, Chair B’s comments were very similar to those of the other interviewees. Traditional academic meetings, colloquia and seasonal functions were considered to be standard, and important, departmental traditions. Within Chair B’s Department, “There is a range of working groups by theme or major area of study. We have some kind of meeting at least 3 evenings a week with both faculty and students and our colleagues from other universities.”

High quality scholarship, excellent teaching, internationally recognized scholars and peer review publications, books and papers, form the foundation of the Department’s value system. Another of the defining values is their commitment to the discipline. According to Chair, “What

brings us together as a whole is what we teach, how we teach it and the kind of and quality of the research we do.”

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### **4.3.3 Chair C**

#### **Goals and Philosophy**

When Chair C assumed the role of chair, he was committed to “reestablishing the Department within the University.” He expressed his initial concern for the manner in which the Department was perceived by the central administration. Chair C was also committed to solidifying the Department’s national and international position as a leader in the discipline. Improving teaching within the department was also one of his goals.

#### **Attitude toward administration**

Chair C had a clear picture of what he believes it takes to be a good administrator. He described some of what he views as essential characteristics including, “Commitment to the job. Be willing to work hard. Deal with people in difficult circumstances. Have you own compass. And listen to others, not just as a form of consultation, but listen to what people really mean and modify your actions as a result.”

Discussing his role as an academic administrator, he noted,

It has to be taken as a challenge. The role of any administrator is to ensure that they are there and that the group of people they are working for are as productive as possible. Get as many resources for them and hire the best people you can and let them do the best they can in those circumstances. Don’t go for second best and make sure to give them the sense that the university likes them so they’ll be sure to put out for the university and make sure your students will cheer you on.

Throughout our conversation, Chair C expressed his views on innate ability versus learned skill. In the case of students, teachers and administrators, Chair C believes that you can help someone with “the natural ability” but efforts to assist those without “it” often be wasted. In the case of an unskilled chair, he suggested,

They should get out and get someone who knows how to run it. It’s like saying, ‘what about the pupils that can’t play the piano?’ Well, you should stop doing it. Let someone who know how to play the piano, play. Now you get someone with real musical talent. Then the question is how do you get them to maximize the quality of their music not by music theory, you practice the piano a lot.

#### **Role of the Chair**

According to Chair C, the chair has three levels of responsibility. He described the role of the chair within the department, the university and the international academic community.

Paralleling one of his goals, he also discussed the role of the chair in ensuring that the department is respected both within and outside the university. The chair is also an influential partner in developing university and faculty level policy.

Chair C discussed the potential for chairs to influence the greater University by “moving the university closer to what you think the university should be; talking to deans and provosts and talking about university policy and where it should go over a period of time.”

Addressing the leadership function of the chair, Chair C stressed the external role of the chair.

The chair is the door through which the rest of the university sees the department. You want to make sure the department is appropriately perceived outside the university. It is also important to ensure that it exercises the leadership it needs to exercise within the country .

Speaking to the internal role of the department chair, he provided the following views on his role as facilitator.

You want to make sure faculty are doing a good job teaching undergraduates and graduates. If you want a group of peers to take collective action they have to organize themselves to make that possible. I’m supposed to be the mechanism by which it happens.

### **Professional Development**

#### **Chair Training**

As for his participation in the university run training session, Chair C felt that it was “off the mark” and a “waste of time,” with the exception of the benefits he derived from meeting with peers and establishing a network of colleagues. Chair C explained that his orientation to the role was much more skillfully accomplished by his predecessor who spent a month briefing and preparing him.

#### **Personal Growth**

Regarding his personal development, Chair C stated, “I’m more tired, more experienced. I know more people but I am still the same person.” He placed a paramount value on the role of the people who have been his support network. On several occasions throughout our conversation, he highlighted the importance of his network of colleagues in enabling him to succeed in the chair.

#### **Literature**

Academic leadership research and literature do not play an important role in his thinking. “I don’t have much confidence in theory of this kind. I think you know how to do it or you

don't...it's like being a musician." According to Chair C, practice, personal experience and a network of administrative colleagues are the keys to administrative success.

### **Organizational Structure**

There was little discussion about the structure of the Department other than the mention of the traditional academic rituals including committee work and meetings. Chair C was clear in his commitment to having open communication within the Department, "I operate by making sure that everyone in the department knows what is going on."

When asked to describe the structure of the department, he indicated that was "not something he would undertake to do." He did, however, mention that the people in the department are "very talented and very passionately devoted to their subject." There was also no discussion of the Departmental merit structures. Although Chair C discussed the importance of excellent teaching within the Department, it did not appear that he had undertaken any improvement initiatives at the faculty member level.

### **Organizational Change**

Chair C noted the impact of the planning process on the Department,

I don't think that anyone is ever enthusiastic about doing anything that isn't actual teaching and research. We regard it as a necessary evil. It was a needed participation and very intense debate about what the department should do. There is a sense that it worked out.

Within the Department, Chair C has started an alumni association to support the Department's development and fundraising needs. Acting in support of his goal to improve teaching, he has created teaching awards for graduate student Teaching Assistant's (TA), and started a course in teaching for Ph.D. students. He also mentioned the TA training program within the Department.

### **Orientation to the Department**

#### **New faculty**

Chair C believes that much of the orientation for new faculty occurs during the hiring process. He described how, during interviews, he personally stresses that "teaching is an absolutely important priority."

Our new faculty are not tresh Ph.Ds. by and large and we have a whole bunch of material they receive. They talk to the graduate chair about teaching courses but most faculty walk in knowing how to do the job. They have usually taught a first year class before they get here...they remember when they were first year students themselves and it wasn't that long ago.

Chair C mentioned that every new faculty member is assigned a mentor. “We attach a senior colleague to a junior and make sure they are psychologically and professionally compatible. I haven’t really checked up on it much.” Although Chair C recognizes the benefits of the pairings, he provided insight into his view of the policy by stating, “the purpose of the program was because some people have the sense that the junior faculty are afraid to approach the chair. This has not been my experience. Nobody mentored me either.”

