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UMI
THE EFFECTS OF CURRICULAR AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES ON STUDENT-FACULTY
AND STUDENT-STUDENT RELATIONS AT THE SLOAN SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

by

Daniel Alan Horn

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2001
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Graduate College

As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Daniel Alan Horn entitled "The Effects of Curricular and Institutional Changes on Student-Faculty and Student-Student Relations at the Sloan School of Management" and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Patricia MacCorquodale 10/18/01
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Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Dissertation Director
Gary Rhoades
STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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SIGNED: Daniel Hor
I would like to thank the students, faculty members, administrators, and staff members at the Sloan School of Management who participated in this study. You were all extremely generous with your time and insight. In particular, I would like to show my gratitude to John Van Maanen. Your work inspired this study and your constant assistance ushered the research component through to completion.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Allison. You convinced me to seek a doctorate and supported me to the end. For that, and for all of the other ways you better my life, I thank you.
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ABSTRACT

This study tests hypotheses posed in a 1983 article regarding the Sloan School of Management and the Harvard Business School (HBS). In this article, Van Maanen (1983) states that student-faculty and student-student relations in the two MBA programs differ due to their contrasting institutional and curricular characteristics. Subsequently, the Sloan School of Management adopted some of the same characteristics found at HBS. By adopting a cohort system, eliminating the master's thesis as a degree requirement, increasing its program size, and placing greater emphases on student in-class participation and faculty teaching quality relative to research production, the Sloan School has begun to resemble HBS structurally.

Through interviews with MBA students, faculty members, and administrators as well as observations of classes and analysis of documents including course syllabli, this study attempts to determine whether the Sloan culture resembles that found in the literature on HBS. The results show that Sloan's culture looks more similar to that at HBS in some ways. Most importantly, the implementation of the cohort system has increased the sense of cohesiveness among students. In this manner, the Sloan culture has begun to resemble that at HBS. The more dramatic effects on student-faculty and student-student relations that are attributed to the HBS cohort, however, have not begun to appear at Sloan. Nor have the increased emphases on student in-class participation and faculty teaching quality had the same effects at Sloan as they have at HBS.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Problem

In his 1983 article "Golden Passports: Managerial Socialization and Graduate Education", Van Maanen compared two highly selective graduate business administration programs--those at the Harvard Business School (HBS) and MIT's Sloan School of Management. The author used the theory of organizational socialization to explain how the institutional culture of each program influenced both student behavior and the type of positions students entered upon graduation. To apply this theory, the author described the different cultures at HBS and Sloan in great detail, focusing on their student-student and student-faculty relations.

Van Maanen (1983) found very different cultures at the two institutions. At HBS, students were extremely close with one another and developed somewhat antagonistic relations with the faculty. In contrast, Sloan students were not as intimate with their fellow classmates and tended to have closer, less antagonistic relations with the faculty. Van Maanen attributed these differences to certain curricular and institutional characteristics.

Subsequent to the publishing of Van Maanen's (1983) article, the Sloan School adopted several characteristics found at the Harvard Business School, including some of those that Van Maanen cited as being critical factors in the different cultures at HBS and Sloan. As a result, it is the goal of this study to determine whether these changes have affected the Sloan culture, and if so, whether the culture at Sloan has begun to resemble that of HBS as Van Maanen and other authors have described it.
The Details
One major distinction that Van Maanen (1983) drew between the two institutions was the presence of a cohort system at HBS--whereby first-year students enroll in the same classes with the same group of students--and the absence of such a system at Sloan. Van Maanen and other authors who recounted the HBS experience from either a student or faculty member perspective (Henry, 1983; Ewing, 1990; Reid, 1994) found that the cohort, or section, system encouraged cohesiveness among HBS sectionmates. Harvard students grew close through discovering common solutions to common problems and experiencing setbacks and triumphs at the same time. This cohesiveness influenced student-faculty relations as well. When faced with obstacles such as a heavy workload, cohesiveness turned into an "us-versus-them" attitude among HBS students, as they pitted themselves against their professors.

Van Maanen (1983) also suggested that the cohort provides potential power for students vis-à-vis the faculty. By placing students in pre-established groups, HBS had formed mini-organizations through which students could effect change. One of the ways they could do this was by ganging up on the faculty member en masse during class--a manifestation of the "us-versus-them" spirit. Van Maanen claimed that HBS students rarely employed this power in fear of jeopardizing their "golden passports" to high-paying positions upon graduation. Other authors, however, provided several examples of students engaging in such actions (Henry, 1983; Mark, 1987; Ewing, 1990; Reid, 1994).

Van Maanen (1983) noted two other ways that HBS students could employ their potential power: (a) through the course evaluation system, since teaching weighed so heavily upon faculty careers at HBS; and (b) through strong student presence on community-wide committees--HBS had a
very large student body and strong representation relative to the faculty and administration on these committees.

The cohort also affected student-student relations at HBS. Forcing students to share the same classroom for a full year, even insisting that they sit in the same seats all day, every day, elicited tension among students who became overly familiar with their sectionmates. As a result, Van Maanen (1983) found that HBS students developed "impression management skills". These skills served a dual purpose. First, through impression management, students established norms of behavior in the classroom, curbing overt breaches of common decency that either caused or were caused by tempers flaring among students. Second, these skills enabled students to manage the impressions they made on their faculty members, primarily by controlling the actions of their classmates—seeing that no student outshone the rest of the section, for example. Other authors presented numerous examples of students employing these impression management skills (Orth, 1961; Ewing, 1990; Reid, 1994; Elderkin, 1996) in a variety of ways, though none referred to these skills with the same name.

Van Maanen (1983) noted that the cohort provides valid measures of comparison for students. Each section has the same set of assignments and the same group of faculty members grading their work. This could lead to competition among students. Though he suggested that competition for grades was rarely overt at HBS, other authors on the HBS experience offered evidence to the contrary (Henry, 1983; Ewing, 1990; Reid, 1994; Elderkin, 1996). They found that students frequently engaged in open competition spurred greatly by the presence of a forced grading curve at HBS.

Finally, a different curricular characteristic at HBS has been shown to elicit a second form of competition—jostling for "airtime" in
the classroom. HBS is notorious for placing heavy grading emphasis on in-class participation. Approximately half of a student's grade in each class is derived from the quality and quantity of his or her participation. Though Van Maanen (1983) only briefly alluded to the struggle for airtime among Harvard students, other literature on HBS speaks quite emphatically about this brand of competition (Henry, 1983; Reid, 1994; Elderkin, 1996).

At Sloan, Van Maanen (1983) found very different student-faculty and student-student dynamics. Most importantly, he suggested that the absence of a cohort system prevented student cohesiveness. Students enrolled in different classes at different times with different professors. As a result, Sloan students did not overcome common obstacles together and celebrate their triumphs in unison. The "open-ended" nature of Sloan's program ensured that students followed highly individualized paths to their degrees. This personalized educational experience was punctuated by the fact that each Sloan student was required to write a master's thesis, further encouraging individual work.

Student-faculty relations were different at Sloan than at HBS. Van Maanen (1983) stated that "Students seem more obsequious to the authority of the faculty at MIT than at Harvard" (p. 445). He offered several explanations for this. First, due to the lack of cohorts, there was no organization through which students could impose force, and no cohesiveness to allow an "us-versus-them" spirit among students to emerge. Second, Sloan's class size of 150 students was only a fraction of that at HBS, which neared 800. Sloan students, he claimed, did not hold the "numerical strength" to influence faculty or administrators like their counterparts at HBS. Lastly, Sloan faculty members were judged on the quality of their research more so than that of their
teaching. Student evaluation of teaching performance, therefore, meant less at MIT than at Harvard. Overall, Sloan students acted very respectfully towards their professors. There were no instances of students ganging up on faculty members.

Van Maanen (1983) also found vastly different student-student relations at Sloan. Without cohorts, the type of tension caused by prolonged exposure to the same classmates never developed. Thus there was no need for impression management skills. Furthermore, without common measures for comparison through a cohort system, there was no competition for grades among students. The competition that did exist was within each student rather than with others. Finally, Van Maanen noted that classroom participation, if at all part of a student's grade, was usually an insignificant portion. Though he never explicitly makes the claim, Van Maanen seemed to suggest that the type of competition for airtime witnessed at HBS was absent at Sloan.

Since 1983, Sloan's program structure has begun to look more like the one at HBS. Sloan adopted the cohort system for first-year, first-semester students in 1993—a slight variation of HBS' two-semester section system. All new Sloan students are grouped with approximately 59 sectionmates to compose one of the six class sections, or "oceans", as they are called at Sloan. Second, according to upper-level administrators, teaching evaluations have increased in importance when considering a faculty member for tenure and promotion. This does not mean that student evaluations are more important than research, but the gap has presumably decreased. Third, Sloan has doubled in class size—from approximately 300 in Fall 1983 to 617 in Fall 1999—more closely resembling the HBS class size of 793 when Van Maanen (1983) conducted his study. Fourth, Sloan eliminated the master's thesis as a graduation requirement in 1993. Current students enroll in more classes with their
classmates than did their predecessors. And lastly, Sloan has increased the amount of emphasis placed on student participation in grading.

The goal of this study is to determine whether and how these curricular and institutional changes have influenced student-faculty and student-student relations at Sloan. Because Sloan now looks more like HBS structurally, has Sloan's culture begun to resemble the HBS culture that Van Maanen (1983) found? Have student-faculty and student-student dynamics similar to those at HBS emerged at Sloan?

Organization of the Study

In order to investigate the broad questions posed above, the relevant literature must first be explored. In this case, the most relevant literature is that which describes the HBS culture--its student-faculty and student-student relations. The reviewed works, written mostly by former HBS students and faculty members, help to flesh out Van Maanen's (1983) hypotheses regarding HBS. These hypotheses are then used to devise more specific research questions as they pertain to Sloan.

Chapter Three clearly identifies the research questions and describes the three methods employed to answer these questions: (a) interviews with Sloan students, faculty members, and administrators; (b) classroom observations of Sloan courses; and (c) content analyses of Sloan course syllabi. This chapter also addresses the sampling issues of how students, faculty members, and administrators were selected to be interviewed, how classes were chosen to be observed, and how documents were picked for analysis. The way access into the community was gained and the limitations of the study are also addressed in the third chapter.

The results of the study appear in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Four addresses student-faculty relations at Sloan, and Chapter
Five addresses student-student relations at Sloan. Each research question is answered in its own section. The results of all three methods are presented concurrently. As interviewing was the primary method of investigation, the interview results clearly dominate the two chapters.

The last chapter, Chapter Six, is divided into four sections. First, a summary of findings is presented. This section addresses the specific research questions in light of the study's broader question: whether Sloan has begun to resemble HBS. The second section outlines recommendations for future inquiry. These are either questions that could not be answered by this study due to its limitations or those that have emerged as a result of the study. The third section notes the research and policy implications of the study—what can be derive from these findings in terms of future administrative policies. The last section considers the findings in light of the literature on business schools.

Relevance

This dissertation is clearly most relevant to the current and future students, faculty members, and administrators at the Sloan School of Management. Once the nature of student-faculty and student-student relations is identified, current Sloan community members can decide whether they would like these interaction patterns to continue, and potential community members can determine whether this is their preferred study or work environment.

The substantive focus of this study is distinctive. With regard to other MBA programs, those at Sloan and HBS are more prestigious than nearly all others. HBS and Sloan, for example, were ranked #3 and #4 respectively in the 2000 Business Week ratings of full-time MBA programs. Both well-known and highly selective programs are housed by
perhaps even more famous and selective institutions--MIT and Harvard University. This does not mean, however, that this dissertation is irrelevant to other MBA programs and academic disciplines.

The analytical focus of this study makes it relevant to a broader range of MBA programs. The results of this dissertation should be considered by those MBA programs which already utilize or are considering adopting the individual curricular and institutional characteristics examined here--the cohort method, a large enrollment, an increased emphasis on teaching relative to research, the absence of a master's thesis, and an increased emphasis on class participation, as well as two characteristics that have yet to be discussed. Those are the case study technique and participation in national magazine ranking systems. These will be addressed thoroughly in Chapter Two.

Many of the individual characteristics examined here are very common in graduate business education. For example, 21 of the top 30 MBA program listed in the 2000 Business Week rankings employ the cohort method, while all of these programs use case studies as a pedagogical technique (http://mba.us.com). With regard to program size, the academic discipline of business has grown rapidly. In the 1970-71 academic year, 25,977 master's degrees were granted in business. That number quadrupled in 1997-98, reaching 102,171 degrees. This designates business as the graduate discipline with the most growth over that time period (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Although this growth may be accounted for by an increased number of programs nationwide, it is very likely that individual MBA programs have enjoyed significant enrollment increases as well, similar to what has occurred at Sloan. A prominent issue in the MBA literature is the focus on verbal communication skills for business students (Bogert & Butt, 1997; Wolff, 1997). Programs have been accomplishing this through an emphasis on in-
class participation. Finally, regarding the other characteristics examined, most MBA programs do not require a thesis and all participate in both the Business Week and U.S. News and World Report ratings systems. Most topics in this study, therefore, are applicable to other MBA programs.

Disciplines other than Business use some of these techniques and have experienced similar changes as well, thereby expanding the study's relevance to include a greater share of the higher education community. The cohort method, for example, is loosely followed in many traditional graduate programs, and is more stringently applied in professional graduate education programs such as medical and law school. The case study method has become a popular pedagogical technique and can be found in different iterations in many disciplines. Other academic disciplines and graduate programs have enjoyed rapid growth. The numbers of master's degrees conferred in Computer and Information Science and the Health Professions, for example, have both increased by approximately 600% since 1970-71 (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). There has been a widespread re-dedication to teaching, particularly at the undergraduate level within the last decade (Boyer, 1990; Lucas, 1996) and more emphasis on balance between teaching and research (Smith, 1990; Tang & Chamberlain, 1997; Neusner, 2000). Lastly, almost all institutions of higher education participate in the national magazine ranking systems. Thus while the effects of the Sloan School's changes are most relevant to members of the Sloan community, and then secondarily to those affiliated with other MBA programs, they are clearly applicable to many other disciplines.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In his "Golden Passports" article, Van Maanen (1983) compared cultures at the Harvard Business School (HBS) and the institution at which he was a faculty member—the Sloan School of Management at MIT. He applied the "culture of orientation" theory to explain the effect of each business school's culture on the type of positions their students entered once they had earned their degrees. It is this culture, he wrote, that graduate students "learn, participate in, and presumably, carry with them elsewhere on graduation" (p. 437). Van Maanen described the Harvard Business School culture as team-based and corporate-oriented—more business than school. As a result, its students sought traditional corporate positions that emphasized team management when re-entering the workforce. Conversely, Van Maanen described Sloan as a smaller program, one that was more individualistic for its students. Sloan's graduates, accordingly, found positions in smaller, entrepreneurial-oriented companies that valued individual performance. While this study does not investigate the culture of orientation, it does focus heavily on the culture at Sloan—its student-faculty and student-student relations. Van Maanen related these outcomes and the schools' respective cultures to various curricular structures. In turn, he spoke to the effect these had on student-faculty and student-student relations. The latter issues are the focus of this dissertation.

Several of Van Maanen's (1983) hypotheses and findings serve as the framework for this chapter and are explored in detail. Other literature regarding the Harvard Business School and the discipline of business administration is used to support Van Maanen's hypotheses. Literature regarding other professional education disciplines and undergraduate education is explored to broaden the interpretation of student-faculty and student-student relations. While describing how the
literature has addressed these issues, this review helps to form the research questions of the study.

No follow-up on Van Maanen's article has ever been published. No other authors have even investigated student-faculty and student-student relations at the Sloan School of Management. The Harvard Business School, however, is by far the most written-about institution in the business school literature. Over ten books have been penned regarding various aspects of the program, some of which are cited here. The subtitle of Reid's (1996) book--"An intimate look inside Harvard Business School, source of the most coveted advanced degree in the world"--may explain why this institution is such a popular subject. Interestingly, authors seem to describe a culture with very little variation at HBS, starting with Orth's (1963) description of Harvard in the 1960s, spanning three decades up to the most recent documentation of HBS in the 1990s by Reid (1994) and Elderkin (1996). All but one of the authors of books regarding HBS cited in this review were either Harvard MBA students or faculty members at one time.

For the sake of clarity, the relevant literature is split into two sections: research on student-faculty relations and research on student-student relations. The former is discussed first.

Student-Faculty Relations

Cohesiveness Among Students

Overall, Van Maanen (1983) found very different cultures at Sloan and HBS. First, he reported more familiarity and cohesiveness among HBS students than among those at Sloan. Van Maanen attributed this to several factors, but primarily to the presence of cohorts at HBS and the absence of such groups at Sloan. Cohorts, or sections as they are referred to at HBS, force students to spend an inordinate amount of time together, Van Maanen noted. Reid (1994) supported this with the
statistic that HBS section-mates spend approximately 50,000 person-hours together in the first year, in class alone. "Given such intensive exposure to one another," Van Maanen wrote, "it is little wonder that students come to appreciate and know very well, indeed, virtually all their section-mates" (p. 441).

This familiarity breeds cohesiveness. Van Maanen (1983), for example, noted that each section developed its own "collective identity" different from that of other sections. Kenton Elderkin, a former faculty member at HBS, compared Harvard sections to "involuntary fraternities" (Elderkin, 1996). Ewing (1990), another faculty member at HBS, and Reid (1994), a former HBS student, both likened the Harvard sections to families. Ewing (1990) then quoted a former student regarding the cohesiveness among HBS sections who said: "Operating with the same group for such a long time, you get to feel camaraderie, tolerance, competitiveness, and also a sense of appreciation that would be impossible in a setting where you see the people on and off" (p. 70).

Discussing the early 1990s trend in the MBA community toward implementing cohorts, Fombrun (1996) offered that cohorts create "smaller, more tightly-knit 'family groups' or primary units within the school" (p. 70). Whether they are referred to as fraternities, families, or family groups, it is clear that the cohort system breeds familiarity and cohesiveness among HBS students.

Sloan did not employ cohorts at the time the "Golden Passports" article was written. Van Maanen (1983) suggested that this led to certain conditions of student-student relations. He found that MIT students were separated from one another by their disparate class schedules. "At MIT," he stated, "the routes taken to graduation show greater variance than at Harvard..." (p. 442). Rather than convening to study for tests or work on homework sets, MIT students were found to
"individually organize and selectively attend to the work tasks set before them" (p. 442).

In 1993, Sloan implemented a cohort system for its first-year first-semester students. Similar to the system at HBS, Sloan’s system requires that students enroll in the same courses with the same classmates. One research question, therefore, asks whether this implementation has induced cohesiveness among cohort students at Sloan.

Van Maanen (1983) mentioned other, perhaps minor differences between HBS and Sloan to account for the disparity between student cohesiveness at the two schools. He stated that the HBS students lived together in dorms while MIT students did not. The HBS students were isolated from the rest of Harvard University due to physical distance and the fact that the business school was on a different calendar. Whereas Sloan shared MIT’s campus and calendar. Finally, Van Maanen noted that MIT students were required to write a master’s thesis, further individualizing their paths to degrees, while HBS students were able to spend more time together in class. These factors, he claimed, increased cohesiveness at HBS and prevented it from forming at Sloan.

Two of the above-cited factors have changed. With the addition of another Sloan classroom building in 1995, Sloan students no longer take classes all over campus. It is likely that they have become more isolated from the rest of The Institute. Additionally, in 1993, Sloan eliminated the thesis requirement. Sloan students now enroll in two more courses with their classmates as a result. The effect of the elimination of the thesis requirement is considered in the results section.

The “Us-Versus-Them” Attitude

The concept of cohort cohesiveness is included in this section because it has an effect on student-faculty relations as well as
Student-student relations. Orth (1961), a former researcher at the Harvard Business School, spent a year observing two of its sections. He suggested that a less cohesive section is more heavily influenced by the faculty member. In one of his observations he noted the following:

Perhaps at least partly because the men in Section E were resisting the development of cohesiveness within the section, the behavior of faculty members assigned to the section exerted more influence on the way the section developed than the behavior of Section A's faculty did in the "friendly" section.

Section A, therefore, what he dubbed the friendly section because they socialized together, was more resistant to the influence of the faculty member.

Van Maanen (1983) took this notion further, stating that cohesiveness, when spurred by certain circumstances, can develop into antagonistic relations between students and faculty members. He described an "us-versus-them" mentality among HBS students. Van Maanen observed that first-year students receive a heavy workload upon entering HBS. This helps build what he called the "collective paranoia" or "siege mentality" among new students. He followed, "Because many students are at least initially convinced that the faculty is highly organized and 'out-to-get-them' (alternatively, 'out-to-change-them') a sort of us-versus-them spirit results..." (p. 443). Students view their sectionmates as allies and the faculty and administration as the enemy. This mentality serves to strengthen section ties even more, according to the author.

Other literature describes this us-versus-them spirit at HBS. In some cases, the students adopt a victim-like mentality relative to the faculty and administration. In other cases, the relations are more
adversarial. Regarding victim-like conditions, Henry (1983) and Ewing (1990) compared the plight of first-year HBS students to that of prisoners. Henry, a former HBS student, quoted a fellow student as feeling like "a widget on their [Harvard's] factory floor." The author followed, "I felt like just another cog in Harvard's giant wheel" (p. 106). Lastly, Henry offered the lyrics of a song that her section composed for a student party. To the tune of "Jingle Bells", they sang:

Harvard profs, Harvard profs, watch them turn the screws.
When a student starts to speak you know that he will lose.
Oh!
Harvard, profs, Harvard profs, what skill at dentistry.
What's more thrilling than to be drilling on poor old section D!
(p. 111)

Though the sentiment was conveyed in jest, it is clear that these students viewed themselves as victims of their professors.

Some examples of the us-versus-them mentality are more adversarial in nature. When her section began the spring terms at Harvard and a new faculty member stood in front of the already cohesive section for the first time, Henry (1983) noted, "he was an intruder into our classroom" (p. 124). Henry also found that her sectionmates were frequently unsympathetic to their professors, laughing when they stumbled, for example. Reid (1994) described an adversarial relationship between students and faculty members at HBS, but his example shows how it manifested itself within the faculty rather than the student body. When recounting his first day at HBS, he noted that one professor assumed a boxer's stance and shouted, "Let the adventure begin!" (p. 57). Whether the students are portrayed as victims or opponents of the faculty, an us-versus-them sentiment is clearly evident.
There is at least one other factor besides the cohesiveness elicited by cohorts that may encourage HBS students to view faculty members as being "out-to-get-them". Although Van Maanen (1983) discredited the case study method as a contributing factor to the different cultures at HBS and Sloan, it should not be overlooked in light of how it is treated in the other literature on HBS. There are several indications that the use of the case study at HBS, particularly in concert with cold-calling—the practice of asking a student to speak without first seeking volunteers—elicits fear on the part of students.

In business school, a case study is a ten to thirty page, single-spaced document that describes an actual managerial problem encountered by a corporation. HBS students are expected to solve this problem and learn a managerial theory in the process. It should be noted that HBS is said to have invented the case study for business schools, and it uses them in nearly every class. First-year students could expect to read three cases each night and finish their MBA careers having read approximately 900 cases in two years (Ewing, 1990). In concert with the case, HBS professors use a certain pedagogical technique that calls for heavy student participation and "cold-calling" (Barnes, Christensen, & Hansen, 1994). One of the most famous components of the case study method is the "opening". At the beginning of each class, one student is cold-called to open the case. At which time, he or she offers an analysis of the problem and a recommended solution.

The literature suggests that fear of such cold-calls is pervasive at HBS. Of the cold-call, Elderkin (1996) wrote, "...It worries students probably more than just about anything else" (p. 46). He stated that students were so frightened by the cold-call that they dubbed the few minutes before learning who will open the case as the "death march". Reid (1994) spoke of cold-call fear by saying, "If the promise of high-
paying jobs was the carrot that dragged thousands of HBS students through two grueling years, the ubiquitous threat of a cold-call was surely the stick” (p. 53). To follow are some examples from the literature that convey the terror of the cold-call experienced by HBS students.

First, Henry (1983) described the typical reaction she and the rest of the section had after the death march ended in each class: "When one of us was called on, the other sixty-eight closed our eyes briefly, gave thanks to whomever we believed in, and tried not to let our relief and state of grace show" (p. 28). She then provided her visceral response to having been cold-called herself:

I started to turn red as I sat up stiffly against my seat. Was I called on to open? He had to be kidding. There are sixty-eight other students in the class, Kirk; why not call on them?...My heart pounded hard; did it show through my shirt? A dozen more questions went through my head before I realized I had to speak. (p. 51-2)

Ewing (1990) described a similarly startled student who had been cold-called, and the reaction by the rest of the section:

Charley stiffens as if electrocuted. A collective sigh of relief goes around the rest of the room from those who have won a reprieve. "Thank God it’s not me," the others say under their breath. All eyes, including the professor’s, fasten on Charley. He feels like some innocent singled out from a crowd to go to the wall and face the executioner’s machine gun. (p. 31)

The literature shows that first-year-HBS students distinctly fear being cold-called to open a case. This may affect student-faculty relations at HBS.
Van Maanen (1983) acknowledged that the case study was used more often at HBS than at Sloan, but downplayed the importance of the case study as a potential factor in differentiating HBS from Sloan. He stated the following:

From my perspective, I think one could easily switch the curricula of the two schools and, if everything else remained in place, the results I report here would still stand. It is not the case but the culture in which the case is worked that matters. (p. 440)

In light of the above-cited literature, however, it is possible that this fear among HBS students might lead to what Van Maanen (1983) described as the siege mentality, the collective paranoia, and the us-versus-them spirit that was prevalent among HBS first-year students.

As mentioned above, Sloan has implemented the cohort system. One research question considers whether an us-versus-them spirit has appeared in the first-year first-semester cohort classroom. The effect of the case study is considered as a factor as well.

**Student Power Vis-à-Vis the Faculty (Through the Cohort)**

According to the literature, the fact that cohorts organize students and compose a cohesive group also serves to empower students vis-à-vis the faculty member standing at the front of the classroom. Newcomb (1962) was one of the first to discuss the effect of the cohort model on student-faculty relations. While studying undergraduate students, he found that, "Students, like other people, are members of groups, and all groups (as distinguished from arbitrary categories) have power over their members" (p. 469). Newcomb considered faculty members as part of this group. He then discussed how students develop norms for the group and stated that "Teachers' influence, if it is to be effective, must be caught up in the norms of student groups" (p. 485).
The notion of student power assumed through the cohort system is discussed in the business school literature as well. In a chapter entitled "The Mysterious and Magical Powers of a Section", Ewing (1990) stated, "If the Harvard Business School has a secret power, it is the section system. A first-year section has a life of its own, bigger than any student, more powerful than any instructor" (p. 64). He claimed that the section enforces its power by developing "standards of behavior" and that "it can be extremely tough on any instructors who don't fall in step with it" (p. 70). This is similar to what Newcomb (1962) wrote almost thirty years earlier.

Van Maanen (1983) also discussed the power of a section, stating that, "If nothing else, by sectioning students Harvard also empowers them" (p. 445). While he did not elaborate on how this section power is formed, he did suggest a way that this power could be employed. Students could enact this power, Van Maanen wrote, through "calculated section-wide behavior designed to shame, embarrass, or even humiliate a given instructor" (p. 446). In essence, this is the us-versus-them mentality manifesting itself in group action. Van Maanen was quick to add that HBS students rarely used this power for fear of jeopardizing their "golden passports" to high-paying positions. The rest of the literature, however, provides numerous examples of students doing just that--ganging up on faculty members through both calculated and spontaneous acts of dissent.

Mark (1987), the only author of an HBS book who has no formal ties to the institution, told the story of a section plotting organized revenge on a faculty member. To merit this treatment, the faculty member--Professor Pearson--had spoken in a chauvinistic manner to a female student. This is undoubtedly an example of the calculated section-wide behavior that Van Maanen proposed. As Mark described it:
Section C presented Pearson with an apron and shopping basket, reminders of his indiscretion. It was also a direct and humorous way to show him that at HBS, students were not going to take any of his corporate-style, old-boy fanny slapping... Pearson, blushing, put the apron on to show them that he was a good sport about the whole thing. But it was humiliating, like a fraternity hazing, and he endured it on order to quiet the stomping of 85 out-of-control MBA students... They had him there, their captive and could play with him as they liked. Pearson excused the class early that afternoon and was the first one to leave the room. (p. 118)

Henry (1983) recalled her section singing a protest song to a faculty member in response to what they deemed to be an unfair assignment. After finishing the song, half of the class placed their namecards on their sides in further defiance.

Ewing (1990) also described pre-meditated actions taken against the professor. The following example has to do with the class blackboards:

One of first-year students' favorite tricks, if they can find a willing and accomplished electrician in the section, is to rewire the boards so that when the professor pushes the "up" button, a board comes down, and when he pushes the "down" button, it goes up. When and how someone accomplishes this feat is mind-boggling, but when pulled off, it invariably creates great pleasure among the students and profound consternation in the perspiring instructor. (p. 200)
Another popular trick that first-year students played on professors, according to Ewing, was to insert pornographic sequences into class films. All of these are calculated acts performed by a section or individual members of a section and designed to embarrass the instructor.

The literature also provides examples of cohorts ganging up on HBS faculty members in less calculated ways (Henry, 1983; Ewing, 1990; Reid, 1994). Henry described a group of female students spontaneously hissing at a faculty member to protest a perceived act of chauvinism—his selection of a woman to open a case regarding L'eggs Pantyhose. Reid (1994) recounted instances such as section students reacting to ambiguous assignments by hurling sarcastic remarks at the professor and the entire section pounding its fists on its desks in unison at the slightest provocation. Ewing (1990) offered a list of ways that first-year HBS students gang up on faculty members. He wrote, "In the first year, when sufficiently bored or irritated, students may sail paper airplanes or throw paper balls. They may squirt each other with water pistols. They may throw doughnuts or cookies" (p. 200). While none of these acts are pre-meditated and some aren't even pointed directly at the faculty member, they are all clearly in defiance of faculty control.

