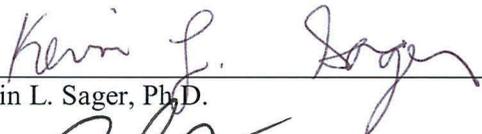


AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF CONFLICT IN AN ALASKAN EARLY
COLLEGE CHARTER SCHOOL

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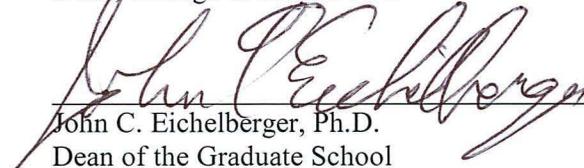


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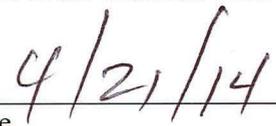
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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF CONFLICT IN AN ALASKAN EARLY
COLLEGE CHARTER SCHOOL

A
THESIS

Presented to the Faculty
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

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Fairbanks, Alaska

May 2014

Abstract

This study is an analytic ethnography investigating the culture of conflict in an Alaskan early college charter school. Interviews conducted with 12 staff members allow for discovery of the conflict and the culture surrounding it within the Effie Kokrine Early College Carter School. Results include a determination that the school sequesters conflict, instead of addressing the underlying problems which create it. The underlying problems creating conflict at the school are: employee lack of general knowledge about the student population, subpar communication skills in students, a lack of female role models for female students, lack of conflict role models for all students, and a lack of training in adult-to-student conflict. This study provides the first comprehensive look at conflict in an Alaskan early college charter school and provides the underpinnings of a future conflict resolution system.

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Acknowledgements

Many people are responsible for a work such as this, though only one gets the label of author. I would like to thank the others who made this piece possible.

To my committee: Dr. DeCaro, Dr. Jarrett, and Dr. Sager

Thank you for the guidance from beginning to end. Without your direction, expertise or editing abilities I would not have been able to bring this project to fruition. My success is a direct result of your hard work, and for that I thank you.

To the Professors who have supported my work:

Dr. Richey, Dr. Taylor, Professor Gubanc, Professor Wooldridge, Dr. Marrs. Each of you have directly or indirectly lead me down this path and your personal guidance has been invaluable. Thank you for influencing my life.

To my family:

Dad, Mom, Stacey, Grandpa, Grandma, Tom, Linda, Brian, and everyone I don't have room to list here, please know that without your emotional strength I would not have finished this project. You each provided guidance in ways too numerous to mention, and have gone out of your way to show your love for me. All of your support has been invaluable and for that I thank you.

Finally, to Nancy Cruz:

When I told you I wanted to move 3,000 miles away to write a thesis, you didn't blink. You gave me a kiss, said, "I'll miss you," and "If you're going that far away, write it well." You came to visit me when it was cold, you sent me a beer or two when I needed one, and you waited for me unflinchingly over the last two years. I am proud to say the

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wait is over, the research is done and the writing complete. Ms. Cruz I'll be home soon,
this time for good.

Chapter 1 Introduction

In the fall of 2012 the Effie Kokrine Early College Charter School (Effie Kokrine), 601 Loftus Rd, Fairbanks, AK 99709, sought to implement a new student conflict resolution system. School officials at the time had a deep understanding of their own culture, students, staff and practices, though lacked expertise in developing and implementing a conflict resolution system. Realizing that conflict resolution system knowledge was a gap in systemic knowledge, school officials approached this researcher for assistance in designing and implementing a new program. This researcher agreed to help on the condition that there would be an exploratory meeting with staff members in order to assess their desire for a new system, as well as the need for change. While conducting the exploratory meeting, this researcher listened to the concerns and ideas of staff members to gain an understanding of the established conflict resolution practices at Effie Kokrine.

1.1 Conflict Map

The initial meeting resulted in a conflict resolution map (Appendix A) which detailed the established process teachers, staff members, and administrators follow in the event of student conflict. The conflict resolution map shows each progressive step an adult may take to intervene in student-to-student conflict. Following the map, adult interventions in conflict, both formal and informal, may be passive, such as ignoring the situation, or active, such as meeting with parents and the principal. Individual decisions for remedying each conflict are discretionary based on the employee, the student, and the specific conflict situation. The discretionary model of addressing student conflict was

working on some level, as there had only been one physical fight in the last four years at Effie Kokrine; however, some of the staff members thought there were gaps in the system.

Discussion of the newly created conflict map made it clear that Effie Kokrine had never clearly outlined an organizational process for resolving student-to-student conflict. The map was the first tangible piece of evidence reflective of the conflict resolution structure within Effie Kokrine. With the new visually represented outline of conflict resolution processes as a guide, staff members began a debate about the necessity of change.

One faction of the Effie Kokrine staff believed existing practices and procedure were sufficient, with few problems. Another faction voiced a desire for drastic change and encouraged implementation of a wholly new conflict resolution process. There was also a third group of employees who did not voice strong feelings either way. Staff member discussion made it clear there was no consensus as to what was working, what was happening, or if modification to existing systems should be made.

1.2 Rationale for Study

Through a series of discussions, this researcher suggested an organizational analysis to gain greater understanding of the conflicts taking place and to find out what is actually occurring within Effie Kokrine. The process of understanding organizational conflict takes place through organizational assessment, and is one of the underpinnings of effective dispute system design (Costantino & Sickles-Merchant, 1996; Harrison, 2005).

As this researcher began the organizational assessment process the investigation of background literature made it clear that Alaskan Early College Charter Schools are under-studied. This researcher was unable to find any evidence of research on student-to-student conflict in an Alaskan junior high or high school, in which the majority of students take college classes. There is also limited existing research into student-to-student conflict in multicultural schools, rooted in, but not fully incorporating, indigenous practices. Considering the lack of existing systemic knowledge about student-to-student conflict in Alaskan early college charter schools and the lack of information about communication in multi-cultural Alaskan organizations, it became clear that uncovering new knowledge would be beneficial to the academic community and valuable to assisting Effie Kokrine in developing a conflict resolution system.

1.3 Effie Kokrine

Effie Kokrine teaches traditional Athabascan values in both the junior high school and high school. The reliance on traditional ways of knowing has made Effie Kokrine a home for Alaska Native students, as well as students seeking an alternative high school experience. At the time of this study, total school student enrollment from grades seven through 12 was 167 students, with 91 male students and 76 female students. In addition, 102 students were Alaska Native, 31 Caucasian, 13 African-American, 21 Hispanic, One American Indian and Multi-Ethic (Appendix B). The diverse makeup of the student population makes Effie Kokrine an ideal place to study conflict and conflict resolution practices within a multi-cultural organization.

Chapter 2 Review of Literature

2.1 Conflict

Conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources and interference from others in achieving their goals (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011, p. 11).

This study utilizes Wilmot's and Hocker's definition of conflict to provide a framework for understanding the culture of conflict at Effie Kokrine. Wilmot and Hocker's definition of conflict mirrors definitions used in other research fields with its requirement of two or more interdependent parties.

2.1.1 Conflict Parties. Parties are analytically distinct units, each viewing a situation from their own unique perspective (Mack & Snyder, 1957). The possibility of intrapersonal disagreement exists, occurring when an individual is at odds with themselves; however, the labeling of conflict does not take place until separate reasoning units perceive the situation as conflictual. A conflictual viewpoint arises within the interdependent parties as they begin to see there are incompatible goals, scarce resources, and there is interference between the parties.

2.1.2 Incompatible Goals. Having goals which are incompatible can happen in two ways, when parties want the same things and when they want different things. The first occurs when parties want the same thing, such as where grading is curved in a school class and only a limited number of "A" grades are available (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). This is an incompatible goal because there is a perception that one interdependent party's success will lead to the other's failure. The second way for an incompatible goal to occur

is when parties want different things (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). For example, different goals could occur in a school when students are voting for games to play in gym class and one student wants to play kickball and another student basketball. In addition to incompatible goals, parties must also perceive there to be scarce resources each are attempting to acquire (Mack & Snyder, 1957; Pondy, 1967).

2.1.3 Scarce Resources. Resources are any positively perceived physical, economic, or social consequence (Miller & Steinberg, 1975). Resources can be either tangible or intangible in form. No matter the form there must be a perception among participating parties that the resource exists in limited quantity. If there are resources which are not limited but parties perceive them to be, a conflict situation may arise. An example of a scarce resource may be attention from a potential dating partner. If the potential mate shows attention to another person, it could create conflict because the limited resource of attention is scarce and not available to both parties. In addition resources which are scarce but viewed by either party as bountiful generally do not create an opportunity for conflict. Perception is at the core of conflict with 95% of individual's perception of conflict involving disagreement and interference from another party (Barki & Hartwick, 2001).

2.1.4 Interference in Goal Attainment. Interference in a conflict situation involves one party blocking progress toward the other party's goals. Conflict goals are the criterion used by decision makers to order their preferences (Schmidt & Kochan, 1972). Interference with attainment of conflict goals, or at least the perception of interference, is a requirement of conflict in nearly all definitions. Tjosvold (2008), who

argues for defining conflict to include incompatible actions rather than interference, offers one exception (Tjosvold, 2008). Tjosvold argues that by defining conflict through action rather than motive there is an achieved progress toward resolving conflict. While the fresh perspective allows for insightful inquiry it presumes that participating parties wish to resolve conflict. This study makes no such presumption, it takes the position that parties in conflict may, or may not, wish to resolve it. Desire to reach resolution, or lack thereof, often rests in culture.

2.2 Culture

Acquired knowledge used to interpret experience and generate social behavior is a generally accepted as a definition of the word culture, though this not the only definition (Spradley, 1979). Culture is more than acquired knowledge which dictates behavior; culture also provides the keystone for deciphering social context, therefore providing insight and meaning to past, present and future events. Culture is inherently a group term providing foundational support for perceptions of belief and values for group members (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2012). The combination of historical, individual, and group implications in definitions of culture has led this study to define culture as “a historically shared system of symbolic resources through which the world is made meaningful” (Hall, 2005, p. 4).

2.2.1 Culture Systems. By system we mean “any group of elements that are organized in such a way that they are able to do things they couldn’t do individually” (Hall, 2005, p. 5). Systems work in cultural contexts to either enable or constrain action. For example, a cultural system might enable a teacher to get up in the morning and drive

to the school building where they educate children all day long. That same cultural system constrains that same teacher from skipping a day of instruction to stay home because it is cold outside. A different cultural system may have a different set of meanings and could allow that same teacher to remain at home on a cold day. The making of meaning takes place through cultural systems which allows for consistent interactions based on historical context.

2.2.2 Shared History. By sharing history individuals and group members gain a stronger sense of collectivism, entrenching the feeling of oneness that is culture. Through shared history group members form bonds enabling them to build shared systems and shared meanings (Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, & Allen, 2001). For example, Effie Kokrine shares its history with students during discussions of Athabaskan elder Howard Luke, the campus' namesake. Through the discussion of the elder, group members grow a feeling of attachment to his story and to the history of the school, further indoctrinating them to the culture. Howard Luke is a deep part of the shared historical culture at Effie Kokrine, and is also a symbol of the school's culture.

2.2.3 Shared Symbols. Sharing systems and history is the start of forming culture, though there must also be shared symbols (Hall, 2005). Symbols are those things on which people confer meaning both arbitrarily and conventionally (Barley, 1991; Zittoun, Duveen, Gillespie, Iverson, & Psaltis, 2003). The meaning assigned to a symbol is largely arbitrary though over time becomes conventional (Hall, 2005). The making of meaning occurs when group members agree on a symbol having specific representations within that culture (Csikszentmihalyi, & Halton, 1981). Examples for symbols can be

people such as Howard Luke, actions, words, interactions, tangible items, intangible items and anything else on which meaning is agreed. Howard Luke is a symbol for Effie Kokrine because he represents the school's hopes for its students. When symbols represent the same thing over a period of time they provide consistency to the culture and become convention, creating mutual understanding and shared values.

2.2.4 Values. Values are the things individuals deem important such as morality, ethics, and aesthetics (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2012). They are the guiding principles in selecting personal behavior and determining right or wrong, good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, in both individual and group behavior (Neuliep, 2006; Schwartz, et al., 2012). Values are deeply rooted, instilled through family and community, changing very little throughout life (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Personal upbringing and community surroundings shape values, meaning individuals tend to have much in common with other cultural group members, though that is not always the case. Individual experience and interactions can mean there are variances between individual and group values.

2.2.4.1 Collectivism. The primary difference in individual and group culture is collectivism. Collectivism is about affiliation. To the collectivist, exclusion of any group member is not acceptable, making harmony within the group the lynchpin of survival for both the individual and community (Hofstede, Jonker, & Verwaart, 2012). As group members work together collectively they build on each other's strengths, filling in weakness and coming together to create a stronger group. Collectivism is the primary shared value across Alaska Native communities and is fundamental to understanding the

organizational culture in a school using Alaska Native principles (Kawagley, 2006; Napoleon, 1996; Roderick, 2010).

2.3 Organizational Culture

As individuals come together in organizations they form unique organizational cultures. Organizational culture is the shared beliefs, assumptions, and values of organizational group members (Schein, 1985). The communicative actions of group members create and retrench organizational culture as group members take part in social, task, and political actions. Those actions act as performances which group members feel obligated to perform to carry out tasks within the culture (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). For example, while carrying out the task of demonstrating male anger in Effie Kokrine a boy may feel obligated by the culture to perform the act of outrage, showing others he is angry by yelling or swearing. The obligation to show anger through a vocal outburst may run counter to how the boy may react as an individual, but is expected by the culture. As organizational group members take part in those performances they rely on organizational culture to guide their behavior and determine what is or is not appropriate (Gregory, Harris, Armenakis, & Shook, 2009).

2.4 School Culture

Creation of culture in schools happens through the same mechanisms as any other organization, through the sharing of systems, history and symbols. Effective schools have a culture that utilizes a coherent ethos and agreement on instructional goals, along with strong teacher role models who put students in positions of responsibility while maintaining an organized but not oppressive atmosphere (Deal & Peterson, 1990).

Through agreement on instructional goals, putting students in positions of responsibility, and having an organized but not oppressive atmosphere, schools build unity among staff and student bodies that are self-motivated toward achievement. It can be difficult to achieve the ideal school culture and one of the primary reasons is girl conflict.

2.4.1 School Conflict and Girls. In school girls are often viewed as easier to deal with than boys because when in conflict they use tactics that diffuse conflict in attempts to maintain relationships (Miller, Danaher, & Forbes, 1986). The female effort to maintain relationships is an organizational cultural trait which discourages open female competition and conflict resolution (Longino & Miner, 1987). Because school cultures tend to discourage open competition and conflict resolution among girls those activities move beneath the surface and become more difficult for school employees to identify. When conflicts break out between girls one of the primary ways it manifests itself is through the formation of cliques (Hughes, 1983).

2.4.1.1 Cliques. Peer interpretations of family background, physical appearance, social development and academic performance partially determines female popularity within schools (Adler, Kless, & Adler, 1992). As social groups develop in school based on popularity, girls vie for social capital in competing groups that become exclusive to in-group members. Those exclusive groups are cliques used by girls to maintain status over peers (Adler et al., 1992). Cliques tend to form around popular girls who use their ties to aggressively maintain social status through behind the back talking, social exclusion, name calling, mocking and other negative traits (Adler et. al, 1992; Merten,

1997). Female cliques put down non-members to stay ahead socially, and of the more effective subjects girls use to insult each other is personal family background.

2.4.2 School Conflict and Boys. Male popularity differs from female popularity in that it is manifest through athletic ability, toughness and a general sense of being masculine (Merten, 1997). Popularity as a tie to masculinity further plays out in male conflict resolution techniques in school. In contrast to girls forming cliques and operating behind the scenes, boys resolve conflict through masculine displays of aggression, fighting, yelling, winning at sports, and talking back to teachers (Adler et al., 1992; Connell, 1996;). Boy conflict is easier for teachers to deal with than girl conflict because it takes place in the open, not hidden from peers or adults in school.

2.5 Family Background and Poverty

Socioeconomic class plays an important role in female popularity based in peer perceptions of family origin, family lineage, work roles, or economic level. Economic levels help determine language usage throughout life as impoverished children hear fewer words than their peers (Eamon, 2002; Bishop & Leonard, 2000). Language knowledge and usage play vital roles in working through conflict situations, providing the ability to verbalize standpoints and talk through personal opinions. The effect poverty has on the ability to verbalize emotions and opinions in conflict situations puts impoverished students of both sexes at a disadvantage in resolving conflict.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Methods

3.1.1 Participants. This study utilized analytic ethnographic interviews to reveal patterns of conflict and communication at Effie Kokrine. The researcher completed 12 interviews lasting between 40 and 120 minutes, with two school administrators, nine full time teachers, and one part time staff member. Interviewees volunteered to participate after a brief meeting introducing the purposed study to school employees. The study utilized 12 interviewees based on Guest, Bunce, and Johnson's (2006) findings that approximately 90% of all data found in qualitative interviewing occurs at 12 participants, with a diminishing level of return on data collection with greater numbers of participants. In total, the 12 participants encompassed more than 70% of the entire staff of 17 at Effie Kokrine, going beyond both communication field standards, and qualitative research recommendations of 5-10 participants for thorough interview research (Guest et al., 2006; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

3.1.2 Interview Structure. Interviews were semi-structured with room for conversation and follow up questions. Wilmot's and Hocker's (2001, 2011) *Conflict Assessment Guide* provided the basis for creation of the interview schedule. The original *Conflict Assessment Guide* asked 65 questions, separated into 10 thematic units. This study modified the *Conflict Assessment Guide* by eliminating questions which were self-evaluative, not relevant to the student population, and which would reveal personal student information and interviewee identities. When modifications were completed this study utilized 23 questions specifically chosen to reveal the meaning in participants'

words. To find meaning and maintain validity and reliability within the interview format this researcher strived to reach deep familiarity with the culture, through interviewees, within the realm of naturalistic inquiry (Creswell, 2007).

3.1.3 Procedures. With naturalistic inquiry and deep familiarity in mind this study occurred on site, where interviewees work and interact with students and staff on a daily basis, helping them to feel comfortable during the interview process. From question construction through data reporting the researcher remained immersed in the data, an imperative step in achieving full understanding of participant thoughts. Data immersion is one of the most reliable and effective methods for understanding what took place during ethnographic interviews (D'Andrade, 1984). Throughout the entire process the researcher kept a reflexive frame of mind.

3.1.3.1 Reflexivity. Reflexive objectivity refers to the researcher being constantly aware of their own influence and potential for their personal bias to alter a study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In ethnographic interviewing it is imperative the researcher keeps his or her own bias in check by self-monitoring and evaluating one's own impact on the work. An example of reflexive objectivity from this study occurred as this researcher considered his personal bias, thinking that culture would be a driving factor in conflict in the organization. This researcher thought often about his personal bias and its potential impact to the study. This researcher was able to monitor their actions and ensure no undue impact be reported on importance of culture in the organization by constantly thinking about his own bias. As a result of reflexive objectivity, culture was not the focus of interview questions or transcriptions, though that was this researcher's initial instinct.

3.1.3.2 Data Transcription. Completion of data transcription took a journalistic style, allowing the researcher to identify ascribed meaning in interviewee comments while omitting verbal blunders and other technical speaking errors that detract from finding clear meaning in participant words. This researcher transcribed data by conducting interviews, listening to the interviews, playing them back to ensure accuracy, and carefully transcribing interviews over the course of several weeks. The transcription process of this researcher is favorable over digital mechanisms or outsourcing of transcription work because it provides another step in complete researcher data immersion, further building the reliability and validity of the study.

3.2 Theoretical Grounding

The modified *Conflict Assessment Guide* used for this study has its roots in phenomenology, which is the way people understand their lived experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Understanding one's individual experience and assigning meaning to that experience is what social science researchers' call, in German, *verstehen* (Wilhelm, 1988). Through *verstehen*, phenomenology helps individuals assess their lived experience, the basic data of reality, by explaining and reasoning the happenings of daily life (Littlejohn, 1996). Individual *verstehen* comes from one's own view of the world, or frame. Frames are the principles of organization which govern events and allow each person to sort the happenings of their own lives into distinct, organizable experiences (Goffman, 1974). Individual understanding of one's own experience is valuable not only to that individual, but also provides unique data to researchers investigating organizational cultures. Individual interpretation of experience and self-made meaning is

not generalizable but situated. The situational aspect of interpretation means that some aspects of findings will apply in other settings, though not all. In order to understand verstehen, framing, and their role in phenomenology, researchers must examine the meaning individuals create in their own experiences. This investigation is hermeneutics.

3.2.1 Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the study of ascribed meaning found in individual interpretations of lived experience (Dilthey & Jameson, 1972). There are various forms of hermeneutics and this project utilizes cultural interpretation, or ethnography (Littlejohn, 1996). The goal of ethnography is to describe a culture and gain understanding of another way of life through the lens of an in-group member (Spradley, 1979). Most often ethnographies involve a researcher becoming embedded into a culture and reporting on the culture as an in-group or quasi in-group member. This study approximates embeddedness through semi-structured interviews with organizational in-group members. Interviews allowed the researcher to acquire thick descriptions of conflict and the culture, which provided insight into organizational culture from the native's point of view (Geertz, 1973).