### **Departmental Traditions & Values**

Chair C noted that most faculty members participate in social occasions within the Department but that encouraging more social gatherings “would be good to do.” He added, “There is always something else good to do.”

In terms of Departmental values, Chair C explained that the faculty are a group of peers. He continued with a music metaphor and noted that each faculty member thinks of herself or himself as a conductor. “Faculty see themselves as individual scholars.”

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### **4.3.4 Chair D**

#### **Goals and Philosophy**

Chair D became a chair with three clear goals. His first goal was to increase the amount of space allocated to the Department, similarly to Chairs A and C. The second goal was to achieve administrative success within the Department. Decreasing the divisive nature of the research units within the Department rounded out his agenda.

Describing his passion for goals and his position on what it takes to achieve them, he added,

I’m just rabidly goal-oriented. I turn the process to meet the goals. I don’t change the goals to the process. Goal orientation is all about choosing the right people. First of all, getting them to share your vision, mobilizing them to get them to believe in things you believe in. You need to have visionary people, skillful people, creative problem solving people with a good sense of lateral thinking so that together you can reach your goals.

Chair D was one of two chairs who actually used the word “leadership” in his description of the chair’s role. Accordingly, D sees the chair’s primary roles as providing leadership and implementing progressive change. Chair D also acknowledged the challenge of working within

academic administration and the need to employ a collegial style when working with academic peers.

Providing leadership is most important. It is the leader's job to work out the implementation function. You have to know to do financial matters in a professional way. You have to have a clear vision of the map even if you don't have a clear vision of the highways and byways.

### **Professional Development**

#### **Personal**

Chair D articulated his commitment to his personal and professional development and discussed the parallels between his research endeavours and administrative duties.

I did a lot of thinking as I do with every job I take on. It's a piece of research. I knew that I was a complete ignoramus in matters of administration that have first and foremost a human dimension.

Chair D was more specific than the other interview participants about his efforts to engage in professional and academic development. Like the other interviewees, Chair D had sought out a network of administrative peers and leaders to provide support and advice. He expressed his interest in taking courses to learn more about administration and finance, but found the time constraints to be too limiting. Chair D actively explored the literature on management, finances and leadership style. While he viewed most of the literature as informative, he found that the pace of its presentation was a little slow. He did not consult any of the academic research on academic leadership and the chair.

Chair D's administrative skill development included much on the job training and "figuring out where the hot elements are and not putting your hand there." He discussed the effort he placed on learning "the art" of fundraising. "It's a professional skill. It's a talent. I learned from a number of individuals."

Not surprisingly, Chair D shared his thoughts on academic administration, its strengths, weaknesses and its impact on the future of the institution. He explained,

A lot of the main problems with academic administration is that it is done by a rank bunch of amateurs. The problem I see in many of my colleagues, including those at the top, is that they don't believe that there is much to learn. They think they know it all. What people [administrators] understand the least in universities is that it's all people. Hence the need for management and leadership skills.

#### **Role Models**

Chair D outlined how his role model had influenced his view of the human side of leadership.

My role model taught me that people are everything. How you mobilize, influence and get people to buy in. This is the only important thing, everything else is secondary. Once you know how to do it with people you can correct for your shortcomings. You have to have a sense of justice and have to proceed with a sense of justice no matter how much you dislike a person. I was inspired by that.

When asked for a metaphor to describe his role and position as chair, D responded, "I became more authoritarian than I hoped and I'm always working on it."

#### Staff Development

Chair D described his focused and developed commitment to both the department and his duties. His support and attention to professional development extended to administrative staff members.

Chair D, like Chair A, emphasized the important contribution the administrative staff make in creating a successful academic department. Chair D worked with the staff in the Departmental administrative offices to analyze how their physical layout influenced staff work. Committed to creating positive change that would encourage a more effective administrative core, Chair D allocated funds towards the reconstruction of the office. The space was designed to reflect and enhance the collaborative nature of the department's administrative work. Chair D was the only interviewee to undertake such a physical reorganization.

Another interesting aspect to his philosophy on chair-staff relations was the set of expectations he held for administrative staff. He described how his version of a successful environment was one in which staff members actively developed their skills and talents. In support of this, and to increase the effectiveness of the administration, he and the staff believed that all jobs had to have understudies. Therefore, if someone was unable to be at work, another staff member was always prepared and willing to step in to fulfill their duties. In turn, their role was filled by another staff. Chair D also encouraged staff to excel in their work and was supportive of their efforts to seek new challenges. Chair D discussed the fact that he encourages staff, when they have achieved their personal goals within the Department, to seek more challenging positions either within the Department, the university or externally.

#### Faculty Development

Chair D has a collection of literature about teaching and teaching within the discipline that he shares with new faculty. While Chair D counsels new faculty to participate in teaching

improvement initiatives provided by the Faculty and the University, he has also instituted a program for reviewing teaching within the department. Chair D meets with faculty after they have completed their first year of teaching and several times after that. Together, they review the faculty member's teaching evaluations. If the evaluations suggest a need for improved teaching performance, faculty are required to meet with the Associate Chair to work out a teaching improvement plan. Chair D was quick to note that even faculty who have received outstanding evaluations are encouraged to improve on their current work. They are reminded "not to rest on their laurels and continue to improve."

### **Organizational Structure**

Chair D had strong feelings about the structural changes that needed to take place within the Department in order to make it more productive. Bringing faculty together and eliminating the internal competition between research units was considered to be the first step in fostering the Department's success. To this end, Chair D established a new model of chair-faculty relations. As a faculty member in the department, he noted that research groups competed against each other for the attention and support of the Chair. "The department was very divided by the natural divisions within the discipline. Faculty don't have the same needs. They don't speak the same language."

Chair D assumed that this phenomenon was counterproductive for the Department as a whole. He adopted an "all or one" approach to departmental communications. To avoid feeding the historically divisive nature of the department, he only meets with faculty individually or as a department.

"There is also a more formal meeting structure within the department. No matter how you inform them there is always a new kind of unsure feeling and they have gone along with that."