Van Maanen (1983) did not witness these types of student uprisings at Sloan, whether organized or not. "The Sloan faculty", Van Maanen stated, "has been able to successfully, however, unintentionally divide and more or less conquer the student body" (p. 445). Without a cohort, students had no rallying organization with which they could lodge protests. As he put it, there was no "organization in place (other than that explicitly condoned by the school) through which insurgency might be effected" (p. 445-6). With the implementation of the cohort system
at Sloan, this study seeks to determine whether first-year first-
semester Sloan students gang up on faculty members.

Van Maanen (1983) noted one critical difference between HBS and
Sloan that provided power to the HBS sections and not to the Sloan
first-year students: the HBS room assignments. The HBS sections sit in
the same classroom all year, while the faculty members shuffle in and
out. Van Maanen suggested that this arrangement promoted “a degree of
student ownership and comfort in the room...” (p. 441). Ewing (1990)
described it as a turf war, stating, “Nine room in Aldrich could be
‘owned’ by first-year students and become the ‘home turf’ of sections A
through I for a whole school year” (p. 66).

Sloan students, Van Maanen (1983) noted, “continually shuffle
between classrooms”, so they never developed this sense of ownership.
Although Sloan adopted cohorts in 1993, it did not adopt the one-room
policy as well. This characteristic is considered in the student-
faculty relations analysis.

Student Power Vis-à-Vis the Faculty (Through Other Factors)

While some factors noted in the literature provide power to
cohorts at HBS, other factors provide power to HBS students more
generally--most notably the program size, the influence of student
evaluations, and the use of the case study method. All of these are
explored below, starting with program size.

Van Maanen (1983) compared the Harvard Business School’s
enrollment of approximately 1,600 MBA students to Sloan’s enrollment of
300 MBA students. The author suggested that this vast difference in
size provided students with potential power. At HBS, students could
enact change by mobilizing their imposing numbers and through strong
student representation on faculty and administrative committees. He
then noted, "Harvard has a significant edge over MIT in this official power category by virtue of its greater number of representatives in proportion to the faculty" (p. 446). Regarding Sloan's size and its effect on student power, he stated, "The numerical strength and sentimental ties necessary to effectively challenge school policy is seldom present among students at MIT" (p. 441).

Since 1983, Sloan has doubled its program size to slightly over 600 traditional MBA students. The Sloan student body has more "numerical strength" than ever. The question of how this size increase affects student-faculty relations is considered in the results.

Van Maanen (1983) also discussed the influence of student evaluations on student-faculty relations at HBS and Sloan. At Harvard, he wrote, "Performance in the B-School pits are closely monitored by the school and professional classroom competence is, in many ways, judged by whatever student ratings a faculty member can manage to obtain" (p. 441). Ewing (1990) confirmed the importance of teaching at HBS, by stating, "The instructor who doesn't measure up doesn't teach again--up or out is the rule. In most cases, this happens with assistant or associate professors, who don't have tenure, so they can simply be let go" (p. 203). As a result of teacher ratings playing such a critical role in a faculty member's career, Van Maanen suggested that HBS students held potential power vis-à-vis faculty members through the evaluation system.

At Sloan, Van Maanen (1983) found, "these ratings have less bite since faculty careers are based far more on research productivity than teaching performance" (p. 446). Sloan students, therefore, did not hold this potential power. According to current Sloan faculty members and administrators, teaching and teaching evaluations have become more important since the early 1990s. The effect of this change on student-faculty power relations is addressed in the results.
The literature also suggests that the use of the case study method at HBS provides students with power in the classroom. According to the current HBS website (http://www.hbs.edu), the case study method expects that student participation will consume approximately 85% of each class session. The faculty member guides the discussion rather than delivers a lecture. It is proposed that this emphasis on student discussion provides students with power—the power to withhold class participation. Barnes, Christensen, & Hansen (1994) suggested that HBS students "possess the power to turn a discussion class into an academic charade by withholding involvement" (p. 24). Ewing (1990) offered a similar sentiment, suggesting, "The students in a classroom literally have the power to make the class grind to a halt if they want to." Ewing made his point about the case study method more dramatically by stating, "it is to student power what wheels are to an automobile" (p. 212). This may not be the "calculated section-wide classroom behavior" about which Van Maanen (1983) wrote, but it can certainly embarrass the instructor when enacted. The case study is thus considered as a factor in the results on student-faculty relations.

One last factor mentioned in the literature on student power pertains to all contemporary selective MBA programs. Business Week magazine has published biannual ratings of selective MBA programs since 1988. Institutions in this ranking system are judged almost exclusively by their recent graduates and recruiters who interview students at these schools. The literature suggests that this rating system has had a significant impact on business programs. Fombrun (1996) noted that after the initial 1988 ratings were published and digested by the MBA community, "business schools would henceforth be competing not for legitimacy in academic circles, but for the approval of students and executives" (p. 252). In other words, institutions recognized that it
was in their best interest to please and impress those that rated them, thus providing power to these groups. MBA programs, Fombrun found, "began to realize that the clients must come first" (p. 241).

Others have examined the effect of these rankings on the student-faculty and student-institution power dynamic. Walpole (1998) has investigated this matter thoroughly. First, she examined the effect of the Business Week rankings on a top twenty MBA program by interviewing its faculty. She found that these professors felt pressure "to teach students only what students wanted in order to keep them 'happy'" (p. 10). To accomplish this, the faculty softened the curriculum. According to Walpole, "To keep these students satisfied, the faculty felt pressure to provide entertaining classes that did not contain the content or rigor faculty thought necessary, lest they be too challenging for the students" (p. 10). These results, though, applied to only one business program.

Walpole (1999) followed this up with a second article that investigated the effects of the Business Week rankings on 29 selective business schools. Surveying faculty members at these schools, she found that only 29% of the respondents believed the rankings did not affect their teaching. Walpole quoted one of the respondents in the following passage:

The B Week rankings have led to a stampede to keep students happy and meet their every whim...the curriculum is stuffed with meaningless courses full of drivel...so that content-wise, it is impossible for us to teach and examine students on material we did even as much as 10-11 years ago. (p. 16)

The rankings did not affect all institutions and all faculty members in a similar manner. Even within this competitive group of programs, selectivity played a role. Faculty members in schools ranked in the top
five were less likely to feel pressure to accommodate student desires and report decreased academic rigor of the program. Tenured faculty members and male faculty members were also less likely to feel this pressure.

In an article that cited declining quality of business curricula, Jennings (1999) supported Walpole's (1998, 1999) findings. She stated that students have assumed power in business schools, and that the ratings system "causes the deans of faculty to ease grading standards and lighten student loads" (p. 28). This is a clear sign of increased student power.

Sloan participates in the Business Week ratings system. Its ranking fell from #9 in 1996 to #15 in 1998, and then jumped up to #4 in 2000. The effect of these rankings on student-faculty and student-administration relations is considered in the results.

**Student-Faculty Power Dynamics in Other Disciplines**
The concept of HBS students holding power in the classroom is unique when compared to literature from other disciplines. Medical and law school students are portrayed as victims in the literature without the same type of power or even the potential power that Van Maanen (1983) proposed to exist at HBS. Students of medical and law school may be seen as negotiating their education as individuals in order to cope and survive. But they are depicted as being collectively powerless relative to their professors.

In *Boys in White*, Becker et al.'s (1961) landmark study of medical students at the University of Kansas, the authors found these students were wholly subordinated to their professors. Although these students were in cohorts, this structure did not empower them as others have proposed. Having sacrificed and achieved so much to enter medical school, and then even more as their careers advanced, these students
were willing to endure harsh treatment from the faculty in order to become doctors--punishment accepted to obtain their own "golden passport". One medical student was quoted as saying, "One thing you have to understand is that most of us here will put up with just about anything if we really have to in order to get through" (p. 281). Becker et al. offered the following four tenets of the nature of student-faculty relations at this institution:

1. The faculty can prevent any student from getting through school or, less extreme, can make his passage through school difficult and uncertain, if he gives evidence of not having done satisfactory work.
2. The faculty can humiliate and even degrade a student when he gives evidence of not having done satisfactory work.
3. It is necessary, therefore, to make a good impression on the faculty--to present them with either the substance or the appearance of learning.
4. No simple method of making a good impression will suffice, therefore; it is necessary for the student to be sensitive to faculty demands and modify his behavior accordingly, even when these demands seem foolish or likely to nullify the purposes of medical school. (p. 279-280)

The lack of power that students felt regarding their professors--what Becker et al. (1961) described as being "at the mercy of a capricious and unpredictable faculty"--combined with a desire to impress these faculty members. As a result, students were greatly concerned with the impressions they made on their professors, as expressed in tenets number three and four above. This is similar to the impression management skills among Harvard Business School students to be discussed
in the next section, where one of the reasons why students manage one another is to influence the impressions that they make on their faculty members.

According to Turow (1977) and Kennedy (1982), student-faculty power relations at Harvard Law School are not unlike those described in medical school. These authors characterized the relationship between law students and their professors as cold and hierarchical. Again, these students were in cohorts, but that did not appear to empower them vis-à-vis the faculty. In offering a first-person account of the first year at Harvard Law School, Turow described professors as "merely acquaintances" of their students. The in-class relationship was "chilly" at best, and the author noted that Harvard faculty members went to great lengths to avoid out-of-class contact with their students. Turow explained how this distance between the students and faculty further affected their relationships by saying, "The fact that the professors were so remote naturally tended to increase the kind of awe in which we held them" (p.138).

Kennedy (1982), a Harvard Law School professor, offered a theoretical analysis that supports these characterizations. The classroom, according to the author, "is hierarchical with a vengeance". Teachers seek deference from and to instill fear within their students. Students are rendered powerless. Kennedy described the students' in-class role as follows:

They learn to suffer with positive cheerfulness interruption in mid-sentence, mockery, ad hominem assault, inconsequent asides, questions that are so vague as to be unanswerable but can somehow be answered wrong all the same, abrupt dismissal, and stinginess of praise...(p.137)
Kennedy dubbed this behavior the "modeling of hierarchical relationships", with faculty members placing themselves at the top and students at the bottom of the classroom hierarchy. Kennedy insisted that this imposed stratification is useful to students--it prepares them for their future roles as trial lawyers who must defer to judges or as junior associates who must show respect to senior partners in a law firm. As he said, "Law teachers model for students how they are supposed to think, feel, and act in their future professional roles" (p. 602). This can be viewed as a powerful "hidden" or informal curriculum that does not appear on the syllabus but is certainly learned in the law school classroom.

Student-Student Relations

Van Maanen (1983) described distinctly different student-student relations at the Harvard Business School and at the Sloan School of Management. He attributed much of this difference to the presence of cohorts at HBS and their absence at Sloan. There are two main themes of the research on student-student relations discussed here: (a) students managing one another, and (b) competition for grades and for opportunities to participate in class. First, however, the broader concept of student-student relations is explored.

Students Managing One Another

Literature outside of the business school realm discusses how students influence one another. While writing about undergraduates, Newcomb (1962), as stated above, found that groups influence their individual members. He cited two "bases of group power": (a) "groups so often have it in their power to reward and to punish--as by applause or shame, or by according or withholding of status or of worldly goods" (p. 470), and (b) the fact that "human beings want and need each other" (p. 470). As a result, student norms are developed within student groups.
These norms are likely stronger in cohort groups, where students spend a great deal of time together. While observing medical students at the University of Kansas for what would ultimately become the above-cited *Boys in White*, Becker and Geer (1958) found that students in cohort groups developed student culture, similar to Newcomb's (1962) norms. They found, "This intensive interaction in an isolated group produced the understandings and agreements we call student culture—a set of provisional solutions and guidelines for activity" (p. 72). Van Maanen (1983) and others who describe business school student-student relations observed similar norms and cultures.

Student norms are particularly important for cohort students at HBS, for while the number of hours that these students spend together in cohorts is shown above to elicit cohesiveness among students, it can also cause tension among the same group members. Elderkin (1996) described this phenomenon by saying, "Spending an entire year with the same people can, in some circumstances, heighten tensions among students and cause seeds of inevitable friction to blossom into full-blown animosity" (p. 44). Student norms serve to prevent tension by monitoring classroom activity within the section.

Van Maanen (1983) found similar dynamics in the HBS classroom and suggested that to prevent this sort of evolution from friction to animosity, HBS students enforced norms with what he called "impression management skills". According to Van Maanen, impression management takes two forms. First, these skills are used to prevent overt breaches of established "common decency" norms such as arrogant or rude in-class comments, as well as workaholic or leech-like behavior in private study groups. Second, these skills are used to influence the faculty member's impression of the section, thus the name, such as by curbing students who would otherwise outshine or draw unwanted attention to the rest of
the section—what HBS students dubbed "rate-busters" and "rate-shirkers". When describing in-class student management, Van Maanen wrote, "It is relatively easy (however crude) for a well organized section to check the classroom antics of potentially deviant members" (p. 444). This is similar to Becker et al.'s (1961) third and fourth tenets regarding impressing the medical school faculty member, but here students are managing one another whereas the students that Becker et al. observed were managing themselves.

Other authors describe HBS students managing one another as well, focusing specifically on in-class managing. Orth (1961) found that students frowned upon their classmates bringing in outside knowledge, offering highly insightful comments, or preparing elaborate notes for class. This resulted in dumbing down the classroom. In his words:

Many students feel that rewards from peers are at least as valuable as those offered by the Faculty. They therefore limit their class performance to a point between the minimum acceptable level set by the Faculty and the maximum acceptable level set by their peers. (p. 220)

Similarly, Ewing (1990) depicted how norms of the average were imposed in HBS sections. He said, "Now and then a section will come along that exacts more conformity from its members than most sections do, that punishes those who differ too much from the average" (p. 69). As an example of managing in action, Ewing cited a story told to him by a fellow HBS professor. This faculty member recalled how one of his female students was hesitant to talk in class. Ewing wrote, "He realized that the words he had wanted her to say were on her lips in that class but she had known that they would sound too precocious to the others. She didn't want to be penalized for being a 'star'" (p. 70).
Ewing (1990) also suggested that cohorts and their accompanying student management can have a more positive effect on behavior. He claimed that they can set "out-of-bound markers that even the most arrogant people are forced to observe" (p. 71). In this sense, cohorts can maintain a sense of decorum in the classroom.

Reid (1994) discussed student norms and how they were enforced while he was a first-year HBS student. He wrote, "Certain people had at times sought to delineate the range of opinions that could be expressed in class" (p. 93).

How do students employ these impression management skills? How do they manage one another? One of the ways is through verbal cues. Van Maanen (1983) suggested that it was done by "applauding, booing, or even hissing" the offending students in class (p. 443). Reid recalled, "Booing and occasionally hissing erupted in response to in-class comments that these people found unpalatable" (p. 93). Similarly, Ewing (1990) found that managing "may take the form of cold silence, hissing, or subtly ostracizing the offender in social activities" (p. 69).

Ewing (1990) offered a few examples of students managing one another in physical rather than verbal cues. First, he cited a former student who claimed that sectionmates sometimes brought large scorecards to class. "When a long-winded classmate finished a pointless speech," he stated, "they would all raise their cards showing how they scored his or her performance" (p. 42). Then Ewing quoted a student describing an incident with a particularly obnoxious classmate: "One day when he was talking the people felt that he was too condescending to bear. They rolled up pieces of paper and threw them at him as he talked" (p. 71).

Finally, Reid (1994) and Elderkin (1996) both described the infamous Sky Deck Section Awards at HBS--additional examples of students imposing norms on the section. Recipients of these informal weekly
awards were selected by members of the sky deck, so named because it is
the top row of the HBS classroom. It is here that the section's self-
appointed pranksters sought seats. Reid described the awards by saying,
"These were meant more to keep people in line than to laud exemplary
behavior" (p. 35). Popular honors, according to Reid, include the Shark
Award, "for the week's most ruthless comment" and the Computer Literacy
Award, presented to "people who habitually peppered their remarks with
numerical references" (p. 92). Other awards were created based on the
particular occurrences of each specific section classroom.

These student-student relations differed from what Van Maanen
(1983) found at Sloan. At MIT, students were less affected by the
actions of their classmates and, consequently, did not manage one
another. "Impression management skills," Van Maanen wrote, "while
obviously of value when carrying out instrumental and expressive links
with other students on campus, are of relatively less importance at MIT
than Harvard" (p. 446). He continued:

By and large, MIT students would never think of booing or
hissing the public foibles of a classmate. They may be
disgusted by what is going on, as is the case when one
eager-beaver dominates a classroom discussion, but they
would rarely, if ever, act collectively to bring it to a
halt. (p. 446)

Van Maanen attributed the lack of impression management at MIT to the
absence of a cohort system. He stated, "Because various school-based
or classroom groupings at Sloan are temporary, shifting, and subject
specific, getting along with one's classmates is situationally defined,
sometimes important, sometimes not" (p. 446). While Sloan students
might have breached standards of common decency, the fact that they did
not spend all of their time together made it much more bearable. He elaborated on this with the following quote:

Individual arrogance, abrasiveness, slyness, rudeness, withdrawal, and sophomoric forms of personal display are relatively easy to tolerate when attachments are known to be fleeting and limited to only one class (and then only for whatever time remains in a term). (p. 446)

The absence of a cohort system, therefore, prevented Sloan students from developing the sort of impression management skills evident among HBS students.

As previously mentioned, Sloan has implemented a cohort system similar to the one at HBS. This study seeks to determine whether cohorts at Sloan have led to the type of student-student relations found at HBS. Do Sloan’s cohort students use impression management skills in any way?

**Competition for Grades**

Another factor of student-student relations potentially influenced by cohorts is competition for grades. At HBS, Van Maanen (1983) found competition for grades to be “peaceable on the surface and savage underneath”. He claimed that competition was kept in check by the notion that “to do well in the program, they [the students] need one another” (p. 444). Van Maanen found a different type of competitiveness at Sloan. “Competition,” he wrote, “while certainly present, tends to be inward, or self-directed” (p. 445). The author then attributed this lack of competitiveness among Sloan students to the absence of cohorts. In his words:

In contrast to Harvard, students at Sloan have relatively few opportunities to perform in front of their classmates. Moreover, students can only compare performances within
particular classes and must invent standards for comparison across classes since the self-selected instructional programs of fellow students vary. (p. 445)

According to Van Maanen, the absence of cohorts at Sloan prevented all forms of student competitiveness except competition with oneself.

The other literature on HBS confirms the presence of competition, but is less willing to maintain the peaceable nature that Van Maanen (1983) proposed. Henry (1983), Reid, (1994) and Elderkin (1996) all provided examples of overt competitive action among HBS students. For example, all three authors noted that HBS students attack one another in class to score well on in-class participation—a significant portion of a student’s grade at HBS. Elderkin quoted one student as saying, “You score points by communicating well and, at times, by shooting down other people” (p. 54). A certain type of competitive student is dubbed a “shark” at HBS, which Elderkin defines as “an aggressive student who has an intuitive sense for weak statements by others and immediately recites right after them to make him or herself look good at the other person’s expense” (p. 49).

Reid (1994) and Henry (1983) discussed the practice of students selecting study group partners from different HBS sections to avoid group members presenting one another’s ideas in class. As Reid said, “At HBS, a good in-class comment is a zero-sum game. If someone else says it, you can’t” (p. 55). Henry also recalled a similar case in which students planning a mock debate wrote their speeches only after hearing the opposition’s arguments.

As a result of blatantly competitive acts among HBS students, Henry (1983) contended, “Competition sometimes took the peculiar form of not helping one another” (p. 142). She presented examples of students depriving one another of calculators during tests and refusing to help
one another in the classroom. Henry summarized, "We were under pressure to compete with one another" (p. 142).

The literature suggests that two additional factors contribute to competitiveness at HBS—the forced grading curve and the use of the case study method. These are both long-time features of the HBS curriculum. At Harvard, approximately ten percent of each section must fail each class, regardless of overall class performance. Elderkin (1996) described how this forced curve affects students: "If grades raise blood pressure, HBS' policy that ten percent must flunk makes many students apoplectic" (p. 53). Students react to the curve by becoming competitive. Elderkin (1996) claimed, "The scrambling for a limited number of grades inevitably inspires intense competition among students" (p. 50). How does this sort of competitiveness manifest itself? Elderkin stated, "There is an effort by some students to make other people look bad to try to get them to fill the flunk category in order to keep themselves out of it" (p. 49). To do so, students employ the shark tactics described above.

Reid (1994) also suggested that the forced grading curve prompts competitiveness. He claimed that the competition attributable to the use of cohorts is heightened by the forced curve. In his words: "The people in our section would spend a sometimes-claustrophobic year together. The competitiveness fostered by this would surely be worsened by a zero-sum grading system in which a person could only avoid a bad mark at the expense of someone else getting it" (p. 62).

Another potential contributor to competition among HBS students is the use of the case study method. Elderkin (1996) claimed that competitiveness at HBS is fueled by the "fundamental adversarial nature of the case study method, which is designed to divide the class over a series of issues to promote class debate" (p. 54). He compared the
action of a case study discussion to that of a boxing match: students fight one another to win high marks for class participation, and the sense of competitiveness escalates with each jab and counterpunch. The faculty member serves as the referee in this match. The other literature depicts competitiveness in case study discussions but does not attribute the competitiveness directly to the use of the case study method.

Again, since Sloan adopted a cohort system in 1993, a research question investigates whether this system has elicited competitiveness among first-year first-semester students as Van Maanen (1983) would suggest. The other two factors that the literature proposes induce competitiveness at HBS--the forced curve and the case study--are considered as factors in the results as well.

**Competition for Airtime**

A second form of competitiveness that exists in the HBS classroom, according to the literature, is competition for airtime. This competitiveness is not necessarily related to cohorts, but more likely due to the emphasis placed on class participation at HBS and how this affects students' grades.

Several authors describe fierce competition to be heard in the HBS classroom. With class participation counting for a high percentage of a student's grade, usually 50%, students seek to contribute frequently. This leads to competitiveness. Reid (1994) described the struggle for airtime in this manner:

I had been amply warned of the airtime obsession...Once a class's cold-call lamb was left quivering in a corner, they told me, the battle for air would begin. One would accumulate airtime whenever speaking in class, whether the comment made was a shining insight or a pedantic truism.
Although my professors were sure to insist that class participation grades were not based upon the quantity of a student’s comments, I could bet that many people would risk alienating their peers by zealously trying to “get in” as often as possible. (p. 58)

Reid later described this obsession for airtime as a war: “The airtime war in Section I escalated considerably, and I quickly lost my stomach for it. At every pause in the conversation it was hands, hands, hands. It became increasingly difficult to ‘get in’ in any particular class” (p. 80).

Henry (1983) reported that this competition has an adverse effect on the flow of class discussion. She noted, “There was no support for anything a student said, and once recognized, people blurted out whatever was on their minds. No one who spoke listened to anyone else; it seemed as if they were competing to just take up airtime” (p. 41-2).

As Reid (1994) and Elderkin (1996) both observed, HBS students employed certain tactics to ensure themselves enough airtime. Students used such maneuvers as the “chip shot”, which Reid described as “an innocuous comment that gives class discussion a paltry push forward” but ensured that the student spoke that day. Reid also described the “reopening” technique. In his words, “This happened when a student, called on to speak in the middle of the class, would prattle on for several minutes running” (p. 82). Students often use this to present openings they had outlined the night before in anticipation of a cold call. Elderkin mentioned these tactics along with the “deliberate tangent”, also known as the “filibuster”. With this technique, a student changes the direction of the conversation, “either to avoid something they could not respond to or to throw out a comment they thought was more impressive” (p. 49).
Execution of these and other tactics, while common, were not warmly received according to Elderkin (1996) and Reid (1994). Students who performed in-class maneuvers deemed offensive sometimes received Sky Deck Awards. The "invisible hand" award, for example, was presented to a student who spoke without raising one's hand or being called upon. Conversely, the "Statue of Liberty" award was similarly presented to a student who kept his or her hand raised while others were talking.

While Van Maanen (1983) did not directly comment on competition for airtime at Sloan, it can be assumed from the overall lack of competitiveness that he described among Sloan students, that there was also little competition for airtime. Since the article was written, Sloan has placed a greater emphasis on class participation when assigning grades. A relevant question, therefore, is whether this increased emphasis on student participation has induced competition for airtime at Sloan, particularly in the courses where class participation is weighed most heavily.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods used to conduct the study. The research questions are listed first, followed by the methods used to answer these questions—the study’s design, the coding system used to analyze the data, and the sampling of the population.

Research Questions

The overall question that I attempted to answer is: In light of recent curricular and institutional changes at the Sloan School of Management, have the Sloan student-faculty and student-student dynamics changed from those described in Van Maanen’s (1983) "Golden Passports" article to more resemble those attributed to the Harvard Business School (HBS) in the same article and other literature? If so, can these dynamics be attributed to the recent curricular and institutional changes made at Sloan? If Sloan relations do not resemble those at HBS, why is this? In researching these questions, I paid particularly close attention to the influence of implementing the cohort model at Sloan.

The study is divided into two halves: an investigation of student-faculty relations at Sloan and an investigation of student-student relations at Sloan. As such, each half has its own set of research questions that are addressed below, starting with student-faculty relations.

Student-Faculty Relations

To briefly review the main themes of the literature, Van Maanen (1983) and others who discuss the HBS experience claim that the cohort system at Harvard—whereby first-year students enroll in all courses with the same group of classmates—engenders cohesiveness among students in these sections. HBS students spend all day together in class and then study or socialize together out of class. This creates a bond
unlike that seen among classmates in non-cohort classes. Partially triggered by a heavy first-semester workload, this cohesiveness can evolve into an "us-versus-them" dynamic, where HBS students view their sectionmates as allies and the faculty and administration as the enemy (Henry, 1983; Reid, 1994).

One of the ways that this contentious mentality can manifest itself, Van Maanen suggests, is through "calculated section-wide classroom behavior designed to shame, embarrass, or even humiliate a given instructor" (p.446). HBS students rarely engage in such actions, he claims, for fear of jeopardizing their "golden passports" to high-paying positions upon graduation. Other authors, however, present numerous examples of HBS cohort students ganging up on faculty members (Henry, 1983; Mark, 1987; Ewing, 1990; Reid, 1994).

According to Van Maanen (1983), these dynamics were not present at Sloan as of the early 1980s. The fact that students were not in cohorts prevented the development of student cohesiveness and thus a confrontational environment in the classroom. The Sloan faculty was much more dominant of its students due to the absence of cohorts, but also for other reasons. First, research was more heavily weighed than student evaluation of teaching during tenure decisions at Sloan, so evaluations did not have the "bite" that he found at HBS, a more teaching-oriented institution. Second, Sloan's small program size relative to that at HBS prevented students from developing the "numerical strength" necessary to challenge school policy. Finally, Sloan students were required to write master's theses, further separating students and individualizing their paths to degrees. As a result of these factors, Van Maanen claims, the faculty was able to "divide and more or less conquer the student body" (p.445). Sloan
students did not engage in collective resistance and gang up on faculty members.

Sloan adopted the cohort system for first-semester students in 1993 and has retained it since then. Sloan has also made other institutional changes that have resulted in its closer resemblance to HBS. First, according to upper-level administrators and faculty members at Sloan, teaching evaluations have become more important relative to research since the early 1990s. Second, Sloan doubled in size from slightly more than 300 students in 1983 to just over 600 students in 1999. It is still approximately 300 students smaller than HBS, but Sloan students clearly have more allies with which to enter combat, if they choose to do so. Lastly, Sloan eliminated the thesis requirement for MBA candidates in 1993. While the primary point of investigation will be the effect of the cohort implementation, the influences of these other changes are addressed when appropriate.

In order to determine whether these changes have influenced student-faculty relations at Sloan, and whether these relations have begun to resemble those that the literature attributes to HBS, the following research questions were devised:

1. What is the current state of Sloan student-faculty relations: What is the level of closeness? What are students' perceptions of the faculty? What is the faculty's perception of students?
2. Have student-faculty relations changed over time? What factors have caused these changes?
3. Are students more cohesive as a result of the cohort implementation?
4. Is there an "us-versus-them" dynamic present in cohort classes?
5. Do students, as a group, gang up on their faculty members in cohort classes?

6. Are student-faculty relations different in cohort versus non-cohort classes?

The first two questions attempt to establish a sense of overall relations among Sloan faculty members and students. The first question examines different facets of current student-faculty relations such as the closeness among students and faculty members, student perception of the faculty, and the faculty's perception of students. The second question seeks to determine whether these sorts of relations have evolved over time at Sloan and what factors have caused these changes. The next four questions focus more narrowly on individual aspects of Sloan student-faculty relations, and specifically the influence of the adoption of the cohort system on these relations.

The third question asks whether the cohorts have elicited greater cohesiveness among students in the first-semester classroom. This is a student-student relations question, but it is addressed in this section as it ultimately influences student-faculty relations. If cohorts have elicited greater cohesiveness, it must then be determined whether an us-versus-them dynamic has evolved at Sloan—the subject of the fourth question. If an us-versus-them mentality does exist, the fifth question seeks to determine whether this has manifested itself in cohort students ganging up on faculty members.