3.2.2 Symbolic Interactionism. Understanding individual ascribed meaning from multiple individuals within an organization allows the researcher to see actions and the meanings organizational members associate with those actions to form descriptions of organizational culture. Organizations are unique cultures because the organizational members within them share meanings they have created through communicative acts (Pacanowsky, & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982). The shared meaning is done through a process of sense making which allows individuals to use the unique ascriptions of

meaning they have created to determine appropriate action within the organizational culture. This means actions are symbolic of the sense made from previous actions and interaction (Blumer, 1969). Making sense of previous actions and interaction is symbolic interactionism and provides the basis for social understanding (Blumer, 1969).

Through phenomenology, verstehen, hermeneutics, organizational communication and symbolic interactionism, the *Conflict Assessment Guide* is anchored in valid, reliable, established, communication theory. The sturdy basis of the Conflict Assessment Guide provides an ideal backdrop for assessing an organizational culture.

3.3 Experience-Near, Experience-Distant

After completion of transcription, the researcher sorted interviewee comments into lists of themes, and then further into cultural domains based on the original Conflict Assessment Guide (Spradley, 1979). Through the sorting process experiences were taken out of “experience-near” conceptions, which is participant understanding, and moved to “experience-distant” conceptions, which is an outsider understanding (Geertz, 1983). Experience-distant domains generate organizable, analyzable data, which is the basis of analytic ethnography. The four cultural domains became the central element in discovering the culture of conflict at Effie Kokrine, are: (a) Nature of Conflict, (b) Orientation to conflict, (c) Interests and Goals in Conflict, and (d) Conflict Style (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). Because this study searched for specific, predetermined information, it is not simply ethnography but an analytical ethnography (Loftland, 1972).

3.4 Epistemology

The label of constructionist has traditionally defined ethnographies because they seek to explain situated data, which is not generalizable. The lack of generalizability does not indicate a failure to create knowledge, but instead points to creation of situational knowledge, which is ideal for understanding a specific organization or culture. Analytic ethnography varies from other ethnographic research in that it does not seek general lived experiences but instead asks direct questions to generate data organized in a specific manner (Loftland, 1989). Analytic ethnography searches for many of the same cultural descriptors as other positivistic research, such as type, frequency, magnitude, structure, process, cause, consequence, and agency (Loftland, 1995). Analytic ethnographies share some similarities with positivistic research though in seeking personal interpretations of lived experiences vary far enough to qualify as interpretivism. Interpretivism is the notion that individuals interpret actions based on their own experiences without relying on standard globalized meanings (Williams, 2000).

3.5 Research Question

With a constructionist epistemology, interpretivist theoretical perspective, analytic ethnographic methodology, and semi-structured interview method, this study seeks to answer the research question:

RQ1: “What is the culture of conflict within Effie Kokrine Early College Charter School?”

Chapter 4 Interview Data

Throughout the series of interviews, this researcher elicited the thoughts and opinions of participants, although in some cases participants were unable to articulate thoughts which were pertinent to the study. This chapter reveals the important data from each of the major themes found in interviews. For further information, transcriptions of all interviews are included in Appendix C, with the exception of Diana's interview. The personally revealing information in that transcript was pervasive enough that removing the personally identifiable information would have significantly altered the scope of her words. Omission of Diana's transcript from this publication has taken place to preserve her privacy though it is available for review by the Institutional Review Board. In addition, there are many instances in which descriptions of specific actions taken by students and staff could have been helpful in explaining a conflict situation, though to keep all identities concealed have been removed. To further protect the privacy of interviewees and others mentioned in interviews no original names are used.

4.1 Themes

After all data sorting procedures 14 themes arose: (a) Is There Conflict?, (b) Culture, (c) Conflict Styles, (d) Physical Conflict, (e) Dating, (f) Girl Drama, (g) Boy Drama, (h) Home Life, (i) Poverty, (j) Counseling, (k) Language/Profanity, (l) Models of Conflict Resolution, (m) Metaphors Describing Conflict, and (n) Conflict Goals.

4.1.1 Is There Conflict? When asked if they see conflict between students interviewees responded in an even split of six yes, six no. It is worth noting that with one exception all interviewees were able to converse about student-to-student conflict they

had witnessed even if responding “no” to the initial question. The staff members who witnessed student conflict had responses as basic as “Yep,”¹ and as detailed as, “There is [*sic*] definitely lots of conflicts . . . there are far more conflicts going on than most adults know about. There is [*sic*] a lot of small daily conflicts going on.”² Those who did not observe conflict gave responses including, “No, not much, no. I don’t think there is that much student conflict around here and it’s getting to be less and less.”³

4.1.2 Adult-to-Student Conflict. While being asked to specifically discuss student-to-student conflict, half of the interviewees made statements mentioning another type of conflict, adult-to-student. Interviewees made comments such as “I think fundamentally our challenge is not managing inter-student conflict. I think its managing adult-to-student conflict.”⁴ Another participant talked about adult-to-student conflict more directly, telling the researcher, “I see conflict with them towards me.”⁵ Of the many statements given regarding conflict in the school, one answer sums them all up well. The interviewee said, “We will talk about multiple levels of conflict. I would say the most vexing is teacher student conflict. I would say students in general communicate concretely.”⁶ This interviewee thinks that students are sending and receiving messages clearly with each other though that may not be the case when they are communicating with adults. Overall, interviewees did not come to consensus answering to the question of what kind of conflict is a problem at the school.

¹ See Appendix D, Page 76

² See Appendix D, Page 114

³ See Appendix D, Page 96

⁴ See Appendix D, Page 130-131

⁵ See Appendix D, Page 132

⁶ See Appendix D, Page 127

Interviewees are split on where conflict at Effie Kokrine arises with half of participants observe conflict coming from student-to-student interactions and the other half observes conflict in adult-to-student situations. Effie Kokrine systemically does not agree that conflict is a challenge that needs additional attention.

4.1.3 Culture. One question closely related to observing conflict is the relationship conflict has to each individual's culture. An interviewee who said they did not see student-to-student conflict as a problem for the school followed up with this statement:

You've picked a group of people that are generally rather conflict adverse. You picked Alaska Natives who generally have a cultural practice of caring for each other. . . . This is not a big school, its small, you don't have a big problem spilling out over the edge of the bathtub. This isn't Lathrop (another local high school).⁷

The interviewee is clearly saying that they view culture as playing a role in conflict occurring, or not occurring, at Effie Kokrine.

When asked direct questions, such as, "is conflict tied to culture," respondents gave mostly negative responses. Answers not relating conflict to culture include, "I don't think it matters at all. Their friends are their friends no matter what color they are"⁸ and "I wouldn't say the culture of Effie Kokrine is based on ethnicity."⁹ The response, which provided the clearest statement disassociating conflict and culture, came from an interviewee who, when asked if conflict was tied to culture, responded, "I don't think it

⁷ See Appendix D, Page 103-104

⁸ See Appendix D, Page 94

⁹ See Appendix D, Page 104

has any more to do with Alaskan Native than anything else.”¹⁰ For these three interviewees conflict has no roots in culture, and is a wholly separate issue.

There was an acknowledgement that culture has a role in conflict at Effie Kokrine. An interviewee explained the differences in indigenous Western views of education though the transcription contains personally revealing information about the interviewee. What follows is a restatement of the interviewee’s words by the researcher, verified for accuracy by the interviewee.

Researcher:

What I heard you say was that Alaska Native families, it’s not that they don’t value school. It’s that there are these other communal things that they also value which sometimes take away from education. Is that accurate?

Interviewee:

Yes¹¹

This interviewee viewed education in indigenous, Alaskan Native culture as different from Western culture. Those differences include how students approach school, their personal interactions, and their own styles of managing conflict.

One of the roles culture may play in conflict at Effie Kokrine is teaching students to avoid conflict. When the researcher asked an interviewee if students avoided conflict because of their cultural background, they responded with, “I would say so.”¹² In total,

¹⁰ See Appendix D, Page 79

¹¹ See Appendix D, Page 69

¹² See Appendix D, Page 74

only two respondents acknowledged observing a tie between cultural background and conflict.

Interviewees overall do not associate conflict with culture. They see Effie Kokrine as a safe place for students of various cultures to come and learn together. Interviewees generally said that culture is not a primary concern in the creation of a conflict management system. Culture may not need to be accounted for; however, the styles of conflict resolution used do play an important role in conflict at the school.

4.1.4 Conflict Styles. Conflict styles are “patterned responses or clusters of behavior that people use in conflict” (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011, p. 144). The five patterned responses include: (a) Avoidance, the denial of conflict, (b) Competition, aggressive and uncooperative behavior, (c) Compromise, some gains and some losses for each party, (d) Accommodation, putting aside individual goals in favor of pleasing other people, and (e) Collaboration, showing a high level of concern for one’s own goals and the goals of others (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). The styles of conflict used to resolve or not resolve conflict can reveal much about organizational practices. Discussions about conflict styles with interviewees led to two distinct styles used at Effie Kokrine, competition and avoidance.

4.1.5 Competition. One interviewee mentioned conflict specifically, stating that conflict at Effie Kokrine comes from girls and centered on boys:

Its competition around boys that is lingering and deep. It’s bad because it’s divided groups of our girls against each other. There is a viciousness, which goes on and lingers in ways which guy conflicts don’t. Once guys figure out what the

pecking order is they kind of go about it. When girls are still competing and there is still bad history between girls for years before it will continue for years.¹³

The lasting effect of that competition is avoidance as explained by another interviewee:

I don't see a lot of kids moving on. They tend to hold grudges for a couple of days or a week or longer. . . . I don't think they ever work it out, they just get tired of holding a grudge.¹⁴

Students compete and then avoid resolving the conflict, though they do not end their competition. Students break into cliques or factions to carry out competition, for example: "What I see is they will try and pull into teams. They will try and get people on their side."¹⁵ Drawing other students to one side based on friendship, family, or simply argument position is highly conflictual, even if students are not taking part in physical violence.

"I would say engage in conflict,"¹⁶ another teacher said when asked about the style of conflict students' use. This opinion is tempered slightly by an interviewee who explained student conflict as ". . . a mix between avoiding and competing. They either ignore or show a little aggression. Some avoid a lot and act like conflict is not happening."¹⁷ To this participant students compete and then avoid resolution, carrying out a cycle that is difficult to stop as it is takes place covertly throughout the school.

¹³ See Appendix D, Page 108-109

¹⁴ See Appendix D, Page 77

¹⁵ See Appendix D, Page 110

¹⁶ See Appendix D, Page 114

¹⁷ See Appendix D, Page 149

4.1.6 Avoidance. Teachers who said in initial responses that conflict was not a problem at Effie Kokrine tended to provide “yes” answers when asked if students avoided conflict. A simple “Yeah”¹⁸ came from one staff member when asked if students avoid conflict, while another teacher explained the long lasting effects of conflict as students “forget why they are arguing or what they were mad about. They manage to just avoid each other.”¹⁹ Staff members articulated several instances in which students would avoid each other for years, not speaking because of an offense made in elementary school or early in junior high. The ability to avoid conflict appears to be just as important at Effie Kokrine as the ability to compete or break into the correct faction for social advancement in the school.

Student conflict, according to interviewees, takes place through competition and avoidance. Overtly most students at conflict avoid one another in attempts not to deal with issues head on. Covertly students compete for friends and break into factions that can be long lasting and destructive. The covertness of most conflict makes it extremely difficult for the school to address and simple for students to deny is even taking place. Understanding the covert and overt nature of conflict is of vital importance to understanding conflict at Effie Kokrine.

4.1.7 Physical Conflict. In any school the number one goal is the safety and security of students and staff. The potential for a fistfight, brawl, or scuffle exists constantly as students move through the emotions that come with being a modern teenager. Physical altercations at Effie Kokrine are rare. There was a report of two

¹⁸ See Appendix D, Page 73

¹⁹ See Appendix D, Page 150

students physically fighting in the weeks before this study began, which was the first incident at the school in at least four years. With absence of physical fighting the question becomes, are there physical altercations at all?

When asked for evidence of physical altercations between students one interviewee reported, “In the hallway, you might see tripping or roughhousing, things like that, until you put an end to it. Or, they’ll just keep doing it and doing it.”²⁰ Another interviewee said students, “will start going by each other in the hallway and hit one of the students they are angry at. . . . Push them and say names under their breath.”²¹ Some staff members see pushing, tripping, shoving, and bumping one another are as aggressive and unacceptable behavior, though that is not the entire staff view.

There is a contingent of staff members who perceive physical student interaction as a method for expressing friendship, not conflict. One interviewee explained, “Instead of saying, hey, how’s it going? I’ll put you in a headlock because I think your fun.”²² The same interviewee went on to say, “I don’t know if it’s showing they are buddies or whatever, but they will walk up and poke someone or put them in a headlock.”²³ Another interviewee echoed the sentiment, “Most of pushing, shoving, etc., is horsing around among friends.”²⁴ There is a clear break in interpretation of physical contact between students as being harmless fun or something with potential for danger.

²⁰ See Appendix D, Page 87

²¹ See Appendix D, Page 96

²² See Appendix D, Page 147

²³ See Appendix D, Page 146

²⁴ See Appendix D, Page 83

It is worth noting that a single interviewee reports physical fighting outside of the school as a direct result of school interactions. The interviewee told the researcher, “I’ve heard that kids will end up in fights outside of school . . . because they are smart enough not to do it at school. I’ve heard rumors about it lots of times.”²⁵

School violence is not pervasive and students are not in physical danger on a regular basis. The lack of physical danger to students has left Effie Kokrine without a standard of acceptable behavior and leaving staff members to interpret behavior piecemeal.

4.1.8 Dating. Fortunately, there are limited reports of physical manifestations of conflict. With any conflict, physical or otherwise, there is always a looming question of, why is conflict occurring? Overwhelmingly interviewees gave dating as a reason for conflict between students. Of the 12 participants, only three did not mention some form of dating as a cause of conflict within Effie Kokrine. Conflicts stemming from dating do not tend to create conflicts between boys and girls. Dating conflicts instead create rivalries among girls.

One example of conflict stemming from dating comes from a recent incident in a classroom in which “A girl liked a boy, he liked another girl, and then the first girl started to talk about the second girl. It started spiraling.”²⁶ This classroom incident shows two girls upset about not being able to share the attention of a single boy. The boy and his available attention are a scarce resource, a theme seen repeatedly in interviews.

²⁵ See Appendix D, Page 114

²⁶ See Appendix D, Page 114

A second teacher talked about origins of school conflict, “Its competition around boys. . . . Its divided groups of our girls against each other. There is a viciousness, which goes on and lingers in ways which guy conflicts don’t.”²⁷ A third interviewee told the researcher conflict is about “Boys, between the girls. . . . The conflicts that I see are mostly between the girls. I don’t see that much conflict with boys, they are chill.”²⁸ A fourth participant told the researcher that conflicts center on:

People making rumors, boyfriend-girlfriends, people that are interested in each other. If a girl is interested in a guy and another girl is too, all the sudden they are at odds. Then they piss each other off, no matter what they do. Even saying ‘hi’ will piss off the other girl.²⁹

Nearly all interviewees made mention of dating conflicts, with no interviewees mentioning boys in those discussions. Dating conflicts are a strictly female phenomenon, at least in relation to their effect on school atmosphere. In the words of one interviewee, “I think the girls are very much in this state of wanting to please the boys. They will bend over backwards to be nice to the boys.”³⁰

Dating is the primary source of student-to-student conflict at Effie Kokrine. Girls perceive boys as a scarce resource vying for their attention, flirtations, and social status. As couples form and separate, the girls hold other girls accountable for breakups and boys’ misdeeds. The troubles Effie Kokrine faces with dating stem directly into girl drama.

²⁷ See Appendix D, Page 108-109

²⁸ See Appendix D, Page 76

²⁹ See Appendix D, Page 147

³⁰ See Appendix D, page 78

4.1.9 Girl Drama. The title of this section was chosen because it is the language used by an interviewee when asked how her students describe conflict.³¹ It is clear that girls are in conflict because of boys, though that does not present that larger picture of girl culture at Effie Kokrine. All study participants, with one exception, pointed to girl culture as a cause of conflict at Effie Kokrine. One interviewee said:

Our girl culture is so bad. I think that is the heart of where our conflict comes from. We have a bunch of girls who are trying to be really sexy, and play dumb, and we need to start raising an awesome leader, girl culture.³²

Interviewees see the girl culture as the primary source of conflict, but what makes it so bad?

One interviewee talked about girls blaming other girls for problems instead of the girls working together. “Often it’s a case were the boyfriend messes around with someone else and the girlfriend isn’t mad at the boyfriend but she wants to go kick the butt of the other girl.”³³ Another interviewee explained that girls’ at Effie Kokrine are “either confrontational or passive”³⁴ A third participant went on about the combination of confrontation and passiveness, “They will exclude, talk about, look in the direction, snicker, and make it known indirectly they are talking about her.”³⁵

Exclusion and behind the back talks take place as “The girls break into factions,”³⁶ as one interviewee had put it. The interviewee was impressing the notion that

³¹ See Appendix D, Page 138-139

³² See Appendix D, Page 85

³³ See Appendix D, Page 129

³⁴ See Appendix D, Page 89

³⁵ See Appendix D, Page 70

³⁶ See Appendix D, Page 147

girls are separating based on friendships and long term social status. When asked if girls team up and break into factions to win conflicts over the long term interviewees gave affirmative responses such as, “Oh Yea!”³⁷ and “Yea. Yes, friends stick up for friends,”³⁸ and “I think so yeah.”³⁹

As the female factions separate, based on perceived slights or encroachment on a potential dating partner the school splinters into smaller cliques. A participant describe cliques as groups of girls “associating with these girls, and these other girls only associating with these other girls.”⁴⁰ When asked if boys become involved in the same actions the interviewee replied, “Nope.”⁴¹ To describe the way girls break into factions and team up against one another the term passive aggressive arose in several interviews.

“Passive aggressive eye rolling, refusing to work together,”⁴² is the phrase used by one interviewee. Another interviewee, when asked which of the five conflict styles their students use, responded, “The other that you didn’t say is passive aggressive. Instead of making a big deal because they are in school they will talk trash behind their back or exclude them.”⁴³ The girls work through conflict with a passive aggressiveness that manifests by breaking into cliques, subtle name calling and talking behind other student’s backs. The overall tone of the girl culture within Effie Kokrine is described in

³⁷ See Appendix D, Page 130

³⁸ See Appendix D, Page 94

³⁹ See Appendix D, Page 114

⁴⁰ See Appendix D, Page 67

⁴¹ See Appendix D, Page 67

⁴² See Appendix D, Page 76

⁴³ See Appendix D, Page 114

the words of an interviewee, who, when asked for a metaphor to describe conflict at the school replied, “Mean Girls.”⁴⁴

Girls at Effie Kokrine carry out conflict through indirect confrontation. Girls are not aggressive in face to face confrontation, but are extremely aggressive when it comes to building alliances which they use to outcast other girls who have participated in a perceived slight.

Interviewees also talk of having few female leaders either from the staff or older students, and a general culture that lacks strong female leadership. A lack of female leadership is creating the “Mean Girls” culture at Effie Kokrine. To fully understand the importance of female conflict we need to take a look at male conflict.

4.1.10 Boy Drama. The title of this section was chosen because it is the language used by an interviewee when asked how her students describe conflict.⁴⁵ Male examples of student conflict tended to be brief firecracker moments. Explosions are never a preferred method of resolving conflict, though “blow up” is the terminology used by the one teacher who discussed boy conflict. “They (the boys) will usually just blow up at each other, cuss and be done. It’s a lot easier to ask the boys, “Are you done? Can you get a long now?” and it ends.”⁴⁶ The same interviewee said, “With the boys conflict is like whatever, you’re mad at me, get over it and move on.”⁴⁷ Male conflict styles further show the short-term nature of male conflict. “[Boys] might get angry and holler or punch

⁴⁴ See Appendix D, Page 85

⁴⁵ See Appendix D, Page 138-139

⁴⁶ See Appendix D, Page 77

⁴⁷ See Appendix D, Page 88

a wall. I don't know. They just let go like that. Girls, they hold it in or hold on to it."⁴⁸

Another teacher said, "I think boys are more willing to say, "Hey don't push me," or stand up for themselves."⁴⁹

Verbal outbursts and standing up for themselves is not the only way boys resolve conflict. A third teacher suggested, "There is a gym basketball culture, and they work conflict out through demonstrable skills on the basketball court . . . boys use hip checks, sometimes they shove each other into lockers."⁵⁰ In the gym, the classroom, or the hallway, it is clear that boys resolve conflict swiftly, through outbursts and occasionally a shove.

Interview discussions of male conflict were very short, as often interviewees were unable to articulate incidents of boy conflicts. There was one occasion where an interviewee talked about boys and girls both dealing with conflict by shutting down, saying, they "won't do anything or say anything."⁵¹ Any discussion of where conflict comes from at Effie Kokrine turns immediately toward the girls. One interviewee commented, "I think it's mostly girls. I really do. I don't see the boys acting out that way."⁵²

Interviewees cited boy drama as short, explosive, and generally easy to deal with. Staff members have a much easier time intervening in boys' profanity laced outbursts or threats of physical violence than they do the subversive girl drama. There are

⁴⁸ See Appendix D, Page 95

⁴⁹ See Appendix D, Page 98

⁵⁰ See Appendix D, Page 109-110

⁵¹ See Appendix D, Page 134

⁵² See Appendix D, Page 94

inconsistencies in how Effie Kokrine systemically addresses both boy drama and physical violence. Effie Kokrine employees see both boy and girl conflict as being rooted outside of the school. When asked where the root of conflict in the school originates, home life is often the reason given.