### **Orientation to the department**

"When I was hired I got a call from the Chair saying I was hired. During that time he never spoke to me about what were his expectations of the job. He said here is what your office and number will be." This was how Chair D recounted his introduction to the Department.



Chair D noted that there were shortcomings in traditional way new faculty had been introduced to their roles and responsibilities. In response, he adjusted the process to meet his goal of having an integrated and successful faculty complement. Now, when a faculty member enters the Department, job expectations, promotion and tenure requirements and teaching quality are all clearly outlined within the offer letter. All faculty are assigned a senior faculty member who serves as their mentor until they complete their first three years of service. The expectations of the mentor-mentee relationship are outlined to both members. These expectations include having both mentor and new faculty involved in the process of reviewing each others grant proposals and papers.

New faculty also have the tradition of meeting within their own peer groups within the department to discuss issues that are relevant to new faculty. Chair D, however, did not initiate this tradition.

#### Student Orientation

The student association coordinates a department-wide retreat. They also host a series of lectures and social events. While they are well attended by students, Chair D expressed an interest in having greater faculty participation.

#### Departmental Traditions and Values

Chair D described a traditional list of academic and community events. There was a marked emphasis on the interaction between faculty and students at these events.

We do have a number of faculty-student events that people go to quite religiously. We have a huge number of seminars, there is someone well known or one of us speaking almost everyday. There are also sessions during the week that bring faculty and students together.

#### Values

You want to be excellent in research. You sure don't want to be OK at teaching. Once excellence is the driving force it colors how you think everywhere and actually it colored the staff. Talk to our staff. They are sharp. They are people I am friends with, not just colleagues.

This was how Chair D described the Department's commitment to excellence. The theme of excellence ran through our interview. There were many tangible initiatives that Chair D has introduced and supported that would have been excellent indicators of both his commitment to

achieving the Department's goal and his approach to leading the Department. Unfortunately, some of Chair D's initiatives cannot be described in detail without identifying the Department.

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#### **4.3.5 Chair E**

##### **Goals & Philosophy**

Although Chair E did not outline his goals for his tenure in the chair, he was intent on creating a Department plan that would leave his successor with a completely balanced budget. Chair E expressed his commitment to enhancing the quality of education throughout the department. He also discussed his dedication to students and the importance of enhancing the quality of their experience.

##### **Thoughts on administration**

Chair E had some thoughtful comments on his view of administration. Speaking of his role, as stated, "It's rewarding when you see good things happen and if you can influence the people you bring in. If you see yourself and the department growing and attracting better graduate students it's worth it." He added that his primary interest was in "teaching and dealing with students, working with research and ideas and creating things." This was in contrast to the administrative function which was not seen, comparatively, as a creative endeavour.

Chair E shared his thoughts on how the central administration influences and impacts on the chair and the department,

Administration involves a tremendous amount of bureaucracy. Much of the time you spend is really satisfying the needs of the bureaucracy for some reason, and it's not necessarily productive.

According to Chair E, the university is sending a message that says, "don't be generous, be selfish. Because that's the way you are going to get ahead in this institution." He perceives that there is a danger in this approach in terms of the institution's faculty recruitment efforts. "We are going to be attracting people to this institution that are overall excellent but are less generous to the institution."

Chair E also commented on faculty career paths and how they become introduced to administrative roles. He noted, "I suspect it is true of most people. When you enter a university career it's probably because we don't have a strong taste for administration and bureaucracy and most of us are purposely trying to avoid that stuff when following this career route."

Chair E had a clear vision of who should be sitting in the administrative seats. "I have strong feelings that you wouldn't want to install anybody in the position that would want the position....because they are probably seeking power or some personal glorification."

After some discussion of the impact of excluding people who might want the challenge of the administrative and leadership tasks from the roles, Chair E admitted that there might be some people who not only want the administrative challenge but are also good at it.

### **Role of the Chair**

Chair E shared his perception of his role as chair. His first responsibility is to ensure that the Department is administratively well run and that resources are well allocated. He also emphasized his commitment to the professional development of both academic and administrative staff. While three of the interviewees indicated the importance of delegation as an essential skill for chairs, Chair E disagreed.

I purposely tried to not delegate additional tasks to my academic colleagues. I felt that I purposely tried to minimize the amount I put on these people because my expectation is that they are busy full time staff as academics."

Chair E, like Chair C, mentioned the changing role of the department chair with the addition of development and fundraising responsibilities. "Right now, we are all especially busy with development, having lunches with alumni and phoning them up and making inquiries."

Chair E outlined his view of how chairs are perceived and the kind of person that should hold the position.

The chair is seen as a leader or at least a figure head of their unit and that person's own personal reputation reflects upon the department's. I think an academic administrator should see themselves as a servant and unless you are willing to accept that you shouldn't take the job.

### **Role models**

The chair commented on the person who had most greatly influenced his administrative approach. A former departmental administrator, Chair E was inspired by his role model's ability to "galvanize the troops, keep people together and sustain momentum by building a sense of spirit and support".

Another important lesson Chair E learned from his role model was, “Your staff must know that you care. It’s very important they see that you care about them, their pursuits, their studies and their school.”

### **Professional Development**

#### **Chair Training**

Chair E also commented on the training program that was offered by the senior administration. “It was helpful, a good pep talk. Offers of assistance were made and suggestions about operating styles were given.”

#### **Personal**

Chair E was aware of the literature addressing teaching and learning issues, as well as that addressing administration within his discipline. Chair E had previously subscribed to discipline based publications dealing with teaching and education issues. “Whenever possible, I certainly attempt to go through the magazines and read articles and see what best practices are”. He also subscribed to a discipline based academic administration journal but canceled his subscription because of the increasingly bureaucratic nature of the articles. Despite his interest in these forms of literature, he was unaware of the body of research addressing the academic administration.

Chair E felt that time was one of the most challenging aspects of his job. This lack of time created tensions between maintaining his own research, fulfilling administrative duties and professional development.