The last question was proposed as an indirect way of determining the effect of the cohort system on student-faculty relations at Sloan. It asks whether student-faculty relations are different when students are in cohort and non-cohort classes, meaning the first semester versus the subsequent three semesters. If so, can these changes be attributed to the absence or presence of the cohort system?
Student-Student Relations

As mentioned above, Van Maanen (1983) found that the cohort system forces students to spend a substantial amount of time together at HBS, and this increases familiarity among students. But this static environment, with students sitting in the same room with one another all year, could also cultivate conflict among cohort members. In order to sustain the sort of cooperative effort required by cohorts for nine months, Van Maanen claims, students develop and employ “impression management skills”. With these skills, students manage one another and enforce group norms upon “deviant members” by using such tactics as booing or applauding classmates publicly. Managing also occurs out-of-class in private study groups. Other authors such as Reid (1994) provide explicit examples of highly-organized student managing such as the Sky Deck Awards for each HBS section.

At Sloan, Van Maanen (1983) found that students operated much more independently of one another and pursued individualized paths to their degrees. Students spent little time together and thus had little cause, desire, or opportunity to manage one another.

The cohort has other effects on student-student relations as well. Van Maanen (1983) reported a total lack of competitiveness regarding grades among Sloan students, proposing that the absence of a cohort system precludes measures of comparison from forming. Students enrolled in different classes or in different sections of similar classes. Groups of students could not compare grades with such dissimilar measures. Conversely, several other authors have noted high levels of competitiveness at HBS (Henry, 1983; Ewing, 1990; Reid, 1994; Elderkin, 1996). The cohort may fuel this competition by providing clear measures for comparison, as Van Maanen suggests.
Finally, there are different types of competitiveness. Van Maanen (1983) noted that class participation composes a high percentage of a student's grade at HBS. As a result of this factor, Harvard students frequently jostle for in-class airtime (Henry, 1983; Reid, 1994; Elderkin, 1996). Van Maanen stated that class participation at Sloan was "either an insignificant or nonexistent portion of a student's grade in all but a few classes" (p. 441-2). Airtime at Sloan, therefore, was not as precious.

Since "Golden Passports" was published in 1983, a number of curricular changes have occurred at Sloan that could influence student-student relations. As mentioned above, the cohort system was implemented in 1993. In-class participation has been much more highly emphasized across the school: it counted for grading in a higher percentage of classes in 1999 (62%) than it did in 1993 (49%), and in those classes where it is part of the grade, participation counted for 20% or more of the grade at a higher rate in 1999 (50%) than it did in 1993 (29%). The percentage of the grade for which participation counts has also increased in five of the six cohort courses at Sloan.

The following research questions were devised to determine whether student-student relations at Sloan have begun to resemble those at HBS as a result of these changes:

1. What is the current state of Sloan student-student relations, both in-class and out-of-class?
2. Are student-student relations different in cohort versus non-cohort classes?
3. Do cohort students attempt to manage one another by employing impression management skills?
4. Are cohort students competitive regarding grades?
5. Are students competitive regarding airtime?
6. Have student-student relations changed over time?

Similar to the first two student-faculty relations question, the first two student-student relations questions attempt to establish some sense of overall relations among Sloan students. The first question seeks to determine the current status of student-student relations: How do students perceive the relations among classmates in-class as well as out-of-class? The second question examines whether these relations are any different in cohort versus non-cohort classes.

The next three questions look specifically at the effect of changes at Sloan. Question three asks whether the cohort system has encouraged students to develop Van Maanen’s (1983) impression management skills. Do they manage one another in or out of the cohort classroom as students did at HBS? Since the cohort now provides standard measures of comparison for grades, question four asks whether this has induced competition for grades among cohort students? The fifth question examines competitiveness as a result of grading on class participation. Have students become competitive for airtime now that class participation is weighed more heavily in a student’s grade at Sloan?

The last question asks whether student-student relations have changed over time at Sloan. This question is somewhat problematic, however, and is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Design of Study

This is an analysis of MIT’s Sloan School of Management using the case study method (Yin, 1984). It is both cross-sectional and historical. It is primarily cross-sectional in that it uses several methods to examine the current state of student-faculty and student-student relations at Sloan. It is secondarily historical in perspective because it tracks change over time at Sloan. It is not a longitudinal study since it does not follow specific cohorts of students before and
after the curricular changes at Sloan. Most of the data regarding the “old” Sloan has been acquired through the Van Maanen article and the interviews with faculty members and administrators who had been at Sloan for at least six years and therefore witnessed the implementation of the cohort system and other changes.

The research questions stated above are answered through the following methods: (a) faculty, administrator, and student interviews; (b) class observations; (c) syllabi analyses; and (d) other techniques such as observing students and faculty members on campus, attending organized meetings, and monitoring the student listserv. The results of all methods are intertwined to achieve a triangulation effect (Jick, 1979; Patton, 1990). Below is a more detailed description of which questions each method answers.

Interviews
Interviews serve as the primary data source (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Patton, 1990). Faculty and administrator interviews were used for historical comparative purposes as well as to provide a sense of the current state of both student-faculty and student-student relations at Sloan. Faculty members were asked a series of questions, most of which paralleled the research questions listed above. The interview script as well as the actual questions can be found in Appendix A. Regarding student-faculty relations, all professors interviewed had taught a first-semester class since the cohorts were implemented. All faculty members, therefore, were asked to discuss four common topics: (a) student-faculty relations in the cohort classroom, (b) whether cohorts create cohesiveness among first-semester students, (c) whether an “us-versus-them” dynamic is present in the cohort classroom, and (d) whether students gang up on cohort faculty members. Faculty members who had taught at Sloan for at least six years were also asked whether any of
the above topics had changed over time. Finally, faculty members who had taught both cohort and non-cohort classes were asked to compare student-faculty relations in those two types of classes.

Sloan faculty members reported being somewhat unaware of student-student relations and had very little recollection of such relations before the curricular changes occurred. All faculty members were asked to discuss the following topics: (a) current student-student relations at Sloan, (b) whether current cohort students attempt to manage one another, and (c) whether current students are competitive for either grades or for airtime. Lastly, faculty members who had taught in cohort and non-cohort classes were asked to compare student-student relations in these classrooms.

Faculty members interviewed held widely-varied personal characteristics. Responses offered were analyzed based on faculty discipline, gender, rank, and years of experience at Sloan.

Administrators were asked many of the same questions as faculty members regarding student-student and student-faculty relations. A few administrators were also asked questions regarding logistical issues at Sloan. These interviewees were helpful in providing a more comprehensive scope of the changes in the MBA program.

Student interviews were used to establish the current state of student-faculty and student-student relations at Sloan. The interview script as well as the actual questions can be found in Appendix B. Broad questions were often employed with probes to focus on the research questions. For example, some students were asked to describe their first semester at Sloan. From there, probes were used to explore any number of effects of the cohort implementation.

Regarding student-faculty relations, students were asked to discuss relations in both cohort and non-cohort classes. Students were
then questioned as to whether there was an us-versus-them dynamic present in the first-semester classroom, and whether first-semester students ganged up on faculty members.

Sloan students were asked to describe current student-student relations in both cohort and non-cohort classes. They were questioned regarding whether students attempt to manage one another, and whether students are competitive with one another for grades in cohort classes. Competition for airtime, particularly in the classes where participation weighs heavily in the grade, was also discussed.

Similar to faculty responses, student responses were also examined in light of different student characteristics. Student gender, year, cohort, and major, or what Sloan calls the "track", were all considered during the analysis.

Lastly, faculty member, administrator, and student interviewees were asked specific questions regarding issues that arose during the study's class observations and syllabi analyses. In this way, the methods all served to reinforce one another.

Class Observations
In-class observations (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Patton, 1990) were employed in support of interview results and were helpful in answering almost all research questions. Observations were useful in determining the current state of student-faculty relations. I considered individual student and faculty behavior as well as behavior towards one another, including such details as student and faculty entrance time, interaction patterns, attentiveness, body language, preparedness, and other possible factors. I looked for student cohesiveness leading to an us-versus-them mentality among students and any evidence of students ganging up on the faculty. Since I observed both cohort and non-cohort classes, observations were useful in
determining whether there was a difference between these two types of classes.

Regarding observation of student-student relations, I watched students' behavior towards one another. More specifically, did students attempt to manage one another through speech or body language? Did students seem competitive for grades or for airtime? Were relations in cohort classes different from relations in non-cohort classes?

When conducting the analysis, certain additional factors were considered. The class' discipline as well as time of day were factors. I took note of the part of the semester in which the specific class session was held—beginning, middle, or end of the semester. If the course was part of a first-semester required core, I also considered the specific cohort as a variable. Finally, I controlled for faculty characteristics such as gender, rank, and discipline.

**Syllabi Analyses**

Syllabi from Fall 1993 and Fall 1999 were analyzed as another supporting data source (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Patton, 1990). The Fall 1993 syllabi served as an historical data source. When examining these syllabi, I first looked for anything pertaining to student-faculty relations: Is in-class student behavior mentioned? If so, what parameters are set? Are students encouraged to meet with faculty members out of class? I then analyzed these documents by course type (cohort versus non-cohort) and year (1993 versus 1999). Are student-faculty relations handled differently in cohort classes? Have any of these factors changed over time?

Next, I searched for any mention of student-student relations: Is special attention paid to in-class behavior? Are syllabi different for courses where class participation is weighed more heavily for grading? Is there any reference to students managing one another in class or
competing either for grades or for airtime? I again analyzed these documents by course type (cohort versus non-cohort) and year (1993 versus 1999). Are student-student relations handled differently in cohort classes? Have any of these factors changed over time? Unfortunately, since faculty members had little recollection of student-student relations in the past and neither current students nor current class observations could not provide this measure of comparison, the syllabi are the only strong source of data when considering the change over time in student-student relations.

Other Techniques
As a case study, some less directed methods of data collection were used. I spent approximately two days per week during the 1999-2000 school year observing and talking to students, faculty members, and administrators formally and informally in the student lounges, the cafeteria, the library, the computer lab, and several of the other areas on and off-campus where Sloan community members congregated. I attended “town hall” meetings with students and administrators where policies were discussed. By my request, I was placed on the student listserv and received approximately five student-generated e-mail messages per day. I acquired the Sloan Student Senate meeting notes. When appropriate, I drew upon these experiences and documents as supporting evidence for hypotheses and conclusions.

Data Analysis
Results for the study were written up by research question. Each question is answered using the appropriate methods, with results presented individually. For example, on the question as to whether students are competitive for grades at Sloan, interview results regarding this question from students, faculty members, and administrators were combined with results from the syllabi analyses and
classroom observations to devise a general response. Results from each method were presented. The question as to whether students are competitive for airtime was then answered the same way, in the next subsection.

Several research questions led to a yes or no response. In these cases, the answer was derived from a simple majority of responses or data points. When no consensus appeared, it is stated as such, and both sides are explored. In most of these questions, why or why not conclusions were then sought. Content analysis (Patton, 1990) was performed on the interview results. For example, if interviewees suggested that students were not competitive, explanations for why students were not competitive were then sought. In a few cases, explanations such as this one were grouped by common characteristics, such as those pertaining to the institution, the students, the faculty member, or the course. The number of responses supporting a similar statement is usually cited, either in actual numbers or approximations.

Sample/Data Collection

Faculty Interviews

As of Spring 1999, there were eighty-nine full-time faculty members and twelve adjunct or visiting faculty members at Sloan. Since nearly all of the research questions pertain to the cohort system, I requested interviews with all current Sloan faculty members who had taught a first-semester cohort class since the system implementation in 1993. Only these faculty members would be qualified to discuss the atmosphere in the cohort classroom. This reduced the number of professors eligible for this study to thirty-seven.

I sent out personalized e-mail messages to all thirty-seven faculty members in October 1999. Most (92%) of these teachers were full-time Sloan faculty members. The remainder were adjunct or visiting
professors. After receiving approximately twelve positive responses, I sent out another round of e-mails and visited the remaining faculty members in their offices. Appendix C contains an example of one of these e-mails requesting participation. Some faculty members never responded and others declined the invitation to participate. I ultimately interviewed twenty-four faculty members—65% of the total who were deemed eligible.

Of the eligible faculty members, the characteristics of those interviewed did not differ too greatly from those who refused to be interviewed. Thirty-eight (38%) percent of those who were interviewed were women, versus 9% of those not interviewed. Fifty-eight (58%) percent of those interviewed were tenured, while 46% of those not interviewed were tenured. Faculty of all six first-semester required core courses were represented in both groups. One-third (33%) of the eligible Economic Analysis for Business Decisions faculty members were interviewed, as well as 50% of the Data, Models, and Decisions professors, 80% of the Strategic Management professors, 75% of the Communication for Managers faculty members, 83% of the Organizational Processes professors, and 75% of the Financial and Managerial Accounting professors.

Fourteen of the twenty-four interviewees (58%) were teaching at Sloan before 1993 when the cohorts were implemented. These faculty members were able to compare relations before and after this and other changes. Additionally, sixteen of all interviewed professors (67%) had taught MBA classes outside of the first-semester core. They were able to compare student-faculty and student-student relations in cohort versus non-cohort classes. Finally, all fourteen of the faculty members who had taught before and after 1993 had also taught both core and elective classes, so they were able to comment on the differences of
environments in both core and elective classes before and after the cohort implementation.

All faculty interviews took place in Fall 1999 or Spring 2000 and were one-on-one. Almost all interviews lasted between forty and sixty minutes. Twenty interviews were conducted in-person in the faculty member's office, and all but one of these were recorded. Four interviews were conducted over the telephone.

**Administrator Interviews**

Two groups of administrators were contacted through e-mail messages outlining the study. First, I selected upper-level administrators whom I presumed held knowledge of MBA student-faculty and student-student relations before the changes occurred. Those with historical knowledge were also asked logistical questions regarding the changes. Then I contacted administrators with knowledge of current student-faculty and student-student relations.

Six upper-level administrators were interviewed: the current Deputy Dean of the Sloan School of Management as well as a former Deputy Dean, the current Director of the MBA Program as well as a former Director, and two current Associate Directors of the MBA Program. Two of these administrators were also Sloan faculty members and two others were Sloan MBA graduates. These four interviewees were able to provide wide-ranging responses to questions, as they had multiple views of student-faculty and student-student relations at Sloan.

The interviews took place during Fall 1999 and Spring 2000 in the offices of the administrators. All six interviews were recorded and transcribed, lasting between thirty and sixty minutes.

**Student Interviews**

I began interviewing students in Spring 2000. I waited until the second semester so that first-year students had time to reflect upon
their semester in cohorts and would be able to compare environments in cohort and non-cohort classes. I contacted Sloan students with e-mail messages as well. First, I sent e-mails to the entire MBA program through a Sloan student list-serv. I invited first and second-year students to participate in focus groups based on their specific first-semester cohort, or what is called the "ocean" at Sloan. Appendix D contains a copy of this e-mail message.

The above request elicited very little response, as students reported that these times conflicted with other obligations such as classes or recruitment events. I then sent out similar but personalized e-mail messages to individual students requesting that they participate in non-cohort-specific focus groups. Unable to secure lists by cohort or by track, I was able to control for only two factors--year and gender--while soliciting participants. Using the 1999-2000 Sloan Student Directory, I selected students by attempting to keep the distribution of year and gender relatively close to actual proportions. I proceeded alphabetically, selecting first and second-year men and women based on their positions on the Student Directory page, a form of systematic sampling (Fink & Kosecoff, 1996). I did, however, seek slightly more second-year students in order to generate a stronger base of knowledge on the full two-year MBA experience.

I interviewed fifty-three Sloan students, or 9% of the Sloan MBA student body. Thirty-one (58%) of the interviewees were in the class of 2000, and the other twenty-two (42%) were in the class of 2001. Seventeen of all student interviewees (32%) were women, which is close to the actual proportion, 27%. My sample also consisted of eighteen international students, or 34% of the sample. This also resembles the actual proportion of international students at Sloan, which was 38% in 1999-2000.
In terms of cohort representation, I interviewed students from all twelve first-semester cohorts--six from the Class of 2000 and six from the Class of 2001. Most cohorts were represented by three to five students.

There are eight different tracks that students can enter. The tracks of the interviewed students very closely resembled the actual proportions of students in each track at Sloan. To follow are the percentages of students from the sample in each track accompanied by the actual program-wide proportions in parentheses: 2% e-business (5%), 9% financial engineering (8%), 11% financial management (15%), 11% information technology and business transformation (7%), 6% operations and manufacturing (1%), 26% new product and venture development (30%), 11% strategic management and consulting (15%), and 26% self-managed or undecided (20%).

All students interviews were conducted in a conference room or a staff member's private office within the Sloan building. All interviews were recorded and ran between twenty and sixty minutes.

Of the fifty-three student interviewees, twenty took part in one-on-one sessions. The remaining thirty-three interviewees participated in multiple-student sessions: sixteen students were in eight two-student sessions, nine students were in three three-student sessions, and eight students were in two four-student sessions.

Class Observations
I gained access to Sloan classes by e-mailing faculty members and requesting observation permission. Appendix E contains a sample of one of these e-mail messages. In a handful of cases, I approached the faculty member in person seeking permission. All but a few faculty members granted me permission to enter their classrooms.
When observing classes, I arrived approximately five minutes before the scheduled class start time and stayed approximately three minutes after the actual end time. Whenever possible, and often at the faculty member's request, I sat in the back corner of the classroom. Sloan classrooms house curved rows of seats, thus I was able to see the faces of almost all students in the room from this position.

Thirty class sessions were observed. Of those thirty sessions, seventeen (57%) occurred in the fall semester and the remaining thirteen (43%) occurred in the spring semester. Of the fall semester observations, twelve sessions were traditional required core courses containing first-semester cohort students only. A thirteenth session was the Finance Theory first-semester elective class for first-semester students. The other four first-semester classes observed contained second-year students only. The thirteen second-semester classes observed contained a mix of both first-year and second-year students.

The class observations occurred at different times of the academic year. The first classes observed were held during the middle of the first semester. From that point on, I observed classes regularly through the end of the first semester and throughout the entire second semester.

I observed both large and small classes. Twelve of the thirteen first-semester cohort class observations were standard size--approximately sixty students. Most of the remaining observed classes held anywhere between fifteen and thirty-five students, while some second-semester observations were as large as sixty students.

Most first-semester cohort classes were scheduled in the morning. As a result, I observed eleven morning and two afternoon cohort class sessions. To compensate for the high percentage of morning cohort
classes, I observed twelve afternoon and five morning non-cohort classes. All sessions lasted approximately ninety minutes.

I observed each of the six Class of 2001 first-semester cohorts at least one time. I observed the Atlantic Ocean twice, the Baltic Ocean once, the Caribbean Ocean once, the Indian Ocean twice, the Mediterranean Ocean five times, and the Pacific Ocean once. I also made certain to sit in on each of the first-semester core classes at least one time. Of the required core courses, I observed Economic Analysis for Business Decisions twice, Data, Models, and Decisions three times, Communication for Managers once, Organization Processes once, Financial and Managerial Accounting twice, and Strategic Management three times. Lastly, I sat in on the first-semester elective class, Finance Theory, one time. First-semester cohort classes composed twelve of the thirty observations (40%).

It is difficult to determine course discipline representation. There are seventeen unofficial departments within Sloan. These divisions are practically meaningless to students, however, since their tracks do not correspond to specific divisions. Tracks are truly multi-disciplinary, combining courses from any number of divisions. I observed classes within thirteen of the seventeen Sloan divisions and across all eight tracks.

It is important to note the measure of observer obtrusiveness in the classroom. Each faculty member was made aware that his or her class would be observed on a specific day and time. Therefore, it is possible that faculty behavior was influenced by the presence of an observer. There are three reasons, however, why the observed professors would not know how to alter their in-class behavior for the sake of observation: (a) the requests for observation (see Appendix E) did not offer any specific details of the study; (b) a high percentage (82%) of faculty
members who were both observed and interviewed were observed first, so learning the details of the study during the subsequent interview would not have influenced their in-class behavior when observed; and (c) more than half (61%) of the observed faculty members were never interviewed, so they were never aware of the study’s specifics. Therefore, it is assumed that observer obtrusiveness was low for the faculty.

I also assume that my presence did not influence student behavior in the classroom. First, over half of the observed classes contained approximately sixty students. Most observed classes were large enough in size that I was likely unnoticed by the majority of students. Second, due to my position in the back corner of the room, most students would have had to look behind them to notice me—a slightly awkward maneuver, particularly when students are expected to face the front of the room and the lecturer. Third, with the exception of one ocean, I observed no specific group of students more than twice, and most groups only once. It is unlikely that I raised suspicion among students by being a constant presence in their classroom. Lastly, even if students learned the specifics of my study through the interview process, most observations were done before most student interviews were conducted, and most observed students were never interviewed at all. If students questioned my presence in class, they were unaware of my goals during observation.

Syllabi Analyses
Through the Sloan Office of Communications, I was able to secure copies of syllabi from two fall semesters: 1993 and 1999. I could not obtain syllabi for every MBA course offered during those semesters. There were sixty-nine courses listed in Fall 1993. I obtained forty syllabi (58%). Many of the missing syllabi, however, corresponded to classes that may not have produced traditional syllabi, courses with
titles such as Research Project, Special Seminar, and Proseminar. These syllabi, the oldest that I could secure, are from the first semester that the cohorts were implemented. They serve ably as a measure of Sloan before the changes occurred because the effects of these changes on student-faculty or student-student relations would not yet be reflected in these documents.

For the Fall 1999 semester, I was able to secure fifty-six out of a possible seventy-six syllabi (71%). Again, many of the courses for which Sloan did not hold syllabi were for titles such as Independent Study, Workshop, and Special Seminar.

Gaining Access

Through correspondence with John Van Maanen, author of the "Golden Passports" article and a current professor of Organization Studies at Sloan, I was able to secure a position as a Visiting Scholar for the 1999-2000 academic year. This title provided me access to all areas of the Sloan campus, including the library and computer lab. It is also likely that it assisted me in gaining entrée into the Sloan community. I mentioned this title whenever appropriate while talking with or sending e-mail messages to Sloan administrators, faculty members, staff members, and students. The title of Visiting Scholar grouped me with the faculty, while my age was more similar to that of the students. I believe these factors enabled me to obtain truthful answers from both sets of interviewees. For example, a few faculty members spoke somewhat maliciously about certain policies at Sloan such as the required core classes and the elimination of the thesis, indicting administrators by name. Faculty members also spoke willingly about the flaws in their own teaching skills. Students spoke unflatteringly about faculty members and classmates by name, and others expressed self-doubts regarding their return to the classroom and openly questioned whether they were
qualified to be admitted at Sloan. Neither students nor faculty members seemed to offer guarded interview responses. It should be noted here that all interviewees were granted complete anonymity, as the names that appear in the results are fictitious.

Limitations

There were a few limitations to the study. The first was that my appointment as a Visiting Scholar was not made official until October 1999. This meant that I was unable to attend any Orientation events for first-year students that fall. I was also unable to observe the first month of classes at Sloan, particularly the way in which cohort faculty members set the tone for student-faculty relations in the classroom.

The second limitation was that I had little opportunity to establish the nature of student-student relations before Sloan's changes occurred. Current students and class observations could only provide a sense of current student-student relations, and faculty members had little recollection of student-student relations in the past. As a result, I had to rely on the syllabi analyses as the primary source of data for this question.

Another limitation is Sloan's status as a highly selective business school. The results found at Sloan may not apply to all schools at all selectivity levels. If the same institutional and curricular changes were made at a less selective institution, they may elicit different effects.
CHAPTER FOUR: STUDENT-FACULTY RESULTS

The results of the study follow the form and order of the research questions listed in Chapter Three. Chapters Four and Five present the results of the student-faculty and student-student relations analyses, respectively. Both chapters are divided into subsections that explore the specific research questions.

Student-Faculty Relations

To determine whether the student-faculty relations at Sloan have begun to resemble those attributed to HBS in the literature, a combination of both broad and specific questions are answered. The first question asks: What is the current state of student-faculty relations at Sloan? The second question is: How have Sloan student-faculty relations changed over time? The rest of the questions are more specific. The third question looks at the effect of the cohort, and determines whether Sloan students have become more cohesive as a result of the cohort implementation. The next two questions are answered together. Is there an us-versus-them attitude, where students pit themselves against the faculty? Does this attitude manifest itself in students ganging up on cohort faculty members? Finally, the last question examines the difference in student-faculty relations in cohort versus non-cohort classes as an indirect way of determining the effect of the cohort implementation.

The General State of Student-Faculty Relations at Sloan

What are student-faculty relations like at Sloan? How do students perceive the faculty? How does the faculty perceive students? Are relations respectful? The answers to these questions provide necessary background information for the remainder of the study. To answer these questions, faculty, administrator, and student interview results are
used, as well as results from the class observations and syllabi analyses.

Student-faculty relations are generally positive at Sloan. There is mutual respect among Sloan students and faculty members for each other’s intellect, accomplishments, and experience. Sloan students and faculty members used the same adjectives to describe one another, such as “smart”, “bright”, “challenging”, “curious”, and “interesting”.

Faculty members were quick to note the diversity of the student body in terms of both ethnicity and professional experience. Thirty-eight (38%) percent of the MBA program was composed of international students. In addition, each incoming class grouped MBA candidates with varying professional backgrounds including medical degrees, military experience, law degrees, and of course, consulting and investment banking experience. Faculty members also recognized the high quality of previous experiences held by these students. Professor Jim Pope described students in the following way, “A good group of people, very bright, quite diverse on the whole. Students are young but they’ve had a few years of work experience. A lot of confidence. A range of specific skills.” These comments are quite typical of those provided by the interviewed faculty members.

Student perception of faculty members was slightly more complicated. All interviewed MBA candidates seemed aware that Sloan professors are at the top of their fields in management or economics research and students afforded respect appropriately. But while students admitted to being more respectful of certain disciplines than others and somewhat awed by big-name professors, it was the teaching ability that outweighed these and any other factors when attributing respect to a faculty member.
Most interviewed students admitted to entering Sloan with more respect for the courses which required a great deal of quantitative analysis, such as economics and statistics, and less respect for the courses which required minimal quantitative skill--communications and organizational behavior, for example. Second-year student Jill Carter explained, "I think there are initial perceptions. I mean come on, we're at MIT. We're not lying. Most people come here because they feel comfortable or want to learn more quantitative stuff." But students are also able to separate respect for a professor and that for a discipline. Talking about a non-quantitative course, Jose Arocas, a first-year student from Venezuela said, "My professor was very good, and people respected his work a lot, even if the content wasn't very valued." Second-year student Michael Joseph corroborated this notion by stating, "If it was a good prof, they liked the prof, they respected the prof. They didn't necessarily respect the subject. There's a separation there." Students offered many examples of faculty members in quantitative courses who never won student respect and those in the non-quantitative classes who were cherished by students. In the end, students respect good teaching and, "if the professor is bad, any course, you're not going to respect him," as Mr. Arocas stated. In essence, the discipline matters little in terms of the respect for the faculty member--teaching quality is more important.

Students also spoke about feeling a certain amount of awe for big-name professors. Student Jill Carter described this feeling in the following quote:

We're in a place where we're in a strategy class and our professor was quoted in The Wall Street Journal on the front page at least three or four times throughout the semester. He was going into court, he was on TV. That is such a high!
More often than not, however, statements like this were followed by ones that explain how teaching is still more important than a big name. Students understood that ground-breaking research does not translate into good lecture subject matter by itself—the faculty member must be skilled at making this connection. Second-year student Teryn Rushdie offered, “Ultimately, you’re here to learn from a professor, and no matter how good their research is and how good their publications are, it all comes down to teaching.” Providing an example of the importance of perceived teaching ability in light of a big name, Carlos Herrera, a second-year student from South America said the following:

In the case of Simmons, for example, although he’s a great man, a lot of research done, the leading faculty member in the finance department, I don’t think people respect him as much because he flies like 300,000 miles away from the ground floor, from the core subjects he’s supposed to be teaching. People start asking, “What am I doing here? Is this really the purpose of taking a class with this personality who almost won a Nobel Prize?”

Like the discipline that professors taught, a professor’s reputation is clearly less important than his or her teaching ability when it comes to student respect.

Are Sloan faculty members good teachers in the eyes of their students? Most responses indicated that there is a range of teaching quality at Sloan. The majority of students, however, seemed pleased with the overall quality of teaching.

On the more positive end, second-year student Anthony Nielsen stated, “Generally speaking, I thought the quality of teaching ranged from good to outstanding.” A subset of students sprinkled their positive comments with hints that some faculty members are guided more
by their research than by student interest. First-year student Amanda Pryzbilla, for example, offered this quote:

I think the faculty members I've had experience with are very interested in the students' learning. I've had one or two faculty members who have kind of pushed their research on the class and have geared the class towards their research.

Similarly, second-year student Emily Fletcher remarked, "I definitely feel like most of my professors have been very interested in the subject matter. I feel like sometimes, because of their research, they have a different emphasis than some of the students want." In some cases, for example, students recalled wanting a more shallow treatment of certain topics and more in-depth analyses of other topics. But the level of depth provided by the professor was dictated more so by his or her research interests.

First-year Italian student Philippe Grazzio compared Sloan favorably to other schools of similar size by noting, "There is a little bit of mediocrity around, but not any more than could be expected in a large institution. You're not going to have 80 exceptional faculty members no matter what." These comments represented the group of positive remarks regarding Sloan teaching.

Another subset of student interviewees elaborated on the variation in teaching quality at Sloan. The following quote, offered by second-year student Ben Jolsen, was somewhat typical of this group:

I've had a pretty broad range of faculty members. I've had a fair amount of inexperienced faculty. In fact, probably the two worst teachers, instructors at any level I've ever had have been at Sloan. So that's been kind of disappointing...On the other hand, I've had some really
brilliant professors, some professors that I think are really geared toward teaching, like Michael Burkett, for instance, I think really loves to teach.