4.1.11 Home Life. Students not only have to navigate the dangers of teenage dating but often do so with less than desirable home lives. The ability to cope with personal or family issues is a highly discussed cause for school conflict. Interviewees, at times, gave long accounts of students trying to overcome personal hardship while recounting numerous examples of conflict that began with an event external to the school. In talking about external events interviewees said:

Students struggle to deal with things when there is so much going on in their world. Everything going on inside their world crumbles when they are dealing with issues they don't know how to deal with.⁵³

Another interviewee gave an example of an incident that happened recently in which “one student looked at the other one funny, and thought the other was talking about them. I mean honestly nothing really . . .”⁵⁴ happened, though a conflict arose.

In any culture the individual household in which the person grows up has tremendous impact on how they live the rest of their life. That is especially true of minority and indigenous peoples who are constantly straddling a line between two cultures, Alaskan heritage, and Western ways. One teacher explained the impact of a student's home life on their ability to interact seamlessly with their peers; “It goes back to

⁵³ See Appendix D, Page 86

⁵⁴ See Appendix D, Page 114

home life. There are some kids taught if your Alaska Native look for this, watch for this, defend yourself against this. Those kids are always set up to be defensive.”⁵⁵ Students who are on the defensive because they have been taught that they may be attacked are going to be more prone to defensiveness when small annoyances arise in school, and that may lead to more conflict. As noted earlier, reports of culture as an influencing factor in conflict at Effie Kokrine are rare.

Staff members talk about the importance of home life enough that they often must remind themselves that they are not solely responsible for student outcomes, as one teacher tells us:

As a teacher, I need to keep in mind that I see them for so many hours a day but what happens at home is powerful and shapes who they are. When I don't understand why or how a student is doing something I have to remember at home that is how it is probably modeled. I think keeping in the back of my mind I can't get frustrated and I need to keep showing positive examples.⁵⁶

What happens outside of the school is just as important to students as what happens inside, according to interviewees. Students face many challenges outside of the classroom, often carrying those challenges over into the school building.

4.1.11.1 Poverty. As teachers show positive examples of positive behavior in social settings to students, they must overcome significant challenges presented by the diverse population they serve. Poverty affects a student's ability to learn and interact with peers, as they become concerned about where they will live or where their next meal will

⁵⁵ See Appendix D, Page 75

⁵⁶ See Appendix D, Page 92

come from. Effie Kokrine has a significant, yet unverifiable number of homeless students staying with friends, living in homeless shelters, or transition between foster families.

The numbers for students living in something other than a traditional family situation are high, though not reported here directly, in an effort to maintain the privacy of Effie Kokrine students. The number of students living in uncertain conditions is not the only thing that is unverifiable; there is also a discrepancy among interviewees about the pervasiveness of poverty among Effie Kokrine students and their families.

When asked about poverty and its effect on students, inevitably the conversation would turn to the common public school measure of poverty, free and reduced lunches. Families receive free or reduced meals for their students if they earn under benchmarks set by the state and federal governments. The number of students at Effie Kokrine who qualify should be a quantifiable; however, the staff is uncertain as to what that number is.

When interviewees were asked, “(Student) families are often near the poverty level, is that correct?”⁵⁷ One interviewee responded by saying, “I can’t say that. I can say that about 60% of our students are on free and reduced lunch. That kind of puts them at a place.”⁵⁸ At the opposite end of the spectrum another interviewee said, “The majority, 90% are a part of the free and reduced lunch program, so it’s not an exaggeration to say my kids are poor.”⁵⁹ Two other respondents included free and reduced lunch percentages of “80%,”⁶⁰ and “85-87%.”⁶¹ A 30% discrepancy in the rate of impoverished students

⁵⁷ See Appendix D, Page 96

⁵⁸ See Appendix D, Page 96

⁵⁹ See Appendix D, Page 106

⁶⁰ See Appendix D, Page 128

⁶¹ See Appendix D, Page 143

can be quite large in a small school such as Effie Kokrine and encompasses 49 students that may or may not be living in poverty.

Another example of the uncertainty of poverty at Effie Kokrine comes from an interviewee, who said:

There are parents who are really well off, but they would never display that. It's hard to tell, you'd think someone making \$50-55,000 a year isn't starving. With the number of iPhones I see here and the number of nice vehicles I see here, who knows where the money goes.⁶²

Interviewees may not have shared a common or correct number when discussing students living in poverty, though they spoke with one voice in discussing the ramifications of poverty for students in conflict.

There is a discrepancy among interviewees over the number of students who are living in poverty. That discrepancy could change the way conflicts occur as teachers may be focusing on an impoverished student base they may feel the need to treat differently than a wealthier student body. That voice is exemplified by a teacher, who when asked for reasons that students struggle replied:

Indigenous is not it. Poverty is. Broken, family is. That is the variable. I've got kids that are hard charging Alaskan Natives. I don't see honor role as dependent on cultural background. What I do see it dependent on is poverty, single parents, functioning household. Period, full stop, that's it. You can write that in bold

⁶² See Appendix D, Page 118

letters and underline it. I don't see anything else. There is no predetermined factors that weed out a kid that's not that. Poverty will weed every kid out.⁶³

Interviewees point to poverty as a source of language deficiency, personal stress, inadequate supervision, hunger, and homelessness; however, they fail as a group at recognizing exactly how pervasive poverty is at Effie Kokrine. Teaching student's social behavior and academics can be highly dependent on economic status and the task becomes even more difficult with uncertainty or inaccuracies about how pervasive poverty is. With greater understanding of poverty the school will be able to implement processes and procedures for teaching specifically to Effie Kokrine students.

4.1.12 Counseling. If poverty is an issue at Effie Kokrine, there is a litany of issues that go along with student poverty. To deal with the troubled home lives of students, interviewees said that there is need to provide professional counseling. The clearest example of a need for counseling came from an interviewee, who said:

I would hire a counselor and put a lot of energy into helping these kids solve conflict outside of school. I think that's where the majority of conflict actually comes from. It's hard enough to come to school and have expectations placed on you, but to come home and not have a support system, and not know where your next meal is coming from, and having troubled parents, all just adds to the stress load. Any straw that gets added on to that automatically gets escalated into a big thing.⁶⁴

⁶³ See Appendix D, Page 112

⁶⁴ See Appendix D, Page 84

Another teacher, when asked how often students reveal deeply personal information, responded, “Almost every day. I’ve thought about going into counseling, but here at this school I am dealing with counseling every day.”⁶⁵ A third staff member suggested, “I think this school needs a counselor more than someone to help students resolve conflict. I think they, in general, just need someone to talk with.”⁶⁶

4.1.12.1 Talking Circles. In an effort to provide someone to talk with, without spending money, Effie Kokrine currently brings in a local Athabaskan elder to conduct talking circles on a weekly basis. One interviewee thinks the talking circle effort is working for the boys and may be the reason that boy and girl conflicts are so vastly different within the school. The interviewee said:

I think what we are doing right now and is really good is talking circles. . . I think it’s a good place for them. It’s mostly boys going right now. Talking circles give the boys a chance to talk out some of these things. Maybe that’s why they’re not. . . [The interviewee stopped the quote and motioned their fists together in a motion to indicate fist fighting.]⁶⁷

The idea that talking circles are working in any fashion was only mentioned by a single participant.

Talking circles, overall, came up very little in conversations about conflict reduction at the school, though interviewees often brought up the need for professional counseling. Staff members often believe they are playing the role of counselor to students

⁶⁵ See Appendix D, Page 89

⁶⁶ See Appendix d, Page 114

⁶⁷ See Appendix D, Page 97

without the training or expertise to do it well. Having a professional for students to talk through life, and academic issues would, in the eyes of interviewees, be of great benefit to the school. An in-school counselor is cited by many as needed, though is recognized to be a near impossibility in an already tightly stretched school budget. In addition to counseling interviewees brought up the need to teach students greater language skills.

4.1.13 Language/Profanity. Discussions of conflict and its resolution at the school usually turned to communication and language use. When asked if students had the language proficiency needed to resolve conflict or deal with it skillfully the answer was “no”. An interviewee summed up the language problems Effie Kokrine students face in trying to communicate in conflict:

We know that poor kids hear 30 million fewer words by the time they get to school. So there are incredible language deficits coming just because of poverty. Now couple that with an intensely quiet culture to start with, I mean the fewer words the better. The students don't express themselves in any proficient way.⁶⁸

If students cannot express their anger, pleasure, or other emotions in proficient ways, that begs the question, what skills do they need to develop in order to move successfully through conflict situations?

Interviewees tended to focus responses toward students gaining vocabulary skills that project taking personal responsibility. An interviewee talked about students needing to:

⁶⁸ See Appendix D, Page 106

Gain the I statement, take responsibility, that's the biggest part. The next piece is having tools to say, wait a minute, I need to step back, I am in a heated moment and I need to step back. Kids don't have those tools because their grappling to survive and to hold what they have together.⁶⁹

The notion that students do not currently have the ability to not speak out appropriately in moments of anger comes in another interviewee, saying, "if students are mad, profanity is how they express themselves."⁷⁰ Profanity is not a way to build relationships as intense language can be off putting, especially to adults. A third interviewee told the researcher of student language skills:

We need to give kids the skills and the language to know how to get along with someone even though they may not like each other. I have to tell the kids all the time when you graduate you're going to have to get out and get a job and work with someone, I promise you, you probably won't like but you're going to have to get along with whoever that is. You can't swear at them or whatever it is. You have to learn to control yourself and school is where kids learn that.⁷¹

Interviewees see students failing to take responsibility for their words or actions, while relying heavily on profanity. Staff members see the use of profanity as an issue because it is not an acceptable social norm in the adult world. One interviewee said it was a problem because "It's more of a social norm thing. Trying to teach them that you can't

⁶⁹ See Appendix D, Page 122

⁷⁰ See Appendix D, Page 88

⁷¹ See Appendix D, Page 103

drop an f-bomb in an interview or in front of customers?”⁷² When asking staff members about profanity used in conflicts the focus on real world interactions and language usage becomes further evident.

Rather than speaking of problems with students, communication in conflict answers tended to focus on student-to-teacher conflict. One interviewee, when asked about how students work through conflict, suggested, “I think they communicate with each other well, actually. They communicate all the time.”⁷³ Another participant said that, “I think the greatest need right now is training in conflict resolution for adults. 95% of the conflict in the school is staff student-conflict.”⁷⁴ A third staff member reported:

Sometimes when I think about it I can see why they were upset or can understand later on why they had that reaction, but they are not very tactful about it at all. They can't really control those outbursts even to a teacher.⁷⁵

That same staff member added, “They need to learn how to deal with conflict in a more productive way instead of blowing up at other people.”⁷⁶

The staff at Effie Kokrine voiced a desire to build student-to-teacher conflict resolution skills, while also building the skills to understand conflict from another student or teacher's point of view. One teacher exemplifies this desire, telling the researcher:

Trying to figure out how to give [students] the tools to debate with someone where you show them your opinions and have them show you theirs. For the most

⁷² See Appendix D, Page 150

⁷³ See Appendix D, Page 143

⁷⁴ See Appendix D, Page 131

⁷⁵ See Appendix D, Page 135

⁷⁶ See Appendix D, Page 13

part we are able to do that with each other, but trying to give those skills to kids can be difficult.⁷⁷

A second interviewee stated:

I need to help them develop the skills negotiating with each other. If they can learn the skill of how to talk to each other without getting into an argument it would help. They don't know how to do it and they haven't been taught, or modeled it. It's just so hard for them because they are egocentric they just fight against it, they don't want to see it from another point of view because the value of their argument is going away. If you can teach them language, I believe if they learned how to use the language just by repetition maybe that might have impact.⁷⁸

A third interviewee added that students at any age don't know or use basic conflict terms.

“Ask students when they get in an argument; do you diffuse it or do you escalate? They don't know.”⁷⁹

Interviewees think students need to develop the language skills that effectively communicate anger, resentment, hurt, excitement and any other emotion without using profanity and in ways appropriate for western culture. Developing effective language skills for resolving conflict is a step in the conflict resolution process, one that interviewees said needs to precede the demonstration of successful conflict resolution skills.

⁷⁷ See appendix D, Page 149

⁷⁸ See Appendix D, Page 144-145

⁷⁹ See Appendix D, Page 132

4.1.14 Models of Conflict Resolution. Interviewees report that students do not see effective conflict resolution models in or outside of the school. When interviewees were asked if students saw conflict resolved successfully or in a positive manner the answers were stark and one sided. For example “No. I think it’s pretty rare. I think that’s how a lot of kids have learned to deal with things is that fight or flight mentality,”⁸⁰ was the response of one interviewee. Another participant said, “There are a few exceptions, but generally no, they never see examples of how to resolve conflict.”⁸¹ A third staff member talked of student’s conflict role models, “Sometimes, other times they don’t have the role models to teach them how to handle dispute in the most tactful way. . . They tend to blow up instead of talking it out.”⁸²

The three examples show that students are rarely, if ever, shown examples of successful, healthy conflict resolution at home. When interviewees were asked, “Do students see positive models of conflict resolution at school?” Staff members responded with a unified “no.” Interviewees gave several reasons for not acting as conflict resolution models to students which included, “Most of the time if staff meets it’s behind closed doors because individual students come up as a topic pretty often.”⁸³ Another reason offered for staff not modeling conflict resolution behavior to students is that the staff provides a single voice to students. One participant concluded, “I think it has

⁸⁰ See Appendix D, Page 89

⁸¹ See Appendix D, Page 114

⁸² See Appendix D, Page 134

⁸³ See Appendix D, Page 150

something to do with the way adults here talk to each other. It's the same way staff might have different opinions but they are very cordial about it."⁸⁴

No matter the reason students at Effie Kokrine see few, if any, positive examples of conflict resolution. The lack of conflict role models leaves students to figure out conflict resolution on their own, using techniques they have previously seen, such as profanity. At Effie Kokrine the most pervasive model of conflict resolution pushes issues beneath the surface in a pattern that younger students emulate and carry on.

4.1.15 Metaphors. The most popular metaphor used to describe conflict and communication at Effie Kokrine was the book *The Outsiders*. Two participants suggested the book resonated with students:

We read the book and the kids could really relate [to it] because there are people with issues. The book features people who have material goods and others who are native that don't. It's always them vs. someone else, and at the end of the day, my kids realized we are all in it together. We have differences but we are very similar. They relate to it.⁸⁵

Student responses to *The Outsiders* points to a scenario in which interviewees see adversity and differences students struggle to overcome. Of note, *The Outsiders* might have been a popular response because junior high students had recently studied it, making it familiar with interviewees.

Another book used at Effie Kokrine, and suggested as a metaphor for conflict and communication, was *Two Old Women*. An interviewee compared students to the novell;

⁸⁴ See Appendix D, Page 133

⁸⁵ See Appendix D, Page 91

saying “the two old women were ostracized, then had to come around and help other people. They [students] talked a lot about that book.”⁸⁶

Both *The Outsiders* and *Two Old Women* are novels placing value on coming together as a group and overcoming differences while finding ways to deal with unique problems. Solving problems was also a key component in the only T.V. show offered as a metaphor, *Raising Hope*.

One participant suggested *Raising Hope* was comparable to student conflict because the show features:

People who weren't prepared to deal with this issue that suddenly came into their lives. There is a mess up here and there, but it all turns out good in the end. Then they start all over again.⁸⁷

Both the novels and the T.V. show provided tangible metaphors for conflict, though, they were not the only route participants took to describe conflict and communication at the school. One respondent suggested the metaphor for students as “walking into a minefield and don't even realize they are getting into conflict.”⁸⁸ This participant saw students as unable to see exactly where they are going, and suggested that students were trying to resolve conflict but it was:

Like trying to bake a cake without a recipe. There are so many ingredients to put in and they don't even know even how to find a recipe to do it. They are trying

⁸⁶ See Appendix D, Page 75

⁸⁷ See Appendix D, Page 144

⁸⁸ See Appendix D, Page 114

different things and saying okay so this one doesn't work, maybe this one does work.⁸⁹

Both suggestions showed students were trying to make their way through a process, without a guide to show them how to get to the end goal of conflict resolution. Another interviewee suggested that students don't need guidance in resolving conflict. This interviewee stated that students were finding ways to resolve conflict, though adults may not be clearly seeing their methods. The participant suggested the comparison of, "A school for the deaf. Not that they are not listening, but they're not using words the same way. They are using all kinds of communication but it just doesn't look familiar to us."⁹⁰

Much like the discussion of seeing conflict, metaphors to describe it do not land squarely in one corner. Respondents see the organization and conflict processes with their own lens providing different views of the culture. The only clear consensus in thinking of metaphors was the inability to articulate one.⁹¹

The metaphors used to describe Effie Kokrine's conflict all point to a student population that does not fit in well and is lost. Interviewees perceive students as separated from other local student populations in their ability to communicate and their ability to find their way through conflict resolution. The metaphors for the most part do remain positive, in that they generally lead to successful outcomes. The metaphors used by interviewees often make reference to fictional characters trying to achieve goals and compares those characters to Effie Kokrine students.

⁸⁹ See Appendix D, Page 114

⁹⁰ See Appendix D, Page 113

⁹¹ See Appendix D, Pages 94,130,136 and 150

4.1.16 Conflict Goals. Articulating metaphors can be a challenging task for interviewees, and participants did not have as difficult a time identifying conflict goals in student-to-student conflicts. There are four conflict goals which show what each party was trying to accomplish in conflict. The four goals are, (a) Content, what each party wants in the conflict, (b) Relational, defines how each party wants to be treated, (c) Identity, how each party protects or repairs their view of self, (d) Process, What process works best to move through conflict (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001).

The most popular response was identity. The identity response was popular, as one interviewee put it, “Identity because that is one of their most valuable things they have right now, who they are.”⁹² Another participant echoed the importance of identity to the students:

Identity is the biggest one. If a kid feels slighted they will act out and show their aggression toward other people. If someone called them out on something they don’t feel is true or even if it is true they don’t want to be called out.⁹³

There is more evidence that students focus on their and their group’s identity as another interviewee said, “They care deeply about what each other say.”⁹⁴ A third staff member was unable to say if it was identity, but when asked what students are trying to accomplish in conflict said, “I can’t put my finger on it. I think it is their friend was dissed, and they want the other person to know you can’t treat my friend like that.”⁹⁵

⁹² See Appendix D, Page 140

⁹³ See Appendix D, Page 149

⁹⁴ See Appendix D, Page 109

⁹⁵ See Appendix D, Page 95

There were minor mentions of each of the other conflict goals; however, they were fleeting and not well substantiated. The interviewees showed that the vast majority of conflict within Effie Kokrine has to do with identity of self or the identity of a social circle. Understanding that conflict goals primarily are associated with identity may be a major step in understanding the culture of conflict at Effie Kokrine.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Domains

The 14 themes which arose from the interviews provide unique insight into the culture of conflict at Effie Kokrine. In an effort to further organize the 14 themes this researcher uses the larger domains of: (a) orientation to conflict, (b) nature of conflict, (c) conflict interests, and (d) conflict styles from the *Conflict Assessment Guide* (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). Understanding conflict through the lens of each of the four domains allows for understanding the culture of conflict within Effie Kokrine.

5.1.1 Orientation to Conflict. Wilmot's and Hocker's (2001, 2011) *Conflict Assessment Guide* includes questions investigating the effects age, race, gender, and cultural background to determine the role they play organizational conflict. Overall, none of these are central in how students address or resolve conflict. What does modify students' ability to take on conflict is their home life. Stability at home creates a stronger environment for student success both academically and socially.

Closely tied to home life is poverty, and Effie Kokrine does not have a clear grasp of how many of its students are homeless or live in poverty, making it difficult to tailor education and social training to the students. Currently, staff members design student educational plans without the knowledge of the pervasiveness of poverty, assuming that all students come from a low socioeconomic class. Knowing the exact percentage of impoverished students in each grade may help teachers tailor training programs and other activities to their specific students, helping to improve student's ability to communicate

conflict. Student ability to communicate in conflictual situations, with both adults and peers, has a tie to the school's failure to define conflict.

Effie Kokrine does not currently utilize an operational definition of conflict violence, or any other term for unacceptable student behavior. Without definitions for behaviors staff members must decide for themselves what is or is not acceptable behavior. As independent decisions about student actions are made students may think they are victims of unjust treatment from staff members. For example, if one staff member witnesses a student pushing a friend, they may treat the incident as playful. Another staff member may see the same incident and treat it as a physical assault that merits intervention. The lack of consistency in the definitions of conflict or violence along with the application of intervention can make it difficult for students to understand expectations and is a source adult-to-student conflict. Along with ensuring that Effie Kokrine staff members apply policies in uniform manners, the school will also benefit from evaluating their overall approach to the understanding of conflict.

Students and staff currently view conflict as negative at Effie Kokrine. Staff members participate in hiding and sequestering conflict, treating it as something in which not to participate. By treating conflict negatively, employees may be making it more difficult for students to discuss conflict issues with their peers, further entrenching the message that conflict should take place behind the scenes. By providing demonstrations of successful conflict resolution and teaching students that conflict is natural, Effie Kokrine may begin to alleviate the underground nature of conflict at the school.