It’s a choice between keeping up with literature in the field and trying to get my book here finished or reading something additional on the periphery. It’s a choice one has to make. If all things were equal and one had time, sure that (information on teaching) would be interesting to pursue.

#### **Faculty Development**

“People are just too busy. One should not underestimate how many effective professors we do have. We have some tremendous teachers who are role models.” Chair E, like Chair C, perceived that all people have, “various degrees of natural ability. I think it will always be so that some people will be more outstanding as teaching, and that is not to say that not all of them can’t be improved in some way by teaching information.”

Even though time is a limiting factor, Chair E has taken steps to improve teaching within the department by instituting a very detailed teaching dossier requirement for all faculty. He

highlighted the negative impact of the central administration's notion of forgiveness of less than stellar teaching if the research component is considered successful. This lack of support from the centre of the university does not encourage teaching improvement initiatives at the department level.

Although Chair E was aware of the teaching resources within his discipline, he was not aware of additional faculty development and pedagogical literature. He did, however, have some insightful thoughts on prescriptive forms of literature.

Any information that is helpful for one to do a better job has to be good. Communication is an interesting issue. Most newsletters are not effective. Either they are so broad that the information is too general or they are so specific to personality that they are irrelevant.

He also mentioned the existence of the now defunct teaching development centre within the university. He used this example to support his question, "As pressure increases to gain funding and publish more frequently, what will be the future of teaching in the university?"

### **Organizational Structure**

#### **Teaching and merit**

Chair E expressed his concern for faculty and the Department in terms of the ever increasing demands to publish and provide quality in the classroom. He outlined how he and the Department have attempted to deal with balancing research and teaching.

We have worked towards a balance. How many reputable journal articles does an individual have to write to prove we are fully capable of high quality scholarly research and when do we say it's the high level of units produced in a factory that is more important or the profile of the individual in various stages of the game?

### **Orientation to the Department**

#### **New faculty**

When new faculty enter the department they enter one of the research groups and are introduced to their roles and responsibilities through a series of informal research based meetings and lunches. Chair E discussed the value of the recent Faculty statement on new faculty mentoring. Although he had yet to use the program, he felt that it would have some value. He did, however, state his position on the quality of the new faculty that enter the department and the relative lack of need they have for orientation and mentoring.

It is safe to say that most often the people we hire are fairly academically aggressive people, if they need help they will go and get it if they feel they should consult with someone with more experience they will do it and by and large our staff members are that type.

**Organizational Change**

Chair E described the dwindling financial resources within the university and the implications for culture and the reinforcement of the competitive spirit within the Department. "It's easy for groups to say 'we are taking the hit. We are taking the brunt of these cuts'. That doesn't help the sense of camaraderie that is here for all intents and purposes." Chair E's concluded that there is a "general appreciation that this is the reality and we must respond."

**Departmental Traditions & Values**

Chair E commented that "there is a strong sense of duty in relation to the quality of the education" offered by faculty. Chair E attributed this commitment, in part, to the professional values of the faculty and their desire to instill them in the students. There are, according to Chair E, a set of expectations within the Department that encourages faculty to involve themselves in activities beyond the walls of the university. "We share a view that our graduates must be open minded, broad minded individuals with a variety of skill sets, certainly those that will allow them to work with the public. It's important that we do the very best job we can." Chair E is committed to working towards a state of departmental excellence in which "no undergraduate or graduate student will come to the department and think that they would have been better off somewhere else, in terms of the quality of education they got."

Within the Department, faculty are organized around their common research interests. Each group has a coordinator who has the responsibility for ensuring that discussions around teaching take place.

When describing the department, Chair E stressed the value both he and the faculty place on creating equilibrium. He explained that they strive for, "a good balance of scholarship for its own sake, academic careers and a good balance of teaching at the undergraduate level as well. And a good balance of concern for students."

There were a great number of unique, student focused traditions within the department. In order to respect my promise of anonymity to each participant, the details of these traditions have been excluded. Although it is important to add that most of these traditions in the department is organized for and/or by students

Chair E also discussed the limited role that the history of the department plays in current events. In this case, students and even some faculty are not aware of the significant achievements and accomplishments of their previous colleagues and peers.

I suppose its akin to the latter Pharos having no idea of the early kingdom. In spite of the fact that there is this huge history surrounding them students have very little appreciation for the number of graduates that have gone before them.

### **Culture and community**

Discussing his hopes for a healthy culture in which teaching and research are balanced, Chair E shared his perceptions of what it will take to achieve this state. “We will only get there by having a healthy culture in the department and of late the competition over scarce resources has not been helpful.” Chair E elaborated on the impact of the current climate on the culture of academe.

My biggest concern is what happens in terms of each personal relationship and the culture of the place, as the sense of competition grows greater and at the same time expectations of the university are getting larger and larger and larger. The pressure on staff members is huge, maintaining that sense of community when members are under a lot of stress.

## Chapter 5 Discussion & Conclusions

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### 5.1 Introduction

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This chapter will synthesize the data presented in the interview summaries in order to answer the research questions that were proposed in the introduction. The first section of this chapter explores how the interview participants perceived the cultural attributes of their departments. The second section highlights if, and how, chairs demonstrated their awareness of how cultural attributes influence the formation, enhancement and support of departmental culture. This section also addresses the third research question by highlighting if, and how, chairs manipulated these cultural attributes in attempting to change departmental culture. The following section addresses how elements of the university culture, primarily orientation practices for new chairs, may impact the approach taken by the chairs. In conclusion, the methodological limitations and the implications for future research and administrative practice will be explored.

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### 5.2 Perceptions of Departmental Culture

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There were several dominant themes that emerged in the interviews. When discussing their perceptions of department culture, chairs often expressed their perceptions in terms of the faculty members and research activities within the department. Faculty research and scholarship were often the hallmark of chair goals and interpretations of their roles. Similarly, chair perceptions of Departmental structures were also discussed in terms of research based division of faculty groups. An additional recurring issue was the impact the current environment within the university was having on the department, the chair and faculty members.