Students recognized the influence of research on a Sloan faculty member’s career, and suggested that teaching does not exact a high level of commitment from all faculty members. Second-year student Jeff Edwards made the following statement on this subject:

There’s a variation to which they’re committed to teaching. Sloan is definitely known as a research institution where it’s very important to research, and publish. Some professors seem to be more interested in that than in teaching their classes.

Ming Yee, a second-year student from Singapore, said, “Most of them are great researchers, but not all of them are great teachers.” These quotes seem to indicate that the commitment to and quality of teaching at Sloan cannot be generalized across all faculty members.

Finally, on the negative side, a small group of students appeared generally displeased with the quality of teaching. In describing the Sloan faculty, second-year student Josh Goldstein stated, “I’d call it very low quality, with specific exceptions... But by and large, the faculty is really incredibly weak. Just stunningly weak.” Second-year Italian student Vincente DiRosa also made a damning remark regarding the commitment to teaching among Sloan faculty members, “Generally speaking, they are great researchers, and on average, they are less oriented to teaching.”

Again, there was variation of student opinion on Sloan teaching quality. Some comments were mostly positive and a small group of comments were mostly negative, but nearly all indicated a range of teaching quality. Students recognized that Sloan professors are top-
notch researchers but not all devote as much effort to their teaching. No student factor such as gender, year, cohort, or track seemed to have any influence on the results.

While respect for a teacher may be based on student opinion of teaching quality, Sloan students insisted that most of their classmates always acted respectfully towards faculty members. Second-year student Christine Dodge summarized student sentiment in this way:

In class, the students are attentive, they don't talk to one another, there's no whispering, there's no game-playing, there's no note-passing, there's no looking across the room. There's nothing. When students are in class they pay attention and it's serious.

Student respectfulness will be discussed later in much greater detail, but again, students asserted that they and most of their classmates acted professionally at all times in class. Results from faculty interviews, administrator interviews, and class observations reinforce this notion. These results are discussed below.

When asked about current student-faculty relations in their classes, faculty members offered a narrow range of responses employing mostly positive terms. The word "respectful" was used most often. A typical answer was offered by long-time Sloan faculty member Phil Halperin when describing his Fall 1999 class: "The students were fine, they were respectful of me the whole time." Professor Eleanor Berger went further in stating, "I think that the students are very respectful here, a little bit deferential compared to student behaviors I've observed or heard about in some other top MBA programs." Professor Jack DeAnza, a recent Sloan hire described students by saying, "overtly respectful and sensitive". These sentiments were shared by the other faculty interviewees.
Two high-ranking Sloan administrators agreed with the notion that Sloan students are highly respectful towards faculty members, and one administrator, Bill Weatherby explained it by stating, “That’s very much the MIT way. Faculty walk on water...It’s a research institution.” In other words, because Sloan faculty members are renowned for world-class research, students are deferential towards their professors. As mentioned above, students are well aware of their faculty members’ professional accomplishments.

The class observations also served to confirm the idea that students are respectful of faculty members. During thirty observations, regardless of faculty gender, discipline, and rank, and regardless of whether core or elective classes were observed, most students acted respectfully towards the professor. Students made seemingly appropriate in-class comments, held few side conversations, and appeared attentive. Students always sat upright in their seats, appeared to be taking notes diligently, and asked presumably insightful questions.

However, there was some evidence of inappropriate behavior in most classes. Two potentially disrespectful acts witnessed in these classes were student tardiness and the act of students walking out and back into the class in the middle of the 90-minute session to use the restroom, place a phone call, or for other reasons. Like the otherwise respectful behavior, these acts also occurred in almost every class, regardless of the student, faculty, or class characteristics. Faculty and student interpretation of these acts will be offered next. Tardiness will be addressed first.

It is common knowledge within the Sloan community that classes begin five minutes after the appointed start time and conclude five minutes before the appointed end time. Nearly all observed classes actually began seven or eight minutes after the appointed start time.
Even considering this small cushion, there were consistently at least five students who walked in after the class had begun and often two or three students who showed up between twenty and thirty minutes late. It is highly unlikely that the same students were late in each observation since twenty-four of the thirty class observations contained unique groups of students. When questioned regarding this behavior, both faculty members and students confirmed its presence.

When students were asked how many of their classmates they believed were late, a 10% to 15% range was typical. In a class that holds sixty students, they suggested six or seven would arrive late, on average. Students insisted that it was a minority of the class. This is consistent with the class observations. Students and faculty members were then asked to offer explanations for this tardiness. Both groups offered similar answers here.

First-year student Chris McMillen made a critical distinction about tardiness in stating, “There’s part why you’re doing that [arriving late], and part why you’re not scared to do it.” The overwhelming majority of students who were asked why tardiness exists at Sloan followed the latter path, simply explaining that students were late because it was allowed. “If you just got railed when you did it, people just wouldn’t do it,” said first-year student John Aronson. Second-year Chilean student Fernando Colina made a similar statement, “We all do what the teacher says. If the faculty says, ‘I do not want people arriving late,’ I think most of the people will not arrive late.” The few faculty members who claimed to not have any problems with tardiness attributed its absence to having not condoned it. But mere statements were not enough for some. Further deterrent tactics were also employed. Professor Edward Grant offered the following:
I make it very clear very early that they come on time and I do that in several ways: first of all, I say it. Then, when they come in late, I make a joke out of it and push them, and we all watch them until they sit down and they never do it again.

Another long-time Sloan faculty member, Joanie Horan also used additional tactics. After telling students that they are to be in class on time, she apparently adds, “your class participation grade is going to be negatively affected if you wander in here at a quarter to.”

Beyond why students are not fearful of being late, lies the question of why students are late. Members of both parties suggested that students are late to early classes due to the start time. This was a popular remark. Promptness is jeopardized by the often slowed train system or traffic on the much beleaguered Boston highways. The frigid temperatures during the long Massachusetts winter is enough to keep the non-commuters in bed, according to interviewees.

Students are late to classes at all points during the day, so the early time explanation is not enough. Students and faculty members listed a number of other explanations for tardiness such as recruiting conflicts, the perceived right to lateness earned by paying high tuition, cultural differences in the value of promptness and the lack of interest in class. None of these, however, were mentioned by more than a handful of interviewees. A more common explanation, mentioned more frequently by students than by faculty members, is what was called the “culture of MIT”. This was applied not only to tardiness, but also the aforementioned tendency of students to walk out and back into the classroom during the class session.

The culture of MIT was described by long-time faculty member Jim Pope in the following manner:
MIT's is the engineering approach: you get your job done, you work your late hours. You're not punching the clock, you're doing it on your time. And following those silly rules is not the important part. The important part is getting the learning, getting the job done. The MIT culture tends to be less respectful of rules and decorum and appearance than the Harvard culture.

Professor Pope's comment suggests that students at the Sloan School have assumed the engineering culture of what community members call "the institute", or MIT. Forty-eight (48%) percent of the Sloan Class of 1999 and 37% of the Class of 2000 earned undergraduate degrees in engineering according to Sloan Placement Office documents, but only 10% of both classes earned these degrees from MIT. Therefore, this may be an artifact of the culture within the engineering discipline rather than that of MIT. Second-year student Jordan Kelp offered a common remark when trying to explain student tardiness. He stated the following:

It has a lot to do with the backgrounds of the Sloan students we're talking about, because a lot of them come from technical fields that really encourage cultural norms of freedom and "you do your thing, I'll do my thing." I think it's a very different audience than you might have at another school like Harvard.

The phrase "individualists" was also used frequently to describe Sloan students. Student Christine Dodge explained the tardiness is this way:

I wondered if maybe it was tied to the kind of students that come here: they're individualists. The MIT persona doesn't like to be told what to do, doesn't want to run in the typical path, likes to stride to their own thing a little more.
Others proposed that the MIT culture, because of its technology-oriented nature, rewards individuality. That is why students walk into class late, that is why students feel free to walk out of class to place a phone call, and that is why faculty members allow them to do these things. The Sloan community is imbued with this spirit. In fact, several students insisted that these acts couldn’t simply be a reflection of student opinion of Sloan professors or Sloan classes because students arrive late to and walk out of recruiting events as well. Second-year student Mike Shipsky explained, “It’s not just professors, it’s guest lecturers. It’s not even lecturers, but presenters at lunch-time for a special series or company presentations.”

When committed in front of recruiters, however, these acts of disrespect appear to have greater consequences and do not go unnoticed by the faculty and administration. Although this is not directly related to student-faculty relations at Sloan, it provides a richer description of the Sloan student body. In Fall 1999, the administration convened a task force dubbed the Professional Committee. The following statement was found in a memo from the Professional Committee to the Sloan community:

At a Town Meeting with MBA students in the Fall, Peter Howser raised the issue of the impact of poor manners affecting recruiter perceptions of Sloan (and thereby rankings). A discussion ensued with many students speaking about what could be done to improve the community norms of acceptable behavior. In the Spring, a faculty member approached the Student Senate regarding poor student behavior during presentations by visitors and asked the Senate’s assistance in improving this behavior.
The memo is referring to the Business Week rankings. These biannual ratings of MBA programs are followed closely by those in the MBA community. Sloan's ranking has fluctuated, jumping from #9 in 1996, to #15 in 1998, and finally to #4 in 2000. What makes this rating system unique is that, until the year 2000, it had considered only the opinions of recent MBA graduates and recruiters. In 2000 it added a small component entitled "intellectual capital". Nevertheless, the opinion of recruiters greatly affects the ratings and thus the fate of the program, or so it is believed at Sloan and probably all ranked MBA programs.

In order to quell this concern about recruiter perception, the Sloan Student Senate was in the process of writing Sloan Community Standards that would apply to behaviors such as tardiness, the use of cellular phones, and the use of the computers for games or websurfing during both corporate presentations and classes.

For whatever reason, either due to the individualistic spirit at Sloan or because it is only committed by a minority of students, or for both reasons, tardiness was only addressed in two of the fifty-four Fall 1999 course syllabi. Both happened to be first-semester cohort classes. Other indiscretions such as cell phone use or walking out and back into class were not mentioned in any Fall 1999 syllabi. Overall, there was little indication of student-faculty relations in the syllabi. Five out of the fifty-six syllabi encouraged student-faculty contact out of class.

One potential explanation for these acts of disrespect is that they are effects of the cohort implementation. Familiarity among students bred by cohorts may embolden students to act in a disrespectful manner towards their first-semester faculty members. This tardiness, however, was observed in both cohort and non-cohort classes. In addition, faculty members and students did not confine these acts to
cohort classes. No faculty member or student offered the cohort as an explanation for these acts. When asked directly, a handful of students and faculty members stated that they did not believe these acts were cohort effects. This concept was not explored thoroughly, however. The possibility remains that tardiness is a result of familiarity bred by cohorts, and this behavior continues as students leave the core, thus explaining the presence of tardiness in elective classes.

Student-faculty relations at Sloan appear generally positive. Students and faculty members speak very highly of one another. While students recognize the quality of research produced by their faculty members, students afford respect to their professors based on teaching ability. While students seemed pleased with the overall quality of teaching, they agreed that there is a range of quality within the Sloan faculty.

Faculty member, administrator, and student interviewees all stated that students act respectfully towards faculty members in the Sloan classroom. When asked to explain student tardiness and a tendency to walk in and out of the classroom, students offered a long list of reasons. Perhaps the most compelling was that tardiness was an effect of the engineering culture at MIT. Students are individualists who march to the beat of their own drummer. While these acts may be overlooked by Sloan faculty members, it is the corporate recruiters whom certain community members fear are offended.

Changes Over Time in Student-Faculty Relations

The question of whether student-faculty relations have changed over time can be answered through faculty and administrator interviews as well as through syllabi analyses. Several institutional changes occurred at Sloan since Van Maanen published his article in 1983--changes that were likely to affect student-faculty relations. The
cohorts were implemented and the thesis requirement was eliminated in 1993. In addition, the program size jumped from 300 students in 1983 to 463 students ten years later, and then to 605 MBA candidates in 1999.

Faculty members and administrators, particularly those who had been at Sloan since 1992 or before, were asked whether student-faculty relations had changed over time. Since all responded affirmatively, they were all asked how these relations had changed. Syllabi from all 1993 classes were also compared to those from 1999 to determine whether student-faculty relations were addressed any differently in these documents. Results from the syllabi analyses are woven into the interview findings. Results from the student interviews and class observations are also employed in this section. Though they cannot provide a measure of change over time, they can confirm present conditions at Sloan. To follow are the four changes most frequently cited during faculty member and administrator interviews. Results are presented in thematic order, not in order of frequency of citation.

When asked how student-faculty relations had changed through the years at Sloan, several faculty members and administrators suggested that distance has grown between students and faculty members. Paula Balmer, a long-time faculty member remarked, "I think the students, in general, now are more separate from the faculty than they used to be. We used to interact much more with the students on an everyday basis." Steve Wallace, a Sloan administrator who was a master's degree candidate at Sloan in the 1980s compared relations then and now by saying, "There was much more of a sense from day one that you call faculty by their first names. The sense that we were in it together to some degree." Apparently, this sense of togetherness is not as strong at Sloan today.

Sloan professors and administrators suggested that two factors have loosened student-faculty ties: (a) the elimination of the thesis
requirement, and (b) the drastic increase in program size. As several faculty members and administrators noted, these two changes were inextricably linked. Some historical background follows.

In 1983, when Van Maanen wrote "Golden Passports", the two-year Master's of Science program consisted of approximately 300 students. (Sloan did not begin awarding MBA degrees until the entrance of the Class of 1995.) Ten years later, the program totaled 463 students. Sloan had grown over that decade for financial reasons. As Sloan administrator Bill Weatherby told the story, the size increase was a product of MIT's reaction to dwindling government funding. "The Institute [MIT] said, 'You've got to either start growing your way out of this or shut your doors.'" Sloan responded by enrolling more students. Managing these students then became a problem since Sloan did not increase the faculty proportionately to the student increase.

When a master's thesis was a graduation requirement, each Sloan student had at least one faculty member serve as a thesis advisor. When the number of Sloan students rose, the time required of professors to advise theses jumped dramatically. Faye Eastlake, a long-time faculty member described the resulting situation in the following manner:

The number of students had increased, but the number of faculty had not. So what you had was that it became impossible to manage the thesis as a personal kind of experience. And you had a number of people who, when you couldn't manage a small number of students expeditiously, decided they didn't want to do any. So you had some people managing twenty or thirty theses, and some people doing none. And it just became an unsustainable system.

The thesis requirement distinguished Sloan from most other business schools that did not require the same sort of academic capstone
experience, but a 1991 Report of the Task Force on Improvement noted that it also demanded time that could have been otherwise spent in the classroom. Mr. Weatherby stated, "The market was telling schools that they needed to create more outlets for students to take additional electives. The thesis was a differentiator but it wasn't something that spoke to people who were hiring students." For these three reasons—the inability to supervise theses efficiently, the student desire for more electives, and the lack of influence on job placement—the master's thesis requirement was eliminated.

Sloan students are still encouraged to write a thesis, but no more than a handful of MBA students were doing so in Spring 2000. As mentioned above, it is widely believed at Sloan that when the thesis requirement was eliminated, the quality of student-faculty relations suffered. Professor Westlake said, "What the elimination of the thesis has done is limit the very close interpersonal contact between faculty and students." Melanie Heights, an administrator at Sloan, offered a similar comment: "When we eliminated the thesis, that probably widened the gap between students and faculty quite a bit." As Melanie's colleague in the administration Steve Wallace explained it, "One thing you can say about the thesis is, it puts you in very close relationship with at least one and up to probably three or four faculty members depending on the topic." He followed that the thesis, "was something for everybody," meaning that each and every MBA student used to be guaranteed some close contact with Sloan faculty members.

As mentioned above, Sloan doubled in size from 1983 to 1999, and grew rapidly in the early 1990s. Interviewees claimed that this growth has, like the elimination of the thesis requirement, created distance between Sloan students and professors. Faculty members and administrators offered comparisons of relations with students before and
after the student population boom. One long-time Sloan faculty member, David Streiffen, described the changing conditions in the following manner:

I know maybe, if I'm lucky, a quarter [of the students], not by name, just by sight, and will have encountered them in some form or another, either as a guest teacher, or they've been in my section, or they've taken one of my electives. Whereas I used to know 100% because I would see them all in my course. And because I would see them all then over the two years that they were here, we'd interact in the lobby, in the elevators, in the corridors, because there was a reason to interact. Now, when somebody says hello to me standing and waiting for the elevators, it's not a surprise, of course, but the background is anonymous.

Dr. Balmer offered a similar statement: "I used to feel like I knew a third to half of the student body really well, and now I know a sixth at most." She directly attributed this reduction to the combination of the increase in program size and the elimination of the thesis requirement. Tom Spriter, another long-time faculty member, stated that as the MBA program size has grown, "we've lost some of that same personal contact and relationship." Finally, when comparing Sloan in the early 1990s, when she was a student, to current-day Sloan, administrator Elizabeth Peters noted, "Probably being a smaller program made students feel that the faculty were more approachable." It is clear that together, these two changes--the elimination of the thesis requirement and the increase in program size--have reduced the amount and perhaps the quality of student-faculty interactions at Sloan.

In order to compete for students and to fill more spots in the student body over time, a few faculty members suggested that Sloan
evolved from a technical-oriented "niche school" to become a full-service business school. Rather than academic differences, however, these faculty members cited structural changes as evidence of Sloan stepping out of its niche--dropping the thesis requirement, implementing cohorts, and becoming a larger program. These are all characteristics of other popular business schools, including the Harvard Business School.

Another facet of a full-service business school is a strong commitment to the student job-acquisition process. As perhaps another, yet not explicitly stated reason why faculty members may feel less close with students, a small group of faculty members noted that Sloan has placed more emphasis on job-placement and less on teaching over time. Concurrently, they claim, Sloan has begun to attract students who do the same: those who are more interested in job-acquisition and less interested in their classwork. As a result, it appears that resentment, or an academic-recruitment tension has emerged among these professors at Sloan.

An experienced Sloan professor, Jonathan Hellerman recognized this development over time at Sloan. In his words:

It's very much more of a business school than a management school. And it's much more focused as a...(pause)...I don't want to use too pejorative a term here, but it's much more driven by the function the school performs in propelling people into high-paying jobs than learning.

While faculty members cannot know for certain whether all contemporary business students are more interested in acquiring jobs than knowledge, or whether Sloan is simply attracting this type of student for the first time, these faculty members have noticed the difference. Dr. Hellerman said this:
The main change that I see is that the students themselves are much more dominated by the whole recruitment process than they were twenty-five years ago. So from day one, the recruitment process itself, and the preparation for the recruitment process draws the student interest.

Another long-time faculty member, Phil Halperin openly displayed some resentment for this development. While attempting to explain the attendance problem in his elective class, he stated, "Second-year students don’t show up to class. They think they’re here just to get a job." It is clear that Dr. Halperin does not feel the same way.

The most frequently cited example of Sloan administrators and students placing recruitment over academics was the addition of the Finance Theory course to the first-semester core in Fall 1999. On top of the six pre-established required courses, Finance Theory was added as an elective for first-year, first-semester students. While students saw it as a necessity for recruiting purposes, some faculty members viewed it as an illogical concession to student desires. Dr. Hellerman offered a summary of this occurrence:

We have done a thing in the fall semester which we never would have done for intellectual, academic, or teaching reasons. We pushed Finance into the fall. Why did we push Finance into the fall? Because students perceive they’re at a disadvantage in front of the recruiters in January for summer jobs.

First-year students wanted to be able to discuss finance theory during their interviews with recruiters for summer positions. He then explained that the Finance course naturally follows the first-semester Economics and Accounting courses, so Finance should not be taught at the same time. Dr. Hellerman offered an example of academic-recruitment
tension by later stating that it was one of the "things we wouldn't do for the normal progress of the material, but were driven to do by the recruitment process."

Not all Sloan faculty members are uneasy with the institution's evolution. Mr. Weatherby pointed out that the older professors are more likely than their younger colleagues to view Sloan's path negatively. He followed by saying, "I think the older faculty maybe see this place as more of an assembly line." It was, in fact, some of the older faculty members, some of whom had been at Sloan for more than twenty years, who broached this subject. Kurt Fulton, a young faculty member seemed unaffected by this development at Sloan, stating, "I'm willing to live with the notion that the students are here primarily to get a good job." Regardless of how he views students' intentions, however, he agreed that students are placing job-acquisition over academics.

Some of this academic-recruitment tension among faculty members is likely caused by the presence of corporate recruiters at Sloan, a permanent fixture at most business schools. Mr. Weatherby described the faculty member-recruiter relationship metaphorically, "The faculty are very annoyed when the money-changers [recruiters] invade the temple and divert the students' attention away from the pearls of wisdom that are being dispensed." Other Sloan community members seem to fault both the students and the recruiters. After relaying a story about how one of his students was flunking his first-semester class due to traveling for interviews, Dr. Bernstein offered the following simile to describe the student-recruiter relationship: "Somebody likened recruiters to moon people. It doesn't matter what you do, you could ban them and they'd be floating around over there in East Cambridge and students would flock to them."
The perception that faculty members are less close to students, therefore, was attributed directly to the elimination of the thesis requirement and the increase in program size at Sloan. It is also possible, though faculty members did not explicitly state as such, that this distance is a result of resentment towards the emphasis Sloan administrators and students place on recruiting rather than academics.

If class attendance is, in fact, affected by increased student focus on recruiting, there may be some indication of a backlash against this phenomenon in the syllabi. Three (3%) percent of the 1993 syllabi mentioned student attendance. Eighteen (18%) percent of all 1999 syllabi, including 16% of elective syllabi, either encouraged students to attend class, noted that attendance is a requirement, or explicitly stated that students will be penalized for absences. While 18% is not an overwhelming figure, the margin between the two figures is great enough to be noticed. It should be noted that no faculty members cited increased student absences as a change over time, but the addition of this policy to course syllabi would seem to indicate a change in student behavior. Perhaps faculty members view required attendance policies as a weapon to combat perceived student preference of recruiting over academics.

Upon examining the other facets of the syllabi, few were found to have changed much over time. Overall, a similar percentage of all classes mentioned or listed office hours in each year—27% in 1993 and 29% in 1999—and for both years, fewer than 10% of all syllabi recommended or suggested that students visit or contact faculty members out of class. It is possible that faculty members, when interviewed, were comparing current student-faculty relations to those before 1993, thus the difference would not be evident in this syllabus analysis. It is also possible that even if syllabi from before 1993 were obtained,
the difference in perception of closeness would not be apparent through this type of comparative analysis. This may be a sentiment that does not affect the way faculty members construct syllabi.

The second change in student-faculty relations as perceived by administrators and faculty members is highly pervasive. Several interviewees stated that students have developed a "consumer" attitude towards faculty members and have become increasingly demanding of professors and the MBA program. Others used synonymous terminology, such as students having an "increased sense of entitlement" or "expecting more from faculty".

In comparing how students and faculty members view the role of Sloan MBA students, Elizabeth Peters, an upper-level administrator, stated the following:

I think there is a perception now of a customer mentality. You will hear that a lot. "I'm a customer here. I'm paying $28,000 a year and I want x." Whereas I think the faculty would often consider "No, you are not a customer. You are a student and you're paying for the right to be educated here." That's very different.

Several other administrators and faculty members replicated this statement almost verbatim. Professor Joe Fox phrased it in a slightly different way: "They have this sense that this is their world and I'm here to work for them." Regardless of whether students truly are consumers in this dynamic, it is clear that faculty members believe students have adopted this attitude towards the program.

Professor Robert Webber suggested that this trend should not be attributed solely to Sloan, but that it has appeared at all institutions of higher education. He said, "There's a greater sense of entitlement among young adults, in general, and a sense that universities should be
providing all sorts of services that they've never provided before. And that's just an increasing trend over time." With Sloan's tuition increasing slightly less (32%) between 1993 and 1999 than the average tuition increase at the other top nine MBA programs within the Business Week rankings (36%), it is likely that consumerism is not a Sloan-only phenomenon if related to tuition costs.

How does the consumer attitude manifest itself in the classroom? First, faculty members claimed that students apply pressure on them to provide practical information. Professor Pope stated, "They expect to be able to recognize useful knowledge when they see it and complain when they don't see it." Other Sloan professors suggested that students are very directed in their approach to classes. Professor Harold Compton said, "I've noticed that students are just coming up to me and saying, 'What does Operations have to do with e-commerce? What do I have to learn from Operations?' So they're a little more pointed on what they want to get out of a class." Dr. Cornera quoted students as saying boldly, "What are the seven things that we need to know?"

Current Sloan students agreed that they are demanding in class. Second-year student Jordan Kelp talked about friction between students and faculty members in this way, "Students get irritated most when they find that the class isn't serving what their personal goal is." Another second-year student, Justin Lee, associated the students' consumerism with their age. He said, "I think we're all in our mid to late twenties, early thirties. People are quite demanding as to what they expect from class. If it doesn't meet what they want, it's not like when you were in college, they're more vocal about it, they get more irritated about it."

The same group of faculty members suggested that the consumer attitude served to decrease the academic rigor of the program, or as
they put it, "dumbed it down". Professor Bernstein stated that students are willing to forego the process of academic discovery in their desire to obtain practical knowledge quickly. He summarized the student mentality in this way:

Tell me the take-away, I want to know why this is good, how this is going to help me tomorrow to get a better job or to perform better in whatever job I go out to. I want to know now. I don't want to have to go through a series of steps and say "Wait, let's go and build up a logical argument." I'm interested in the output and its utility, and less interested, or less accepting of what I would call an academic intellectual approach to understanding methods and why they're useful, why they deliver what we want.

Similarly, Professor Cornera claimed that consumerism manifests itself in the form of excessive workload reduction requests. She stated the following:

The students have gotten to the point of being a little bit out of control. "We want you to put together summaries of all the articles." Excuse me, but you can go read your friggin' article. One person, one year wrote in my evaluation, "All this reading, one article was actually ten pages long." As if that were excessive.

Two Sloan faculty members provided examples of how the first-semester classes that they teach had been dumbed down, bowing to student demands. Professor Bernstein said, "Compare what is in DMD today to what was in DMD when I started teaching in the 60s, 70s, and the 80s. There isn't any comparison." When asked how the curricula differ, he responded, "The subject matter is treated at a very superficial level by comparison with the way it was treated before." Professor Hellerman used his
Economics class, numbered "010" as another example of student pressure dumbing down a course, stating:

We have substantially reduced the intensity and intellectual level of 010 in the last five years, due to this pressure. And if you want to see that, just go back and look at the exams in 1995 and compare them to the exams in 1999. It's changed. It's changed because of the continuing pressure to lower the intensity.

It should be noted, however, that talk of dumbed down classes was not restricted to those in the cohort.

An example of the consumer attitude and dumbing down was also found in the class observations. While observing Dr. Webber's section of the core statistics course entitled Data, Models, and Decisions, or DMD, he handed out the final exam from the previous two years. When asked if providing students with previous exams was a common practice at Sloan, Dr. Webber made the following statement:

It's the students serving the students. I never used to hand out final exams from previous years. Then I used to hand out the previous year's final. Then one of my colleagues teaching the course this year said, "Let's give them the previous year and the year before." Ten years from now, it'll be the previous three years, plus they'll want a video on how to study for the exam, they'll want sample question from this year's exam, they'll want study guides, they'll want you name it.

Offering assistance in studying, thus making the exam easier, may certainly be considered dumbing down.

Finally, a frequently-cited example of student consumerism was the addition of Finance Theory to the set of Fall core classes. As
mentioned above, faculty members suggested this was a clear concession to student desire that should not have been made for academic reasons. It appears that students have become more demanding over time and faculty members and administrators have reacted by fulfilling certain student requests.

Why do faculty members and administrators respond to these requests? One of the most compelling reasons also happens to be the third significant change over time in Sloan student-faculty relations: the increased interest in student satisfaction as a result of the national Business Week ratings of business schools. As mentioned earlier, this ranking system, conceived in 1988 and well-read throughout the MBA community, considers the opinions of MBA graduates and recruiters almost exclusively. This has been explored in the literature. As Walpole (1998) found, MBA faculty members, fearful of jeopardizing their institutions’ Business Week rankings, felt pressure to keep students happy in the classroom. This pressure often resulted in dumbing down their curricula. It is these rankings that give consumerism its weight. Perhaps not surprisingly, it is essentially the same group of older Sloan faculty members who lamented student focus on recruiting rather than academics that also harped on the effects of the Business Week rankings.

Some faculty members agreed that the ratings have specifically contributed to pressure to improve teaching. Professor Cornera, for example, claimed that the ratings not only result in pressure to increase teaching quality, but they also lead to increased student consumerism. In her words, “I think that as a result of the Business Week ratings, we as a school have become more concerned with teaching. And the students have, in turn, become more demanding of teaching.”
Other faculty members talked about how the ratings have increased emphasis on student happiness in general. Dr. Hellerman, for example, was outspoken on the effects of the ranking system. He began by saying, "I think it drives, more so than it should, it drives the school into a kind of customer focus. This is a system that rewards a school for having students say nice things about the school." He later explained its effect on faculty members by stating, "It creates less of an atmosphere that you're a faculty member teaching the students what you know, and more that your job is to keep everybody happy--to make sure that they don't get unhappy." In other words, faculty members must sometimes overlook concern for student learning and elevate concern for student happiness, precisely as Walpole (1998) discovered.

Professor Pope spoke about faculty members becoming more attuned to the joint effect of the rankings and increased student consumerism. He offered the following opinion:

Now, the faculty as a whole are more responsive to calls for change, and part of that push is from the students, part of it is from the outside world and the ratings, which interact with the students. So students read the ratings, and the ratings, at least in Business Week's case, are based on students.