5.1.2 Nature of Conflict. The nature of conflict at Effie Kokrine relies heavily on the scarce resource of attention. Most conflict comes from girls who vie for attention from boys. Girls perceive attention from boys as a limited resource because there are few boys each girl sees as a potential dating partner. With the limited amount of attention a girl may receive from a boy, she does not want to share with another girl. Both girls in the scenario seek attention from the boy though he can only share that attention with one of them, which makes both girls' goal of gaining attention from the boy incompatible. The origination of conflict primarily comes from girls' competing for the resource of boys' attention and by the interference created in the cliques girls create.

Student-to-student conflict at Effie Kokrine most often takes place outside of the eyes of adults. Students split into cliques and carry out long, dramatic conflicts that take place through name-calling, and outcasting of social pariahs. Conflicts move between parties, behind the scenes, with rare outbursts in the presence of school officials. The cliques create interference for those in opposing cliques, making the goal attainment difficult for all. The nature of conflict at Effie Kokrine is covert. Students rebel against other students in quiet, unseen ways only to reveal what has actually taken place after the conflict is over. Students remain silent about conflict in much the same way that staff members do.

Staff members exhibit a united front for students, never letting students see when there is a disagreement among them. Adults working out their differences behind the scenes are understandable actions in an effort to maintain privacy, though that effort may have the unintended consequence of teaching students not to resolve conflict, but rather

choose avoidance. Teachers inadvertently hide conflict from students which teaches students to hide conflict from adults. Conflict becomes much more difficult to address as it becomes further hidden in the cycle.

5.1.3 Interests in Conflict. One of the primary challenges that Effie Kokrine faces is the inability of students to articulate their points of view. Students in conflict cannot clearly state their desires or emotional states, often leaving adults and peers unsure of what the student is trying to accomplish in conflict. The inability of students to communicate concretely in conflictual situations presents difficulties for students attempting to resolve conflict. Student conflict goals may not be easily discernible through their words; however, it is clear that most students in conflict act with the intention of protecting their own identity.

When in conflictual situations, students often act with the goal of protecting their own identity. For students it is vitally important for adults and peers to recognize them as unique individuals. Students move through conflict situations acting more to protect their own identity or that of their social circle than they do to protect their original conflict goal. Preservation of identity is the primary goal for most conflict at Effie Kokrine, even if that is not what a dispute is originally over.

5.1.4 Styles of Conflict. Effie Kokrine currently has a culture of conflict built around competition and avoidance. Competition at Effie Kokrine appears on the basketball court and hallways for boys and in factions created by girls. Students compete not just physically, but for friends to build alliances, and for social advancement. Some competition can be healthy, however, at Effie Kokrine competition divides groups of

students, entrenching them on opposing sides of a conflict. As parties in conflict build alliances with classmates, those classmates then avoid the issue publically. They pretend they are not in conflict for the most part, only participating behind the scenes to maneuver toward personal objectives.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Knowing the Student Population. In order for Effie Kokrine to get a firm grasp on conflict it first needs to understand its student body. The school could spend some time training all staff members on the specific socioeconomic and cultural situation of the students, so education plans can best fit the student base. Understanding exactly who the students are and where they come from will be an effective first step in addressing the problems students face in their home lives. Giving teachers a full understanding of the students they serve will allow other teachers to react better to conflict situations.

5.2.2 Definitions and Responses. Improvements in adult responses to conflict situations will come from Effie Kokrine defining conflict and violence, as well as creating a thorough description of appropriate responses to each. Currently staff members are left to decide when a situation merits intervention and when it does not, leaving both students and staff members unsure of the appropriateness of an intervention. Clear intervention guidelines along with appropriate actions for conflict intervention will reduce adult-to-student conflict and create an improved work environment.

5.2.3 Perception of conflict. In addition to defining conflict and its response, Effie Kokrine would be well served to alter its view of conflict overall. Currently the

school views conflict as negative, not modeling or addressing it except in the worst of times. If school employees shift their perception of conflict from negative to positive and treat conflict as a useful way to alter the course of student interactions, students may begin to perceive conflict as a tool for building cohesiveness. In order to unite the students, the staff will need to effectively model conflict resolution for students as well as build students positive self-image.

5.2.4 Preserving Identity. For students it is vitally important they maintain their identity through a conflict situation. In order to teach students to resolve conflict the school needs to teach students there is not a tie between their identities and resolving conflict through compromise or collaboration. Currently students perceive each as sources of weakness rather than strengths. As students see weakness in collaboration and compromise, they also move forward in completion and avoidance, furthering the conflict spirals in the school.

5.2.5 Female Role Models. Along with teaching students there is not a tie between identity and compromise. Effie Kokrine can build a stronger student body by actively implementing strong female role models. Currently the older students have few women they feel they can or should emulate and younger students see few leaders they want to emulate. The lack of strong female role models tends to play an important role in the covert nature of conflict within the school. Implementing stronger female role models will also help teach girls they do not need to be as competitive for the attention of boys, eliminating a major source of conflict at the school. Having strong role models can also improve language issues across the school.

5.2.6 Language. Strong role models can serve as mentors for teaching students language skills. Students currently lack the ability to be self-reflexive or articulate their opinions and feelings. The implementation of a language usage and vocabulary program which centers around personal feelings and discussion of emotion will help students clarify their conflict goals and find resolution in their conflict situations.

5.3 Limitations

This study made every effort to be as thorough as possible throughout the entire research and reporting process. There are limitations to this study that could be improved by future research. The first limitation on this study is access to students and their families. Because of institutional and school district regulations barring interaction with students and their families, this study only accounts for the perspectives of school employees. By interviewing student family members and students themselves, data collected for this research would be much richer, providing insights that are more detailed, which could improve results.

In addition, observations of student behavior and interactions, with peers and adults are not permissible because of school board and institutional review board regulations. Preventing researcher interaction with students limited the ability of the research to verify the reports of interviewees. A further limitation on this study is the inability of the research to report student actions because descriptions of student activity could reveal student or staff member identity. A further limitation to the study is participant desire to influence report outcomes. Participants may have been unwilling to

discuss accurately the effects of culture and other subjects because the perception of a cultural bias.

5.4 Conclusion

This study began by asking the question, “What is the culture of conflict at Effie Kokrine?” The answer is: The culture of conflict at Effie Kokrine shares an organizational history of failing to define precisely what conflict is, or how it manifests in the school, which results in organizational members who tended to value shunning conflict. The history shared of suppressing conflict has built strong organizational ties to treating conflict as though it does not exist. As conflict often loses transparency, through its dismissal within the organization, there is a systemic push of the outward signals of conflict beneath the surface. The systematic suppression of conflict leads to the formation of cliques which are organizational symbols of identity, used by students to compete within the school, protecting student’s own self-images and organizational personas.

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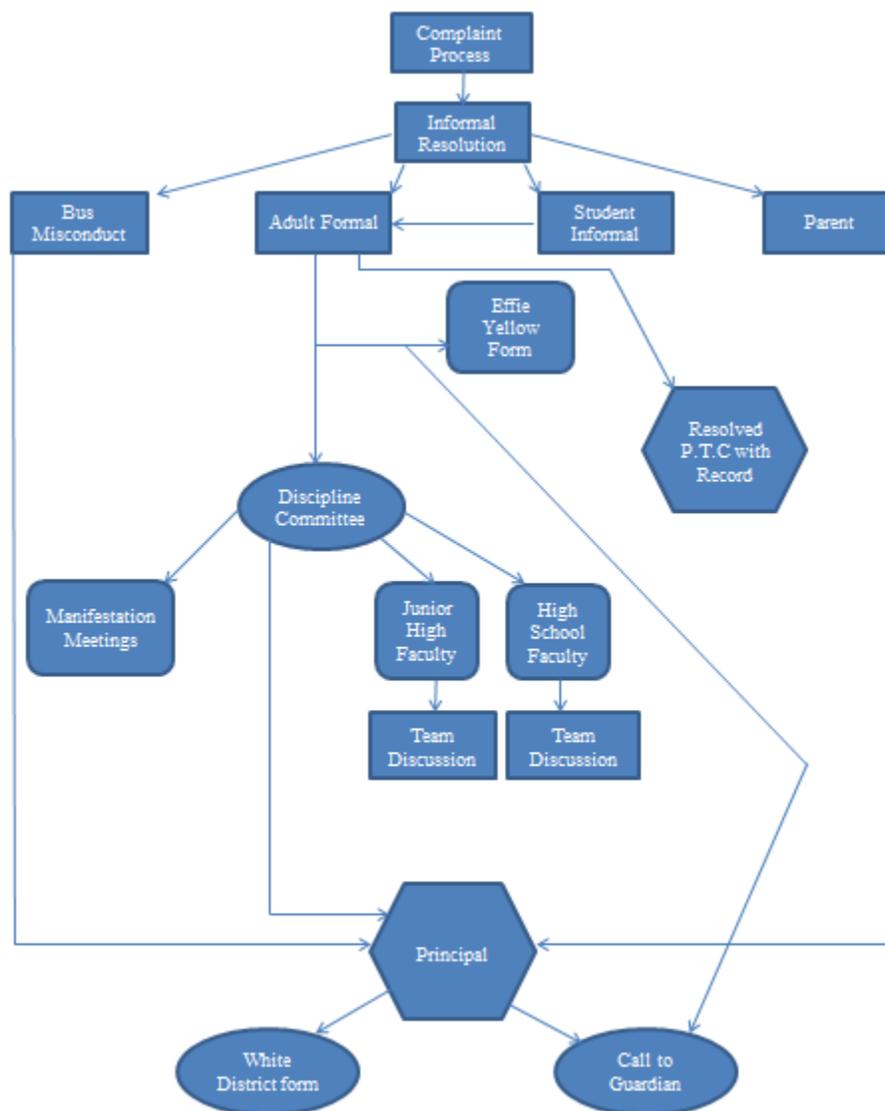
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Appendix A: Conflict Resolution Map



Appendix B: Effie Kokrine Enrollment Data as of 11/15/13

Grade	TSIG	C	AA	H	AI	AN	M-E
7	25 11M/14F	5 2M/3F	1 0M/1F	3 2M/1F	0 0M/0F	15 6M/9F	1 1M/0F
8	35 20M/15F	3 0M/3F	3 3M/0F	1 1M/0F	0 0M/0F	25 15M/10F	3 1M/2F
9	31 20M/11F	9 7M/2F	2 0M/2F	1 1M/0F	0 0M/0F	15 10M/5F	4 2M/2F
10	23 14M/9F	4 3M/1F	3 1M/2F	0 0M/0F	0 0M/0F	15 10M/5F	1 0M/1F
11	39 18M/21F	7 3M/4F	2 2M/0F	2 1M/1F	1 1M/0F	25 10M/15F	2 1M/1F
12	14 8M/6F	3 3M/0F	2 1M/1F	0 0M/0F	0 0M/0F	7 2M/5F	2 2M/5F
Total	167 91M/76F	31 18M/13F	13 7M/6F	7 5M/2F	1 1M/0F	102 53M/49F	13 7M/6F

Key:

TSIG: Total Students in Grade

C: Caucasian

AA: African-American

H: Hispanic

AI: American Indian

AN: Alaska Native

M-E: Multi-Ethnic

M: Number of males students

F: Number of female students

Appendix C: IRB Approval Form



(907) 474-7800
 (907) 474-5444 fax
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Institutional Review Board

909 N Koyukuk Dr. Suite 212, P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

October 30, 2013

To: Brian Jarrett
 Principal Investigator

From: University of Alaska Fairbanks IRB

Re: [476603-3] Conflict and Conflict Resolution Processes in an Alaskan Early College Charter School

Thank you for submitting the Revision referenced below. The submission was handled by Exempt Review. The Office of Research Integrity has determined that the proposed research qualifies for exemption from the requirements of 45 CFR 46. This exemption does not waive the researchers' responsibility to adhere to basic ethical principles for the responsible conduct of research and discipline specific professional standards.

Title: Conflict and Conflict Resolution Processes in an Alaskan Early College Charter School

Received: October 30, 2013

Exemption Category: 7

Effective Date: October 30, 2013

This action is included on the November 6, 2013 IRB Agenda.

Prior to making substantive changes to the scope of research, research tools, or personnel involved on the project, please contact the Office of Research Integrity to determine whether or not additional review is required. Additional review is not required for small editorial changes to improve the clarity or readability of the research tools or other documents.

Appendix D: Interview Transcripts

This section contains full transcripts of all interviews though there are omissions to protect the privacy of interviewees, students and staff of Effie Kokrine. Full transcriptions are available to the IRB and North Star Borough School Board for oversight and review purposes.

D1 Shelly

Researcher: Do you see conflict?

Shelly: Sure all the time.

Researcher: (omitted)

Shelly: (omitted)

Researcher: Do you see changes in how students interact with one another throughout the semester?

Shelly: They get protective of one another. I will even see instances where they are protective of other students when I might be coming down hard that student. They want to defend that student.

Researcher: Does that happen only inside the classroom?

Shelly: I would say within the room. (Omitted)

Researcher: When they bond it works well, but what happens when they don't get along in... (Shelly interrupted the question with her response)

Shelly: I see more of it with the girls, the cliques happening.

Researcher: What do you mean by cliques?

Shelly: This girl associating with these girls, and these other girls only associating with these other girls.

Researcher: Do the boys get involved?

Shelly: Nope.

Researcher: When that happens, are they doing it for a reason?

Shelly: I see this happening now. A girl likes a boy, and he likes another girl, so the first girl wants to talk about the second girl. It starts spiraling.

Researcher: What do the students call it when that starts happening?

Shelly: Oh yea, they just flat out say, gossiping.

Researcher: The girls break into clicks, recently because of a boy. Is that what conflict usually is over?

Shelly: Yea, at this age for sure.

Researcher: (omitted)

Shelly: The kids tell me a lot. It depends on the home life. For instance, I had a girl with hickey on her neck and a boy who thought dating was texting a lot. Knowing their home life makes a difference.

Researcher: When you say home life do you mean parents, or income, or something else?

Shelly: Stability of home life. (Omitted)

Researcher: Is it obvious as a teacher who has more stable home lives?

Shelly: Oh yea.

Researcher: Do the other students know who comes from stable homes?

Shelly: I don't know. That is something they don't talk about. They will ask questions but they won't directly say something. (Omitted) They will ask those kinds of questions but not directly.

Researcher: When something like that happens and the home life is not as solid as we would like it to be, what do the students say?

Shelly: A lot of excuses. "I had this. This was wrong."

Researcher: Will students tell adults in school the whole story?

Shelly: No. Not directly. If I poke and ask then they will tell me but will they come confide in me without me asking what is happening, no. Not until they really, really, get to know me. (Omitted)

Researcher: Do you see differences in the home life based on culture?

Shelly: mmm hummm.

Researcher: How so?

Shelly: (omitted)

Researcher: I am going to summarize what I think you said, please tell me if I am incorrect. What I heard you say was that Alaska native families, it's not that they don't value school. It's that there are these other communal things that they also value which sometimes take away from education. Is that accurate?

Shelly: Yes.

Researcher: Do Alaska Native families of the students you have value western education?

Shelly: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Shelly: I wouldn't say cultural challenges come from not trusting the system. It's more of a feeling if the boys learn hunting, trapping, fishing, and other stuff. Then they are learning life skills.

Researcher: Are there many student families who put value put on college, or are life skills more valuable to your student's families?

Shelly: It depends. (Omitted)

Researcher: In thinking about how students relate to each other you said the girls fight over boys. What do the boys fight about?

Shelly: Playing games and who is winning.

Researcher: Competition?

Shelly: Yea.

Researcher: When you say playing games do you mean competing at something physical such as a sport?

Shelly: Anything!

Researcher: Is there recess at Effie Kokrine? Do the kids get a chance to go outside and play?

Shelly: (omitted)

Researcher: Is there a formal recess?

Shelly: In elementary school but not at this age.

Researcher: Boys work through conflict through competition you said. What do they do?

Shelly: They voice it. They say I am not playing with you anymore. They are into video games such as Xbox live. They are connecting with one another even though they

are in different homes. They will come in, talk about it, say oh you did this last night or you tried this, and then end up in an argument.

Researcher: Do they use profanity?

Shelly: If they do, it's behind my back. I don't allow it.

Researcher: The girls break into cliques, you said. What do they do once they separate?

Shelly: They will exclude, talk about, look in the direction, snicker, and make it known indirectly they are talking about her.

Researcher: Do you think girls that are doing that understand the power they hold over the person they are doing that to?

Shelly: I think so.

Researcher: Does the person they are doing it to understand the power the other girls are holding over them?

Shelly: It depends on the girl. There are some girls that will just say "I don't care what they think." Other girls will cry and cry.

Researcher: Do responses vary based on maturity?

Shelly: Yea.

Researcher: Is maturity tied back to family life?

Shelly: Oh yea. It's a different mentality.

Researcher: When cliques form, do students involved know what the clique is trying to accomplish, or what the goal is?

Shelly: I think it's more of me or her and making people decide like more.

Researcher: Do the boys get involved in this?

Shelly: It depends on the boy.

Researcher: When students disagree is it relational, identity (Shelly interrupted question with her response).

Shelly: (omitted)

Researcher: As a teacher is 'you're judging me' easier to deal with than 'you don't like me?'

Shelly: It depends on the student and it depends on the situation.

Researcher: Do students ever argue about stuff such as: 'I think we should do this, or that?'

Shelly: Yea.

Researcher: Can you give me examples?

Shelly: (omitted)

Researcher: Are those productive conflicts, or are they negative?

Shelly: It's not really arguing.

Researcher: Do students understand what is happening when there is conflict between other students?

Shelly: Yea.

Researcher: If you and I are students in the same class and we are mad at each other, do the other students realize it quickly?

Shelly: It depends on how it is playing out.

Researcher: Is conflict often played out through social media?

Shelly: Defiantly on Facebook. They will come in and say, 'I saw what you wrote'

Researcher: Is Facebook from a teacher's point of view, good or bad?

Shelly: (omitted)

Researcher: When you're involved in helping students deal with personal issues is it often something brought from home as opposed to something that originated within the school?

Shelly: Outside in.

Researcher: If you had all the money and time you needed, what would you do to change conflict and communication at school?

Shelly: I would want a counselor, an in school counselor.

Researcher: Would you make counseling visits mandatory for students?

Shelly: I would have the councilor work with students on conflict resolution and life skills.

Researcher: What do you mean by life skills?

Shelly: How to communicate effectively with people or even in some instances personal hygiene (omitted).

Researcher: You are often taking on a motherly role?

Shelly: Yea.

Researcher: And the counselor role?

Shelly: Yea.

Researcher: How many of your students do you have a close enough relationship with they would tell you something very personal?

Shelly: Most, and even past students I've had still stop in to talk. (Omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Shelly: (omitted)

Researcher: What is it?

Shelly: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Shelly: (omitted)

Researcher: When students disagree, there are five styles of conflict: avoid, compete, compromise, accommodate, and accommodate. Do the students choose one more often than the rest?

Shelly: Yea, they say I don't care what another student thinks. They just ignore it.

Researcher: They avoid conflict?

Shelly: Yea.

Researcher: Is that a product of culture?

Shelly: I would say so.

Researcher: Do Non-Alaska Native students follow the lead in avoiding conflict or do they handle it differently?

Shelly: I would say they handle it differently.

Researcher: What do they do?

Shelly: The Alaska Native students will be more physical with wanting to handle something.

Researcher: Even with the girls?

Shelly: Yea.

Researcher: The girls and boys both get physical?

Shelly: Yea, they will want to fight it out.

Researcher: When you say fight it out do you mean physically?

Shelly: Yea, throwing punches.

Researcher: Does that happen often?

Shelly: No.

Researcher: Why don't they fight physically?

Shelly: (omitted)

Researcher: Is that a good moment for you as a teacher, when one student steps in and ends another students conflict?

Shelly: I try not to always be the one interfering. I ask them if they can resolve it on their own or if I need to step in.

Researcher: Is there a metaphor you can use to describe conflict or communication at Effie?

Shelly: I would have to say it was a book they totally related to. *Two Old Women* when the two old women were ostracized then had to come around and help other people. They talked a lot about that book. Then the other book would be the *Outsiders*. Two groups are pitted against each other and start noticing they have similarities even though economically they were apart.

Researcher: The kids see themselves in both situations?

Shelly: Yea.

Researcher: What else could be important for us to know about student communication and conflict?

Shelly: Again, it goes back to home life. There are some kids taught if your Alaska Native look for this, watch for this, defend yourself against this. Those kids are always set up to be defensive. Researcher: Do the students who are always on the defense know they are or is defensiveness just a part of who they are so they don't see it?

Shelly: I don't think they recognize it.

Researcher: Do the other students see it?

Shelly: I don't know.

Researcher: Is there anything the school has done to help students resolve conflict that has worked well in the past?

Shelly: I can tell you what doesn't work. Sending the two conflicting students to the principal and saying to them, 'you sit and listen to the other side' (omitted). It doesn't work.

Researcher: Thank you.

D2 Brittany

Researcher: Do you see conflict at Effie Kokrine?

Brittany: Yep.

Researcher: When you see conflict between students are there themes for what brings it out?

Brittany: I don't think so. Boys are a point of contention between the girls.

Researcher: Are the girls a point of contention between the boys?

Brittany: The conflicts that I see are mostly between the girls. I don't see that much conflict with boys, they are chill.