#### Departmental Membership

When discussing their goals and roles, chairs often focused on the internal workings of the department and its faculty complement. Although chair goals varied in scope, purpose and detail, all chairs distinguished between external and internal goals. Internally, chairs were interested in improving the department's administrative infrastructure, balancing budgets, building a sense of faculty community and improving teaching. Only Chair C discussed his goals to improve the external reputation of the department. In addition, Chair E was the sole chair to express his desire to enhance the quality of student programs and experience within the Department.



Chairs focused their attention primarily on the internal, faculty-based goals. Perhaps, this trend can be related to their personal experience within the department and their interpretation of department strengths and weaknesses.

Interestingly, only Chair A and Chair D described their role as one of leadership. In discussing their roles, chairs paid considerable attention to their sense of responsibility towards faculty. Supporting and motivating faculty in their scholarship, enhancing the academic community, and promoting departmental interests were the most frequently mentioned roles. In addition, supporting students and administrative staff development was mentioned by two chairs.

Chairs' perception of their roles and goals within the department, suggest that faculty interests and internal issues are at the heart of their perception of department culture.

#### Shared Values and Traditions

When discussing shared values within the department, chairs described their faculty-centred approaches. Most chairs described the predominant values set in terms of research. Accordingly, dedication to the discipline, excellence in research, individual achievement, and publications were all prominent departmental values. Again, only Chair E described his Department's commitment to the overall quality of education offered. He also highlighted the Department's commitment to a balance between teaching, research and students.

Discussions of departmental traditions also centred on research and faculty members. Traditional academic activities included colloquia, committee work, and discipline based research meetings. There was also mention of seasonal social activities within the departments. Within some departments, chairs highlighted the role of student involvement in these activities. Only Chairs E and D outlined the importance and value of the student focused and run academic activities within the Department.

#### Departmental Sub-cultures

When discussing their perceptions of department structure, chairs often noted the role of research groups. It is interesting to note that chairs expressed both positive and negative feelings towards the impact these groups had on the overall culture of the department. While Chair E and Chair C relied on the research sub-groupings to support the introduction of new members into the

Department, Chair D noted the divisive effect of research sub-groupings on the spirit of Departmental community. Chair D's efforts to influence this cultural attribute will be discussed in section 5.3 of this chapter.

#### External and Internal Challenges

Chairs also explained the impact the changing internal and external environment was having on the roles of both faculty and administrators. Within the University, the climate of fiscal accountability and funding cuts has impacted the role of the chair. Every chair mentioned their role in guiding Departmental strategic and long term planning. Several chairs noted their role in raising funds for their departments. The responsibility for creating Alumni and donor networks was highlighted as new and ever expanding roles for academic chairs.

Chairs also discussed the increasing demands being placed on new faculty. Chair E highlighted the increasing expectations for new faculty in terms of their research and publishing productivity. He also noted that these changes were resulting in an increasingly competitive environment. Chair E suggested that, in the long run, changes to the overall culture of both the university and the department would result.

There was significant discussion of the external environment's impact on the roles of chairs and faculty. The discussions of increasing planning and fundraising demands may suggest that chairs are now required to employ a new set of skills and abilities. The notion of changes to the traditional collegial nature of academic work, in the form of increasing internal competition, may suggest that Chairs will also need to develop the ability to create alternative methods to bring the department together.

#### Summary

Participating chairs appear to interpret cultural attributes through faculty and research supported actions and structures. In addition, the chairs paid considerable attention to the environmental impacts on the roles of the chairs and faculty members. While this may suggest that the demands and expectations being placed on chairs are increasing, there could also be implications for the importance of culture as a framework through which to understand and mediate these changes.

In the following section, the manner in which Chairs considered cultural attributes in support of challenges the Department was facing will be outlined.

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### **5.3 Demonstrated Awareness of Cultural Attributes**

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This section will address the manner in which several chairs employed their awareness of cultural attributes. Their actions often illustrate the manner in which the cultural attributes of the department can both influence and be influenced to effectuate change.

#### Administrative Initiatives

Chair A and Chair D described similar approaches to changing departmental administrative practices. They both supported their goals of improving the strength of the administration with changes to the fundamental structure.

Chair A and Chair D both expressed their dedication to and personal reflection upon their own administrative practice. Both expressed their desire to learn more about administration and had contemplated taking courses to improve their skills. While Chairs A and D had both sought out role models and a network of administrative colleagues for support, Chair D had reviewed the management literature. His self-proclaimed “ignoramus” status had prompted him to explore the leadership, accounting, human resources and fundraising literature.

Both Chair A and Chair D, established clear goals at the beginning of their terms. Demonstrating their understanding of the cultural traditions of the department, Chair A and Chair D recognized the constraints the actual organizational structure of the department presented to achieving successful administrative practices. Both hired department business officers and restructured the administrative side of the department. These restructuring efforts involved a significant number of staff changing positions and leaving the department. The actions of Chairs A and D may indicate their recognition of the role of the structure in setting the culture of performance.

Acknowledging the need for cooperative work within the administrative staff, Chair D physically restructured the department. “With professional assistance” the Department tore down walls and created an environment more conducive to collaborative work. This act of physically

restructuring the department is an example of Chair D's understanding of the role the physical structure played in creating and contributing to the existing administrative process and culture.

#### Teaching Initiatives

Creating a climate that supports excellence in teaching is one of the responsibilities of the chair at the University of Toronto. Within the sample, three of the five chairs discussed their goal of improving the quality of teaching in the department.

Chair A was deeply committed to improving the quality of teaching within the department. Understanding that he may not be able to address the issue with his more senior colleagues he focused his energy on new faculty members. He developed an orientation program that allowed him to introduce new faculty to the teaching improvement literature as well as require them to establish a teaching portfolio. He recognized the importance of the orientation and introduction of new faculty to the traditions of the department. This was his first initiative to address the teaching culture within the department.

Chair A also changed the merit structure within the department so that research and teaching were treated equally. This is an example of acknowledging the structural assumptions upon which a departmental tradition is based and rethinking these assumptions to meet the desired goal.