One faculty member, Tom Spriter also agreed that the rankings influenced the Sloan community, but placed emphasis on the administration rather than the faculty. In his words:

I think students have become more influential. The Dean's Office, the administration of the school is so worried about standing in Business Week and other external rankings. And they know that the MBA program and student satisfaction drives those in important ways and therefore they put a lot
of emphasis on trying to do things that will help us in the ratings.

Overall, faculty members seemed aware that the ranking system of *Business Week* has been highly influential on the Sloan community and student-faculty relations more specifically.

Students confirmed the notion that the rankings give their opinions some weight at Sloan, particularly with the administration. Second-year student Jim McNulty had this to say about the influence of the rankings and student respect: "Because of the *Business Week* rankings, that has maybe made the administration a little bit more sensitive to what the students are thinking and feeling." Another second-year student, Liz Fowler, also spoke of the ratings and the administration, stating, "They appear to be genuinely interested in what the students want because it's in their best interest to create a good program--they can rise in the ratings, they can get more money, the whole thing."

Again, the *Business Week* ranking system has affected the Sloan community, particularly student-faculty and student-administration relations. It is possible that this rating system, along with student consumerism, has contributed to the dumbing down of certain Sloan courses.

When asked how the student voice is heard most clearly, faculty members and administrators agreed that it is through the formal committee systems. The student voice has been amplified over time because it is more organized as a result of these committees, but also because student opinion is now sought--students have been asked to sit on more Sloan community committees. The increased student voice is the fourth change in student-faculty relations over time.
While the following quotes speak mostly about student influence with the administration, this change over time was included in the student-faculty relations section because many of the students' suggestions and requests for change affect the faculty as well, such as the issue of the Finance Theory course.

Professor Pope offered this comment on how students are more mobilized at current-day Sloan:

Their voice is heard more readily now than it was a few years ago. I think they're a little more mobilized, they recognize that through student committees, though their own personal initiative, they can communicate with the administration and apply some pressure.

Administrator Melanie Heights made a similar remark, noting that student committees, particularly the Student Senate, used to be quite disorganized, "Whereas now," she continued, "they're getting to the point where they can pass resolutions and put some pressure to bear on the administration."

Noting that students have grown more influential over time but seemingly at the request of the administration Dr. Cornera said this:

I think the student's voice is pretty loud, and we have students on all kinds of committees. There was a core committee, there's student representation. Students have access to the Dean's Office, the deans talk to the students more. I think there is more student voice. The senate is more active than it used to be.

Professor Streiffen remarked about the change over time and that it appears to have been initiated by the administration. "Increasingly," he said, "students are asked to take part in committees-
the Master's Committee, the MOT Committee. It's true, they seem to be more engaged in curriculum suggestion."

Several faculty members specifically applauded the progress of the Sloan Student Senate. As Professor Hellerman said, "Students, through their representatives, oftentimes are trying to improve life. I'm in favor of that. And it works pretty well. The Senate seems to work well."

Student-faculty relations have changed significantly over time at Sloan. Students and faculty members have grown less close due to the elimination of the thesis requirement and the increase in size. This distance may also be caused by the emphasis students and Sloan place on recruitment. Other changes in student-faculty relations are that students have become more demanding, the popular Business Week ranking system has influenced the Sloan community, and the student voice has grown louder. There has likely been some interplay among all of these changes. It is possible that any of the last three changes--student consumerism, rankings effects, and increased student voice and organization--has contributed to increased distance between Sloan students and faculty members, for example. It is also possible that the student voice was sought in an effort to boost Sloan's Business Week ranking. Student consumerism may have been magnified by student organization. These changes, therefore are not independent of one another.

An example of the interaction among these changes appeared in the Sloan Student Senate resolutions. Four resolutions were passed from Spring 1999 through Spring 2000. Of those four, three were related to the student job-acquisition process. One resolution implemented rules monitoring student behavior during recruitment presentations. A second resolution requested clarification of the grade disclosure policy as it
pertained to recruiters. The third resolution was student reaction to the proposed cancellation of the Information Technology and Business Transformation (ITBT) track. The second point listed in defense of this track was that "ITBT track members are highly sought after by recruiters." This shows that the strong student voice has been employed to improve the job-acquisition process. Again, this is further evidence that many of the changes at Sloan are interconnected.

One change over time not mentioned by faculty members and administrators was the cohort implementation of 1993. The rest of student-faculty relations section will be devoted primarily to this issue.

The Effect of Cohorts on Student Cohesiveness

According to Van Maanen (1983), the cohort system breeds familiarity among students. Students take a series of classes together, sharing the same workload and overcoming shared obstacles such as seemingly insurmountable workloads. This familiarity evolves into a sense of cohesiveness that has a multitude of effects on student-faculty and student-student relations. Have students become more cohesive in the first semester as a result of the cohort system at Sloan?

To answer this question, a series of methods were employed. Results from interviews with faculty members and administrators serve as the primary source of information. All of the interviewed professors either currently teach or have taught a first-semester course since the cohort was implemented in 1993. Fourteen of these faculty members taught the same or similar courses at Sloan before the cohorts were introduced, and therefore have a basis for comparison in determining the effects of the cohort system. Four of the six administrators interviewed were also at Sloan before the cohort implementation, either as faculty members or as students. Therefore, most of these
interviewees can compare Sloan before and after the cohorts were implemented. Results from student interviews were also used. While students could not compare the current conditions to those of Sloan before 1993, their responses could help describe the current state of cohesiveness in the cohort classroom. Finally, results from class observations of first-semester cohort classes are employed as well.

In 1993, first-semester cohorts were implemented for first-year students. Sloan faculty members who witnessed the implementation explained that the cohorts were an attempt to retain Sloan's traditionally small environment and the educational benefits associated with that, while still growing in size. With students taking first-semester classes in groups of approximately sixty, the actual size of the incoming class was to become relatively meaningless. A small-school environment would be created within each cohort.

The cohort implementation of 1993 coincided with the initiation of a new required core curriculum: all first-semester MBA students enrolled in the same six courses. These six courses were as follows: (a) Strategic Management; (b) Financial and Managerial Accounting, commonly referred to as Accounting; (c) Economic Analysis for Business Decisions, or Economics; (d) Organizational Processes, or OP; (e) Communication for Managers, also known as Communication; and (f) Data, Models, and Decisions, the statistics course referred to as DMD. The system has retained its structure since then with one exception—the Finance Theory elective course was added in Fall 1999.

The first question to answer is whether the cohort system has increased cohesiveness among first-semester students over time. Nearly all administrators and faculty members who were asked this question, regardless of rank, discipline, or gender contended that the cohort system has increased cohesiveness among first-semester students at
Sloan. Talking about Sloan before the cohort implementation, Professor Webber said, "Pre-93, our classes seemed like a random collection of people, a random collection of MBAs." In contrast, Dr. Balmer noted that in the cohort system, "The students obviously know each other within the class group better." A third long-time faculty member, Richard Leaves stated, "They're a group. There's no doubt the cohort system creates a group." One of the newer faculty members, Eleanor Berger, went further in elaborating how the cohort elicits cohesiveness with the following quote: "It seems to promote more camaraderie, the students do sort of bond. Everybody's going through the same thing, and they know that other people can relate to what they're going through." Finally, administrator Bill Weatherby explained it this way, "It's sort of the bootcamp thing. Everyone goes through this miserable experience and thereby it's a rite of passage and you talk about it for years after." Overall, interviewees were in agreement that the cohort, or lock-step method, has made first-semester students more cohesive than first-semester students were before 1993.

Sloan students also agreed that the cohorts provide a sense of cohesiveness during the first semester. Several students mentioned sharing a bond with their classmates in their section, or "ocean", and particularly with those in their smaller study and workgroups, or what Sloan dubbed "flocks", consisting of between six and eight classmates. Students joked about spending more time with their oceanmates and flockmates than with their own spouses. As such, a second-year South American student, Carlos Herrera, noted, "The cohort and the flock become your family. You get attached to them. They're the only thing that you relate to -- in the morning, afternoon, and night." Another second-year student, Ray Chen from Singapore, reflected on this subject by saying the following:
It was easier to bond with someone when you knew you were going to see them the next day, and the next, and the next for a whole semester. On a daily basis, you can carry jokes through from a previous day to the next, and you learn each person's quirks and personality.

While the bond may be formed by the sheer number of hours spent in class or working on assignments with flockmates out-of-class, it is strengthened through shared adversity, similar to what Van Maanen (1983) and others found at Harvard. On top of being thrust into a new environment with few if any familiar faces, most students claimed to have been completely overloaded with work during the first semester. Sloan's approach was described as the "drink from the firehose" method, where first-semester students are bombarded with information and assignments in order to ensure that all students have a core base of knowledge with which to continue their MBA careers. "The amount of work is just phenomenal" said student Peter DiNardo, "And in the end, it creates some kind of bond between the students, similar to a fraternity pledge period." Faced with so many challenges, the cohort becomes a source of comfort. Gianni Maltobello from Italy offered the following:

The workload was pretty high. It was a new environment, we came from different places with different experiences. So I think it was like a kind of safe environment in the ocean--seeing always the same faces, getting to know each other very well.

The intense workload clearly helps create a more cohesive first-semester unit.

A secondary method of determining the cohesiveness of cohort classes is to compare current student-student relations in and out of the cohort. When students were asked to do this, one of the few
differences cited was the fact that students felt isolated when not in the cohort. Second-year student Emily Fletcher mentioned that she enjoyed being in a cohort. She followed by stating, "I didn’t realize how much I liked it until the beginning of the second semester, where I felt kind of lost." When comparing the two semesters, she said, "I felt more floating and disorientation." In comparing the first and second semesters, first-year student Dave Leidenfeld said, "It’s a little bit more isolated. Not that it’s an isolating place at all, but you’re not as part of a group.” Katie Kingsly spoke warmly about how the cohort’s inside jokes helped to de-stress overworked students. She then stated, "I haven’t seen that at all this semester." Finally, Sarah Mascia spoke of the difficulty in making friends after the first semester, noting, "Going from class-to-class with totally different people also makes it really hard for you to meet people. So some people have actually said, 'I kind of miss the support of the ocean and having the team.’" These descriptions of non-cohort student-student relations are very similar to Van Maanen’s (1983) depiction of Sloan relations before the cohort was implemented. He spoke of students having "individualistic" and "personalized" educational experiences at MIT compared to those at HBS.

Without having observed first-semester classrooms at Sloan before the cohort implementation for comparison, I cannot determine with observation whether current Sloan students are more cohesive than their predecessors were prior to 1993. I can, however, make a general assessment of cohesiveness in these classrooms. It appeared that first-semester students, as the semester progressed, grew quite comfortable with another in the classroom—a level of comfort that did not appear to be duplicated in second-semester classes. Most of the in-class discussion was controlled by the faculty member and students had few opportunities to address one another. Students, nevertheless, appeared
familiar with their oceanmates. On several occasions, students displayed a knowledge of their classmates' professional experiences and cultural backgrounds—an impressive feat considering the classroom held sixty students. I also noticed several, what I believed to be, inside jokes about which students commented in the interviews. Not limiting the observations to the classroom, students who had shared the same ocean were always much more friendly with one another during multiple-student interview sessions than those who shared any other commonality, whether it be the same major, or "track", the same out-of-class interests, or even the same country of origin. Overall, it is clear that first-semester students feel a sense of relation to their classmates. Faculty members note that this was not present before cohorts were implemented in 1993.

The Us-Versus-Them Mentality and Ganging Up in the Cohort Classroom

Van Maanen (1983) found that cohort cohesiveness at the Harvard Business School had some potential negative effects on student-faculty relations. He suggested that cohort cohesiveness could evolve into an "us-versus-them" attitude, or a "siege mentality" where students, perhaps rallying around shared obstacles such as seemingly insurmountable workloads, view the faculty as the enemies. A cohort also provides potential power to its student. Van Maanen claims, because it is an organized group. This "us-versus-them" attitude and the potential power can lead to regressive behavior on the part of students, such as "calculated section-wide classroom behavior designed to shame, embarrass, or even humiliate a given instructor," as he suggests. Other authors such as Mark (1987) and Ewing (1990) also discuss the effect of sectioning students at HBS and offer several examples of cohorts displaying the sort of behavior that Van Maanen describes. Has Sloan witnessed some of the cohort's ill-effects? If not, why not?
To answer this question, three methods were used. First, faculty, administrator, and student interviewees were asked whether an us-versus-them attitude was prevalent among students in the first-semester classroom and whether students ever ganged up on the faculty member in the cohorts. Second, the syllabi from the six cohort classes in 1999 were examined for any indication of the presence of these effects, as well as compared to their 1993 predecessors to see if they had changed over time with relation to student-faculty relations. Finally, class observations were used to corroborate the findings.

One note should be made. Upon learning that this study is a form of comparison between the Harvard Business School (HBS) and the Sloan School of Management, eleven of the twenty-four Sloan faculty members mentioned that they had ties to HBS. Most had either taught there before coming to Sloan, had spent a sabbatical there, or had been a student there. Other faculty members, administrators, and even students who had no official ties to HBS claimed to be extremely familiar with the program, as the school sits only a few miles down the Charles River. Some students had taken a class there and others had friends who attended HBS. As a result, many interviewees infused their responses regarding Sloan student-faculty relations with comparisons to relations at Harvard. Some of these professors had not been at HBS for decades, others had been there as recently as the previous year, but their comments were general enough that this does not appear to matter. These comments will appear in this section whenever appropriate.

As previously mentioned, long-time Sloan administrators and faculty members agreed that the cohort system has made current first-year, first-semester students more cohesive than those who attended Sloan before 1993. Sloan students also suggested that they felt a stronger sense of cohesiveness among classmates during the first
semester than at any other time at Sloan. Before it can be determined whether this cohesiveness has elicited the cohort's ill effects, it must first be determined whether the conditions for negative effects are present at Sloan.

Van Maanen (1983) suggested that a heavy workload would help to form the us-versus-them attitude among HBS students. Students interpret this as the faculty being "out to get them". Sloan students, faculty members, and administrators all agree that first-semester students are under a great deal of pressure, especially due to a heavy workload. When asked to describe the first semester, almost every student mentioned the workload along with the level of stress that accompanies returning to school, working long hours with their small teams, and making career decisions. Second-year student Peter DiNardo described his first semester in this way: "The first semester is a very tense environment--a ton of work." Peter's colleague, Jennifer Nolan agreed. In her words:

It's just an ungodly amount of material they ask you to do as a student in the first-year core. And what happens is, you as a student, in addition to all of the adjustment issues--coming back to school and learning how to do things here at Sloan, and meeting people, teams, moving all of that stuff. In addition to all of that, you've got really more material than you can ever prepare.

Faculty members agreed that students are burdened with high academic expectations. Professor Pope, for example, spoke of the first-semester core by saying, "There's a lot of pressure in the first semester. Everything's required and there's a large number of courses. The workload is pretty high." Dr. Halperin stated simply, "There is a very high course load," when talking about the first semester.
It is clear that the high workload and multitude of other factors create a great deal of pressure for first-semester Sloan students. There is little question that these are the types of conditions under which an us-versus-them spirit would manifest itself. Do students adopt this attitude? Do students gang up on the faculty members during the first-semester core?

In perhaps the greatest measure of agreement among all interviewees, every faculty member and approximately 85% of all students who were asked whether an us-versus-them attitude emerged in the first-semester classroom replied no. In addition, every faculty member and all but one student declared there to have been no ganging up on professors in the Sloan cohorts. The fifteen percent of students who reported sensing an us-versus-them spirit in the cohort classroom all cited the same core faculty member. This can be considered an outlier. (This faculty member denied the request for an interview.)

First-year student Neil Kuczynski explains that the cohesiveness of the cohorts failed to evolve into an us-versus-them spirit with the following quote:

I didn’t really see it as an us-versus-them thing. I definitely saw that there was a greater sense of solidarity among the students in that we were together all of the time, but I didn’t see that play itself out as an adversarial relationship with the professors.

Argentinian second-year student Martina Fidelo offered a similar comment, “I think it actually helps for the students to be all in the same class. It’s like you become friends, but it doesn’t affect the relationship with the faculty.” These comments were typical of those expressed by students and faculty members.
In terms of classroom observations, there was no blatant us-versus-them attitude or ganging up present in the room during the twelve first-semester cohort classes witnessed. Students appeared respectful of faculty members and there were no cases of students confronting faculty members. As mentioned in an earlier section, students were late to classes and walked out and back into the classroom freely during the class observations. Students and faculty members maintained, however, that this was not meant disrespectfully towards faculty members—they claimed it is simply an artifact of the culture at MIT: the spirit of individuality and the engineering approach. In addition, this did not appear solely in first-semester classes when students were in cohorts. Sloan students were late to and walked out of all classes, including electives. Students and faculty members confirmed this.

Finally, there was no convincing evidence of an us-versus-them spirit or ganging up in the 1999 cohort course syllabi. The 1999 syllabi offer little indication of any tension between students and faculty members and little mention of in-class behavior. A few clauses are noteworthy, however. Even though tardiness is not considered a measure of disrespect at Sloan, it should be recognized that two of the six 1999 syllabi mentioned tardiness. One syllabus states that lateness will affect the class participation portion of the student's final grade. The syllabus for the Data, Models, and Decisions class explained why students should arrive on time with the following statement: "Late-comers miss announcements, handouts, the initial thrust of the class, and disturb other students." This clause, however, was present in the 1993 syllabus for the same course, so this could not be a cohort effect. The other syllabus, that for Strategic Management, simply encouraged students to arrive on time. There is no stated repercussion on a student's grade due to lateness. The syllabus for this course was
revised substantially since 1993 and the addition of this clause was one of the changes.

When comparing the 1993 core syllabi to those of 1999, four of the six syllabi offered virtually no changes at all. Two syllabi were restructured, but none of these changes were related to students developing an us-versus-them attitude or ganging up on faculty members. In fact, student-faculty relations were rarely mentioned at all. No syllabi for either year noted faculty office hours. Since the faculty members who teach the same class use the same syllabus, faculty members discuss their own office hours in each individual class. While no syllabus in 1993 even mentioned out-of-class relations, two out of six syllabi in 1999, those for Accounting and Organizational Processes, encouraged this type of contact. Again, there is little evidence in these documents to convince the reader that students are prone to ganging up on the faculty member in the cohort classroom.

When asked why they felt this previously established cohesiveness rarely transformed into an us-versus-them attitude or acting out as a cohort, interviewees offered a very long list of explanations, with few reasons being cited by more than a handful of respondents. Interviewees also offered very similar responses to these two questions. Rather than separate the two questions and their answers, they are addressed together here for the sake of thematic consistency.

No single answer dominated the responses to these two questions, but one theme recurred: while first-semester students are more cohesive now that they are in cohorts, this cohesiveness is simply not strong enough, when sparked by potentially antagonistic circumstances such as the overwhelming workload mentioned above, to harbor the cohort's ill-effects. A number of factors diluted the strength of the cohorts. The list of individual explanations are separated into three categories:
characteristics of the cohort, characteristics of the students, and those of the faculty.

Cohort Characteristics

When asked why there was no us-versus-them spirit in the cohort classroom and why students did not gang up on professors, a somewhat common explanation among faculty member interviewees was the fact that the cohorts of approximately sixty students were not pure cohorts—not all students take every class together. This may chip away at the likelihood of students uniting in the face of adversity. Harvard’s cohorts, at the time that Van Maanen (1983) reported on them, did not have these sorts of divisions.

There are three reasons why Sloan’s cohorts were not pure cohorts as of Fall 1999. First, the Communication core class was split into half cohorts. Each cohort of sixty students had two Communication sections holding thirty MBA candidates. This was done to facilitate student participation. Second, approximately five Leaders for Manufacturing (LFM) master’s program students who were not in the traditional MBA program enrolled in three of the six required core classes with each of the cohorts. Thus for each cohort, there was a group of five students floating in and out of the classroom. Third, MBA students were given the option of enrolling in Finance Theory as an elective during the first semester in Fall 1999. Not all students signed up for this course. Therefore, some students in each cohort created a subset of the full cohort by enrolling in this elective. These three factors, individually and cumulatively, dictated that these were not pure cohorts and diminished the likelihood that students would revolt en masse during the first semester.

According to students, cohort cohesiveness is also diminished greatly by the amount of time devoted to working with their small teams,
or flocks. This was the most commonly cited reason among students for a lack of us-versus-them sentiment and ganging up in the first-semester classroom. Each cohort is split into approximately eight smaller teams, or flocks. Students spend so much time with their eight-member groups, both in-class and out of class, that their sense of being part of a larger group pales in comparison. Second-year student Jeff Edwards said, "It was a cohort, but there wasn't a lot of cohort cohesiveness in that sense. I think we tended to be very focused on our teams." Cindy Dorado, a first-year student reflected on her first semester at Sloan by saying, "We obviously felt comfortable with each other, but the team was the linchpin of the first-semester experience." Second-year student Mike Shipsky compared his ocean of sixty students to his smaller flock of eight by stating, "I think everyone felt much more comfortable within their team of six-to-eight people," then he followed by saying, "It seemed like we were a bunch of spheres running around in a bigger sphere."

It should be noted here that while the literature described HBS students forming study groups, they were different in nature and intensity than those at Sloan. HBS groups formed so that students could discuss case studies before class. Once students became comfortable analyzing cases alone, the groups often dissolved. At Sloan, flocks met to prepare for class but also because they had group assignments to complete throughout the entire first semester. These assignments necessitated that the groups remain active.

Other explanations relating to the cohort were offered by only a handful of interviewees. Lisa Eppinger, a second-year student, suggested that the period of time that students are in cohorts is too brief to cultivate mass resistance. In her words:
You also have to realize that it's a fairly short period of time. And by the time you start out, yes, you are in a cohort, but it takes a while before you get to know each other in the first place.

Administrator Melanie Heights repeated this sentiment, then added, "First-semester students are still looking around for signals from the rest of the community. They're not particularly comfortable asserting themselves." So the notion that the cohorts end before students become comfortable posing group challenges is another factor.

It is interesting to note that the HBS cohorts last the full academic year—twice as long as those at Sloan. This may be a critical difference between the student-faculty relations at Sloan and Harvard. The HBS cohorts have more time to congeal. HBS cohorts may develop such as strong sense of cohesion by the beginning of the second term that faculty members, particularly those thrust in front of these students for the first time may naturally seem like outsiders and may be susceptible to group challenges.

When discussing this subject, Ms. Heights also mentioned that when Sloan was adopting cohorts, the Sloan administration looked closely at the HBS system and requested advice from HBS administrators. She noted:

Some things we adopted, some things we chose not to adopt. Interestingly enough, sometimes at their warning, we didn’t adopt things. They felt that some of their procedures caused some regressive behavior in their students that made them less responsible for their own behavior.

When asked to cite specific conditions that were not adopted due to fear of regressive behavior, she mentioned the fact that HBS cohorts sit in the same room all day while the faculty members shuffle in and out to teach them. She suggested that this arrangement "encouraged too much
territoraility" among HBS students, which Sloan hoped to avoid. Van Maanen (1983) also suggested that this HBS characteristic promoted student ownership of the first-semester classroom. A few Sloan faculty members raised this point. Kurt Fulton, an HBS lecturer before coming to Sloan, cited this as a significant difference in student-faculty relations between HBS and Sloan. Reflecting upon his experience teaching at Harvard, he said, "The fact that a section has its own room makes the students feel like 'This is our turf and the faculty are invited to speak to us.'" Dr. Balmer agreed, stating that the Sloan way of operation, making students move classrooms, "helps break up the monolithicness" of the cohorts. Again, this is just another way that the cohort cohesiveness is reduced.

Student Characteristics

Some explanations as to why interviewees did not sense an us-versus-them attitude or observe students ganging up on faculty members in the cohorts focused on student characteristics. For example, some suggested that the cohort bond may be weakened by the high percentage of international students at Sloan. In Fall 1999, foreign students composed almost 40% of the incoming class. One faculty member, Dr. Balmer, stated that the presence of international students elicits a sense of heterogeneity. In comparing HBS to Sloan, she noted, "We've always admitted more international students than Harvard ever admitted." As a result, she claims, "They're not cookie-cutter: look the same, talk the same." This heterogeneity may reduce cohort cohesiveness.

Others spoke specifically about Asian students—the most highly represented foreign nationality at Sloan. The presence of Asian students affects group student-faculty relations in two ways. Second-year Italian student Vincente DiRosa spoke about the influence of Asian students on cohort cohesiveness by saying, "I think Asian people, due
probably to language difficulties, have less ability to integrate in the first months, which are critical in creating a cohesive environment." Interviewees noted that Asian students tend to congregate with one another across oceans rather than with other students in their own flock or ocean.

The second way that Asian students influence student-faculty relations is the idea that these students tend to be extremely deferential towards faculty members, at least during the first semester, and are very quiet in class. Ray Chen, a second-year student from Singapore said, "During the first semester, I think those from outside, particularly the Asian countries, tend to defer to the professor and not question as much." Professor Edward Grant offered a similar statement: "The Asians are more deferential and much less likely to raise a different point or to push you on a point you’ve made." While some faculty members contended that unfamiliarity with the English language may cause reticence in class, it is the Asian culture to which most attributed the deference and in-class shyness. "Asian students come out of systems where they’re not encouraged to speak in class," Professor Hellerman noted. A colleague, Jack DeAnza, stated more directly that Asian students "never talk", they believe that "You’re the professor, so you have all the right answers." The potential force of a cohesive resistant front, therefore, is likely reduced by the shyness and deference of Asian students, whether due to language difficulty or cultural differences.

Other student characteristics were mentioned as well, but none were offered by more than three interviewees. It was proposed that students were too busy during their first semester of business school to pose any threat to their professors. As mentioned earlier, almost all faculty member, student, and administrator interviewees acknowledged
that first-semester students are overworked. In addition, students are attempting to reacclimatize themselves to student life, and they often have recruitment commitments to which they must tend. All of these pressures may preclude them from expending additional energy by forming a resistant front.

Professor William Winger suggested that "most students need the class and do not have enough knowledge in this area" to jeopardize their class time by forming gangs. Administrator Melanie Heights offered another student-oriented explanation: "It would be seen as poor form by the group to attack the professor, I believe, in less than a courteous manner." Simply stated, students are too professional and respectful of faculty members to gang up on them. Student Ray Chen offered a similar statement: "Given that this is an MBA program, that in itself lends a certain air of professionalism to it. So as you carry things forward, they never got out of hand."

Dr. Streiffen had two more student-oriented explanations that were related to decreased cohort cohesiveness. In both, he compared Sloan to HBS. His first explanation was a distinction between the two programs based on the students' living arrangements. He noted that Harvard is a residential campus: students live with one another in HBS dormitories and reinforce the cohesiveness in this way. Conversely, Sloan is not a residential campus. Many students live nearby, but others are spread throughout the greater Boston metropolitan area. He followed, "Partly because Sloan is not a residential community, I don't think it [the cohort] sustains itself with the same kind of intensity and total embracement or engulfment that one gets at Harvard as a member of a cohort. I think it's less here."

Dr. Streiffen's second point was related to the aforementioned individualistic nature of the Sloan student body. He said, "I think
there is greater individuation within the cohorts than one finds at Harvard, more of a willingness to kind of be the nail that stands out here than might be the case at Harvard." Considering the frequency with which this point was raised on other issues, it should be assigned a great deal of weight as an answer to this question of why there is no us-versus-them spirit and no ganging up on faculty members in the cohorts.

Faculty Characteristics
A third classification of explanations for the absence of group resistance had to do with the behavior of faculty members. While acknowledging the potential of resistance in any classroom, a few Sloan professors believed that it could be avoided if they set the proper tone at the beginning of the semester and diffused potential conflicts when they arose. While discussing students ganging up, Professor Bernstein said, "If you're careful to establish the right kind of student-professorial perspective at the start, that's very unlikely to happen." Dr. Compton offered a similar response, "It's certainly not me-versus-them. I tend to have some control of the classroom and tend to have takeaways that I want to get out after eighty minutes. So I kind of have an agenda...but I try to keep it congenial."

Professor Fox described the specific tactics he uses to extinguish flare-ups with problem students:
I worked very hard to diffuse their ability to recruit allies and become a gang by making sure that I was talking to the whole class, by getting the whole class involved, and by getting the attention off of them and on to other people.

Behavior by the faculty, therefore, may also prevent rebellious acts by first-semester students.
Two other faculty characteristics are potentially critical to the analysis. Though no interviewees mentioned these explicitly as explanations for an absence of us-versus-them attitude and ganging up in the cohorts, they must be considered.

During the interviews, administrators, faculty members, and even students discussed the tenuring process at Sloan and its implication on teaching. While Sloan has increased its emphasis on teaching over time, it is still a research institution. Sloan does not place the same amount of emphasis on teaching as does Harvard, for example, according to interviewees. Faculty members and administrators substantiated this argument with their interpretation of tenure requirements at Sloan. Professor Pope's comments were typical of most:

What it takes to be promoted here and be successful, and what it takes for status within the faculty community is more weighted toward research and less so toward teaching than it is at Harvard.

Upper-level Sloan administrator Elias Bacal stated quite definitively, "Tenure decisions are based primarily on the quality of research. That is the nature of the school, so it will not change." His colleague in the administration, Elizabeth Peters, confirmed this notion by remarking, "This is a research-oriented institution and therefore faculty are rewarded and promoted for research. Teaching is a very small subset of that."