Researcher: When the girls are in disagreement with each other how do you know?

Brittany: Passive aggressive eye rolling, refusing to work together. People who are normally best friends will refuse to sit or work together. Occasionally they will call each other names but that is easy to put the kibosh on.

Researcher: How does the staff handle it if two students are supposed to be working together and they won't tell you why?

Brittany: (omitted)

Researcher: Is passive aggressive the right term for the girls?

Brittany: Definitely!

Researcher: What do girls do to let other girls know they are mad?

Brittany: With passive aggressive stuff a lot of the girls will not actually rise to the level of confrontation. Through some other person who will say something.

Researcher: Through a gossip chain?

Brittany: Yep.

Researcher: I am going to call that engaging in conflict because they are still doing something. Is that the most common response or is it more common to pretend as if nothing happened?

Brittany: I don't see a lot of kids moving on. They tend to hold grudges for a couple of days or a week or longer. Most of the conflict I've seen between the girls, they get

over it in the first few days. I don't think they ever work it out, they just get tired of holding a grudge. It takes energy to be passive aggressive and I think they just get tired of it.

Researcher: Do you see any conflict at all with the boys?

Brittany: Yes but it's different. They will usually just blow up at each other, cuss and be done. It's a lot easier to ask, "Are you done? Can you get a long now?" and it ends.

Researcher: Is that easier to deal with as a teacher?

Brittany: Yes and no, if kids really need to express themselves in that way. You're supposed to write them up for cussing but it's the only way they know how to express themselves. This is counterproductive because they are communicating in the way they know how, and I don't want to write them up because I don't want to teach them that expressing their frustration is bad.

Researcher: Do the boys have language to express how they feel without profanity?

Brittany: I don't think so. There is a very macho culture at this school with our boys, anyone who is not macho at this school is not necessarily teased or bullied but there is a definite disparity between the macho basketball boys and everyone else.

Researcher: Is profanity an Effie Kokrine problem or a high school problem?

Brittany: It could be just a high school thing.

Researcher: (omitted)

Brittany: (omitted)

Researcher: Are there big differences in students at Effie Kokrine and students at other schools?

Brittany: Definitely, I feel like students at Effie are wise beyond their years. They have experienced so much. You can't treat them like normal high-schoolers because they are so much wiser. You'll be having a conversation with them and all of the sudden they will drop some really deep, profound, realization on you which is something I haven't experienced before, ever.

Researcher: When you say wise beyond their years, you're talking about personal life, not education?

Brittany: Yep.

Researcher: When boys fight its quick and when girls fight there is an underlying passive aggressiveness. What happens when boys and girls argue?

Brittany: I am sure there are [arguments] between the many couples that come and go but I rarely see conflict. I think the girls are very much in a state of wanting to please the boys. They will bend over backwards to be nice to the boys than the boys are all hot on the girls so they won't do anything to them. The biggest thing might be: "oh he stole my pencil." It's not real drama

Researcher: Is there a difference in how students handle conflict in seniors or freshman?

Brittany: I don't think so. I think it's mostly the same, boys blow up, girls are passive, I don't know.

Researcher: Does it have to with Alaska Native culture?

Brittany: I don't think it has any more to do with Alaskan Native than anything else. Our entire culture is based on traditional gender roles. If you read any books on female psychology you will see girls are vying for the most suitable mate. I don't know how much of that can be blamed on culture when there is this pure biological and social hierarchy.

Researcher: What do boys argue over?

Brittany: I don't know it's just stupid stuff. You never know. It could arise from somebody sitting in someone else's chair. You know that can't possibly be what they are actually fighting over because the reaction is out of scale.

Researcher: The disproportion is so out of whack we know there is some other underlying thing there?

Brittany: Yep. I rarely know what conflict is with boys. I think in this whole thing we are missing a big part in conflict in this school and that is conflict with kids and teachers. I see more kids written up for conflicts with teacher than any other thing.

Researcher: What are students doing that upsets teachers?

Brittany: In classes it's talking out of turn, cussing, always having to write them up for cussing. I think there are some teachers who cannot deal with the fact that students have their own free will. More and more kids get written up for stupid, silly things, and every time they are written up it's ISS. It pulls them out of class, and it's not helpful. In this whole mediation process we really do need to have a way of working out conflict with teachers because there are some teachers who

cannot get along with students. I think a part of this should be developing the skills students need to get along with a difficult instructor.

Researcher: I am going to recap what I heard you say. Please tell me if you think it is accurate because I want to make sure I am interpreting you correctly. What I am hearing you saying is students have to work with a lot of teachers, some they get along with, some they don't. The reasons for that can vary but the one of the reasons is some teachers are flexible, and other are more authoritarian. The authoritarian teachers don't have the room to take into account a student is having an off day and students don't know how to react when the teacher has no flexibility. They are just running into each other. Is that accurate?

Brittany: Perfect, yea!

Researcher: Okay, what do we do about it?

Brittany: Having some honest to goodness conversations about what is going on in these students lives. We don't have professional development here to talk about things like that. I feel like that would be important. A lot of teachers understand in the back of their mind they are dealing with a hard population but they don't really understand what that could feel like to a teenager. I think we don't have a forum for kids to express themselves at our school. Part of their advisory class on Friday should be writing their autobiography of what happened this week. We can gain a lot of insight about what is happening outside of school and how it's affecting them in school.

Researcher: When you say that, do you mean have them write about their personal lives, what is happening in school, or both?

Brittany: Both, whatever they want to share.

Researcher: If they shared personal feelings and stories do the majority of staff members have the skill and ability to interpret that and adjust what they are doing?

Brittany: Probably not.

Researcher: So possibly we need student and staff development?

Brittany: For sure.

Researcher: What does the staff need for training?

Brittany: I've been dealing with. . . (Interrupted by another staff member to take care of a student issue for the next several minutes)

Researcher: (omitted)

Brittany: (omitted)

Researcher: When students feel upset with that teacher or another teacher, what do they do?

Brittany: They will get surly and not talk in class. They shut down and stop doing their work and stop paying attention.

Researcher: How do you bring them back in?

Brittany: (omitted)

Researcher: Because it's difficult to ask individual faculty members to change, what kind of skills can we develop in students to help them adapt to staff members?

Brittany: Communication skills are important. If kids could learn how to speak to teachers who have hard fast rules, if they had a framework for talking to them levelheadedly without getting too emotional, I think that would be a really good thing.

Researcher: Do students have the ability to put things in other people terms?

Brittany: They should be able to but our kids don't. It doesn't even register, that is a skill they need to develop.

Researcher: If students developed that would it alleviate some issues with the stricter teachers?

Brittany: I think it would be a small way of teaching kids that we are all here working together. It would be a small step but it would certainly help.

Researcher: Do girls aim their passive aggressiveness on teacher or only other girls?

Brittany: Yea, if a teacher pisses off a student they will either storm out or say I have to go to the bathroom and hide out in the bathroom for the rest of the period or the eye rolling the shutting down the heads on the desk.

Researcher: Is that what the boys do too?

Brittany: Sometimes that is what the boys do with teachers because they know they won't win a direct conflict. Boys do a lot passive aggressive shutting down.

Researcher: Do students know what kind of power they have being passive aggressive?

Brittany: I think they see results. They get attention from teachers who want to know what going on. Their friends, they'll be like, "you're standing up to a teacher," and that's the cool thing to do.

Researcher: If students are passive aggressive to other students, do those students understand the power that is being held over them?

Brittany: Yea. Withholding friendship is one of the worst punishments ever. Being ignored and having your support system fall out from under you, leaves the students alone and helpless.

Researcher: You think both parties see that?

Brittany: Yea.

Researcher: Do they see it the same way?

Brittany: Certainly not. People who are in a position of power only think about what they need to do to send their message. The person on the receiving end just feels bad all the time. It's not a power thing to them, it's that they don't know what they did and they won't talk to me about it.

Researcher: Most of the time students don't avoid conflict?

Brittany: They are passive aggressive, is that avoiding?

Researcher: It is more engaging because they are not just ignoring the issue, they are acting on it.

Researcher: Does conflict ever become physical between boys or girls?

Brittany: I don't see that often. Most of pushing, shoving, etc., it is horsing around among friends. We have kids without social skills who don't know that it's bad to run into someone or get in their personal bubble.

Researcher: Why do kids not have social skills?

Brittany: (omitted)

Researcher: When students are mad at each other do they know why?

Brittany: Not necessarily.

Researcher: How do they find out?

Brittany: I think sometimes they never find out. I think sometimes it's through gossip chains.

Researcher: If you had unlimited time and money what would you do to change conflict and communication at the school?

Brittany: I would hire a counselor and put a lot of energy into helping these kids solve conflict outside of school. I think that's where the majority of conflict actually comes from. It's hard enough to come to school and have expectations placed on you, but to come home and not have a support system, and not know where your next meal is coming from, and having troubled parents, all just adds to the stress load. Any straw that gets added on to that automatically gets escalated into a big thing.

Researcher: Are teachers given adequate training in talking with students and dealing with outside of school issues?

Brittany: I haven't experienced any of the professional development stuff. I imagine it's all just curriculum, I don't know what the individual teacher training programs are like but I would say no. That would be really valuable.

Researcher: What can the school do to help kids who are dealing with personal issues outside of school?

Brittany: Open door policies. I feel like without hiring somebody we don't have anybody.

The five minute passing period is not enough to have in depth discussions or help a student come up with strategies for dealing with stress. Staying after school is the only option, we don't have the infrastructure for kids to have healthy a conversation.

Researcher: Tell me about the talking circles with Howard Luke?

Brittany: Howard Luke comes in on Fridays. They make an announcement he is in the building and then kids can go down there whenever they want. I think that is valuable thing. We have talked about a talking circle just for girls, which I think, is important because our girl culture here is awful. I don't know how many kids actually take advantage of it. I think definitely the white kids don't feel like they can go. They feel like it is a native thing and they feel like they can't come.

Researcher: Other than when they are in talking circles, do non-indigenous students feel excluded?

Brittany: (omitted)

Researcher: Is there a metaphor you can use to describe conflict and communication at Effie?

Brittany: Mean girls.

Researcher: Why?

Brittany: Because our girl culture is so bad. I think that is the heart of where our conflict comes from. We have a bunch of girls who are trying to be really sexy, and play dumb, and we need to start raising an awesome leader girl culture.

Researcher: What else do you want us to know?

Brittany: My hope is that we can get to a point where we can talk about things instead of just writing kids up. This is such a broken system, it's not healthy.

Researcher: It's broken on the staff-to-student end not on the student-to-student end?

Brittany: Yea, I don't perceive us as having more student-to-student conflict than any other high school but student-to-staff conflicts should not happen as often as they do.

Researcher: How often do they happen?

Brittany: At least daily.

D3 Deb

Researcher: Do you see conflict at Effie?

Deb: I do see conflict. Something I see regularly is conflict within students themselves. Students struggle to deal with things when there is so much going on in their world. Everything going on inside their world crumbles when they are dealing with issues they don't know how to deal with.

Researcher: When you say issues within themselves, what do you mean?

Deb: Family life, depression, suicide.

Researcher: Do you work with many students who are dealing with suicidal thoughts?

Deb: (omitted)

Researcher: Is it obvious who comes from "traditional" supportive homes and who doesn't?

Deb: It's obvious, yes.

Researcher: Is it obvious to the students?

Deb: I would say probably not, I don't think. It's interesting because they know each other's families, so they know but they don't think it's a big deal. They realize it but they don't understand the impact it has.

Researcher: When students disagree with each other, do you know?

Deb: Yea, they'll say it. It's interesting how they go about it. If it's something outside the classroom that they don't agree to teachers usually hear about it, but maybe not right away. It's not in a tattletale kind of thing because they have this mantra that snitches get stitches, which is frustrating for us.

Researcher: Do you hear from students who are involved in conflict, or do you hear it third party?

Deb: Their friends, otherwise I hear from parents. (Omitted)

Researcher: Is that true for the majority of your students if they are being bullied they won't tell anyone?

Deb: I would say so.

Researcher: Does it matter if it is a boy or a girl?

Deb: I don't think so. I think they all still have that mantra that snitches get stitches.

Researcher: You see your students as not trusting adults in their ability to stop confrontation. Is that accurate?

Deb: Yes, sure.

Researcher: Do they trust each other? They might not tell you, a teacher, about an incident, but would they tell their friends?

Deb: I think so, yea. Then students who know are held accountable not to tell.

Researcher: Will the friends who know do anything about it?

Researcher: It depends on the group of students. I've had some students who would and some who would not do anything about it.

Researcher: What brings conflict out at Effie?

Deb: I don't know. Kids with the transition to darkness are very tired. So they are a little edgier and they have more tension. I know I have more tension (between) myself and students this time of year. Maybe there is something with that and they are just edgier. Little things could set them off.

Researcher: When students have conflict, how do they show it?

Deb: In the classroom they won't do much about it because there is an adult in the room. In the hallway, you might see tripping or roughhousing, things like that, until you put an end to it. Or, they'll just keep doing it and doing it.

Researcher: Violent fistfights don't happen in class. Is there anything that does happen in class?

Deb: Students will tell you if they don't agree. If students don't get a long there may be some long stares or something like that. As a teacher I to address it right when it happens.

Researcher: When students are upset with each other for any reason, is it generally because they feel like they have been slighted? Or is it stress in trying to maintain a relationship? Or is it something else?

Deb: With the boys conflict is like whatever, you're mad at me, get over it and move on .

.. (omitted)

Researcher: Is profanity an issue?

Deb: Not in the classroom but it's always an issue in the hallway, especially in the mornings.

Researcher: Is it an issue that it's conversational, or that it's threatening?

Deb: I think a little bit of both. Sometimes I think it's just a part of what they say and other times I think it is derogatory. They'll say H or F sometimes in context and sometimes it's more confrontational.

Researcher: Do students have the language to express anger or other emotions outside of profanity?

Deb: I think that is how they say their emotions because that is how they view them. If students are mad, profanity is how they express themselves.

Researcher: If I am student and I am mad and call you a bitch do I have any other terms for that language?

Deb: Not that I know of.

Researcher: Do you think the majority of your students ever see conflict resolved positively?

Deb: I hope so. We talk about how to deal with things and try to do a lot of positive self-talk.

Researcher: For example, at home between mom and dad or brother and sister, for the most part do disagreements get worked out positively?

Deb: No. I think it's pretty rare. I think that's how a lot of kids have learned to deal with things is that fight or flight mentality.

Researcher: Are families receptive if you need help or input with a student situation?

Deb: (omitted)

Researcher: How often do you have to get parents involved?

Deb: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Deb: I think so because as I get younger brother and sisters they get more open, revealing things to me because of the relationship I have with their older siblings.

Researcher: How often do students tell you stuff that is beyond a normal teacher role and into psychologist roles?

Deb: Almost every day. I've thought about going into counseling, but here at this school I am dealing with counseling every day.

Researcher: Do the students know whose family has money and who doesn't?

Deb: That is interesting question. They do but it's not an issue. They know whose family comes from where but I don't think it's important to them.

Researcher: If students face a conflict situation do they avoid, compete, collaborate, accommodate, compromise?

Deb: The girls are either confrontational or passive. With the boys it's like whatever, you're mad at me, get over it and they move on.

Researcher: When you say the girls are passive, what do you mean?

Deb: They won't do anything about directly. They will be quite and try to bring other people down and get their friends on their side for petty reasons.

Researcher: They don't directly confront conflict?

Deb: Yea, they will do other things to bring that person down. I've had groups of students who are more confrontational who will go up and say, 'your friend said this or you said this.' It depends on the student groups.

Researcher: Is there one thing boy's do that creates conflict and girl's do that creates conflict?

Deb: I think with girls it's probably saying something about another girl. If someone says something about someone they care about they'll get really defensive. Boys will just have a disagreement, they approach problems differently.

Researcher: How do students work out conflict when they are mad at each other?

Deb: It depends. The more aggressive girls will just go at it, others will be more passive and send texts.

Researcher: Do text, social media, Facebook etc. play a big role in how students get a long, or don't?

Deb: I hear things about students talking about each other on Facebook. The stuff that happens outside the classroom always makes its way into the classroom.

Researcher: Is Facebook good for school or bad for school?

Deb: I don't think Facebook as much of a problem as texting. It's more direct and more personal.

Researcher: What is important for us to know about conflict or communication at the school?

Deb: It's important to know the students and how to deal with the individual students.

Knowing which ones can be confronted and which ones can't is important.

Researcher: Do students need help learning how to deal with conflict?

Deb: I think so. I think we all do.

Researcher: What could be done to improve communication and conflict if you were given unlimited money and time?

Deb: Build their confidence. When you're more confident, you are more able to express what you think.

Researcher: Do you think the students are open with each other?

Deb: It depends on who the student is and what issue it is.

Researcher: Are students willing to be open with most of the staff members?

Deb: I'd say so. We are their go to, to talk about things.

Researcher: Is there a metaphor you can use to describe conflict and communication between students at Effie Kokrine?

Deb: The Outsiders. We read the book and the kids could really relate because there are people with issues. The book features people who have material goods and others who are native that don't. It's always them vs. someone else, and at the end of the day, my kids realize we are all in it together. We have differences but we are very similar. They relate to it.

Researcher: How important are the cultural differences between students?

Deb: I think they are important but it is not something they focus on. Individual background is important but not something that will separate people here. We focus on and embrace everyone's culture.

Researcher: Culture doesn't separate them?

Deb: No

Researcher: Does it bond them?

Deb: (omitted)

Researcher: Do non-Alaskan Native student feel excluded?

Deb: I don't think so. I think they enjoy learning the native culture. Very rarely will I have a student say "you don't know because you're not native," or something like that. It's interesting when we talk about culture because the kids know they are different but they don't know exactly how.

Researcher: What else do we need to know about Effie Kokrine?

Deb: As a teacher, I need to keep in mind that I see them for so many hours a day but what happens at home is powerful and shapes who they are. When I don't understand why or how a student is doing something I have to remember at their home that is how the behavior is probably modeled. I think keeping in the back of my mind that I can't get frustrated and I need to keep showing students positive examples.

Researcher: Is there a way of involving parents before conflict spirals?

Deb: Let them know and keep them involved.

Researcher: Does that work?

Researcher: It depends on the students and the parent.

Deb: Is there anything else you want us to know?

Researcher: I think kid's home life is so important. You see it with kids who have a supportive home life, things are well balanced and parents have a good temperament, they have that responsibility at home and you just know. You can try to have those kids become leader in the classroom to model for the other kids.

Researcher: Do you ever see productive conflict at school or is it only destructive?

Deb: Mostly destructive. I don't think it's productive at the student-to-student level but possibly at the student-to-teacher level.

Researcher: What can we do to improve communication and conflict between students and teachers?

Deb: Just set positive communication examples. Positive self-talk, respecting people as an individual, listen to what people are and are not saying that is important.

Researcher: Anything else we need to know?

Deb: Not at this time.

Researcher: Thank you.

D4 Jessica

Researcher: Do you know why I am here conducting these interviews?

Jessica: I think we were looking for ways to do peer mediation.

Researcher: Peer mediation means there is conflict you would like resolved?

Jessica: Yea, at the student level. Having students be able to resolve their conflicts without. . . .(Motions fist together as a symbol of fighting)

Researcher: Without fisticuffs?

Jessica: Yea.

Researcher: What kind of conflicts do you see in the school you would like help teaching students to mediate?

Jessica: Students not getting along with each other. Someone might anger someone else and then the first thing they do is want to fight about it. They say something off hand to another student and the student takes offense to it.

Researcher: If I am a student and say something off hand that another student doesn't are they likely going to punch me?

Jessica: They could punch you in the face. They could say something back at you and then it causes other kids to get involved. It kind of gets this friction going in the school. Next thing you know it's out of hand.

Researcher: When you say friction do you mean the students break into factions taking sides on issues that arise?

Jessica: Yea, Yes Friends stick up for friends.

Researcher: When that happens is it in one particular age group?

Jessica: I don't think it's in one grade or age group. The junior high and high school really don't mix so it's probably within those individual parts of the school.

Researcher: Are faction at all tied to culture?

Jessica: I don't think it matters are all. Their friends are their friends no matter what color they are.

Researcher: When there is conflict, what brings it to the forefront at the school?

Jessica: I don't know. I think that sometimes it comes in from the outside. I think sometimes something happens at a movie theater or somewhere and they bring it to school.

Researcher: How important is home and personal life to students in conflict?

Jessica: I don't know.

Researcher: Is there a metaphor you could use to describe conflict at the school?

Jessica: No, they are all different. Some conflicts can be settled right away. Other it goes on under the surface.

Researcher: Is there a difference between the boys and the girls in the staff's ability to deal with conflict?

Jessica: MMM HUMMM. I think it's mostly girls. I really do. I don't see the boys acting out that way.

Researcher: How do the boys act out?

Jessica: I don't know. They might get angry and holler or punch a wall. I don't know. They just let go like that. Girls, they hold it in or hold on to it.

Researcher: Are there themes that cause things to come up with the girls?

Jessica: It's probably more personal, boyfriend, girlfriend, ex-boyfriend, current girlfriend.

Researcher: Do you think it has to do with socioeconomic status?

Jessica: I don't know. I couldn't say.

Researcher: When the girls are short with each other, is that the right way to phrase it?

Jessica: Just angry with each other.