On the other hand, although Chair C was committed to improving the teaching in the department, he did not attempt to initiate changes in terms of the teaching practice of faculty. His assumption that "some people have it, some don't" was the basis for his approach to professional development. He perceived that training programs and scholarly research on teaching or administrative skill improvement are of limited value because these are very personal and innate talents. He did, however, move closer to his goal by instituting training programs and awards for graduate student Teaching Assistants in the department. While this move may contribute to the success of the graduate student teaching, it may not have significant impact on overall quality of teaching in the department.

### Change initiatives

There are several ways in which culture within an organization can be altered in order to effectuate change and cope with the external reality of the department. Schein (1992) notes that the creation of subcultures is often a mechanism by which change is effectuated in established organizations. This is a process by which the leader, or the members of the organization, create sub-groupings within the larger organization to initiate change.

Chair A demonstrated this approach. He was cognizant of the dynamics of the department and concluded that certain efforts must be made in order for change initiatives to be accepted. He perceived that although most senior faculty would openly challenge their experienced colleagues, that they would be less likely to challenge new faculty members. Based on this assumption, Chair A created new subcultures of groupings within the Department. He began to recruit junior faculty to create and initiate change projects within the Department. This process, according to Chair A, was very successful in changing the traditional research based sub-grouping approach to initiating or challenging change initiatives.

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## **5.4 Future Challenges**

The chairs interviewed in the study were either unfamiliar with the organizational culture literature and academic leadership literature or had reviewed some of this research and found it of limited value to the academic administrator. If chairs had read administrative literature to inform their practice, it was grounded in the business community. Chair E, had explored the disciplinary administrative literature but had become disenchanted with its increasingly bureaucratic tendencies. Perhaps, it is time to look at how research on administration in higher education is disseminated. If the purpose of this type of research is to inform or improve practice, the individuals interview in this study seemed to suggest that this research has not yet accomplished these goals.

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## **5.5 Limitations**

This study was not intended to contribute to the best practice literature. It was not conducted under the rhetoric of the traditional academic leadership literature in which successful practice was analyzed in order to produce a prescriptive final product. Although there was a

discussion of the roles and responsibilities of the chairs, it was mainly to provide contextual discussion of their perception of their organizational culture. Therefore, this study was unable to highlight the best practice or confirm the success of the chairs who had adopted a cultural framework.

Another limitation with the design was the lack of representation of both male and female chairs in the sample. My original intention was to have a cross-section of disciplines represented while still meeting the expertise requirement. Within the University of Toronto, there were no women chairs working in the selected departments that met the pre-established criteria and who had held their positions for the minimum two year period. Although I would have preferred to ensure representation of women chairs, I felt that the disciplinary representation and expertise functions were more important at this stage of the research. In any efforts to pursue this research program further, I will ensure a more balanced representation of participants.

This study was also not designed to consider the impact of distinct disciplinary cultures on leadership and culture. Although there has been a significant body of research on this area, it was decided that for this preliminary study of the leader's interpretation of their departmental culture, controlling for disciplinary culture, would complicate the effort of the researcher and cloud the gathered information.

This study did not attempt to isolate the administrative best practices within the framework of organizational culture. It was decided that isolating departments based on their perceived success would not provide insight into how the average administrator viewed culture. In further research efforts, it would be interesting to investigate if chairs recommended for inclusion in the program based on their outstanding performance were more likely to adopt and apply a cultural framework.

The sample size, and the focus on a single institution, also limits the generalizability of the results.

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### **5.6 Reflections on Research Design**

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While analyzing the data, I began to reevaluate my methodological approach and its implications for my findings. Researching culture is a challenging enterprise. Most studies investigating an organization's culture, create multilevel analyses and data collection mechanisms in which all members of the organization are interviewed and involved in the process. Addressing the notion of leadership in organizational culture also presents certain challenges. It was not my original intent to evaluate the value of employing a cultural framework or demonstrating an awareness of cultural attributes. I felt that, because this area had been previously unexplored, it would be beneficial to begin this area of research with an analysis of how chairs currently view the cultures in which they are embedded. Although the chairs provided interesting and new perspectives, the data collected would have been more robust had I extended the scope of the interview instrument to include how chairs ranked the importance of the cultural attributes. This could be achieved by introducing chairs to the various cultural attributes and allowing them to order them according to their perception of the impact they have within the department. This would have provided a thicker description of their perception of culture.

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### **5.7 Future Research**

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This study has illustrated that there are chairs who consider all elements of departmental culture when attempting to achieve departmental goals and implement change. Future research into what has contributed to the development of their notions of culture would have implications for chair selection and training. Additional research about how chairs approach their professional development and learn about their administrative tasks, including university-provided training programs and research literature, would enable researchers and practitioners to create channels through which information and research about academic administration could be communicated. Taking a step back and analyzing what information chairs want and need, would enable researchers and practitioners to that this research could be useful to administrators.

Acknowledging the emphasis chairs placed on the internal and faculty based dimensions of culture, further research might provided indications of the reasons for this phenomenon and the implications of this view of culture.

Investigation the impact of the university's administrative culture and attitudes towards professional development and leadership, and its impact at the department level might also provide interesting information.

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## **5.8 Conclusions**

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While there has been a considerable amount of attention given to the importance of organizational culture, there has been little research addressing how leaders are actually employing this framework. This exploratory study is the first to investigate how department chairs perceive the culture of their departments.

A number of common themes emerged from the interviews. Although there were several chairs who discussed the importance of staff and student contributions and the value and importance of teaching activities, chairs often discussed their perception of departmental culture in terms of faculty members, research and traditional academic activities. Schein (1990) noted that leaders impact the cultures of their organizations by focusing their energies on particular elements of the organization. These covert and subtle messages are interpreted throughout the organization and serve to support the prominence of certain subcultures or activities. The chairs participating in this study appeared to suggest that they focus much of their attention on faculty and research based activities. This finding has implications for all members of the department in terms of their status and support. In turn, if students and staff interpret this suggested bias, and sense its influence on the culture of the department, their experiences and development may be influenced. Further research may be able to highlight if chairs who expressed this bias had influenced the overall culture of the department or the perceived experiences of its members. This might come through via a more holistic case study of the departmental culture.