The emphasis on research rather than teaching relates to student-faculty relations in the sense that student evaluations are, as a result, less influential on tenure decisions at Sloan. It should be noted that a few faculty members and administrators suggested that evaluations have become more important at Sloan over time. For example, Professor Bernstein said, "Because of the voice of the customer,
increasingly, area heads and the deans are paying attention to our teaching ratings." Sloan administrator Steve Wallace made a similar statement: "Teaching evaluations have become more important at Sloan than they used to be." Other changes have occurred over time that would also make Sloan faculty members more sensitive to student needs, such as concern about the Business Week rankings. But as Dr. Streiffen suggests, these factors have little effect on tenure decisions at Sloan:

It [teaching] is more important. Quite clearly there is much more focus placed on it, and the ratings are seen and read and are a topic of conversation. But it’s penetration into the tenuring and career system is lagged and continues to be lagged, at least in my view.

A very similar statement was offered by another faculty member, Tom Spriter. In his words:

There’s a strong peer pressure here to teach well, to do the best job you can in the classroom. But it doesn’t have any real bearing on promotions and tenure other than if you’re a really lousy teacher or if you fail to fulfill your responsibilities. The faculty has internalized the goal of improving their teaching to some extent, but it hasn’t transformed them into people who put teaching at the top of their professional concerns.

Since evaluations are not weighed as heavily as research in tenure decisions, Sloan student power vis-à-vis the faculty is likely not as strong as at an institution that strongly emphasizes teaching such as HBS. Without this known influence on the professor’s career, students may be less likely to form gangs and enact group rebellion while in cohorts.
Students aired some frustration about the fact that Sloan is primarily a research rather than teaching institution. They expressed a sense of powerlessness regarding the quality of teaching. The cases of two faculty members were offered as examples. First, an economics professor, George McGarrity, was noted as a particularly ineffective lecturer, and one who received low teaching ratings. Student Teryn Rushdie said this about Dr. McGarrity:

If you go back and look at the evaluations in the program office, it’s the same thing every year. Every student says the same thing, but somehow you experience the same thing when you take his class. So that’s a clear example of nothing being done. Why is it? Because he’s a great researcher and no one wants to touch him. The structure is not in place for someone to tell people at his level, “Look, you’re screwing up. Let’s do something about it.”

Several Sloan students mentioned talking with the MBA Program Office regarding Professor McGarrity’s teaching. First-year student Jose Arocas describes his experience in this quote:

I talked with some MBA Program Office people, and what they said is that, “It’s not an excuse, but here, the research is sometimes more important than the teaching skills.” This guy was a very good researcher and was probably going to improve and that’s it. So that’s something that really bothered me because if you’re paying so much...(pause)...I don’t get any direct benefits from the research, it’s the university who gets that.

Most students who discussed Professor McGarrity seemed to believe that he would not be teaching at Sloan if not for his research skills.
The case of another professor, Alexander Doore, was cited by students as the antithesis of Dr. McGarrity’s case. Students claim that Professor Doore is an “outstanding” teacher who was not offered tenure because his research record does not meet Sloan’s standards. One second-year student, Lisa Eppinger, spoke of the discrepancy between the students’ preferences and the institutional nature by saying the following:

There’s an example of a professor who the students just love, in general, but that is probably not going to be able to stay because it’s a research institution...To see somebody like that who had that kind of impact on me not be able to be here is frustrating and I’m not sure that you can do anything about it.

First-year student Chris McMillen displayed the same sense of frustration regarding Professor Doore’s case. He said, “In terms of how it makes me feel, I feel like I don’t have a lot of power to change how they teach me.” While these are only two cases, they clearly affected the way students view the influence of faculty ratings at Sloan. In addition, the sense of powerlessness may contribute to the absence of ganging up on faculty members in the cohort.

One final significant faculty characteristic in student-faculty relations is the use of the case study and cold-calling at Sloan. First, it should be noted that the Harvard Business School is said to have invented the case study method and most of the existing case studies employed by business schools have been written by HBS researchers. Not surprisingly then, HBS teaches 100% of its material through the case study method. Sloan reports to the rankings systems that it teaches approximately 33% of its material through cases. The remainder is a combination of lecture and experiential learning. Five
out of the six required core classes employed case studies to varying degrees in Fall 1999.

Sloan and HBS also have different approaches to using the case study. Dr. Spriter explained his approach to the case in the following manner:

The HBS cases are rich bodies of material that we draw on...but I tend to teach them more as embedded in the class, the same way I might use a movie or a video or a role play or a guest speaker. It’s a tool and it has to be linked to some underlying analytical structure.

Dr. Pope compared the two approaches by saying, "We sometimes do cases the way Harvard does, but we more often use cases in a more illustrative manner. We’re presenting theory in case, rather than somehow presenting the case and letting the theory emerge.” As witnessed during the class observations, Sloan professors are essentially lecturers who use the case material as fodder for discussion. In eleven observations of case discussions, the faculty member was clearly in control of the lecture and did most of the talking in every class. Conversely, a professor using the prescribed Harvard Business School model of teaching a case study is not a lecturer at all. In this learning environment, students are expected to do approximately 85% of the talking, and the faculty member guides the discussion to eventually illustrate a theory.

This difference has effects on student-faculty relations. One of the most critical tactics of the HBS case study method is employed at the beginning of the class. In the Harvard classroom, a student is “cold-called”, meaning called upon without prior notice, to “open the case”. Opening a case entails providing a brief summary of the case facts and analysis of the problem followed by recommendations to solve this problem. As Elderkin (1996) suggests, “The cold-call is a major
event in the case discussion process, and it worries students probably more than just about anything else" (p. 46). He continues by stating that students are so fearful of the cold-call that they have dubbed the short period of time at the beginning of the class when they wait for the opening cold-call as the "death march". There is clearly some anxiety associated with the cold-call and this may spur antagonism between students and faculty members.

Sloan faculty members claim to rarely cold-call their students to open a case. Some Sloan faculty members "warm call" or "cool call" students, telling them either at the beginning of the semester or just prior to the beginning of the class that they will be opening the case on that day. Some Sloan faculty members said that they open the case themselves. Others claimed to not open the case at all, preferring to use the case material much more sparingly. The class observations confirmed these statements. In eleven case study observations, there were two opening warm-calls--where certain students knew that they were eligible to open the case on that day--and one traditional cold-call to open a case, but the professor in that class also assigned another student to assist the one who was cold-called. In a fourth case, the faculty member asked for a volunteer to open the case. In all other case discussions observed, either the faculty member or no one opened the case. Other than the opening, there was little cold-calling in the Sloan classroom. Between one and four students were called upon without raising their hands in seven of the thirty observations, and this usually occurred when students failed to raise their hands in response to a question.

Sloan's deviation from the HBS method of teaching case studies is partly attributable to the aforementioned different approach the Sloan faculty takes to case studies--it's viewed as one of several ways to
provide context for a theory—as well as perhaps to the fact that some Sloan professors believe cold-calling instills fear in the students. This would likely elicit antagonistic student-faculty relations. Professor Webber, for example, had this to say about cold-calling:

I never have taught case studies the HBS way. I warm-call...It’s never been my style to put people on the spot...I don’t like people to be prepared for fear that they’re going to be cold-called.

Administrator Elias Bacal took this notion one step further by stating, "MIT has this image of a collection of smart students who take care of themselves." He explained this to mean that students do not need to be threatened with the fear of embarrassment in order to prepare for class, they are responsible enough to do so on their own.

At least two Sloan student recognized the effect of cold-calling on student-faculty relations. Second-year student Jeff Edwards noted that there was little cold-calling by his first-semester faculty members, and as a result, "It made it [the classroom] less tense." He followed, "I would conjecture that it probably would have been a more antagonistic relationship with the professor if there was cold-calling because you’re afraid they’re out to get you." This is the exact phrasing that Van Maanen (1983) used to describe tense student-faculty relations at HBS. First-year student Kurt Jacoby said that without the cold-calling, cases at Sloan were less stressful than he imagined. He followed: "I thought it was more interactive as opposed to a performance type thing in the class. So I thought that made relations with faculty more casual and more congenial."

The fact that Sloan faculty members use fewer case studies and because when they use case studies it is done in a different manner than at HBS, there is less cold-calling. This likely elicits a less
antagonistic relationship between students and faculty members. It is possible that this decreases the chances that an us-versus-them spirit would evolve in the first-semester classroom at Sloan, and that students would gang up on faculty members at Sloan.

Overall, most students and faculty members stated that there was no us-versus-them mentality and no ganging-up on the faculty member while students were in first-semester cohorts. The most frequently-cited explanation for this is that the type of cohesiveness presumed to be required for this sort of behavior is never established in the Sloan cohorts. Full cohesiveness is prevented by the fact that these are not pure cohorts, students tend to form stronger bonds with flockmates than with oceanmates, the period which students are in cohorts is too short, and students are not in the same classroom all day, encouraging territoriality.

Certain student characteristics also serve to chip away at cohort cohesiveness: the high percentage of international students, the fact that students do not live together, and the individuality of Sloan students. The ideas that students are too busy and too professional were also mentioned to explain the lack of an us-versus-them spirit and ganging up.

Finally, the behavior of faculty members was offered as an explanation. Professors suggested that setting the proper tone and using other pre-emptive tactics can prevent students from ganging up. Two topics that were not discussed explicitly as contributors to the environment in the cohort classroom but certainly should be considered as such are the fact that research is weighed more heavily than teaching in Sloan tenure decisions and the different way in which faculty members teach case studies. The absence of cold-calling, as a result, likely reduces student anxiety and group antagonism.
The Difference Between Cohort and Non-Cohort Student-Faculty Relations

In order to help determine whether cohorts have elicited some of the same ill-effects at Sloan that the literature attributes to cohorts at HBS, differences between student-faculty relations in Sloan’s cohort and non-cohort classes were sought. This was an attempt to identify the cohort effect in a less direct way while further fleshing out the picture of overall student-faculty relations at Sloan.

Students and faculty members were asked whether there are differences between student-faculty relations in cohort and non-cohort classes, and to describe these differences if they exist. Student responses were relied upon more heavily than those from faculty members. Only fourteen of the interviewed professors had taught both cohort and non-cohort classes, whereas all fifty-three students had experienced both types of classes by the time they were interviewed in Spring 2000. The results of the class observations and syllabi analyses were employed as well.

When asked whether student-faculty relations differ in cohort and non-cohort classes at Sloan, most interviewees responded yes. A small group of students found no difference in relations. They will be addressed later. What was most surprising, however, was that no student or faculty member directly mentioned the cohort as a factor in how cohort and non-cohort relations differ. Instead, they spoke of differences between the first semester and all other semesters as well as differences between required and elective courses. It should also be noted that students focused heavily on out-of-class student-faculty interaction while answering this question.

Interviewees were asked to describe how relations differed in cohort versus non-cohort classes. In their responses, sides were drawn along class lines: most first-year students believed that they were
closer to faculty members during the first semester--while they were in cohorts--and most second-year students believed that they were closer with faculty members after the cohorts ended, thus during the second through fourth semesters. Since students were interviewed in the middle of the spring semester, first-year students had less time to make this distinction than second-year students. First-year students had experienced life outside of cohorts for only three or four months when they were interviewed. They believed, however, that this was enough time to draw to firm conclusions.

As mentioned earlier, the first semester is extremely stressful for first-year students. New MBA candidates experience anxiety about returning to school after time out of the classroom. This anxiety is heightened by the heavy workload in the first semester. Professor Pope spoke of this first-year student stress by saying, "They're coming in with a lot more anxieties and uncertainties and feeling their way back into an academic environment. So a lot of things get easier as their careers at Sloan move along." Similarly, Professor Halperin stated, "At the end of the first semester, there's less pressure."

According to some first-year students, faculty members sensed this pressure and eased the new Sloanies into the school year by adopting the role of welcoming and introducing students to business school. These students concluded that they were closer with cohort professors than non-cohort professors as a result. Neal Kuczynski spoke of his relationships with first-semester faculty members in this way:

It was more of a, I don't want to say paternalistic relationship, but everybody kind of knew that this was the first semester...and I think they made a little bit more of an effort to look out for us.
Talking about her first-semester faculty members, Katie Kingsly recalled, "They cared about us and helped us get into the whole business school mode." She followed by stating that her relationship with professors after the first semester was more distant. In her words:

Although I really haven’t met with any of my professors since the core, you always know that they have research and other things going on. I don’t want to say that the relationships are bad, I just think that they’re very different, they’re much more distant. And I don’t think they know you as an individual anymore.

Some first-year students also claimed that a half-hour break between morning classes influenced student-faculty relations during the first semester. Beginning in Fall 1993, the year cohorts were implemented, classes for first-year students were always scheduled for 8:30-10am and 10:30-noon during the fall semester, while second-year students enrolled in classes of different lengths at different times in the morning. This thirty-minute break between classes provided opportunities for first-year students to speak informally with faculty members. Outside of a bank of first-year classrooms, Sloan set up a coffee table where students and faculty members could congregate. Amanda Pryzbilla mentioned the coffee breaks in describing student-faculty relations, saying, "I think last semester, people probably got to know their faculty members a little bit more because we had a break between our classes in the morning and the faculty members were there. So you could talk to them off-line." Cindy Dorado spoke of missing the coffee breaks after the first-semester. In her words:

You don’t have as much regular contact with them, you’re not seeing them at coffee breaks at 10am anymore and chatting with them just about class and life in general. So it takes
more of an effort to get to know them and for them to get to
know you.
It is the notion of talking about "life in general" or "off-line" that
appears to have made an impression on first-year students. Neal
Kuczynski emphasized the non-course related nature of first-semester
interactions with faculty members: "I think they opened the doors not
just for the discipline-specific issues. You wouldn't just go to Webber
to talk about DMD, you could go to him to talk about anything."

In sum, first-year students believed they were closer with their
professors during the first semester than during the second semester.
They felt that faculty members welcomed them to business school and
students recalled more informal chats about a variety of topics. The
fact that students were in cohorts during that first semester, however,
did not appear to influence student-faculty relations.

Second-year students maintained that they were closer with faculty
members once they left the cohort and its required courses. With the
exception of a few remaining core courses, Sloan students enroll in
mostly electives after the first semester. As a result, the student-
faculty relationship changes, these students contended. Jeff Edwards,
for example, described the effect of not selecting his first-semester
professors on student-faculty relations in this way: "In the first
semester, we were assigned these professors. It's not like I chose
them. So I probably already had a more formal relationship with them...In
the first semester, I was much more distant from them." In elective
classes, student-faculty relations revolve around the course's subject,
which unites students and professors. Second-year student Orlando
Posada described the change in relations over time with the following
statement:
I see a big change in the way that professors look at you. In the sense that the first-semester, when you see them, it is more like an introduction to business school, more than a relationship built on the affinity you have because of the topic he’s teaching, and your interest in that topic, like in the other semesters.

Talking about students after the first semester, Professor Eastlake said, “When you’re teaching an elective, students are there because they’ve already made a determination that they want to understand this material.” Professor Grant spoke of the different approach that non-cohort students take to elective classes: “They’re different because the students self-select it, and they’re all excited about the material.”

For second-year students, sharing a common interest with a faculty member increased the likelihood of student-faculty interaction. Liz Fowler had this to say about student-faculty relations after the first semester: “I’ve been able to take classes that I am interested in. And because I’m more interested, I’m also more likely to e-mail a professor, or approach him or her outside of class.” Similarly, Carlos Herrera spoke of the ease with which students approach faculty members after the first-semester:

Once you decide to specialize and do the subjects you have more interest in, you can easily approach faculty and ask for advice or even to be a mentor. After class, I think they’re much more available. The feedback is easily done and you share common ground between the students and the faculty.

Jordan Kelp suggested that the interest in subject matter had combined with a lack of emphasis on teams and a reduced workload after the first
semester to increase the likelihood of students having direct interaction with the faculty member. In his words:

I think if a student is interested in the faculty member's area of study or particular issues in the class, then I think the de-emphasis on team and increased emphasis on individual work, in combination with what's usually a decreased workload, gives students outside of the core more opportunities to actually go the extra step and talk to faculty outside of the classroom in office hours.

Overall, second-year students believed they were afforded and seized more opportunities to interact with faculty members after the first semester. The fact that non-cohort students enrolled in mostly elective classes greatly influenced student-faculty relations. Again, not one interviewee mentioned the cohort as a factor in non-cohort relations.

There was a small group of interviewees who discerned little difference in student-faculty relations in cohort and non-cohort classes. Professor Fulton said, "The interaction with the students is the same," when comparing his cohort and non-cohort classes. Regarding accessibility, first-year student Mike Shipsky stated, "In terms of interaction, I haven't seen any major change that we're now out of the core. I still think that professors are accessible." Regarding closeness, first-year student Jose Arocas offered, "My first semester, I didn't feel like we had any distance with them. And this has been like that." Others made general statements such as Mark Cole's, "First semester is not that different from second semester" and Emily Fletcher's "I can't think of any examples of how I felt differently towards faculty" when comparing cohort and non-cohort student-faculty relations.
The in-class observations seem to support the notion that student-faculty relations are not different in cohort and non-cohort classes at Sloan. There was no discernible difference in the nature or frequency of in-class student-faculty relations in the 30 observed cohort and non-cohort classes. Students and faculty members were extremely respectful of one another in all classes. The subject of conversation always revolved around the classes' scheduled topics. Students did not seem less enthusiastic in required courses or more enthusiastic in elective courses.

There was also no apparent difference between observed out-of-class interaction for cohort and non-cohort classes. Faculty members who taught cohort classes were observed joining first-semester students at the coffee table between morning classes, and non-cohort faculty members were also observed holding discussions with groups of students before and after elective classes. The frequency did not vary immensely. The nature of these conversations is unknown.

In-class student-faculty relations were not frequently discussed in either cohort or non-cohort syllabi for Fall 1999. Out-of-class relations, however, were addressed. Three out of six (50%) cohort syllabi mentioned out-of-class student-faculty contact, while only three out of fifty (6%) non-cohort syllabi did the same—a considerable difference. The Organizational Processes cohort syllabus encouraged teams experiencing difficulty to seek help from the professor among other resources. The Strategic Management cohort syllabus stated, "You should also feel free either to approach the TA's or to make an appointment to see your professor if you have any questions regarding the course or the material." Finally, the Financial and Managerial Accounting cohort syllabus noted, "If you have been attending class and help sessions but are still falling behind you are encouraged to visit
us. These meetings will be much more productive if you come well prepared." The statements from the non-cohort syllabi which address out-of-class interaction were very similar to these. There was no discernible pattern among the three cohort syllabi that encouraged student-faculty contact. Organizational Processes is considered a non-quantitative science, Accounting is a quantitative science, and Strategic Management appears to fall somewhere in between. In addition, one cannot examine variables such as faculty gender or experience since core course syllabi were standard for all faculty members who taught the same course. Similarly, there was no pattern among the three non-cohort syllabi that encouraged student-faculty contact.

While student interviewees suggested that cohort faculty members were open to discussing topics that did not necessarily pertain to the class subject matter, the cohort syllabi did not express this. It would be surprising, however, if they did.

The fact that first-semester syllabi encouraged out-of-class contact may be evidence of faculty members attempting to welcome students to business school and lessen their new-student jitters. The fact that such a low percentage of non-cohort syllabi encouraged out-of-class contact may depict differences in how faculty members approach student-faculty relations in non-cohort classes. It may also be related to how faculty members explained other discrepancies between cohort and non-cohort syllabi—the first semester sets a precedent for the business student’s academic career at Sloan and syllabi need not be repetitive. After the first semester, it may be understood that students are welcome to visit their professors out of class; therefore eliminating the need for this to be discussed in the syllabus.

Overall, it is possible that the nature of in-class student-faculty relations is not different in cohort and non-cohort classes.
That may explain why students did not mention in-class relations when asked to discuss this topic, why the syllabi do not differ in this regard, and why there were no differences in the observed classes.

For some students, out-of-class relations differed in cohort and non-cohort classes. First-year students claimed that the faculty members were extremely welcoming during their period of adjustment to business school. They chatted about topics other than specific coursework during the morning coffee breaks or in faculty offices. As a result, they concluded that they were closer with their first-semester faculty members than those from their second-semester courses. After that first semester, the nature and perhaps the frequency of relations changed between students and faculty members, according to second-year students. Faculty members and students had an established common interest—the topic of the course—due to the fact that non-cohort classes are electives. Relations revolve around this topic, and students suggested that there was more contact with faculty members in these semesters, as student-faculty relations increased.

Summary

Sloan student-faculty relations have evolved in several ways over time—some of which appear attributable to the institutional and curricular changes outlined above. Sloan faculty members and administrators claimed that a sense of distance has grown between the faculty and the student body. Interviewees provided two potential explanations: (a) the elimination of the thesis requirement, and (b) the increase in program size. Without a thesis, students are no longer assured any one-on-one contact with faculty members. In addition, as Sloan has doubled in size, faculty members have found that they are close with a smaller fraction of the student body. A third reason as to why students and faculty members have grown increasingly distant was not
explicitly stated, but may be in effect--an academic-recruitment tension has emerged among some Sloan professors. These faculty members claim that students and the administration place too much emphasis on the job-acquisition process at the expense of students' academic pursuits.

The second and third changes over time are likely related. Faculty members and administrators noticed a consumer attitude among students. This manifests itself in students placing pressure on faculty members in two ways: (a) to provide information deemed practical by the students, and (b) to dumb down the curriculum. The third change over time at Sloan--an increased interest in the Business Week ratings--may very well be what gives student consumerism its weight. It was suggested by students and faculty members that the desire for Sloan to score highly in these rankings provides the power for students to be so demanding of the faculty and administration, as these rankings weigh student opinion very heavily. Some faculty members reported feeling pressured to cater to student desires as a result.

Lastly, faculty members and administrators have found that the student voice has grown stronger. Student representation has increased on community-wide committees, and the Sloan Student Senate has placed more pressure on the administration by passing resolutions and becoming more active in general. This may have evolved from the administration's desire to please students, whether it be driven by the Business Week rankings or other factors. In fact, many of these changes may be interrelated. The increase in program size, for example, has likely strengthened student representation on committees. The emergence of consumerism and the more powerful student voice may have also made students and faculty members more distant.

While students and faculty members have grown more distant over time, current student-faculty relations appear positive overall. There
is a great deal of mutual respect between students and faculty members at Sloan. Professors find students to be bright, and they applaud the Sloan student diversity in terms of both ethnicity and professional experience. Students respect their faculty members as intelligent and challenging teachers as well as top-notch researchers. The most famous professors garner slightly more attention, but it is the teaching ability of faculty members that matters most to students. Commitment to teaching varies at Sloan, according to student interviewees, and there is a range of teaching ability. Faculty members who evince the most dedication to teaching and the highest level of teaching ability are awarded the most respect by students. A majority of students reported being pleased with the overall teaching quality at Sloan.

Though students have varying levels of respect for their faculty members, students always act respectfully towards their professors, according to student and faculty interviewees. When potentially disrespectful behavior was observed in the classroom, such as tardiness and students walking out of class in the middle of the session, most interviewees dismissed it as something that is commonly allowed by the faculty. Others offered explanations, such as recruiting conflicts, cultural differences, and the "engineering ethic" prevalent among Sloan students.

The student respectfulness towards faculty members was reiterated by interviewees when discussing the cohort. Faculty members insisted that Sloan students have grown more cohesive during the first semester of the first year since the cohort was implemented. By spending more time together, sharing the same workload, and overcoming the same obstacles, students have grown close in these cohorts. But when asked whether some of the cohort's ill-effects as witnessed at HBS had appeared at Sloan, the most common explanation was that cohorts had not
developed the level of cohesiveness presumed to be necessary to harbor such behaviors. There is no "us-versus-them" sentiment among students, and oceanmates do not used their strength in numbers to gang up on and embarrass faculty members. Conditions such as a work overload are present to spark antagonistic actions, but students in these cohorts are not close enough to form resistance en masse. Explanations as to why cohorts are not cohesive enough and other reasons as to why student-faculty relations are not antagonistic fell under three broad categories: (a) cohort characteristics, (b) student characteristics, and (c) faculty characteristics.

What is it about the cohorts that prevents extreme cohesiveness? First, they are not pure cohorts like at HBS. Each ocean is split into two halves for the Communication for Managers class. Approximately five students from the Leaders for Management master's program attend half of the six required MBA courses with each ocean. And the Finance Theory course is an elective for first-year, first-semester students, and only some students enroll in this course. So Sloan cohort students do not have the same classmates in all of their courses, which reduces cohesiveness.

The fact that Sloan students spend a great deal of time with their flockmates--those in their small study group--also decreases the sense of togetherness within the larger cohort. This type of group did not exist at HBS. Finally, the Sloan cohorts are only one semester long, versus one year long at HBS. Students may not achieve the required level of closeness with one another in order to feel comfortable challenging professors in class.

One other cohort characteristic unrelated to cohort cohesiveness is the fact that Sloan students move from room to room for each class. At HBS, students stay in the same room and faculty members shuffle in
and out, providing students with a sense of territoriality. Sloan prevents this from occurring by sitting students in different classrooms for each course.

Some student characteristics prevent a high level of cohesiveness, according to interviewees. For example, international students who cannot integrate themselves into the social networks of the oceans reduce cohesiveness, as does the notion that Sloan students are deemed too individualistic to band together against faculty members. Also, while the HBS cohesiveness is likely assisted by dormitory-style housing for students, Sloan does not offer this amenity.

Other student characteristics help explain why oceans do not gang up on faculty members. It was proposed that Sloan students are too busy and too professional to plot attacks on their faculty members. In addition, Sloan's cohorts are populated by a high percentage of Asian students. Interviewees noted that Asians tend to be deferential towards faculty members.

Certain faculty characteristics prevent antagonistic student-faculty relations. Some faculty members insisted that they set the proper tone in the classroom, precluding the emergence of contentious behavior. The fact that research is still weighed more heavily than teaching—and thus student evaluations—even though the margin has presumably narrowed, keeps power out of students' hands. Finally, Sloan faculty members employ the case study technique and cold-calling much less frequently than HBS faculty members. Without cold-calling, students are not fearful that they'll be exposed as under prepared, and the in-class environment is less tense.

When asked whether student-faculty relations were any different in cohort versus non-cohort classes, students responded affirmatively. First-year students felt that they were closer with faculty members
while in cohorts during the first-semester, and second-year students believed they had grown closer with faculty members after leaving the cohorts. Interestingly, though, the differences do not appear to be effects of the cohorts.

First-year students stated that their first-semester faculty members assumed a paternalistic role and welcomed them to business school. These students felt as if the range of discussion topics with faculty members was more open outside of the classroom during the first semester. Planned coffee breaks between classes encouraged friendly student-faculty relations.

Second-year students saw it differently. With another year of experience, they found that they had grown closer with faculty members out of the cohort. Students enrolled in electives—not required courses—which increased the likelihood of out-of-class interaction. Students and faculty members explored topics of mutual interest in more specialized courses. But again, these differences did not appear to be effects of the cohort. The fact that students took the same classes with the same group of classmates did not appear to affect student-faculty relations in any way.
CHAPTER FIVE: STUDENT-STUDENT RESULTS

This chapter is devoted to the results of the student-student analysis. Each of the subsections in this chapter explores the specific research questions related to student-student relations found in Chapter Three.

Student-Student Relations

In order to determine whether Sloan's student-student relations have begun to resemble those attributed to HBS in the literature, another series of questions, both broad and specific are answered here. The first two research questions attempt to explain the current state of student-student relations at Sloan and are answered together for the sake of consistency. They ask: What is the current state of student-student relations, both in general and then in cohort versus non-cohort classes? The more specific questions follow. Do students attempt to manage one another as a result of the cohort implementation? Has the cohort implementation made Sloan students more competitive regarding grades? Since Sloan has increased its emphasis on class participation, has this made students competitive for airtime, like at HBS?

Finally, the matter of the change in time of student-student relations is somewhat problematic. Faculty members claim to have little recollection of these relations prior to the curricular changes at Sloan. Interviews with current students and class observations cannot help to answer this question. Syllabi, therefore, are the only source of data for this question. Results from the syllabi analyses are woven into the other results whenever applicable.

Student-Student Relations in General and in Cohort Versus Non-Cohort Classes
What are student-student relations like at Sloan? How do students perceive their classmates? How do students perceive the nature of in-class relations at Sloan? Are students respectful of one another? What is the nature of out-of-class relations? Are these relations any different in cohort versus non-cohort classes? The answers to these questions provide necessary background for the remainder of the study. To answer these questions, faculty and student interview results are used along with the results from class observations and syllabi analyses. Student interviews are the main source of information for these topics since students have first-hand experience with these relations.

When asked to describe their classmates, students used many laudatory adjectives but emphasized the following: bright, respectful, fun, cooperative, and diverse, both professionally and ethnically. All of the following quotes are from second-year students—those who had two years to reflect on their relations with classmates. Ben Jolsen spoke of his classmates' intelligence and unselfishness in this way: "For me, the biggest advantage to being at Sloan is the students. There's a lot of really smart individuals here and people are willing to help you out." Josh Goldstein offered a similar acknowledgment of the talents of "Sloanies"—how students often referred to themselves:

They have very different backgrounds and they're brilliant people, but everybody has a lot of respect for one another's talents. There's just a basic acknowledgment that you're here and that means that we're all in good company.

Suzy Matthews stressed how willing students are to help one another. She said, "I think they're very cooperative. If you need help from anyone, even if you don't know them, you can try someone through e-mail
and they'll meet with you." Finally, Ming Yee emphasized Sloan student diversity. In her words:

I guess you must have heard it over and over again: the diversity is just amazing; diversity in terms of the culture and ethnic backgrounds. In terms of experience, I'm an engineer and I thought I would meet a lot of engineers. But in the end, I see a lot of consultants and a lot of bankers as well.

Overall, Sloan students were very impressed by their classmates. Several interviewees noted that they chose to attend Sloan precisely because of the type of student it attracted.