Researcher: Angry with each other. Do you have an idea what they are trying to accomplish?

Jessica: I really don't know. I can't put my finger on it. I think it is their friend was dissed and they want the other person to know you can't treat my friend like that.

Researcher: They are trying to protect themselves or their clique's self-identity?

Jessica: Yes, self-identity, I think that is it.

Researchers: Can you describe the things girls do that makes you aware of their conflicts?

Jessica: Usually they will start going by each other in the hallway and hitting one of the students they are angry at.

Researcher: They'll bump into the other persons shoulder?

Jessica: Yep, push them and say names under their breath. Than some other kids hear it and they get involved . . . (omitted)

Researcher: How often does a student come to you to say there might be a fight or we need somebody to step in before a situation gets out of control?

Jessica: Maybe once or twice a year.

Researcher: Not often?

Jessica: Not a lot no. I don't think there is that much student conflict around here and it's getting to be less and less.

Researcher: (omitted)

Jessica: (omitted)

Researcher: I understand the socioeconomic status of most of the students or their family is not high. Their families are often near poverty level, is that correct?

Jessica: I can't say that. I can say that about 60% of our students are on free and reduced lunch. That kind of puts them at a place.

Researcher: Do you think student inability to articulate what's happening has any tie to poverty?

Jessica: There is a tie definitely.

Researcher: If there is a lack of vocabulary for students to be able to say, 'What you're saying to me hurts or what you're saying is offensive,' do you have thoughts on how with money and time we can change it?

Jessica: I think what we are doing right now that is really good are talking circles. An elder comes in and talks with the kids. He'll come in when he can and kids know he's in the building. We'll set up a room and the students will go sit and talk with him.

Researcher: The students are receptive to that?

Jessica: Oh Yea, there are more and more kids going. It's a place for them to get their issues out without letting us know about it.

Researcher: The elder conducts the circle. Are there staff members present?

Jessica: Nope just the elder. It's a place to let it all go. If something is going on at home or suicide attempts or anything.

Researcher: Does the elder touch base with the staff after those conversations?

Jessica: No and I wouldn't want him to. I think what we are doing right now and is really good are talking circles. The talking circle is confidential. If we could get to where the circles were regular with boys, girls, young men, younger girls, and

older girls going I think it's a good place for them. It's mostly boys going right now. Talking circles give the boys a chance to talk out some of these things.

Maybe that's why they're not. . . (Motions fists ramming together).

Researcher: Talking circles provide a place to students to talk about whatever is going on in their lives?

Jessica: Some of the teachers build relationships with students. You would be amazed at some of the things they find out. Stuff the kids just tell them floors me sometimes.

We don't have a counselor here.

Researcher: Has there ever been a councilor here?

Jessica: (omitted)

Researcher: When boys do have problems what are they typically arguing about?

Jessica: I think the boys are more willing to say, "hey don't push me," or stand up for themselves. I don't know.

Researcher: Of accommodation, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, or competition, which most accurately describes this school?

Jessica: I think most of the time the kids just brush it off and walk away from it.

Researcher: Do you think that has a tie to what's festering under the surface, the factions of students that develop with the girls?

Jessica I think so.

Researcher: When there is conflict in the school do student families become involved?

Jessica: We keep it in the school . . . (omitted)

Researcher: Do parents side with staff members if a child is in trouble or do they generally side with the students?

Jessica: It depends. The parents come in ready to stick up for the kid in all circumstances but then they hear the other side of the story and whoa. They say 'my kids did that,' in front of the kid and the kid will sit there. Finally after a while the student will say, 'yea I did that.' The parent is usually shocked that their kid actually did it. Then the students talk and settle the problem.

Researcher: When families become involved do you get longer lasting results?

I: (omitted)

Researcher: Would you say families are involved in their student's academics?

Jessica: (omitted)

Researcher: Is that a product of age?

Jessica: I don't know. I think it's that way throughout the whole district.

Researcher: When students are angry at each other do both students know what they are trying to accomplish?

Jessica: I don't know.

Researcher: If you have a clique talking about another student and the student they are talking about asks why they are talking about them and the group says nothing, can the students figure out what they did wrong?

Jessica: The kids lie too. They say so and so are talking about this girl because she did this and then when you ask them about it they say, "Nope I didn't do that."

Researcher: What do you do when you know something is going on but it can't clearly be defined?

Jessica: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Jessica: (omitted)

Researcher: Escalating levels of trouble. What happens if they get multiple write ups?

Jessica: When they have too many then they have an intervention and the parent comes in and sits down and talks about it.

Researcher: How many of those does it take before a parent gets involved?

Jessica: Usually the first time we call parents will come in. Sometimes though parents don't call back and we can't get them in here.

Researcher: Is there an equal number of parents who are engaged in their children's education as there are who don't call back?

Jessica: I think for the most part if I call a parent, they answer and they want to help. Some have other things going on and they can't handle parenting.

Researcher: What do you think is important for us to know in helping student resolve conflict?

Jessica: I think it is important to know about Alaska Native people and their culture. I never realized this until I was old native people think differently, and they do things differently, so in order to understand the kids you have to know where they are coming from. You have to know the background so that you're not just judging them. The kids really pick up on judgment. I have to be very careful how

I talk to kids. If I say “you’re not doing your homework,” “are you going to bed early,” they think that means I am judging them. They hear me saying “oh I never do my homework,” or “I stay up all night,” they hear it differently than I say it.

Researcher: How does the school use indigenous learning to teach?

Jessica: In junior high they do thematic units. They might take the book *Two Old Women* and learn about the culture that way. They will also bring in elders who will talk about the old ways and how things used to be and how things are now so the kids can understand where their parents came from. A lot of times city kids don’t know what it is to live in the village or go fishing or hunting or berry picking. They learn those kinds of things such as how to preserve fish or berries.

Researcher: Are non-native students receptive to that?

Jessica: Yea, they really enjoy it. It’s different for them but they enjoy it. In the fall the entire junior high goes out and camps overnight a couple nights. They pick berries and look at plants with elders there to they teach them. When they return with the berries they have to sort and weigh them.

Researcher: Is there much integration of that curriculum into the high school?

Jessica: There is a little of that. We have arctic winter survival and an Alaska history class that has elders come in to tell the real history from people that have lived it.

Researcher: Is that interesting for the students?

Jessica: Yea. We also have big events such as Howard Luke’s birthday potlatch, Effie Kokrine’s Snowshoe Race potlatch, the fiddler’s festival, the TTC education summit, AFN conventions.

Researcher: When there is a large cultural event do you notice a difference in conflict in the school?

Jessica: No, they seem to get together more. The kids are anxious to be cooking and involved in it.

Researcher: If there is going to be a potlatch or other being event at the school your saying there is less conflict at the school?

Jessica: Yea, I think so.

Researcher: (omitted)

Jessica: No, not much, no. I don't think there is that much student conflict around here and it's getting to be less and less. I think it's because we build up these relationships with the students. We see them when they are feeling good, when they are sad.

Researcher: What type of communication and conflict resolution skills can we help students build?

Jessica: Being able to tell someone else to how they are feeling. I think the talking circles do that by giving them a safe space where students can talk knowing that what gets said there stays there.

Researcher: Is there any conflict in the school you would say is constructive?

Jessica: I think when students have a confrontation and they get through it to become good friends. They learn how to get along and say to themselves, "okay I can't talk to her today because she has that look on her face." It might not be immediate but after a while you can see it.

Researcher: It's not good when conflict happens but conflict resolution does teach skills?

Jessica: It gives us a chance to say 'hey, look what happened, how did it get to this point and why did that happen,' or, 'what were you thinking when you did that?'

Researcher: Is there anything else you want us to know about conflict and communication?

Jessica: I think it is really important for us to have the elders involved somehow. It would be nice to get to a point where the kids are looking out for each other and willing to step up to help each other out, from an indigenous way of thinking. We need to give kids the skills and the language to know how to get along even though they may not like each other. I have to tell the kids all the time when you graduate you're going to have to get out and get a job and work with someone, I promise you, you probably won't like but you're going to have to get along with whoever that is. You can't swear at them or whatever it is. You have to learn to control yourself and school is where kids learn that.

Researcher: Is there anything else you would like to share?

Jessica: No, I am good.

D5 Mike

While reviewing the informed consent form, Mike shut off his cell phone and mentioned that he requires his students to shut their phones off in class and he will do the same.

Mike: It's a hairball sometimes with the phones. (Omitted)

Researcher: How do you deal with that?

Mike: I tell the students what the expectations are. I use a bureaucratic voice that angers some parents. I can get kids to not text in the classroom but the hard part is the parent sometimes.

Researcher: We want to find out what is happening with conflict at the school and you said before we started you don't see much of conflict at Effie Kokrine.

Mike: This school is not big. When you're talking about places that are so big they are institutional, they have institutional conflict. The nice thing about Effie is it is small enough to be intimate. You've picked a group of people that are generally rather conflict adverse. You picked Alaskan Native who generally have a cultural practice of caring for each other. This was a good pilot project, this mediation thing, to say this is not a big school, its small, you don't have a big problem spilling out over the edge of the bathtub. This isn't Lathrop. We've got parents who bring their kids here precisely because it's not Lathrup. At Lathrop their kids would have been picked up and had their heads shoved in the toilet, given swirlys and here they are rocks stars.

Researcher: Are there kids that don't fit into the culture of Effie?

Mike: Sure.

Researcher: Is it fair to say they are the minority?

Mike: I wouldn't say the culture of Effie Kokrine is based on Ethnicity. It is supposed to serve and it does serve to make a nice homeroom for Native Alaskan kids that experience institutional troubles at other places. . . .(Omitted)

Researcher: There is a perception that there are issues with conflict at Effie Kokrine and some of people, including yourself, have said conflict is not a giant problem here.

Mike: Do you know why?

Researcher: I would love to hear.

Mike: (omitted)

Mike: The school has turned itself inside out, not once, but twice. Howard Luke academy is gone. It was a pretty tough place in these hallways 15-20 years ago. Effie has turned itself around with every new principal, every new staff member. There seems to be an incremental change with the culture and the climate. People ask me where I teach and when I say Effie they get a stern look. I know our kids academically don't come from the same background as other students do, so our experience there is different. We have a lot remedial academic stuff to teach. We have a reverse bell curve. A regular bell curve in the middle there are mostly C+, B- kinds of students. We have a reverse bell curve with kids that are trying to pass and a big chunk of kids that are actually excelling, we have middle ground. The students in the same classroom are 4-6 years apart academically.

Researcher: This is called an Early College School. Do you think that name is accurate?

Mike: For some but the majority, no. The minority of students that are prepared to take college classes do take college classes. Some students roll out of here at 17-18, maybe 20-22 college credits and their freshman year of college done. The professors come down the hill and teach right here. It is an early college and it

does work. It's an interesting program but it means we have a double-sided bell curve.

Researcher: How do you think the students handle the transition between middle school and high school?

Mike: Not very well, for a couple of reasons. The most important one is the gender and the energy going from female teachers in the junior high school to mostly male teachers at the high school. There is a different kind of energy, directness in the high school. The high school teachers don't treat girls like princesses. . .
. (Omitted)

Mike: (The high school) is more like a traditionally American high school because that's how we work it. I've thought quite hard about the cultural shift and there's a gap between middle and high school. There female energy in junior high school, male energy in high school.

Researcher: Do you see many differences between boys and girls?

Mike: Sure.

Researcher: Especially, coming out of middle school?

Mike: Yes.

Researcher: Do those gaps get smaller over the 4 years of high school?

Mike: (omitted)

Researcher: How much of a challenge is it for students coming out of middle school to be grouped with students of different ages?

Mike: That rarely happens. They are largely grouped by cohort for classes. They are mixed in their electives and I don't find that to be a problem at all.

Researcher: Do the seniors help develop the underclassmen socially?

Mike: I wish they would help develop them.

Researcher: Are there skills student lacks in communication and conflict?

Mike: Sure, Anything having to do with spoken and written language. The majority, 90% are a part of the free and reduced lunch program, so it's not an exaggeration to say my kids are poor. We know that poor kids hear 30 million fewer words by the time they get to school. So there are incredible language deficits just because of poverty. Now couple that with an intensely quiet culture to start with, I mean the fewer words the better. The students don't express themselves in any proficient way.

Researcher: Do you try to teach to western cultural standards in communication?

Mike: Yes, I have to. The school made the decision to attach their caboose to the Fairbanks School District and meet their requirements and by doing so we were basically committing to staying inside the box academically. By joining the district we inherit the same curriculum and standards as everyone else. . .
(Omitted)

Researcher: Education about skill development?

Mike: It's always about going deeper and developing skills.

Researcher: If you had unlimited funds and time what skills would you teach in communication and conflict?

Mike: I would want to turn back the clock on their families. I would want them to be read to from the time they are in the womb. I don't know that, that would take away anything from what their home lives are like now, I think it would be additive. If I could get words, language, and books to them we would have a culture of readers. It drives me crazy that they are not, it drives us all crazy. I would like to have the kids be more comfortable with reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Researcher: I find listening interesting because Alaska Native culture is known as a listening culture. You don't see your students exhibiting that in the classroom?

Mike: It depends on what they want to hear. They are listening cultures, that's true but it depends what they want to get from it. We are taught, trained, and told to give these kids more time to answer when calling on them and when they are quiet we are told to let them stay quiet and give them more time before moving on to the next person. I think it is because there is a cultural proclivity to not coming up with an answer right away. There might be some neural linguistic circuits that are actually slower because of the lack of spoken language up when they are 13 years old. They're looking at that 30 million word deficit through no fault of their own. What would I do with unlimited funds? I've often said if school reform still has 4 walls and a clock it's not reform.

Researcher: You need a completely different everything?

Mike: Oh yea. Public education basically mirrors training of the Prussian army.

Researcher: If you have students who disagree about something, with each other, do you see that often?

Mike: No. People, and by people I mean my students, are clever about keeping things out of each other's eyes. If kids don't want adults to know they are as clever as adults at hiding. That doesn't necessarily hold true about a secret. If someone pulls a number on a Saturday and everyone is talking about it on Monday teachers find out pretty quickly. By and large if students want to have communication behind my back they are as apt at it as any adult. People are good at keeping things out of each other's eyes. . . .(Omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Mike: Oh god, everything is interpersonal and it's quite violent.

Researcher: Violent physically or violent emotionally?

Mike: Violent emotionally. It is vicious when girls want to be nasty to each other they find ways even to keep that out of the teacher's eyes. They can be horrendously vicious to each other and they are incredibly clever at hiding that.

Researcher: Can you give me some examples of something you have seen or heard?

Mike: I've only heard about it but it has to do with competition around boys. I don't hear about because the girls don't want me to know about it. I think they are good at keeping me from knowing about it, but its competition around boys that is lingering and deep. It's bad because it's divided groups of our girls against each other. There is a viciousness, which goes on and lingers in ways which guy conflicts don't. Once guys figure out what the pecking order is they kind of go about it. When girl are still competing and there is still bad history between girls from years before it will continue for years.

Researcher: What is the power dynamic when that happens?

Mike: They care deeply about what each other say.

Researcher: Within their own age group or within the school?

Mike: One of the nice things about being an adult is we outgrow that and don't care.

Students are deeply caring when they hear a student said, "I was a bitch," they tear into each other with words and then it might spill out into physical intimidation with the girls, not with the boys.

Researcher: The girls are much more boisterous about conflict when it does bubble up?

Mike: They get it to bubble up outside of adult eyes.

Researcher: When the girls start arguing is it more about their relationship with other girls or is it about how they are perceived in the school?

Mike: That's specific, I don't know.

Researcher: You talked about factions in the girls and them backstabbing etc., what do boys do?

Mike: There is a gym basketball culture, and they work conflict out through demonstrable skills on the basketball court. They leave the smart kids alone. That's one of the neat things about being here, is it's a culture that doesn't tear down the smart kids. We've got some smart, smart kids that apply themselves and they are the dominate culture. We've got some weak kids that don't apply themselves but they are on the outside of the culture. That is an interesting difference in Effie and other schools.

Researcher: Are the girls the same way?

Mike: No.

Researcher: No matter boys or girls, is conflict carried out through avoidance, competition, compromise, accommodation, or collaboration?

Mike: What I see is they will try and pull into teams. They will try and get people on their side. What I don't see are stronger women saying you know 'you need to just shut up, you're making the problem worse.' That's just not a message that is spoken by women or girls here. There are no strong women asserting their leadership.

Researcher: Is there within the boys?

Mike: Yea, but the way the two genders deal with conflict, girls use words as weapons, boys use hips checks and sometimes shove each other into lockers. Girls are not known as being push you into locker kinds of people but they do use words that are just vicious. I don't see the kinds of leadership you'd like to see in the older dominant looked up to senior. I've not seen that leadership in the girls here and boys don't use words that way.

Researcher: Is leadership something you think could be taught at school?

Mike: I don't see the classroom as being limiting.

Researcher: When the girls are backstabbing, is it clear to the other students what they are angry about?

Mike: There are no secrets here.

Researcher: How do they make it clear?

Mike: That's not true we have some girls who are one the outside, who are quite. They are not beaten down but they certainly don't feel like they've got a lot of friend

support. We've got a handful of girls that don't know what's going on because they are basically invisible to the other 70%. Within that 70% everybody knows everything.

Researcher: So they know everything, maybe not clearly and directly but if they are not told directly they'll find out from a 3rd party?

Mike: Yep. I don't know, I've got a group of 3-4 girls who are both talking to each other and working well or fighting and think, 'she's the biggest mega bitch and I don't want to sit at her table.' I can't read all of those signs because there is a whole separate world going on outside of my eyes I am not supposed to know about.

Researcher: Would a student ever say I am not working with this person today?

Mike: They would never use that particular language, No. . . . (Omitted)

Researcher: How do you handle that as a teacher?

Mike: I think the ability to handle conflict and work together is one of life's skills so I make them work together. I make them sit down at a table as say get over it. You need to deal with it, suck it up because it's an adult living skill. The girls don't like that. The boys, they just do it.

Researcher: Do boys or girls score higher academically?

Mike: Lets' look it up. . . .(We look them up and find a 50-50 split male-female)

Researcher: You said the girls often fight about boys?

Mike: Honor roll kids are not sucked into the stupid shit.

Researcher: It's just the lower performers, I am curious about lower tier students. From what I understand at Effie about 70% of students are indigenous.

Mike: Indigenous is not it. Poverty is. Broken, family is. That is the variable. I've got kids that are hard charging Alaskan Natives. I don't see honor role as dependent on cultural background. What I do see it dependent on is poverty, single parents, functioning household. Period, full stop, that's it. You can write that in bold letters and underline it. I don't see anything else. There is no predetermined factors that weed out a kid that's not that. Poverty will weed every kid out.

Researcher: Is there anything the school or teachers can do to get parents engaged who show no willingness to engage in their students academics.

Mike: They have tried. It's passive. Sending invite after invite, and holding open house after open house. They have to come to us because we can't bring the school to their homes. The school has tried a lot of things over the years. Families don't participate because school has been a legal mandatory thing that largely has been a culture disruptor. School has been a destroyer, rather than something positive. Grandma, Mother, Dad, and Uncles they don't want to ever come to school, this is an uncomfortable place. School has been the thing I have to do legally. The elders and parents themselves are deeply conflicted, they don't like school yet in their bones they want their children and grandchildren to go to school and have a different, better experience than their own. So they come to school and really mean it when they say to their kids, 'I want you to graduate.' That's true but there is no inertia behind it, there are not habits to fall upon.

Researcher: If the school is going to focus on building communication and conflict resolution skills what would you recommend?

Mike: Speaking work. There is a lack of organization and discipline in how they deal with information. I have to go back to basic linear thinking patterns because the kids can't take new information and integrate it. Once you get to a critical mass of education all new information begins bouncing off and associating with all other prior knowledge and the acceleration in learning takes off. It becomes like a slingshot in learning ability and it's what is missing in these class rooms. They can associate everything that is tangible in their family and village traditions and it works perfectly.

Researcher: If you were going to use a metaphor to describe communication and conflict at the school what would it be?

Mike: A school for the deaf. Not that they are not listening, but they're not using words the same way. They are using all kinds of communication but it just doesn't look familiar to us.

Researcher: Is the problem with student's communication style or the way the western world sees them communicate?

Mike: (omitted)

Researcher: Your students are living in a split between the western world and a historic culture. Do they understand that juxtaposition or are they just trying to survive?

Researcher: They don't have the self-reflexivity ability to recognize it. They know deep down that they are losing something every time they see a village elder die and they don't want to lose that. It's the same thing with native language classes. They

are trying to save it because they really want it, they don't have the study skills to do it but they are trying.

Researcher: Do their parents understand?

Mike: Probably.

Researcher: What else do you want us to know about communication and conflict?

Mike: I wish students could get to that critical mass of association and the best way to do that is by reading. . . .(Omitted)

Researcher: Is there anything else you want to share?

Mike: We need strong female leadership. We need rock star women teachers in the high school. We need strong women role models. That would help a lot with the girls that are struggling socially and academically. They have no rock star auntie kicking ass and taking names, really strong, capable women. We don't have strong female leaders in the high school.

Researcher: Thank you.

D6 Diana: (omitted)

D7 Jane

Researcher: Let's start by defining conflict . . . (interrupted by Jane)

Jane: Here there is every kind of conflict.

Researcher: When there is conflict between students is there one thing that brings it to the forefront?