There were also differences in how chairs attempted to influence the culture of their departments by manipulating the cultural attributes. Some chairs attempted to effectuate change by influencing multiple levels of culture by modifying the physical structure, merit systems and orientation programs. This finding has implications for the practice of academic administrators and future research.



Although, the data collected in this study is based on a small sample and it is difficult to generalize about chair perceptions of organizational culture and implications for practice, the findings suggest that chairs who recognized the importance of department culture attempted to influence different cultural attributes. Future research on this notion may have implications for academic administrators and their efforts to understand and influence the cultures in which they work.

Although it is difficult to suggest implications for future practice, based on the limited size of the sample, it is important to note that there are several areas that warrant consideration. The participants in this study remarked on the training and orientation designed to introduce them to their roles and the resources infrastructure at the university. Their comments indicated that, while they appreciated the opportunity to interact with their peers, the training had not been particularly helpful. Perhaps introducing chairs to the more complex notions of culture and the impact their leadership may have on both the structure and membership of the department will inform their practice and create more interesting and useful training sessions.

This study provided some insight on how chairs perceive the cultural attributes of their departments. The dominance of faculty and research based interpretations provides an interesting starting point for future research. The notion of the changing influences that act upon academic administrators and their increasing roles as entrepreneurs and fund-raisers creates an interesting framework in which the research addressing the role of the chair might be cast.

Using the modest foundation provided by this study, creating a grounded theory of chair's perceptions of their cultures and their approaches to cultural change might be the next logical step in creating a model for understanding how academic administrators are employing and understanding cultural frameworks when dealing with organizational change. This will, in turn, promote a greater understanding of the challenges facing chairs and a solid foundation upon which to address the nature in which theory may influence practice.

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## **APPENDIX A**

Dr. X  
Chair, Department of Y  
University of Toronto  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5S VVV

November 4, 1997

Dear Dr. X:

You have been selected to participate in a study on how academic department chairs interpret their roles and relate to their department. This project is designed as an exploratory investigation of how department chairs view their roles, address change and experience their department's ethos. Your comments, along with those of your peers, will inform my discussion of how the organization of a department provides constraints or allowances for its chair.

This project is being completed as part of a Master's Thesis in the Higher Education Program in the Department of Theory of Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and you will be able to withdraw at any point. Your participation will involve an initial interview, approximately sixty to ninety minutes in length. In the interview, questions will pertain to your department's history and its general atmosphere and how they have influenced your approach to your role as chair. Additional questions will investigate any support structures the university offers its academic chairs to assist them in their roles. Resources or literature that have informed your practice will also be addressed. In order to gain a greater understanding of how you view the holistic nature of your department, questions will also explore a recent critical incident in your department, if one can be identified, and the way new faculty members are introduced to your department.

With your consent, I will audiotape our interview and transcribe the results. Tapes will then be erased and the transcripts will be coded so your name will not appear either on the raw data or the final paper. At that point in the study, I will provide you with a copy of the interview transcripts. You will also have the opportunity to review my interpretations of our initial interview. At this time, you may indicate any information you would like deleted, changed or highlighted. If there are any additional issues you would like to discuss, we can arrange a second session over the phone or in person, whichever is more convenient for you. Please be assured that your name or departmental affiliation will not be included in the final paper and any associations that would allow one to identify your participation will not be included.

Your participation in this project will inform the current literature on how department chairs approach their role and their department. I hope that it will enhance the academic literature pertaining to academic leaders in higher education.

I will be contacting your office within the next week to confirm your interest in participating. The interviews can then be scheduled at your convenience.

Thank you for your consideration. I will contact you mid-week to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Karen Edge  
Masters of Arts Candidate  
Higher Education Group, Department of Theory and Policy Studies  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/ University of Toronto

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## Potential Interview Questions

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The following list of questions has been designed to represent potential discussion topics. Additional questions may also be included.

### Departmental History

What are the most prominent elements or incidents of your department's history?  
What makes your department unique?  
Are there major traditions in your department? (ceremonies/rituals)

### Personal background

How long have you been a chair?  
How have you developed as a chair? How has your approach changed?

### Role of the chair

What do you see as the most important role(s) of the chair?  
How did the university introduce you to your roles and responsibilities?  
If you could use a metaphor to describe your approach to your role as chair, what would it be?

### Influences

What/ who has influenced your approach to being a chair?  
What support/research/literature would help you in performing your duties as chair?

### Departmental Issues

Is your department unique? how?  
Are there dominant values in your department?  
What are the constraints that you face within your department?  
If you could use a metaphor for your department what would it be?

### Critical incident

What is one of the most significant issues that the department has faced during your term?  
How has it been handled?  
What approach did you take? What were the constraints/supports?

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## INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

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This project is designed as an exploratory investigation of how department chairs view their roles, address change and experience their department's ethos. Your comments, along with those of your peer Chairs, will inform my discussion of how the organization of a department provides constraints or allowances for its chair.

Your participation in the study is voluntary and you will be able to withdraw at any point. Your participation will involve an initial interview, approximately sixty to ninety minutes in length. With your consent, your interview will be audiotaped and the results will be transcribed. Tapes will then be erased and the transcripts will be coded so your name will not appear either on the raw data or the final paper. At this point in the study, you will be provided with a copy of the interview transcripts. At this time, you may indicate any information you would like deleted, changed or highlighted. No associations that would allow one to identify your participation will be included in the final paper.

I have read and understand the above and agree to participate in this study. I am aware that I may withdraw from the study at any point and any record of my involvement will be removed from the analysis.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Please Print Name

---

This project is being completed as part of a Masters Thesis in the Higher Education Program in the Department of Theory of Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.

## APPENDIX B



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## Academic Chairperson Perceptions of Their Departmental Culture

### Interview questions

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#### Departmental History

What are the most prominent elements or incidents of your department's history?

What makes your department unique?

Are there major traditions in your department? (ceremonies/rituals)

#### Personal background

How long have you been a chair?