Perhaps due to the admiration that Sloan students have for one another, it is clear that in-class relations among students at Sloan are quite respectful as well. This appears to be the case regardless of the setting—whether in cohort or non-cohort classes. Second-year student Steven Cohen said, "I would describe the student-student relationship as pretty much very respectful at all times". When describing in-class relations at Sloan, second-year student Peter DiNardo said, "There's not a lot of criticism going back and forth. There's open disagreement within class, but there's never a personal attack." Similarly, second-year student Ben Jolsen said, "I have never really been in a situation where I've seen a student attack what another student said. They might disagree with it." Sloan students insisted that they are highly cordial towards one another in class.

Though most faculty members claimed to be unaware of the nature of out-of-class student-student relations, they felt free to comment on in-class student-student relations. Faculty members recognized how considerate students were of one another in the classroom. Professor Jerry Gold said, "I think people tend to respect each other and enjoy
each other's company." Professor Berger noted how supportive students were in both her cohort and non-cohort classes. She said, "I actually see a lot of supportive behavior in the classroom, where someone will say, 'Well, building on so-and-so's point,' or 'I understand what so-and-so said but here's another way we might want to think about it. I see more of that than people think.'"

The results from the class observations confirm these statements. Students were extremely courteous towards one another during the thirty observed class sessions. There was very little direct in-class interaction among students--students spoke directly to one another during class in only five of all observed classes. In most cases, students spoke directly to the professor and indirectly to their classmates by evaluating the contributions of others, as Professor Berger described above. In all student-student interaction, whether direct or indirect, students were highly respectful of one another and at no point seemed combative towards their classmates, whether in cohort or non-cohort classes.

There was slightly less consensus and less harmony, however, in the descriptions of out-of-class student-student relations. As noted in the student-faculty relations section, students claimed that the small teams, or flocks, define the first semester at Sloan. Not surprisingly, therefore, when asked to describe student-student relations while in cohorts, students immediately referred to their flocks. For most of the students, participation in a flock was a positive experience on the whole. Comments regarding flocks were split evenly between overwhelmingly positive remarks and mixed but positive remarks. In addition, a handful of students stated that their groups dissolved prior to the end of the first semester. Some of these comments are explored below.
First-year student Dave Leidenfeld offered a comment typical of those that were extremely positive: "I think the other thing that defined my first-semester experience was my team. I happened to have a really good team. We all got along very well, bonded well, and worked well together." Second-year student Josh Goldstein had this to say about his team: "My group was fantastic. We had essentially zero conflict, and whenever there had been potential for conflict, we preempted it. We had a fabulous experience."

Whether team members continued personal relationships after the first semester was one of the benchmarks for how positive the flock experience had been. Second-year student Mark Cole bragged about his flock by saying, "I had a great team. We're going out to dinner tonight. We keep seeing each other regularly. It's a great experience. They're still among the people I know best, my first-year team." Anthony Nielsen, a first-year student also mentioned the frequency with which he sees his old team members, stating, "I had a fantastic team experience. Just a fantastic one. We still go out once every two weeks now for dinner." Finally, second-year student Ming Yee made a similar comment: "We did very well. We did all of our group work together, we did most of the individual work together as well. We still try to hang out socially."

Other students spoke of their flocks in mixed, but overall positive, terms. Second-year student Emily Fletcher said, "My group worked out really well, but we had fights, and screaming, and we fell apart. Then we kind of picked up the pieces and brought it back together." Lisa Eppinger, another second-year student said that two of her flockmembers were chronically absent from team meetings. She followed with this description:
So the two of them were slackers and the rest of us were always there. So that caused conflict, but among the ones who were always there, I didn’t think we were spinning our wheels. We were pretty much all contributing with the focus of getting it done, and I thought pretty supportive.

Several students said that their groups were not problem-free and experienced some "bumps in the road". Overall, however, they claimed that their flocks worked out well and were productive despite obstacles such as scheduling conflicts and communication difficulties. Students suggested that these experiences were highly instructional regarding the nature of teamwork.

A minority of interviewees had an overwhelmingly negative flock experience. Second-year student Suzy Matthews said, "We dissolved. We had a complete meltdown." She attributed this result to the fact that her group avoided conflict whenever it arose. "We never got past the nice stage on our team," she claimed. She followed by stating, "When conflict was inevitable, everything for the past three months came flying out at the same time and nobody ever wanted to talk to each other ever again." Another second-year student, Jennifer Nolan, also spoke of a breakdown, saying, "The relationships were highly-strained--extremely stressful."

It is clear that the Sloan faculty and administration were aware of the potential for group meltdowns. In the syllabus for the first-semester Organizational Processes (OP) course, there was a section devoted solely to teams. In this section, the following advice was provided to flocks in distress:

Wise teams know that it is often crucial to seek some form of outside help. Remember that seeking such help is not a sign of failure, but a step in enhancing your learning. Do
not wait until your team is in really serious trouble before approaching one or more of these resources.

This list of resources included a Team Handbook that is part of the required reading for the OP class, a group of second-year students who formed a service called Project Team which counsels problem flocks, as well as the OP professors and teaching assistants.

Again, most students claimed to have had a positive team experience. Some spoke glowingly of their groups, while others made overall positive remarks but acknowledged that there were some obstacles to navigate around. Only a small percentage of students reported having substantial difficulties with their flocks.

For many Sloan students, the flock served as a source of comfort during a very stressful first semester. As mentioned in the student-faculty relations section, Sloan students reported having many concerns during the initial fall semester, particularly the formidable workload and other potentially stressful conditions such as returning to school, making new friends, and engaging in recruiting. The team structure helped students survive this difficult period of time. First-year student Katie Kingsly described the effect of teams in this manner:

The team was a little bit of a safety net because we really got along well and had a great time together. It facilitated not only academic success, but I think everybody checking in with each other emotionally and saying, "How are you doing?" and things like that also helped a lot.

Second-year student Lisa Eppinger offered a similar message by saying, "I don't think that it would have been as easy to get through that first stressful semester had I not had a group around me that I knew fairly well in terms of the small study groups as well as the larger cohort."
It was, in fact, the absence of this safety net that students mentioned as the main difference between student-student relations in cohort versus non-cohort classes. Emily Fletcher, a second-year student, spoke of feeling "more floating and disorientation" after leaving her first-semester team. She compared the first and second semesters in this way:

With my team, it was like everyday, it was check in, check in, check in. It was like, "Oh, that was so confusing today. What did you think?" Or "I can't believe so-and-so said that again in class." There was just always a connection to channel all of my reactions the first semester. And then the second semester, it was like, "Who do I know? Who was in that class?" It was sort of sudden. I no longer had a team...Suddenly, you're on your own. They throw you to the wolves.

First-year student Dave Leidenfeld described leaving his first-semester team by saying, "It's a little bit more isolated. Not that it's an isolating place at all, but you're not as part of a group." Another first-year student, Andy Stover, spoke of the difference between the first two semesters by saying the following:

The team atmosphere was very supportive. That really got you through it. Without the team, I think it would have been ten times as hard. I think that's what is different about this semester—is that you don't have that support network for every class. You have teams in some classes, but you don't have one core group of people that you meet on a daily basis about everything.

The absence of a support network such as the one provided by first-semester teams appears to be a significant difference in student-student
relations in cohort versus non-cohort classes. Students form teams for group assignments in classes after the first semester, but these groups are simply not as strong as first-semester flocks. Students have different teams for each class after the first semester. These groups meet less frequently than flocks.

Finally, the impact of team cohesiveness can be found in the syllabi as well. The only mention of student-student relations in all syllabi, whether for cohort or non-cohort classes, had to do with excessive collaboration. Five of the six syllabi (83%) for cohort classes in 1999 mentioned this behavior. These syllabi acknowledged that students work closely in teams and encouraged this behavior. The syllabi reminded students, however, that individual assignments should be the work of the individual. For example, in its “Policy on Homework Sets and Examinations”, the Economics syllabus stated, “You are permitted and indeed encouraged to discuss course material, including homework, with other students in the class. However, you are expected to turn in your own individual solutions for each homework set.” Similarly, in a clause on “Problem Sets”, the Data, Models, and Decisions syllabus stated the following:

In the case of written homework assignments, your assignment must represent your own individual work. Although you may discuss homework problems with other students, assignments must represent your own work.

In contrast, as a result of the fact that students do not work as closely in teams after the first semester, only six out of fifty syllabi (12%) for non-cohort classes mentioned collaboration. The presence of clauses such as those on collaboration had to do with expectation-setting, according to some faculty members. The syllabi for first-semester classes are the first Sloan syllabi that students see. After
students read and abide by these policies, it is not necessary for them to appear in other syllabi.

Overall, Sloan students praised one another when asked to describe their classmates. They noted the average student’s intelligence, respectfulness, willingness to collaborate, and diversity. This good will apparently followed students into the classroom, where students were highly respectful of one another in both cohort and non-cohort classes. In terms of first-semester out of class student-student relations, most students described the positive effects of their flocks. These small groups served as support networks for new students facing a stressful inaugural semester. It was the absence of these networks that students cited as the main difference between cohort and non-cohort student-student relations.

**Student Managing in the Cohorts**

When comparing student-student relations at Sloan and HBS, Van Maanen (1983) found that Harvard students attempted to control one another in the classroom and developed what he called "impression management skills". Students booed and hissed individual members of the cohort who did not conform with the rest of the group. "Rate-busters" and "rate-shirkers"—students who either performed too well or too poorly in the classroom—were taunted for behavior that would reflect poorly on the rest of the class in the eyes of the professor. Reid (1994) also offered examples of HBS students attempting to manage one another in their first-year cohorts. One of his examples was the weekly Sky Deck Awards. The "Shark Award", for example was given to the student in the section who provided "the week's most ruthless comment", while the "Invisible Hand Award" was presented to a student "who spoke without being called on by the professor" (p.35).
In contrast to those at HBS, Van Maanen (1983) contended that Sloan students did not attempt to manage one another. Sloanies, he wrote, "would never think of booing or hissing the public foibles of a classmate. They may be disgusted by what is going on, as is the case when one eager-beaver dominates a classroom discussion, but they would rarely, if ever, act collectively to bring it to a halt" (p. 446). Has the implementation of cohorts made Sloan students more bold in the classroom? Do cohorts encourage students to adopt impression management skills at Sloan?

To answer this question, faculty members, administrators, and students were asked whether first-semester students attempted to manage one another in any way, either in or out of the classroom. If interviewees requested an example, they were asked whether students react to classmates who speak either inappropriately or too often during a class session--two examples found in the literature. Class observations were also used to investigate this topic along with the syllabi analyses. Did students ever attempt to manage one another in any of the cohort class sessions observed? Do any of the cohort class syllabi mention students managing students in any way?

Overall, it appears that even with the cohort system firmly in place, Sloan students do not attempt to manage one another in the classroom. Most of the faculty member, administrator, and student interviewees claimed that students do not engage in impression management. A small percentage of interviewees suggested that managing occurs privately out of class, and is not meant to embarrass the offending party. This is addressed later in this chapter.

Most interviewees insisted that there is no managing in the cohort classroom. As mentioned above, students claimed to be nothing but respectful towards one another in class. And while student interviewees
noted that opportunities to manage others certainly presented themselves in the form of aberrant comments and behavior, Sloanies do not appear to chastise one another. First-year Venezuelan student Jose Arocas recalled, “We had some people in our ocean that really made strange or out of the context comments.” He followed by saying, “But nobody told them anything.” Similarly, first-year student Sebastian Graves said, “In terms of people talking in class, I didn’t really find that there was anyone trying to discourage that.” First-year student Neal Kuczynski spoke of students who would have been certain nominees for the Sky Deck Awards at HBS but went unrecognized at Sloan:

There were a couple of people who either had really strong opinions about something, excessively strong opinions and were perceived as a little bit abrasive, and then other people who were perceived as always making comments and being the goody-two-shoes, not so much a kiss-ass, but just talking too much and the quality to quantity ratio was out of whack a little bit. They had a reputation, but I like to think that the reputation never got back to them.

Finally, having taken a class at HBS, second-year student Jennifer Nolan felt comfortable providing the following comparison to Sloan:

They may do impression management [at HBS], but my sense from having taken classes there and knowing people who have attended there, is that it’s a kind of back-stabbing crowd...That’s a key differentiator between Harvard and Sloan: they’re all about appearances, they’re all about looking good, and we’re about the substance.

Some students seemed to bemoan the absence of managing and suggested that more managing would improve the in-class environment. Two student interviewees mentioned chronic tardiness as deserving peer
reaction which never emerged. Second-year student Liz Fowler said, "I’ve been in classes where there is one person coming in twenty minutes late every day". She then stated, "And other than a side conversation--someone saying to someone else, ‘Oh, there’s blah-blah again, she comes in late every day’--no one would ever say anything to her." While discussing tardiness in her first-semester section, first-year student Sarah Mascia offered the following quote:

I didn’t know how to get any peer pressure going in our ocean. One of the things that I’ve been talking to other people about in terms of orientation for next year is to have second-years get each ocean together and maybe have a discussion on what classroom etiquette should be. Those things I thought only peer pressure would help because the professors weren’t doing anything.

Another student, Jennifer Maker, suggested that more peer pressure would be helpful in quieting students who are monopolizing the class conversation. She said, “I think that if they did it [managed] more, it would be a better thing.”

A few faculty members claimed to be unaware as to whether Sloan students manage one another in the cohort classroom, but most contended that students do not attempt to manage their oceanmates. Professor Pope said, “I haven’t really encountered a situation where a class, as a whole, was trying to deal with someone’s lack of participation or someone’s over participation.” Similarly, Professor Berger stated, “I haven’t seen much of what I’d call deliberate intimidation in the classroom.” Comparing Sloan to HBS, where he received his doctorate, Professor Compton noted, “I don’t think they’re managing as much how other students see them. I think they’re much more relaxed than they were at Harvard about those things.”
About half of the students offered explanations as to why students do not manage one another. A few faculty members and administrators also offered their opinions on the subject. No explanation achieved a consensus, but certain explanations were more common than others. One of the most frequently cited explanations was the respect for individuality that prevails at Sloan. Administrator Melanie Heights described the Sloan student attitude in the following statement:

I think generally they're very much respectful of "beat of your own drummer", and "If I don't agree with what you have to say I might debate it with you, and then it might not be worth my while to do that."

Students strongly confirmed this notion of individuality among classmates. In discussions about tardiness, students noted that they, partially due to the influence of the engineering culture, are individualists. One student summarized this attitude with the following sentiment: "You do your thing, I'll do my thing." Students invoked the same argument to explain why students don't manage one another. It is interesting to note, therefore, that one of the reasons why students were late to class also served as one of the reasons why students never chastised a tardy classmate: it is counter-culture for the cohort or its students to infringe upon the individualistic nature and rights of others. When describing her cohort, second-year student Jill Carter stated, "We're a group, but we're a group of individuals." Another second-year student, Jennifer Nolan, made this similar comment:

I think there's a very large respect for diversity, and for individuality, and for creativity. That is highly-valued. And because of that, I think everybody kind of lets everybody be. And I always felt that there was a wide acceptance.
Similarly, second-year student Steven Cohen said, "There are some people who talk, and frankly they talk more than I'd like them to talk, but at the same time, it's like, whatever, get your information, you're doing what you need to do, that's all right."

Another common theme among students was that the responsibility of managing the classroom falls upon the shoulders of the faculty member, not the students. When asked about students managing in-class comments, first-year student John Aronson said the following:

I don't really feel it's the student's place to do that, maybe because it goes against some of the culture. And I think the professor's in a position of authority to say, 'That's not what I'm looking for, that's not what we're here for.' When another student says it, they're like 'Why are you so smart?' I just don't think it's helpful.

Others suggested that faculty members are quite successful at managing the discussion, so perhaps it's not necessary for students to control one another. Second-year student Betsy Arbora said this about outspoken students: "I think that whenever there tends to be one, it's the professor who is facilitating the discussion who will go to the person who is raising their hand who hasn't been called on or will cold-call someone who isn't raising their hand." Another second-year student, Doug Peterman, said that he looked to the professor to manage students speaking too frequently. He stated, "The professor will manage it by not calling on that person." Finally, second-year student Steven Cohen offered his experiences from serving as a teaching assistant for a first-semester cohort course: "I know that the professor who I work for has also been active when students have been argumentative in class of communicating directly with that student, saying, 'Hey, what's going on?'"
There were some other reasons mentioned less frequently by students. Second-year student Jennifer Maker, for example, suggested that cohort students did not actively manage one another in the first semester because they did not like how that would reflect upon them. In her words, "I think that people are very concerned about the impressions that they leave on other people because they don’t have friendships in place, they don’t have the relationships in place, they haven’t established themselves among their classmates yet." First-year student Jose Arocas suggested that students were too "politically correct" to manage a student who was talking frequently. First-year Italian student Philippe Grazzio said that the environment at Sloan is very relaxed. In his words, "I think there is a lot of play in the system. So it would take somebody to really exceed that to be actively managed." A few other students suggested that Sloanies simply do not exceed the system's boundaries. First-year student Cindy Dorado said, "It wasn’t as if one particular person was unruly on the team or within the cohort and had to be actively managed or taken aside to be spoken to." Another first-year student, Andy Stover, said this: "In the cohort, there weren’t any extreme cases" in terms of in-class behavior and comments. Finally, when asked whether students try to manage one another in any way, second-year student Peter DiNardo said, "I’ve never seen it in a class, and frankly the need for it has never really popped up in a class that frequently."

Other examples of how students refused to manage one another were also presented. Professor Halperin claimed that when students were bothered by side conversations in his cohort classroom, students would tell him rather than confront their classmates. This is still a form of policing, but it is clearly not the cohort managing individuals by themselves. Second-year student Emily Fletcher offered a different
example. Describing a well-prepared flock in her ocean, she said, "There was one team that was always meeting before strategy. And I was like, 'Oh, they're going to be totally ready. They're going to make all the best comments.'" But rather than attempt to manage that group so that faculty impressions would be altered, she said, "We didn't react. We didn't decide that we're going to get up that early too and have an extra meeting and we didn't criticize them. I think we even complimented them."

The results from the class observations and syllabi analyses would seem to confirm that students do not manage one another. Absolutely no managing in any form was witnessed during the observations of cohort classes. While some students displayed behavior that might warrant managing, such as walking in late, making off-topic remarks, and dominating the class conversation, there was no student response to any of these actions. During one class, a student's cellular phone rang several times before he disabled the sound. The other students in the class acted as if nothing at all were occurring.

With one exception, the syllabi for the six required courses for first-semester first-year students did not mention in-class student-student behaviors at all. That one exception is the following paragraph which appeared in the Organization Processes syllabus:

Learning in this class requires individual participation and involvement. Sharing perceptions and ideas with others is crucial for learning and for understanding how the diverse opinions that you are likely to encounter in an organization are articulated and debated. You will find yourself presenting and testing out new ideas that are not wholly formulated and assisting others to shape their ideas. You
should be prepared to take some risks and be supportive of the efforts of others.

While the presence of this clause might imply that previous Sloan OP students had been less than supportive in the classroom, this cannot be concluded firmly. The absence of any other clause regarding student-student behavior in these six syllabi would indicate that student managing is not a problem in cohort courses at Sloan. In addition, there was no formal feedback mechanism for oceanmates or flockmates mentioned in any of the syllabi. First-semester students were not expected to assess or grade one another regarding participation in class or in the group.

Finally, there was a small group of students who claimed that cohort members do manage one another, but suggested that the managing happens in private, or what they called "off-line". There were no public admonishments such as those at Harvard. After describing how one of her oceanmates sent an e-mail to a classmate who had made an offensive comment in class, second-year student Betsy Arbora added, "There is a respect that you don't necessarily out them in public, but you might out them in private." Second-year student Ray Chen offered this example of managing in private:

In my ocean or team, students did not so much manage but offered feedback and advice. We had a few outspoken students, but there was one particularly outspoken student who would sometimes go beyond the appropriate grounds, causing the professor discomfort. His team fed back to him. They provided advice and they toned him down. It was obvious. Within my team, we did the same thing.

Similarly, first-year student Anthony Nielsen reported that one of his oceanmates made frequent off-topic comments in class. As a result some
of his classmates approached the student privately and said, "I think you're really bright. We like you. But some of your comments are straining a bit." First-year student David Leland offered this comment on how Sloanies view classmates who make senseless remarks:

I've definitely been in classes where people say things and you think either "You haven't been paying attention for most of the year" or "If you would just stop talking, we can all keep going and learn something." It's interesting because maybe this is just my perspective, but it seems as though it carries through the class: I don't feel like it's my place to chew them out. Maybe off-line, but certainly not in front of everybody. I'm not comfortable with that, for one, and two, it just seems counter-culture to the way things are here.

It is possible that managing does occur within flocks or amongst friends looking to improve the in-class environment at Sloan. This is nothing like the type of managing that occurred at HBS, where the cohort employed its power as a group to influence their impression on the faculty member. This is also dissimilar to the weekly Sky Deck Awards intended to entertain the section while embarrassing the recipients. These HBS-like behaviors do not seem to appear at Sloan, according to students, faculty members, and administrators. Sloan students are too individualistic to encroach upon the rights of their classmates. Students prefer to leave whatever managing is necessary to the professor. Some students even suggested that a little more managing would improve the Sloan classroom.

**Competition Among Students for Grades**

Van Maanen (1983) observed a lack of competitiveness among students at the Sloan School of Management when he wrote the "Golden
Passports" article. He suggested that the absence of a cohort system was partly responsible for this phenomenon. As he said, "Students can only compare performances within particular classes and must invent standards for comparison across classes since the self-selected instructional programs of fellow students vary" (p. 445). In other words, the lack of standard performance measures precluded competitiveness among Sloan students.

With Sloan's adoption of the cohort system in 1993, a reasonable question is whether this system has elicited competitiveness among first-semester cohort students. To answer this question, faculty members and students were asked whether Sloan students compete with one another, particularly during the first semester, regarding grades. Cohort syllabi from Fall 1999 were examined for any mention of competition among students. They were also compared to those from the Fall 1993 cohort course to expose any change in syllabi over time regarding student competitiveness. Finally, the presence or absence of competitiveness was noted during cohort class observations. Student interviews served as the main source of information since these interviewees have first-hand knowledge of the subject.

Most faculty members, administrators, and students insisted that first-semester Sloan students are not competitive with one another regarding grades. Interviewees offered several explanations as to why this was the case. These reasons will be explored later.

One key distinction that was made by approximately one-third of the interviewees was that while Sloan students are not competitive with others, they still want to receive high marks and are competitive with themselves. Faculty members and students suggested that one cannot be an MBA candidate at a highly-ranked business school without having been concerned about grades in the past. Professor Cornera stated, "Who do
we have here? They're people who've excelled throughout their academic careers." Second-year student Catherine Ding made the point clearly in this statement:

To be at MIT, we are very competitive people...But I would say in general, people at MIT, my ocean, and people that I've met outside the ocean, although they want to do well and want to push themselves, they don't push people down in order to raise themselves.

Other students offered similar remarks. First-year student David Leland said, "I think everybody at Sloan is incredibly competitive, it's just that they're more competitive with themselves." Mike Shipsky, another first-year student, stated, "People cared about grades, but they weren't caring about grades against somebody else." Finally, second-year student Michael Joseph offered, "I don't think that students are, per se, competitive with other students. I think they're competitive with themselves. So I don't care that Johnny got an A, but I do care that I got an A."

A few faculty members and students suggested that certain Sloanies are more concerned about their grades than others. Professors Troy and Eastlake noted that students hoping to secure summer job offers from a short list of firms in consulting and investment banking were more grade-conscious than others. These firms, according to the professors, are the only ones that inquire about students' grades during the recruitment process. When asked whether this practice made students competitive, Dr. Eastlake responded, "Not with each other, I don't see that. I see them as more anxious." A few students supported this view. Second-year student Jill Carter suggested that these students were "more intense and grade-conscious". Second-year student David Wong described the behavior of these students in this way:
They want to do well. They’ll actively seek out information. The way to really characterize it is that they’re grade-conscious. They will be worried about getting that extra point. They won’t go so far as to cheat or try to give misinformation to somebody.

Again, interviewees emphasized that these students were only competitive with themselves, not with others. They wanted to do well, but not at a classmate’s expense.

Most interviewees, however, did not make these sorts of qualifying remarks. Rather, they simply stated that there is no student-to-student competitiveness at Sloan. First-year student Dave Leidenfeld said, “I haven’t found an ounce of competitiveness at all here.” Second-year student Teryn Rushdie agreed, stating, “I just feel that it’s a really laid-back environment.” Professor Compton added, “I don’t see that much of adversarial relations or competition.”

Students made other distinctions when discussing the lack of competitiveness at Sloan. They insisted that there was no competitiveness in either the ocean or the flock. They also compared Sloan favorably to other business schools in terms of competitiveness and noted that there is no “sabotage” at Sloan. All of these points are discussed below.

Talking specifically about the cohorts, second-year student Emily Fletcher said, “In terms of the whole ocean, I didn’t notice any kind of competitiveness about grades.” Second-year student Steven Cohen made a similar statement: “In my experience, my ocean, the students were phenomenally non-competitive.” Another second-year student, Jim McNulty, spoke of the lack of competitiveness among students in the same ocean but different flocks: “I was amazed at how little competition
there was, and how helpful people were, even if they weren't in your little study group."

Student interviewees insisted that there is no competition within the first-semester flocks either. First-year student Katie Kingsly said, "I didn't think it was competitive within the team at all." Another first-year student, Andy Stover, agreed by offering, "I didn't notice that much competitiveness at all, especially within the team. People were willing to share information or share insight or answers." Finally, in describing the lack of competitiveness within his flock, Mike Shipsky spoke about his flockmates sharing information based on individual expertise. He offered, "Somebody was good in accounting and someone wasn't very good in statistics. Then there'd be kind of an information swap to get the general level up as much as possible within our team."

Students made a point of mentioning that they believed the Sloan environment is less competitive than what they had heard or read about environments at other business schools. First-year student Noah Keller said, "I haven't been in another business school, but my impression from friends that I have at other schools is that Sloan is less competitive than most business schools." While talking about competitiveness, second-year student Teryn Rushdie stated, "When you hear stories about some of the other schools, those stories, whether they are true or not, certainly don't hold true at Sloan." Finally, second-year student Josh Goldstein spoke of how Sloan differed from his pre-conceived notion of business schools in general:

My stereotype of the business school environment wasn't realized here. When I started, I first thought it would be hyper-competitive, and people would snipe or do things to
humiliate one another in some way: to show someone up or to demonstrate how much better they were than someone else. He then added that he did not notice any of these behaviors at Sloan.

One of the ways that some student interviewees expressed the difference between Sloan and what they had heard or read about other business schools in terms of competitiveness was the absence of underhanded student behavior. When asked how he would gauge competitiveness at Sloan, Sebastian Graves stated, "Not particularly high. Certainly not the type of thing one would be scared of in reading the sort of negative accounts of business school. There was no sabotage." First-year student Mike Shipsky also noted a lack of sabotage: "I didn’t see anybody stealing homework or blocking books from being taken out of the library." Second-year student Jennifer Nolan described the absence of underhanded behavior in this way:

There was never a sense of stuff disappearing off reserve from the library, or people not discussing their approaches to problems, and how did they solve it. It was, in that regards, one of the most supportive environments I’ve ever been in.

Overall, students expressed in several ways that Sloanies are not competitive with one another. When asked specifically about student-student relations in the first-semester cohorts, interviewees claimed that there is no competition among students within flocks and within oceans. Students conveyed that Sloan is not as competitive as other business school, particularly due to the absence of student sabotage.

The class observations and syllabi analyses confirmed a lack of competitiveness at Sloan. As noted earlier, students were highly respectful of one another during the classes observed. At no point did
students criticize the comments of others. In addition, neither grades nor grading were ever discussed in class.

The lack of competitiveness can be displayed through two examples from the observations. First, public speaking is practiced in the first-semester cohort Communication for Managers class. Students are randomly called to the front of the room to provide "impromptus"--extemporaneous talks on a subject chosen by the lecturer. The rest of the class is required to offer feedback to the presenter. If the students were highly competitive with one another, they might be tempted to offer harsh criticism. During the impromptus that were witnessed, however, the feedback offered to the presenter was always polite and usually complimentary. Students did not insult or compete with one another during the impromptus in any way. The second example comes from a non-cohort Marketing Strategy class. An in-class activity pitted groups of students against one another to devise the most successful marketing plan. Throughout the activity, student groups shared information willingly and overtly complimented other groups on strong performance. Again, there was no sense of competitiveness.

Fall 1999 first-semester cohort syllabi were also examined for allusions to competitiveness. No syllabus, however, discussed student-student relations in light of competitiveness. In fact, the presence of the previously mentioned individual work clauses in five of the six syllabi--clauses that remind students to submit their own work for individual assignments--would seem to indicate that students are more collaborative in nature than competitive. There was no mention of sabotage as students described above, and only one syllabus, that of the accounting class, mentioned a regrade policy for homework and exams. One might expect more of these courses to have a regrade policy if students were highly competitive. Point distributions appeared on all
core course syllabi indicating how much each assignment and exam was worth, but these syllabi went no further: there was no mention of a grading curve, or how many points equated to a certain letter grade.

When compared to the Fall 1993 syllabi, no differences appeared with regard to competition for grades. This is not surprising, since there is little overall difference between these two sets of syllabi. As mentioned above, four of the six cohort syllabi were practically identical throughout this six year span.

When asked why Sloan students are not competitive, faculty members and students offered a variety of reasons that can be categorized into two types of characteristics: institutional characteristics and student characteristics. All of the reasons listed were provided by at least five interviewees. There were several other explanations that had less support among students and faculty members.