Jane: I have no idea. I don't ever see direct conflict unless it's directly at me and that's rare.

Researcher: (omitted)

Jane: (omitted)

Researcher: Physical conflict does not happen often but what about students verbally sparing, disagreeing, things like that?

Jane: I know it happens but I also know that kids here are very connected to one another.

It is not like they are all groupies but they have their own friends. A lot of kids are here to get through school with an agenda for themselves and because it's a smaller school they purposely avoid drama.

Researcher: Some students are here to get through school and get out?

Jane: Yep.

Researcher: The majority of your students are Alaskan Native, correct?

Jane: Yep.

Researcher: Do you know what the percentage is?

Jane: I'll it up before the interview is over.

Researcher: Okay. You said some of the kids are very well connected and some of the kids just try to get through school on their own. Do you think it has anything to do with cultural life?

Jane: I think a lot of it has to do with people living scattered. Effie Kokrine a kind of like a magnet school with kids are coming from all over Fairbanks. It's not like a neighborhood school and everyone lives next door to each other and they can walk over to someone's house and hang out. They are probably doing that, but not like you would see in a neighborhood school.

Researcher: Do you think that makes it difficult for them to develop friendships?

Jane: I think they all have friends. A lot of them have good friendships between different people we may not see here. Their friends might be at a different high school, might be older, they might not be the people they are in class with every day.

Researcher: Do you think that it is positive or negative for the student's closest relationships not to be people they are in class with.

Jane: It depends. I think you don't have to have friends in here. I think in a way it can be negative for some things. I think everybody here has at least one person they connect with. A peer their own age or a teacher, somebody.

Researcher: Students change a lot throughout their time in the school. Do you notice a difference between the younger and older students in their friendship or disagreement styles?

Jane: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Jane: Yea.

Researcher: In high school do students interact with multiple grade levels?

Jane: Yep.

Researcher: Is the transition between the middle and the high school difficult for students?

Jane: I think the hardest part of the transition is there is just a different academic expectation. It's not that the academics are slack in the middle school. It's that if student chose to do a math project that lasted all day in the middle school that's

what they would do. It's not structured so you've got an hour for math and an hour later something else. If they're working on a reading or social studies project that goes across curriculum they can do that all day. They are not going to do all day that in high school.

Researcher: The high school is more structured?

Jane: Very structured, in the fact that they have to finish with 22.5 credits. So that's their goal every year is to finish 6 credits.

Researcher: Do you see any cultural differences in how students adjust to that between Alaska Native and other cultures?

Jane: I think a lot of it has to do with families. If the family is academically versed it doesn't matter your culture you're going to have a structure and expectation in your life before you even get to the school. . . .(Omitted) . . . We are at a place in this school where we are able meet the parent where they are . . . (omitted)

Researcher: I hear you saying a parent came in as a requirement of the school and instead of the meeting having a focus on academics it was more catharsis. It sounds almost like a confession is that accurate?

Jane: It's not a confession. They go over this stuff but at the same time to talk more in depth about academics, that wasn't going to happen. . . .(Omitted)

Researcher: What percentage of the students has adequate family support in life skills and skills?

Jane: I'd say low. Maybe 3-4 percent

Researcher: Very few students are getting what they need at home, in terms in developing academically and personally?

Jane: Maybe somewhere between 3-20%, it's really low. I think there are people who try. Extended family who try and help and other people who have a pulse on the situation but I do not believe there is the family like you and I grew up in. There are a few but that is mostly middle school and the exception, not the rule. . .
(Omitted)

Researcher: That story makes me curious about student economic situations. Typically when thinking of struggling student they are not associated with wealth. Are many of the family in the school struggling financially?

Jane: Oh Yea. The families here are not wealthy. I would not say we have a high socioeconomic status in this building. We have a lot of homeless students. We have a lot of kids in foster care.

Researcher: The story you told was the exception not the rule?

Jane: There are parents who are really well off, but they would never display that. It's really hard to tell, you'd think someone making \$50-\$55,000 a year isn't starving. With the number of iPhones I see here and the number of nice vehicles I see here, who knows where the money goes.

Researcher: When students are struggling in school. Is it a student conscious choice not to put forth effort? Or are student influenced by families saying school doesn't matter?

Jane: No, I don't think that is the issue at all. Maybe it is for some but in the big picture I don't think it is. Elders will tell students they have to get an education. They have to be able to work in this world and don't really have a choice. Students have to learn to walk in two worlds. I think their outside life heavily influences what happens here. But choosing not to learn your times tables.

Researcher: You think its personal student choices/

Jane: I think a lot of it is laziness or why should I learn math when I can use a calculator.

Well, if you're on a job site you're not going to use a calculator. You better know that plywood is 3X8 and you better know it now. And you better know there is 32sqft in a sheet of plywood.

Researcher: In your view academic failure is often times is a result of student disengagement?

Researcher: I think their disengagement comes from outside influences. They keep coming to school and that's where the line gets fuzzy. Are students here because they don't have a warm place to be and hot food? Or are you here to actually finish up regardless of outside influences and keep moving forward . . . (omitted)

Researcher: Do student ever bring alcohol or marijuana to school?

Jane: (omitted)

Researcher: Do the students need someone pushing them to succeed in positive and negative?

Jane: Yes, they need somebody.

Researcher: Do you see a difference if nagging is done negatively or positively?

Jane: It's got to be positive. It can be both but you really want to always bend it to the positive, using the, I statement. I see you're able to do this. You have to be able to use those strategies.

Researcher: Showing students you see potential in them as opposed to saying your being lazy or something?

Jane: No, you don't want to twist it that way. The more kids feel that support from their teachers or whoever their person is in the building, they are going to keep moving forward. Family is a big thing to these kids, in their culture, don't disappoint family. Because if you disappoint family it's going to go all the way back to god knows who.

Researcher: Spreads through the community?

Jane: Yea.

Researcher: Is that the same for non-native students?

Jane: Hard to say. I don't see enough of that culture. We have a few African Americans here but I really don't see enough of the white or African American culture where I can pinpoint that.

Researcher: Roughly 25% of the students at Effie are non-native and there is an emphasis on traditional ways of learning. Is that an appropriate way to phrase that?

Jane: I don't think they do traditional learning. They do a lot of traditional knowledge in the middle school.

Researcher: They don't in the high school?

Jane: In the high school it's more of a traditional academic track. We do things around certain events but most of the culture teaching is at the 7-8 grade level. We all talk about the values in all grades though.

Researcher: Do students who don't come from traditional native cultures appreciate traditional knowledge or does it disenfranchise them?

Jane: No, when they come here I say if you lived in Spain would you study Spanish culture. Wherever you are your learning about that culture and not only do we teach them about the traditional Athabascan culture but we also emphasize, where did you, as an individual, come from. What is your culture? What does your family tree look like? We are going to tell you about where we are, who we are, and where we came from but at the same time why don't you learn about yourself and where you come from and bring that to the table. In order to have a diversity and richness of culture everyone needs to know where they come from. That's why we teach pieces of traditional life and pieces of other cultures. At this school it's going to be the Athabascan culture we teach because this is where we live.

Researcher: (omitted)

Jane: (omitted)

Researcher: A faculty member intervened before there could be a response?

Jane: (omitted)

Researcher: When you see student-to-student conflict is there usually a more aggressive student or are they usually pretty equal in the back and forth?

Jane: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Jane: (omitted)

Researcher: Yea. I still have it.

Jane: (omitted)

Researcher: What are teachers mediating?

Jane: (omitted)

Researcher: Are they often mediations involving family or support members?

Jane: Nope. Anything that is impacting the kids is what teachers mediate. It might be their temper today or they didn't get enough to eat and their just going to be a little asshole all day long. Then teachers have to intervene.

Researcher: If you were going to have a Lettermen top 10 list, what are the most important skills students need to gain in communication and conflict?

Jane: Gain the I statement, take responsibility that's the biggest part. The next piece is students having tools to say, "wait a minute, I need to step back, I am in a heated moment and I need to step back." Kids don't have those tools because their grappling to survive and to hold what they have together.

Researcher: The most important thing is to teach students to take responsibility?

Jane: Yes, check in with yourself. Did I eat today? It could have a lot do with why you are on edge. They have to have skills to take care of themselves in a positive way.

Researcher: Is there anything we can teach students that will help with family involvement in academic success?

Jane: It has to come from the student not the school because school is authority. If it comes from the kid and the kid says, 'I really want you to come to this meeting tonight. Can you talk to your boss about getting off work early?'

Researcher: Parents will do it for a child but they won't do it for an authority figure?

Jane: Right! If they won't come for the kid and the kid comes to the school and says I tried to get my parent to come and they won't, will you help me? Then we have to intervene. When it comes from the kids, the parent is more likely to engage.

Researcher: Do student behaviors often mirror parental behaviors?

Jane: I am sure they do.

Researcher: Does it become a cycle of parental disengagement then the students are disengaged?

Jane: You have kids who are way more engaged than the parents are.

Researcher: This goes back to the staff member engagement we were talking about?

Jane: Yep.

Researcher: What else could be important to know in trying to figure out ways to help students develop communication and conflict skills?

Jane: You have to know where students are. Ask student when they get in an argument, 'do you diffuse it or do you escalate?' they don't know.

Researcher: Is that something that if time and funding didn't matter could be taught?

Jane: In small groups.

Researcher: What is the split of boys and girls at the school?

Jane: Let's look it up. . . . (Appendix B)

Researcher: Do you students realize the power they have or give up when they take responsibility?

Jane: Nope. If they did they would be taking more of it.

Researcher: Do faculty or staff member realize the power students could have or give up?

Jane: Of course they do. When kids take ownership you see difference in the kid.

Researcher: Do staff members have the skills to help students in conflict and communication.

Jane: I think they do if we had time and all the money in the world. It cannot be a scripted program it has to be something where an issue arises these are the action steps. We don't have an extra person who's going to say hey, "what's up guys. Let's talk." So with that how do we address it? If we had 4 days we did a workshop with the kids. Here are your advisors here are your peer mediators. So with that you have a workshop where the students are helping lead the workshop. It's a student lead workshop.

Researcher: Train peer mediators then have the peer mediators and staff members train the rest of the student population?

Jane: An award at the end to say thank you for stepping up would engage students. Saying you're going to the national leadership conference and it's all paid for through this program at the university. Something like that and getting two college credits for attending where they can all work together to bring something to the table. This model of student led program will succeed but it will take some time.

Researcher: Is there anything else that is important to know about conflict and communication in the school?

Jane: (omitted)

Researcher: You even envision a system where students hold a brokering authority over adults and mediate with them?

Jane: Yea!

Researcher: Would the adults follow that system?

Jane: I don't know. I like it set up like a mini court. People go to arbitration over instances and talk about it. It can be over anything and with anyone, that way we can get kids to understand what mediation is.

Researcher: Do you think there are some employees who would be unreceptive to giving up some power over students?

Jane: I don't if it's guided the correct way. You can't just turn these kids loose, you have to create a structure. Let's say there is a huge blowout, right now when a kid gets in trouble they get either an in school or out of school suspension... We need to be saying okay you were written up your are going to have to meet on Friday afternoon at 3:45 have a meeting of your peers. That person comes to the table and has to state what happened with the paper that was written up and explain why. The school also has to explain why we are considering out of school suspension.

Researcher: The decision is coming from other students?

Jane: This is coming from other students. This is almost like junior court.

Researcher: Student peers would make decision into resolution?

Jane: long with an advisor, one or two of the faculty staff members would have a say.

Researcher: What I hear you saying is that you are not looking for students to facilitate communication in conflict but you're looking for students who can arbitrate and make decisions on outcomes. Is that accurate?

Jane: NO! I am saying if you can't have it resolved with a mediation moment than it needs another step. Maybe the one who got dinged needs to sit there in the circle with the people who have the tools and have been trained. Maybe you're sitting amongst your peers and all of the sudden you realize this is a little bit bigger deal than I had considered. Maybe I need to learn to take some responsibility for my actions.

Researcher: You're envisioning a multilevel process where conflict between anyone of any position, student or staff is resolved?

Jane: Or let's just walk over here and discuss.

Researcher: If it doesn't get resolved at that point you want a second level of student and faculty arbitration, even if it is a disagreement with a faculty or staff member?

Jane: Yes because when it's form the top down what does that do to the kid? It makes them rebel against authority for any type of conflict. This system gives a voice to talk about issues with a teacher you can't stand.

Researcher: Is there trust between the students and the staff to have these conversations?

Jane: That's what I am saying. Now you're in these peer mediation groups and your mediated faculty peers and people of conflict meeting. Somewhere these two people have got to come to an agreement.

Researcher: Both sides are going to have to give a little?

Jane: I am willing to meet you half way. What do I need to do to help you with everyone else watching? Because if it happens again we will be right back here talking about this again.

Researcher: Do students have enough faith and trust to have open honest conversations in that regard?

Jane: You have to build to that, you can't just jump in and decide that this is what is going to happen. It has to be built on itself, if it is not it will fall and flop. It has to be a series of building blocks to get to the arbitration moment.

Researcher: Is there anything else we need to know?

Jane: Not unless you have the magic bullet of getting parents to bring kids to school, no one does.

Researcher: Thank you

D8 Jason

Researcher: In conflict do your students communicate well?

Jason: We will talk about multiple levels of conflict. I would say the most vexing is teacher student conflict. I would say students in general communicate concretely. There are always, multiple cues from students that lead to conflict. If a teacher is not picking them up for whatever reason than things progress. . .(omitted). . .The

end result is I don't think communication between students is complex or confusing but it's very confusing for some staff members and as a result you can say also as we are thinking about developing skills and habit the same is true there. This is a long way of saying their communication between each other is strait forward. There is not a whole lot that is unpredictable with experience though there are still staff members here who have trouble reading those cues.

Researcher: Students together communicate fine?

Jason: They communicate in their language, in their terms, and it works.

Researcher: Is there a skill set we can help students learn to help transition from their terms to the western world?

Jason: Self-advocacy in a proactive positive manner. If you look at our demographics we are at like 80% free and reduced lunch and 75%, upwards of that, Alaska Native population. Lots of kids in poverty, not of the dominate culture, and one of the themes is these kids have had a lot of chips fall against them that's for sure. When they need to advocate for themselves they go into it as though things are going to work against them. What you and I know is that you've got to advocate for yourself all the time. There's red tape to negotiate, there are big bureaucracies working against you. (Omitted)

Researcher: What happens if students need something from another student, will they advocate for themselves in that way?

Jason: Kid by kid, day by day. These guys are very forgiving with each other. (Omitted).

Researcher: Is there is difference in how boys work through conflict and how girls do that?

Jason: I think overall the girls perform better academically and socially, they are more mature. You really have to take it on a case by case basis. So much of what we do at a small school like this arises out of individualizing with kids. I think there are communication conflict resolution skills students need to learn and we could sell to kids because the beyond the school it's relevant. We have kids working, kids in college and this is relevant. I would say we have some tough girls here. They have lived some tough lives and they are survivors. They basically have had no choice but learn to fight for themselves. What is the statistic, one out of every four Alaska Native girls will be raped or sexually abused by the time they are 20. . . (Omitted)

Researcher: Is there a common theme of conflict revolving around relationships, identity, process, or content?

Jason: conflict arises out of maturity generally in ninth and tenth grade. Then we see a clear division, a switch flips and when they get into 11th grade they get more serious about school and they become more able to communicate with you. The conflicts that I would see with older kids generally have to do with talking trash about each other on Facebook, texting, in the hallway.

Researcher: Without a lot of physical fights in the school, how do those issues get resolved?

Jason: There's been less and less of it and I think it's a reflection of the culture of this school. . . (Omitted). A lot of time, trash talking is female. Guys if there is an issue will just walk up to person and they'll go then, or they'll just avoid it. The girls it just stews and it goes on at lunch and they're crying and angry. . . . (Omitted). That type of female conflict is often around guys. It's very troubling from an adult standpoint because it's so demeaning to the girls themselves. Often it's a case where the boyfriend messes around with someone else and the girlfriend isn't mad at the boyfriend but she wants to kick the butt of the other girl. What about her self-respect. If I could have any wish it would be that that girls would feel more self-worth to the point where action like that would primarily be, "what a dick, I am going to break up with you." If I could have them learn anything it would be conflict resolution is not a sign of weakness it is a sign of strength and actually a sign of maturity and my ability to hang on to the things I want for myself and not be diverted from them. Those are big wants.

Researcher: Do boys or girls see the power steaming from those relationships?

Jason: The girls do. If you get them talking one on one and you have close relationship with them the girls see it.

Researcher: The girls let things fester and simmer?

Jason: It will get on Facebook and then it's she said, she said, and this derogatory negative energy.

Researcher: Do they continually bring it up in small ways or do they just pretend like it doesn't exist?

Jason: If you go out in the hall you'll see it.

Researcher: They are not avoiding it they are letting it come up but not explode?

Jason: Yea.

Researcher: Do students work together in arguments separating into factions?

Jason: Oh yea.

Researcher: Are those factions cut along gender, age, culture lines or anything else?

Jason: (omitted)

Researcher: Do the 25% or so of students who are not Alaska Native get involved in the drama?

Jason: No, generally if you're not native here and you like it here and are the kind of person who operates very comfortably in situations where you are not in the majority. You have a set of skills you are not even aware of, that serve you very well in a school like this. You are very tolerant, open minded and you probably have worked with people from different backgrounds.

Researcher: Other than boys is there patterns of things students argue over?

Jason: Not really.

Researcher: Is there a metaphor you can use to describe conflict and communication at the school?

Jason: I am going to differ from the other staff members because I think fundamentally our challenge is not managing inter-student conflict. I think its managing adult-to-student conflict. That is demanding more time and resources right now than anything.

Researcher: What is the community's perception of this school?

Jason: It depends on whom you talk to. It's an increasingly positive perception. To the non-native community that is not aware of the school in any detail it's the native school where the troubled kids go, with the low test scores. I think right now school culture is a hard to put your finger on objectively or take data on but it is tangible. It impacts the overall performance of the kids in a very profound way. The culture of this school is on a very positive trajectory. It's kind of taken care of itself. I would go back to more some of the things I've repeated which is: teaching kids tools to advocate for themselves. I truly believe right now one of our biggest challenges is I don't think we have good systems for mentoring new teachers or for bringing new teachers in to the culture. How do you teach someone to operate in a cross-cultural setting? Back to your question if there is a metaphor, I don't have one.

Researcher: What else do you want us to know about communication and conflict at Effie?

Jason: Be careful generalizing. We have 75% Alaska Native students that means a ton of things. You can't generalize about how they communicate, how they handle culture, their self-image or their self-identity. It's literally kid by kid and case by case. Again I think the greatest need right now is training in conflict resolution for adults. Ninety-five percent of the conflict in the school is staff-student conflict.

Researcher: Is there anything else you want us to know?

Jason: It's not a money issue. You're going to hear that from different people in different meetings. The distance between meeting the academic goals and graduation and attendance goals for us as a school are not a lack of funding. We are not lacking funding, it's the approach, and it's how we apply our energy. Grants are not sustainable over time, they run out. The knowledge and skills are here in the building right now.

J: Thank you

D9 Abbey

Researcher: Are there reoccurring conflicts at Effie Kokrine?

Abbey: Nothing more than any other school.

Researcher: Do you see conflict at all in the school?

Abbey: I see conflict with them towards me.

Researcher: Do your students communicate well with each other?

Abbey: Yea they are very honest and very straightforward. I see them being very good at communicating with each other.

Researcher: Both the boys and the girls?

Abbey: Yea.

Researcher: What is the school like?

Abbey: (omitted)

Researcher; (omitted)

Abbey: Yes, that's it exactly.

Researcher: Do the students have issues like that when talking with each other?

Abbey: I don't think so.

Researcher: What about the students who are not native?

Abbey: Some of the students get offended by things that get said because that person who said it didn't realize someone from the culture they were talking about was in the room. (Omitted)

Researcher: Thinking about the students, do they disagree often or are they reticent to disagree?

Abbey: Sometimes they all have their own opinions and they are not afraid to share them usually.

Researcher: What happens when their opinions contradict?

Abbey: They are usually pretty good at making sure people are aware there are different options and it's okay. People will voice options and that are different and it's usually okay. It's just a conversation. I think it has something to do with the way adults here talk to each other. It's the same way staff might have different opinions but they are very cordial about it.

Researcher: In conflict terms it sounds like what your saying is when students disagree it's not destructive, it's constructive?

Abbey: They might not say, "Oh that is a great idea, I didn't think about it that way." Sometimes that do but often they have different ideas about how an answer might be.

Researcher: How much of that do you think is influenced by their home lives?

Abbey: Tons. They are extremely family focused. A lot of them are cousins, or brothers, or relatives, and that is big huge deal for them. They are also independent and seem to have their own opinions about things and they think of their own.

Researcher: Students understand the family teachings but they don't take it as gospel truth, coming to conclusions on their own?

Abbey: I think so. I can't say that for sure because I don't know exactly how things are happening at home, but it seems to be the case. They are pretty open minded.

Researcher: How does poverty affect your students?

Abbey: (omitted)

Researcher: Do your students have the language skills to handle a disagreement with an adult or with each other?

Abbey: Sometimes, other times they don't have the role models to teach them how to handle dispute in the most tactful way. They might have issues explaining that they having issues. They tend to blow up instead of talking it out.

Researcher: The boys, the girls or both?