How have you developed as a chair? How has your approach changed?

What positions did you hold prior to assuming this role?

What prompted you to accept this position?

Do you like administrative work?

Do you plan on continuing in administration after your term as chair?

#### Role of the chair

What do you see as the most important role(s) of the chair?

What are your responsibilities as a chair?

How did the university introduce you to your roles and responsibilities? (Chairperson orientation?)

If you could use a metaphor to describe your approach to your role as chair, what would it be?

#### Goals/direction for department

What are your goals for the department?

Do you think that you will be able to achieve them?

What are the most important opportunities?

What are the constraints?

#### Influences

What/ who has influenced your approach to being a chair?

Were there pieces of literature/research that have influenced your attitudes or actions as chair?

What support/research/literature would help you in performing your duties as chair?

#### Departmental culture

Is your department unique? how?

Are there dominant values in your department?

How are new members oriented to the department? (literature/introductions/formal Sessions)

What are the constraints that you face within your department?

If you could use a metaphor for your department what would it be?

Is this a good department to chair?

Are there other departments that you would like to chair? Why? What makes them different?

What is your ideal department?

#### Critical incident

What is one of the most significant issues that the department has faced during your term?

How has it been handled?

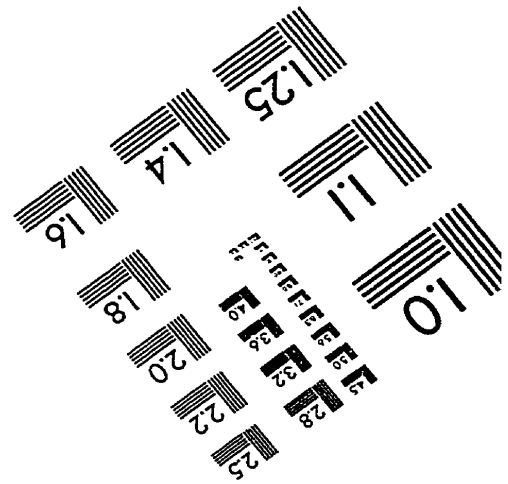
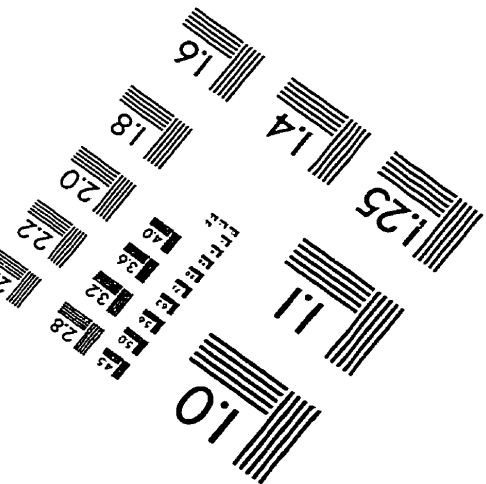
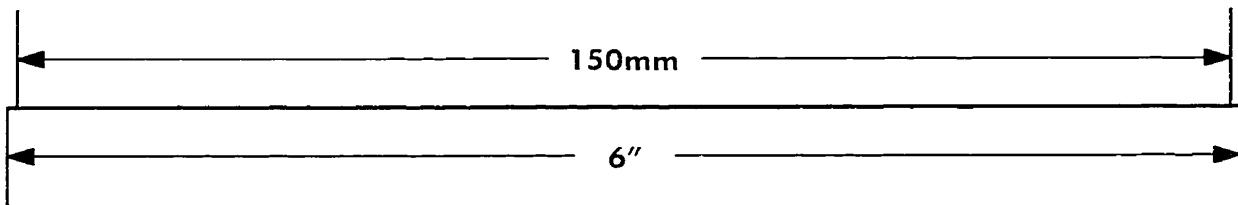
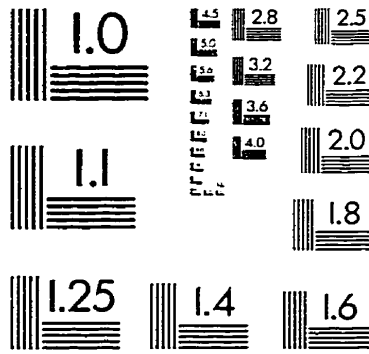
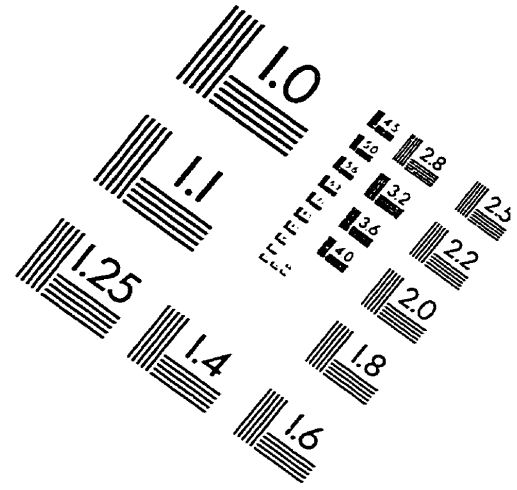
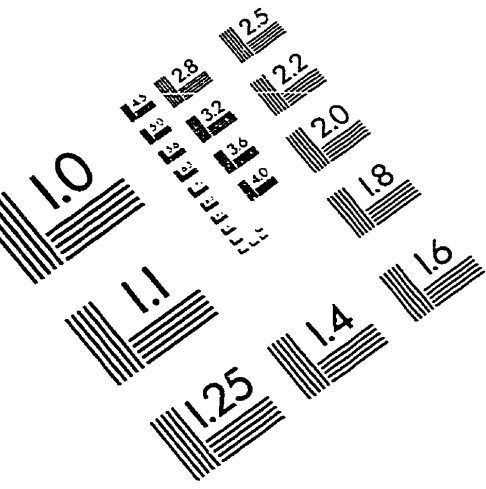
What approach did you take?

What were the constraints/supports?

#### Additional questions

Are there any other aspects of your department or your role as chair that you would like to discuss?

# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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