Abbey: Both. They'll shut down. Won't do anything or say anything.

Researcher: Almost like a child temper tantrum?

Abbey: Right absolutely.

Researcher: Sometimes they'll blow up and say, "I am outta here," and walk off? Do the students realize the power they have in doing that?

Abbey: I am sure some of them do. Based on those that decide to blow up, they use all sorts of colorful language. We have a lot swearing.

Researcher: When they are upset is there a lot of swearing?

Abbey: They swear no matter what. They'll swear in here and I have to say, "Watch the language" and they'll be like, "what about it?" "What's wrong with it? They don't understand why it's inappropriate to speak that way of illegal substances such as alcohol or pot.

Researcher: When students are mad at each other do you ever see that?

Abbey: Oh yea.

Researcher: Do they each know what the other person is trying to accomplish when they are mad?

Abbey: I think they understand why the other person is mad but not always. Sometimes there is miscommunication, which is probably why someone is mad to begin with. Sometimes they can resolve it but other times they start to threaten each other.

Researcher: (omitted)

Abbey: Yea. A "what are you going do about it," type thing.

Researcher: Is it the same when they disagree with a faculty or staff member?

Abbey: Yea sometimes. I experience plenty of defiance. In my mind, if you're not doing what I am asking you to do that's defiance. That's rude, you're not being respectful that wasn't necessarily seen as defiance by other staff members. Sometimes when I think about it I can see why they were upset or can understand later on why they had that reaction, but they are not very tactful about it at all. They can't really control those outbursts even to a teacher.

Researcher: There are 4 kinds of conflict goals: Identity, Content, Relational, and Process. Do you see any of these more than the others?

Abbey: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Abbey: Sometimes they will be aggressive and say, "Knock that off," or something if it gets to the points it happened a lot. If that person was having a bad day to begin with it escalates to, "what are you going to do about it," and getting in each other's face.

Researcher: Is that the same with boys and girls?

Abbey: That would be more the boys.

Researcher: What do the girls do when that happens?

Abbey: Usually the girls are pretty quiet. The girls will sit there and smolder I guess.

Researcher: What do you want us to know about communication and conflict in school?

Abbey: It would be lovely to have some sort of counselor, psychologist, something like that. I know there is need for that. There is a need for people to be able to talk about what's going on at home or personal lives because that's usually what starts conflict at school. They are trying to deal with something at home and having a bad day here because of it. They need to learn how to deal with conflict in a more productive way instead of blowing up at other people.

Researcher: When students have problems at home is there anyone at school they can talk to about it?

Abbey: It's usually teachers or their friends because that's all that's here. There is a not guidance counselor or anything else. They are pretty good at talking to each other.

Researcher: Are they good at listening?

Abbey: (omitted)

Researcher: Are they good at listening to each other across cultural lines?

Abbey: It's dependent on the group.

Researcher: When you say group do you mean they self-segregate?

Abbey: Yea, I see that a little bit. It seems like the African Americans tend to hang out with each other and the natives tend to hang out with themselves. The white kids tend to mix with everybody.

Researcher: Is the school a melting pot or a stew in the classic assimilation or mixing metaphor?

Abbey: I think they are more of a melting pot at younger ages and a stew with the upperclassman.

Researcher: When students disagree, do they compromise, avoid, accommodate, collaborate, or compete?

Abbey: All of the above. I think it depends on the person and the situation.

Researcher: Is there a metaphor you can use to describe conflict and communication at Effie Kokrine?

Abbey: I can't think of any. I guess I don't see a whole lot conflict, I do but I don't. It's weird I don't see people being mad at each other for very long. If they are mad I have no clue because they avoid each other.

Researcher: What do you mean you see a lot conflict but you don't? Is it that you see it in short bursts?

Abbey: Yea, that would explain it perfectly. It's a day-to-day thing. On a good day I forget there are conflicts, it cycles.

Researcher: When you say it cycles, does it cycle with the same students? Or is it like catching a cold and goes everywhere?

Abbey: Usually its particular students that tend to get upset more often.

Researcher: With other students or with you?

Abbey: (omitted)

Researcher: If you had unlimited time and money to improve communication and conflict what skills would you teach students?

Abbey: (omitted)

Researcher: Is there anything else you want us to know?

Abbey: Not really.

J: Thank you.

D10 Katie

Researcher: Do you see conflict in the school?

Katie: We have conflict. We have drama is what my students call it. We have girl drama and boy drama.

Researcher: What is girl drama?

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: Does stuff like that often happen on social media?

Katie: It happens regularly. You are dealing with teenagers. When you look at all the factors children of poverty come from one of the ways they express themselves is through fighting. They don't have mediation abilities because they are not taught that at home. Their way of resolving problems is by arguing.

Researcher: Is it that they don't have language control, emotion control or both?

Katie: I think it would be both and it comes from not having learned how to work through a problem. They are pretty good at confronting it, different levels of it. There is always little things going on almost on a daily basis. Teachers we have to get in there and talk about it, it could be little things like I am tired of you calling me this, or every time I walk by you smack me on the back of the head, or you're talking about me your spreading rumors, that kind of stuff is constant.

Researcher: What is the difference in girl drama and boy drama?

Katie: Those are their self-defined terms.

Researcher: They actually use those terms?

Katie: Yea.

Researcher: (omitted)

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Katie: Boy dram has to do with somebody getting tripped and somebody is always doing that because that is the way boys relate to each other. That's how they express affection.

Researcher: He's my friend so I shoved him in the hall way. I don't like him so I shoved him in the hallway?

Katie: Right, it's the same thing. I can shove him because he's my friend or cousin. Girl drama is more verbal attacks side talking, rumors about appearance and how they act around boys, or who their boyfriend is, that kind of stuff.

Researcher: Is boy drama short term and girl drama long term?

Katie: I am not sure I would say that, it's all relative.

Researcher: What I mean is you described boy drama as maybe an act that comes and goes. . . (Interrupted by Katie with her response)

Katie: Girl drama is more drawn out because it's behind the scenes.

Researcher: (omitted)

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: Those are the things that start conflict but what furthers it?

Katie: That the vehicle to carry out your feelings. It seems like the majority of the cases do start when someone slights someone else. In my experience it usually starts

with a look, or a snide comments or someone said you said this and the situation gets perpetuated.

Researcher: When students disagree is it generally something about themselves, identity, relationship, content, process?

Katie: Identity because one of their most valuable things they have right now, who they are.

Researcher: Does cultural background matter in how students protect their identity?

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: The majority of white students have felt that in some way you think?

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: When students aren't getting along is it ever productive or is it always bad?

Katie: It can lead to productivity.

Researcher: How so?

Katie: If they are not getting along and having an issue and then you sit down and work it out it makes students realize that this is affecting their lives. So that's what makes it productive.

Researcher: When you say they sit down and talk, is that teacher initiated?

Katie: When we sit them down.

Researcher: Are students responsive if you say, 'we need to talk about this,' and you pull two students aside?

Katie: oh yea.

Researcher: What do they say when you say, 'we need to talk?'

Katie: The majority they are happy it's being talked about because they've reached the stage where nobody is getting satisfaction in the conflict. How you handle it as an adult is important because when you're mediating between two students you have to make sure they are both going away feeling like you've taken their side.

Researcher: They want to feel like the adult is there to help, not setting them up to walk into a trap?

Katie: Yep.

Researcher: When girl drama happens and they are catty, is that an appropriate term?

Katie: yea that will work.

Researcher: Do students realize the power they have over the person they are excluding or whatever it is they are doing to them.

Katie: they are so egocentric at this age. One of the things you have to teach them is how their actions affect other students. That's why you have class meetings.

Researcher: How often do you have class meetings to talk about stuff like this?

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Katie: Yes but you can't force them to work it out.

Researcher: Do students who are being bullied understand the power the other person has over them?

Katie: I certainly have never heard them express verbally this person has power over me. Their expressing of feelings is limited to their vocabulary or language. But they know they are being powered over. . . .(Omitted).

Researcher: When boys and girls are in conflict do they need adult intervention or are they good at working it out on their own?

Katie: It depends on what they are disagreeing on. If it's personal relationship they generally need to work it out on their own but if it's a classroom thing I can have control over, yea.

Researcher: (omitted)

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: When students are working out a disagreement do they avoid, compromise, collaborate, compete, or accommodate?

Katie: They are pretty forgiving of each other. When a conflict is over they don't go back and bring it up. It's a clean slate . . . (omitted).

Researcher: How much does home life effect what happens in school?

Katie: They have big bags they bring every day, lots of baggage.

Researcher: Is it obvious which students come from stable homes and which don't?

Katie: Oh yea.

Researcher: Do the kids know themselves who comes from money and who doesn't?

Katie: We don't have any rich kids. 85-87% of our students are on free or reduced lunch program. Then there is another part of that, you wouldn't be able to tell by looking at their clothing because it's important that they have expensive new clothes.

Researcher: (omitted)

Katie: You can tell as a teacher by whose doing the homework and things like that.

Researcher: Can the students tell though?

Katie: The majority are on free or reduced lunch program. They all know their poor.

They know who gets welfare, all that kind of stuff they know.

Researcher: If you had unlimited money and time what would you do to help conflict and communication with students?

Katie: I think they communicate with each other well actually. They communicate all the time. Non-verbal, verbal, texting, whatever, they don't keep secrets from each other. They are very connected so I don't know that that would be the place I would start.

Researcher: Where would you start?

Katie: I would start at material things, getting them state of the art technology. Then I would implement incentive programs to get kids and parents to school. I would give students iPods or whatever it took along with giving the parents monetary incentives to come to school. That's what I would do because once you start getting the parents to come in then it becomes a habit. You've got to get them to come back 3-5 times to make them form the habit and get them comfortable.

Researcher: Are parents unreceptive if you need to talk to them about their students.

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: How long have you been at Effie?

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Katie: (omitted)

Researcher: Is there a metaphor that you can use to describe conflict and communication at Effie Kokrine?

Katie: A sitcom that shows people who stumbled along and figured it out. Raising Hope would be a good metaphor. People who weren't prepared to deal with this issue that suddenly came into their lives. There is a mess up here and there, but it all turns out good in the end. Then they start all over again. The baby comes along pulls them all together, messes it up but turns out okay in the end and they learn something.

Researcher: What else is important for us to know about communication and conflict at Effie Kokrine?

Katie: I e need to help them develop skills negotiating with each other. If they can learn the skill of how to talk to each other without getting into argument it would help. They don't know how to do it and they haven't been taught, or modeled it. It's just so hard for them because they are egocentric they just fight against it, they don't want to see it from another point of view because the value of their argument is going away. If you can teach them language I believe if they learned how to use the language just by repetition maybe that might have impact. For instance when we do small group critiques we follow our writing and thinking patterns, we follow our steps. One of the steps is I hear you saying this and I think that's why I have to actually teach them these words so you teach them that and

even if it doesn't mean something to them I still believe they've got a little bit more grasp of the language to use.

Researcher: Is there anything you want us to know?

Katie: The number one thing is that most of these students love the school. It is there school. . . .(Omitted)

Researcher: Is there anything else you want to share with us?

Katie: I think that's it.

Researcher: Thank you.

D11 Nick

Researcher: What comes to mind when I talk about conflict at the school?

Nick: Girls tend to form alliances with each, they shun each other. When they are in a group setting they are more subtle, not as in each other face like the guys are.

Researcher: How do alliances form, along friendship or cultural lines?

Nick: I have not noticed cultural, it's just whoever their friends are. There's defiantly not much racial stuff here.

Researcher: Do family lives have much to do with how factions split?

Nick: I only get to know some of the parents but I know that some of the students that come from broken or unstable home. They are learning the social cues and rules from home.

Researcher: Students that are coming from less stable homes are getting different social cues than the other kids?

Nick: I think so.

Researcher: Other than family life is there anything else outside of the school that effects how students interact with each other?

Nick: There are some students that don't think they should have to do homework at home. I've had students say they don't want to work at home because they want to hang out with friends and they are only this young once.

Researcher: Does the phrase, 'you only live once,' (YOLO) show up in school?

Nick: It was popular for a little while but it blew over pretty quick.

Researcher: The people who are teachers are strong academically. Is it difficult to teach students that come from different personal or academic backgrounds?

Nick: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Nick: (omitted)

Researcher: When students communicate with each other do you think they have the language skills to communicate clearly or are they missing something?

Nick: There are many students who are operating with limited vocabulary. They are not getting their messages across to others.

Researcher: Do they fill the language void with other forms of communication?

Nick: The guys, with a lot of physical contact. I don't know if it's showing they are buddies or whatever, but they will walk up and poke someone or put them in a headlock.

Researcher: When they do that it's not conflict, its them showing friendship?

Nick: Instead of saying, “hey, how’s it going? I’ll put you in a head lock because I think your fun.”

Researcher: How do the girls show that they are close like that?

Nick: They sit around together and whisper stuff, I don’t know. They are not as physical as guys are that’s for sure. They have their moments but in general not as much.

Researcher: What do they do when they are upset?

Nick: The girls break into factions. The guys just shut down. Some of them won’t do work and will put their head down. They get agitated and if you encourage them to do work. They might not say f-off but will say something that is not very pleasant.

Researcher: How do other students react when a student shuts down?

Nick: They ignore it for the most part. There are students that ignore it but others will try and console them. . . .(Omitted)

Researcher: Does this stuff we are talking about happen often?

Nick: (omitted)

Researcher: When students are upset with each other what are they upset about usually?

Nick: A whole variety of stuff such as people making rumors, boyfriend-girlfriends, people that are interested in each other. If a girl is interested in a guy and another girl is too, all of the sudden they are at odds. Then they piss each other off, no matter what they do. Even saying “hi” will piss off the other girl.

Researcher: Dating, is the biggest thing?

Nick: Dating is probably the biggest one and just not knowing a person causing them to misread a social cue

Researcher: Is that a problem that goes away throughout the school year as students get to know each other better?

Nick: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Nick: (omitted)

Researcher: When students are breaking into factions do they realize the power they have and hold over each other?

Nick: I don't think they are aware of how socially powerful it is to socially isolate somebody. I know they want to bother someone, show them they are not getting along, but I don't think they realize just how frustrating it can be. They know being bullied is lame but they have a hard time empathizing with someone else who is being bullied at the moment.

Researcher: I want to make sure I understood what you said. Please tell me if this is correct or if I need to change the way I heard you slightly. What I hear you saying is, when they are being bullied they understand this is not fun. When they are the party who's upset with somebody and decides they don't see it from the point of view that. Is that accurate?

Nick: I would say that's pretty accurate.

Researcher: Do you think there is a way to change that where students see the whole picture?

Nick: I don't know. We've been working on it for a while.

Researcher: You said it's mostly the girls that do that. Do the guys see that power?

Nick: They can probably see that the girls are doing it to each other. They do it to a degree too. . . .(Omitted).

Researcher: (omitted)

Nick: (omitted)

Researcher: Are those students generally good academically?

Nick: Some work hard and others don't put in the effort, it depends on the kids.

Researcher: Of identity, relationship, content, and process is one a more common reason for conflict in the school?

Nick: Identity is the biggest one. If a kid feels slighted they will act out and show their aggression toward other people. If someone called them out on something they don't feel is true or even if it is true they don't want to be called out.

Researcher: In conflict with others there are 5 styles: avoidance, competition, compromise, collaboration, accommodation, which of those is the most common for students at Effie Kokrine?

Nick: I think it's a mix between avoiding and competing. They either ignore or show a little aggression. Some avoid a lot and act like conflict is not happening?

Researcher: Would it be better if they didn't avoid it? If they just yelled at each other for 5 minutes and moved on?

Nick: If it doesn't escalate some times that helps. Trying to figure out how to give them the tools to debate with some and show them your opinions and have them show

you theirs. For the most part we are able to do that with each other, but trying to give those skills to kids can be difficult.

Researcher: Do students ever see positive conflict resolution at the school?

Nick: Not very much, no. Most of the time if staff meets its behind closed doors because individual students come up as a topic pretty often.

Researcher: Do you think students see conflict resolved successfully at home?

Nick: Probably not if they are seeing what we're seeing. They are probably not seeing it at home.

Researcher: When students are in the middle of disagreement do they change what they want?

Nick: I haven't seen that in one particular conversation but I have seen it with the girls over time. They forget why they are arguing or what they were mad about. They manage to just avoid each other.

Researcher: How do students react if they are really mad and yells f-you and the other student just basically ignores it or doesn't escalate?

Nick: it ends right there. It's when the other student reacts when we have to step in and separate them right away. It doesn't happen too often.

Researcher: Is profanity an issue in the school?

Nick: oh yea. There is a number of kids who have it in their regular vocabulary and they forget they are using it. Either they don't want to control it or they can't. I remind students daily 2-3 in each class.

Researcher: Is it a big deal?

Nick: It's more of a social norm thing. Trying to teach them that you can't drop an f-bomb in an interview or in front of customers?

Researcher: What do we need to know about conflict or communication in the school?

Nick: I think of any school in town it's the easiest because it's a small school and harder to get away from everybody, so you have to address the issue at some point or another. We do establish rapport with students that probably wouldn't at a larger school so sometimes we are able to talk with kids about their conflicts.

Researcher: Is this something that needs addressed here.

Nick: I don't think it's a huge issue. . . .(Omitted)

Researcher: Do you have to do that very often?

Nick: (omitted)

Researcher: In every class or total?

Nick: Total, probably.

Researcher: Is there a metaphor you can use to describe conflict and communication in the school?

Nick: I can't think of a good one.

Researcher: In general when student disagree is it productive or destructive?

Nick: I think it's a mix.

Researcher: What is productive about it?

Nick: They yell for a bit and then they get along, talking about movies or video games or whatever. Sometimes they just need to get their aggression out with each other.

Researcher: When students argue you said it's predominantly about dating, does it generally have to do with something now, past, or future?

Nick: Most of it is in the moment. A lot of them have a hard time looking ahead and there are not too many that hold grudges. We do have a couple that will decide they don't like someone and stick with that deciding, I am not going to deal with you at all for the rest of my life.

Researcher: Is that hard for them to do in such a small school?

Nick: I would think so. I can't imagine not getting along with one when the hallway is this small.

Researcher: anything else that is important for us to know?

Nick: I can't think of anything.

Researcher: Thank you.

D12 Kim

Researcher: Do you see conflict at Effie Kokrine?

Kim: I see it in a more playful manner. I am going to push your paper away so I can get done first. Or I am going to push your cards away so I can get mine out first. Things like that.

Researcher: When playful conflict happens, is it positive, negative, or neutral?

Kim: I think it's positive or neutral as long as both parties are smiling and that's typically the case.

Researcher: (omitted)

Kim: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Kim: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Kim: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Kim: (omitted)

Researcher: At Effie everybody knows everybody?

Kim: Right. Everybody knows everybody.

Researcher: Do students tell you about problems they have with each other?

Kim: No, they tell me about home problems but not problems with each other.

Researcher: Are home problems always family related, never friend related?

Kim: Always family related.

Researcher: Do most students talk to you about their home life?

Kim: Some and typically only in the context of me saying, 'you seem tired today, is something going on.' It's usually more in the context of me probing.

Researcher: (omitted)

Kim: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Kim: (omitted)

Researcher: When you say expressive language, what do you mean?

Kim: Being able to tell me what they know, either in written or orally. It could be expressing feelings but expressing academic knowledge and comprehension questions, telling me a sequence of events. Things like that.

Researcher: (omitted)

Kim: I wouldn't say expressive language issues exist across the board.

Researcher: You see students having trouble finding the right words to show their knowledge, is that a good way to phrase it?

Kim: Yes, it is.

Researcher: Do you think students have those same issues in their personal lives and talking about how they feel?

Kim: With each other in their personal lives I think they understand each other very well.

Within the social constructs, I think they all think they are all the same. . .

.(Omitted)

Researcher: I've heard repeatedly the culture here is awesome, why?

Kim: I think intimacy. I think because it so small and because there is only 4 high school teachers and 4 junior high teachers.

Researcher: Are there significant differences in how students communicate in high school and middle school?

Kim: The high schoolers are more mature. I think just more exposure.

Researcher: Do you think students know how to express personal feelings without profanity?

Kim: I think it's very challenging, not just here. It's a texting generation thing. We had a challenge where the students said, 'sometimes there is only a curse word,' so I told them to think of any curse word and I'll think of a synonym that is not a curse. And they couldn't think of one but it was fun to go through.

Researcher: What skills do we need to develop in students at Effie?

Kim: It's hard because academics are important because there are a lot of kids who want to go on, but some don't some want to go back to where they are from and do the work their family has always done. I think academic skills especially writing skills.

Researcher: (omitted)

Kim: (omitted)

Researcher: Do students ever tell you about other students?

Kim: Yes. I've heard so and so is pregnant or whatever.

Researcher: Why do they tell you?

Kim: (omitted)

Researcher: Why is grammar an issue if students understand each other?

Kim: (omitted)

Researcher: (omitted)

Kim: (omitted)

Researcher: Is it accurate to say that most of the parents of the students you work with are
not educated to high school level?

Kim: I can't say 100% percent but my perception would be yes.

Researcher: If you had unlimited money what would you change in conflict and
communication at the school?

Kim: Smaller groups. I would break them into smaller groups and have them specific
products for specific problems.

Researcher: When students disagree with each other do you ever find out about it?

Kim: Not really, not unless I am in the room.

Researcher: Thank you.