Institutional Characteristics
The first institutional characteristic was also the most frequently mentioned reason as to why competition was absent--Sloan's lax grading system. Students claimed and faculty members confirmed that it is not difficult to obtain high marks at Sloan. This muted the competitiveness among students. First-year student Dave Leidenfeld remarked sarcastically, "Pretty much every class you have to work hard to get a C." He assessed the Sloan grading system this way: "If you show up...they divide it: 50% A's, 50% B's. If you do the work, if you come to class and do a marginally decent job, you'll get a B." Similarly, second-year student Liz Fowler said, "It's possible for everyone, theoretically, to get an A, at least. And everyone's going to get an A or a B anyway, the risk is very, very low." Finally, second-year student Justin Lee offered, "Everyone's GPA is between a 4.0 and a
5.0, 80% of the people. So it doesn’t make that much of a difference whether you’re a 4.4 or a 4.6.”

When asked about student competitiveness, a few faculty members also cited the notion that high grades are the norm at Sloan. Strategic Management professor Richard Leaves explained the lack of competition in the core by saying, “There’s rampant grade inflation. In a lot of these core courses it’s sort of half As and half Bs.” He then said, “So I think it kind of mutes [the competitiveness].” Similarly, a lecturer for the Communication for Managers core class, Laura Toriano, stated the following:

Grades are a joke at Sloan. The bottom line is that they’re A-B courses. The worst case scenario is you get a B. Our policy is that in order to get a C, the student had to have asked for it. The student blatantly did not try.

When asked to define what “not trying” meant, she answered that not coming to class and not turning in assignments fitted this description. “Not doing well on an assignment,” she followed, “and turning that assignment in late does not qualify as blatant.”

Students and faculty members were then asked how grade inflation or the lax grading system affected first-semester students who have yet to receive any final grades. They responded that faculty members convey the grading norms during the first semester. Second-year student Jeff Edwards said, “A lot of teachers admit that everybody can get an A in that class.” Professor Leaves made this statement:

We start telling them. It’s not a commitment. It’s not a forced curve. If they all do lousy, I’ll give them C’s if necessary. But yeah, we start telling them and it’s true and it has an effect that they can be a little calmer here.
Sloan students noted that one of the reasons why grading is so lax, and thus competition is nonexistent, is the absence of a forced grading curve such as the one used at the Harvard Business School. This was the second institutional characteristic. As mentioned in the literature review, HBS faculty members impose curves which ensure failing grades for 10% of the students in each class. Elderkin (1996) noted about the HBS classroom, "The scrambling for a limited number of good grades inevitably inspires intense competition among students" (p.54). Second-year student Ray Chen spoke of the effect caused by a lack of grading curves at Sloan. In his words:

It’s surprisingly very collaborative...The classroom setting may have to do with the incentives set within the courses, or lack of incentives to be aggressive. In other words, there is no fixed pie. There is no "100%, these are the points allocated, and the more you speak and the more you hammer the other person down into the ground, you get a bigger share of the pie." There are no incentives like that.

Similarly, second-year student Jim McNulty said, "You’re not on a forced curve. So if you help someone out, it’s not hurting your grade." Finally, second-year student Jeff Edwards said this about grading curves, "We don’t have a forced curve, so we’re a little bit less concerned about, ‘Some of these people have to fail and I don’t want to be that person.’" So the absence of grading curves affects competitiveness at Sloan.

The third institutional characteristic mentioned by students was the strong team environment prevalent during the first semester. Students claimed that the emphasis placed on teamwork by the faculty and the administration makes students more collaborative and less
competitive while students were in oceans and flocks. First-year student Cindy Dorado made this point explicitly when reflecting upon her first semester at Sloan:

If you look at the fact that they assign us to teams and force us to be cooperative and share information, that kind of radiates outward...Because they encourage the sharing of information, there's no reason to be competitive. In fact, you're cutting off your nose to spite your face because you're not going to learn as much. And what they kept drilling into us last semester is you learn from each other and the only way you can learn from each other is by sharing information.

Similarly, first-year student Kurt Jacofay stated, "The teams definitely made it very non-competitive." Ray Chen spoke about the lack of individual incentives and followed with this quote:

The incentives go the other way, where your grade depends generally on the team effort and team presentations and team everything. As a result you say to yourself, "It looks like all I have to do is collaborate and I'll do well." And from the very first day, it was: "Team. Team is number one."
And everything else so far has supported that.

Other students made similar points. It is clear that the emphasis on teamwork during the first semester makes students more collaborative and less competitive.

One remaining institutional characteristic was only mentioned by one or two interviewees, but it may play a role in the differences of environments at Sloan and HBS. Harvard enforces a grade non-disclosure policy for its students. This policy dictates that recruiters not question HBS students regarding their grades. The only indication of a
Harvard student's graduate academic achievement presented to a recruiter is whether that student has attained the First-Year Honors distinction. This is awarded to the top 15-20% of each class after the first year. HBS students compete for this award.

At Sloan, there is neither a ranking system similar to First-Year Honors nor a grade non-disclosure policy. Firms are permitted to ask a student for his or her grade point average, though not all actually do so, according to student interviewees. Therefore, without any specific academic distinction to obtain, with the knowledge that they may not be asked about their grades by recruiters, and with all of the above and below factors mitigating competitiveness at Sloan, students feel little external academic pressure which could lead to competition among students.

Student Characteristics

Two student characteristics were mentioned by interviewees as potential explanations for the lack of competitiveness at Sloan. The first characteristic noted was the individualistic nature of students. This has been discussed twice before, and it is highly relevant in this section as well. Students claimed that they and their classmates are too involved in their own lives to engage in competitiveness with other students. Known for its spirit of high-technology entrepreneurship, which was likely heightened by the internet boom of the late 1990s, Sloan attracts students who work on business projects in addition to their academic coursework. Three students made this point in quotes cited below. First-year student Dave Leidenfeld explained the lack of competitiveness in this way:

I think a lot of times people are more concerned with their business plans and start-up ideas than what their grades are...The sense you get as part of being a student here is,
"Oh, so-and-so just came back on the red-eye from L.A. to make this class because he was busy meeting with a VC." You talk to first-years who are thinking of leaving because there are just so many good opportunities out there. Every one is pretty much doing a 50K project. There's definitely a lot of that entrepreneurial spirit out here. It's unclear to me as to whether that was here before or whether it's a function of the whole internet boom, and whether it's the same at every business school. It probably is like this at most business schools now.

Second-year student Christine Dodge made similar remarks about learning of her classmates' outside projects. In her words:

People here tend to do their own thing. I've been surprised all year long to discover friends of mine, people I've known well, on the side outside of school were working on their own projects. They go home and they do their own thing. There's probably not as much camaraderie and school spirit here, but by the same token, I think students are more individualistic here. There isn't direct competition.

Finally, second-year student Jennifer Maker said that while no Sloan students are competitive, "I think people are sometimes collaborative, sometime independent, and when they're independent, it's usually because they're doing 8,000 other things at once." She followed by stating, "Actually, I think that a place like MIT and Sloan sort of encourages that as much as anything else." Sloan's culture of individualism likely precludes the sort of competitiveness found at other institutions.

The second student characteristic that was proposed by some students and confirmed by others is the presence of a self-selection effect: non-competitive students are drawn to non-competitive schools
such as Sloan, where they perpetuate this spirit of non-competitiveness. Interestingly, every student who made this point also made an unsolicited comparison to the Harvard Business School. When asked why he felt Sloan was not competitive, second-year student Steven Cohen said, "I think it's simply the personality types of the people who are attracted to a place like Sloan--a lot of self-selection. There are people who did not apply here. I did not apply to Harvard." Similarly, second-year student Ming Yee explained the lack of competitiveness in this way: "It could be the self-selection of the Sloanies as well. We all chose to come to Sloan because we knew it wouldn't be like Harvard. The environment is supposed to be friendlier."

Other students confirmed this notion by stating that they chose to apply to and enroll at Sloan rather than HBS because of the perceived difference in competitiveness. First-year student Neal Kuczynski said, "That was one of the reasons why I came here as opposed to HBS, because that was kind of the perception in my own anecdotal experience with HBS people," meaning that they were more competitive than Sloanies. Similarly, second-year student Steven Cohen offered, "One of the reasons why I came to Sloan, as opposed to Harvard, was that I was very conscious of the fact that this was a much less competitive environment in that sense."

Finally, several students provided the same example when attempting to describe how little competition existed at Sloan. Although this example is unrelated to the cohort classroom, they suggested that it is indicative of Sloan's spirit of collaboration. Students noted that when firms come to campus for recruiting, the students often share the interview questions with one another. First-year student Keisha Hall recalled from her recruiting period, "When we were looking for jobs, we were all competing for the same jobs and
people were like, 'Be ready to go into an operations case. Just think about what you have to say.' So they tipped us off." Second-year student Jill Cater conveyed how a Sloan student might help another during interviews--a Sloanie would say, "This is going to be the case they’ll ask you about. Maybe I didn’t do very well, but at least you should." Finally, second-year student David Wong spoke of Sloan’s unique collaborative spirit in this regard:

That’s an instance where you’re in direct competition with somebody for a very limited number of slots and people are willing to do that and I think that’s great. And there’s no other school in the world that does that. And it’s gotten so bad that a lot of consulting firms know about it, but I think that’s a hallmark of Sloan.

Again, although this example does not exhibit a lack of competitiveness in the cohort classroom, students insisted that it represented the overall willingness to collaborate among Sloan students.

Overall, the implementation of cohorts has not induced competitiveness at Sloan--not in the flocks, the oceans, or non-cohort classes. Interviewees noted the absence of sabotage among students and insisted that Sloan is less competitive than other business schools they had heard or read about. Class observations and syllabi analyses confirmed this lack of competitiveness.

While Sloan students are grade-conscious and want to do well academically, several institutional and student characteristics preclude this from evolving into student-to-student competition. Most notably, interviewees mentioned the lax grading system at Sloan and the absence of a forced grading curve, such as the one used at HBS. Students also suggested that the emphasis on teams and teamwork during the first-semester elicits collaboration rather than competition. Finally, the
individualistic nature of students and the self-selection of non-competitive students also contributes to the lack of competition among Sloan students.

**Competition Among Students for Airtime**

At the Harvard Business School, class participation accounts for 50% of a student’s final grade in nearly every class. As a result of this factor, students become competitive regarding participation, or "airtime", in the classroom (Henry, 1983; Reid, 1994; Elderkin, 1996). Reid (1994) described the "airtime obsession" of HBS students. Some, for example, chose to take a "chip shot", what he described as an "innocuous comment that gives class discussion a paltry push forward" (p.58). Chip shots enabled students to boost their amount of class participation for the day. Elderkin (1996) described similar tactics among HBS students including the "deliberate tangent", where students changed the subject of the conversation to make a point they believed was impressive, and the "Statue of Liberty", where students continued to raise their hand while someone else was speaking in order to ensure being called on next.

In "Golden Passports", Van Maanen (1983) noted that class participation at Sloan was "either an insignificant or nonexistent portion of a student’s grade" (p.441-442). It can certainly be assumed from the overall lack of competitiveness he cited among Sloan students that there was little competition for airtime as well.

Between 1993 and 1999, the emphasis placed on class participation at Sloan increased greatly across the school: it counted toward a student’s grade in a higher percentage of classes in 1999 (62%) than it did in 1993 (49%), and in those classes where it was part of the grading policy, participation counted for 20% or more of the grade at a greater rate in 1999 (50%) than it did in 1993 (29%).
With the recent emphasis on class participation, a reasonable question is whether this has made Sloan students competitive for airtime in any way. To answer this question, faculty members and students were asked this question directly. In addition, student behavior was scrutinized during the class observations. Finally, all collected syllabi were examined for any mention of airtime competitiveness among students, and Fall 1993 syllabi were compared to those of Fall 1999. Once again, student interview results were relied upon heavily since it is these interviewees who have first-hand knowledge of the subject matter.

When asked whether students were competitive for airtime, particularly in courses for which class participation counted, students and faculty members agreed that this was not the case. Second-year student Jill Carter responded by saying, "No. Not at all. In fact, I'll say, 'Come on, say something!' to someone who doesn't talk a lot." First-year student Cindy Dorado stated, "Even in classes where there was forced participation, like strategy and communication, it didn't feel as if people were battling each other to get the attention of the professor." Finally, first-year student Sarah Mascia offered, "I just took macro-economics with Holding, which is 40% class participation, and I don't think there was a lot of competitiveness there."

Similar to the results regarding competitiveness for grades, however, several students and faculty members offered a qualifying remark. While noting that the majority of Sloan students are not competitive for airtime, about one-third of the interviewees who answered this question added that there are a few students in each course who seem to always raise their hands in class. No specific characteristic distinguishes this group. While some believed these notable students are competing for airtime, others insisted that these
students just have a tendency to talk a lot. Professor Fox, part of the former group, said, "I think there are a couple of students in each of my two sections who perceived participation as a competitive event." Professor Compton agreed that some students are competitive for airtime, and added, "You hear from the noisy few." When asked how these students displayed their competitiveness, he said, "They’ll come up and they’ll say, 'I had my hand up and you didn’t call on me.'"

A few students also noted that they have some competitive classmates. Second-year student Jeff Edwards made this statement:

If 50% of the grade is class participation and quality of the comments is important, you will tend to get more of that competitiveness in class. But it always used to be certain people who are competitive that way. And I tend to think it’s the minority. It’s not, from what I understand, what Harvard tends to be, where everybody is just raising their hand constantly and trying to be the one that gets called on.

Second-year student Steven Cohen also spoke of a minority of competitive students. In his words:

I don’t know anybody who really cared that much. There were some people who were very concerned about grades. Very few. And we all knew who they were. And as far as I was concerned, they could do what they needed to do. And if they needed to be competitive for airtime, that was their thing.

It is possible that the same students previously identified as being most concerned about grades--those hoping to secure jobs at top consulting and investment banking firms--were also the ones who were competitive for airtime.
Other interviewees claimed that these few students who raise their hands constantly are not necessarily competitive, but rather have a stronger tendency or desire to speak in class. Professor Balmer said that her students are not competitive for airtime, but "those people who like to talk all the time always have their hands up, and always are ready to talk—it's more of a predilection for talking a lot versus not." Professor Heatherton said, "In general, they were not competitive, but some students raised their hands for every question." Some students agreed with this notion. Second-year student Suzy Matthews said, "I think certain people might always have their hand up and want to speak." Similarly, second-year student Peter DiNardo offered that students were not at all competitive for airtime, but some students "choose to talk all the time, whether or not they have interesting things to say." Second-year student Josh Goldstein made the following statement: "There are people who have something to say all the time. People who have a constant flow of words to offer."

The class observations confirmed this lack of competitiveness for airtime at Sloan. The percentage for which class participation counted in the student's final grade was made explicit in twenty-five of thirty syllabi (83%) for the observed classes. Class participation counted for at least 30% of the student's final grade in thirteen of those twenty-five observed classes (52%). More than half of the observed classes, therefore, placed a relatively heavy emphasis on class participation. In all but four of the observed classes, the faculty member did most of the talking. Students did not seem anxious to talk while the professor was lecturing. When the chance to speak arose, students did not appear to jostle for airtime in any way. There seemed to be plenty of opportunities for students to participate, and at no point did students appear frustrated when not called upon. Students did not leave their
hands raised while others were talking, and all contributions appeared substantial. In a few cases, the opposite of what may be found at HBS was observed--faculty members had to encourage students to speak, sometimes resorting to cold-calling to continue the discussion.

The results of the syllabi analysis also seem to confirm a lack of competition for airtime at Sloan. In Fall 1993, 3% of the syllabi mentioned class participation other than simply listing the percentage it would compose of the final grade. By Fall 1999, that figure had risen to only 7% of the syllabi. Some of these references to class participation in the 1999 syllabi do not address competitiveness for airtime. For example, the Information Technology I syllabus encourages students to "ask questions that other students want to know the answer to, and give clear, brief answers to the questions." In the Strategic Management syllabus, students are told that their class participation grade would be a factor of certain variables, such as: "Is the participant a good listener?" and "Is there a willingness to challenge the ideas being expressed?" There were two clauses, however, that might indicate some manipulation on the part of students. In the Data, Models, and Decisions syllabus, students were warned, "Comments should be limited to the important aspects of earlier points made and reflect knowledge of the readings." Similarly, the Strategic Management syllabus encouraged students to "resist the temptation to jump to topics that are not specifically open for discussion." These clauses may have been added to deter students from attempting to use the deliberate tangent tactic--changing the subject to make an impressive point--as Elderkin (1996) described at HBS. Even if the above-cited passages are intended to discourage student manipulation and jostling for airtime, there certainly were not enough of them to indicate a wide-spread problem at Sloan.
Students and faculty members offered explanations as to why they believed students are not competitive for airtime at Sloan. Two similar explanations were offered by several interviewees and stand out as the most frequently cited. First, students claimed that jostling for airtime is discouraged by the practice of faculty members calling on different students regularly. Second-year student Suzy Matthews, for example, offered, "If certain people are speaking all the time, they make sure that they don't always pick the same people." Similarly, second-year student Josh Goldstein made this statement:

Professors are basically good at recognizing that some people always have their hand up and some people don't. So some instructors compensate by cold-calling and some just make a point of ignoring the person who's burning a hole in their arm socket.

Finally, second-year student Liz Fowler stated that professors are aware of those who like to talk. She followed, "If you're someone who doesn't speak so much, when you do raise your hand, you're called on immediately...So if you feel like you want to participate, or you feel like you need to, you usually can." In other words, if class participation is important to a student's grade, faculty members are mindful of allowing different students the opportunity to talk.

The second explanation is similar to the first. As Professor Winger said, "there's ample opportunity to talk so it's not an issue that people are elbowing other people out." Faculty members provide a high number of opportunities to talk in class, so that anxiety regarding participation does not form. First-year student Katie Kingsly supported this statement with an example from her Strategic Management class, in which class participation counted for 30% of the student's final grade. In her words:
In strategy, we had 60 people and your participation was a lot of your grade. And he would allow 45 people to speak in class. So everybody had their hand up almost at all times because you needed to get that participation for the day. But I still wouldn’t call that competitive because he still called on 45 people out of 60...He definitely called on enough people to satisfy the majority of the class.

Another first-year student, Andy Stover, made a similar argument by noting, “Classes where participation counted the most were also the classes where the most people were called on throughout the class. So there was never a scarcity.” He followed, “You would never have your hand up the whole time and not get called on. So if you had something to say, 75-80% of the time, you’d get called on.”

Professor Comera ensured that students had enough opportunities to talk by expanding the definition of class participation. She said, “We have a lot of foreign students, some of whom are not that verbal in the classroom, so they choose to do their class participation in other ways, like via the internet.” This type of adjustment relieves the pressure to speak for international students and frees up more opportunities for those students who are more willing to participate during class.

Other reasons were only offered by a few interviewees but may be valid explanations nevertheless. Second-year student Suzy Matthews suggested that competition for airtime was absent because a lack of class participation would not adversely affect a student’s grade. She said, “I’ve found that, even in the classes where they say that participation is 40%, if you get an A on the midterm and an A on the final but your participation is low, it really won’t hurt you.” Another second-year student, Peter DiNardo, similarly proposed that class
participation has little overall effect on a student's academic and professional career. He made the following statement:

I just think that if you want to talk, you talk. If you don’t, it’s not going to kill you. You’re not going to fail out, it’s not going to affect what type of job you get in the future.

Jennifer Nolan, a second-year student, proposed that the quantitative nature of Sloan students' backgrounds is likely to prevent competition for airtime. Half of the Class of 2000, for example, held undergraduate degrees in science, math, or engineering. Jennifer stated the following: “Peoples' training here is much more quantitative and much less toward the verbal expression skills. I would never say there's competition.” She continued, proposing that HBS students are more oriented towards verbal expression. Then she offered an example of how this difference manifested itself. In her words:

They [HBS] typically recruit and admit for that kind of ability. And that was really apparent to me in the class that I took over there. We did introductory comments the first day of class, introducing ourselves around the room. My intro was about two minutes, which would be considered a long comment at Sloan. And everybody else in the room was like three to five.

There are other reasons that might help to explain the lack of competitiveness regarding class participation at Sloan. First, some of the previously-cited reasons as to why students are not competitive with one another for grades may also be applied here. For example, students may recognize that with the lax grading system and the absence of a forced grading curve, there is little reason to jostle for position to speak in class. Sloan students are practically assured a high grade
regardless of their in-class contributions. Second, the emphasis on teamwork and collaboration at Sloan may also stifle the urge to compete for airtime. Third, the self-selection of non-competitive students could also affect the amount of competition to speak. All of these reasons, though not mentioned specifically in regards to airtime competitiveness, may apply here as well.

Finally, there are two significant differences between Sloan and HBS which might account for the presence of competition for airtime at HBS and the lack of such competition at Sloan. These differences went unmentioned by most interviewees discussing this topic. First, while Sloan may have placed a greater emphasis on class participation over time, the amount for which participation counts at Sloan is still not at the same level as at HBS. Class participation counts for half of a student’s grade in every class at HBS. For the Fall 1999 semester at Sloan, class participation figured into a student’s grade in 62% of the classes. For these classes, participation composed 22% of the student’s final grade, on average. While these percentages are still higher than their comparable figures in 1993, they are clearly not as high as at HBS. Professor Gold, a graduate of HBS, described the effect of the class participation policy at his alma mater: “It’s not a part of your grade, it’s 50%. So there is an element of ‘I have to demonstrate not only that I’m smart, but that I’m smarter than you if I want to get the top grades.” The environment at HBS is strongly influenced by the requirement for students to speak during each class. This pressure is only heightened by the forced grading curve applied to each class at HBS. Sloan students do not encounter the same policies and thus do not react in the same manner.

The second difference between Sloan and HBS is the previously mentioned disparity in the amount and way that the case study is
employed at the two institutions. Regarding the case study at HBS, Elderkin (1996) noted, "HBS fuels a cut-throat competitiveness by pitting students against each other through the use of the case study method" (p.54). He then explained this by stating that fueling the competition among students at HBS, "is the fundamental adversarial nature of the case study method, which is designed to divide the class over a series of issues to promote class debate" (p.54). As mentioned above, Sloan faculty members use the case study less frequently than those at HBS. When it is employed at Sloan, the case study is used more often as background for a lecture than as a rope with which students play tug-of-war. Professor Spriter, for example, described the Sloan approach to case studies: "We don't see them as a contest for individual students to show off their expertise. We see them as a tool to draw out important lessons and illustrations and for the group to learn."

This likely has an effect on student-student relations at Sloan. With the case study used more sparsely and in a different manner at Sloan, it does not induce the same type of competitiveness as reported at HBS.

Overall, there is little competition among students for airtime at Sloan, regardless of the increased emphasis on class participation over time. Several students and faculty members noted, however, that there is a minority of Sloanies who seem to simply always have their hands raised. While some deemed these students as being competitive, others believed it was just a predilection for talking. When asked why they felt students did not compete for airtime, interviewees focused on two factors: (a) the fact that faculty call on different students constantly, and (b) the abundance of opportunities to speak.

There were other, less frequently-cited explanations that also help to explain this lack of competitiveness. Some examples are the notion that students see participation as having little effect on their
grades and careers, and the quantitative nature of students' backgrounds. Most of the previously-cited explanations for the lack of competitiveness for grades might also apply to competition for airtime. The lax grading policies, the absence of a forced grading curve, the emphasis on teamwork and collaboration, and the self-selection of non-competitive students all may affect the in-class environment, including competitiveness for airtime.

Finally, two more differences between Sloan and HBS may also make a difference. First, the emphasis on class participation simply has not reached the same level as at HBS—half of the grade in every class. Second, it is possible that the difference in the frequency and way in which Sloan faculty members employ case studies affect competitiveness for airtime at Sloan.

Summary

Similar to the student-faculty relations at Sloan, student-student relations seem positive overall. Students described their classmates as being bright, diverse, and cooperative. Sloanies recognized that their colleagues were all intelligent enough to be admitted into a highly-selective institution like Sloan, and were thankful that such talented students offer assistance when needed.

When asked to describe the nature of in-class student-student relations, faculty members and students used the term "respectful". Although there was little in-class discussion among students sanctioned by the faculty member, students were usually supportive of one another when addressing fellow classmates either directly or through professor. Class observations confirmed this respectfulness.

Out-of-class relations were described differently. When asked to compare out-of-class student-student relations in cohort versus non-cohort classes, students focused primarily on their small study groups,
or flocks, within their first-semester oceans. Most comments regarding flocks were entirely positive or mixed but positive. Students spoke of developing strong working and personal relationships with their flockmates. These groups serve as a source of comfort for many students who entered Sloan fearing issues such as returning to school, moving to a new city, handling a large workload, and surviving a stressful recruiting period for summer positions. Some flocks clearly had "bumps along the road", but most students seemed able to reap positive rewards from the group experience. A minority of students had overwhelmingly negative flock experiences and reported having "meltdowns", including arguments and highly strained interactions. This was not the norm, however.

The impact of flocks was seen even more clearly when interviewees compared student-student relations in cohort versus non-cohort classes. Students form teams for individual classes after the first semester, but these teams are never as close as the flocks. Students reported feeling lost and disoriented without their flocks, without a close network of classmates who could discuss a broad range of matters, especially the shared classes. Students noted missing the personal as well as academic support when their flocks disbanded.

The specific student-student behaviors described in the HBS literature were investigated next. First, interviewees were asked whether students attempt to manage one another when in the first-semester cohorts. A small group of students suggested that some managing occurs out of class in a more private setting. Most students and faculty members, however, insisted that Sloan students do not attempt to manage their classmates. In fact, a few interviewees expressed a desire for increased managing to deter some in-class problems such as chronic tardiness and discussion monopolization.
Interviewees were then asked why students do not manage one another. Several explanations were provided, though two were offered more frequently. First, faculty members and students discussed the sense of individuality among Sloanies. Partially influenced by the engineering ethic, Sloan students subscribe to a "you do your thing, I'll do my thing" philosophy. This respect for individuality dictates that students not comment on or influence the actions of others. Second, many students claimed that managing in-class behavior is the responsibility of the faculty member and that most Sloan professors are adept at this. When a student speaks too often in class, for example, professors acknowledge it and make the necessary adjustments in their calling patterns.

Other reasons were cited less frequently. It was suggested that students do not manage one another for fear of how that would reflect on them. Similarly, students noted that it would not be deemed politically correct to attempt to control classmates. Others offered that the in-class environment is relaxed and that there is "a lot of play" in the system, meaning that discussions are not monitored too closely. Lastly, a few interviewees suggested that there is simply no need for managing, as students act and speak respectfully at all times in class.

While most interviewees reported that students do not manage one another in class, some suggested private or "off-line" managing does occur. If a student makes an offensive comment or monopolizes the class discussion, he or she may be counseled by a classmate out of class. Sometimes it is the flock that provides feedback and other times it is the offending student's friends.

The other student-student relations issues pertained to competitiveness. First, with cohort students taking the same classes and being assessed by the same faculty members, interviewees were asked
whether students ever become competitive for grades during the first semester. Several interviewees stated that Sloan students are competitive with themselves, but not with others. It took a generally ambitious person to seek and gain admission into Sloan, they said. Sloanies are achievers. Overall, however, Sloan students do not concern themselves with the grades of others, either in their flock or ocean. Class observations and syllabi analyses confirmed this conclusion.

When asked why cohort students are not competitive with others for grades, two groups of explanations were offered: (a) those concerning institutional characteristics, and (b) those related to student characteristics. The first institutional characteristic offered by faculty members and students was that high marks are not difficult to obtain at Sloan. Students receive mostly As and Bs. One student joked, "You have to work hard to get a C". Others mentioned that without a forced curve such as the one used at HBS, there is no sense that students are competing for a limited number of high grades. A Sloanie can feel comfortable assisting a classmate knowing that it will not affect his or her own grade in that class. Lastly, students suggested that the emphasis on flocks make the environment more cooperative and collaborative than competitive. Sloan encourages and rewards information-sharing, which renders competitiveness counter-productive.

There are two major student characteristics that influence the low level of competitiveness at Sloan. First, the aforementioned individualistic nature of students squelches competitiveness. Sloanies "do their own thing", as one interviewee said. Students are entrepreneurs with side projects that divert their attention from the grades of their classmates. The second student characteristic is the self-selection of non-competitive students. Several student interviewees mentioned choosing Sloan because they had heard or sensed
that the environment is less competitive, less "cut-throat" than at other business schools, particularly HBS. By admitting and enrolling students seeking a non-competitive environment, a non-competitive environment is continually renewed.

The second form of competitiveness is that for airtime in the classroom. Since the amount for which class participation weighs in a student's grade has increased over time at Sloan, interviewees were questioned as to whether competitiveness for airtime exists in the classroom. A small group of interviewees reported that a few students in each class seem overeager to speak and constantly raise their hands. Some suggested this was competitiveness for airtime, and others noticed the same trend and deemed it a predilection for talking. Most interviewees, however, responded that Sloan students, in general, are not competitive for airtime. Class observations and syllabi analyses confirmed this result.

When asked why students are not more anxious to speak in class, interviewees offered several explanations. Students and faculty members agreed that professors provide ample opportunity to speak if class participation is weighed heavily for a course. In addition, faculty members are conscious of calling on different students at all times. These were the two most frequently cited explanations.

A less common explanation was that class participation rarely had the same effect on a grade as the syllabus may indicate. Students suggested that if they performed well on class assignments, lack of participation would not lower their grade, regardless of how much participation purportedly weighed. Also, interviewees suggested that the quantitative orientation of Sloan students, particularly when compared to HBS students, likely prevents competition for airtime. Sloan students are more attuned to quantitative than verbal matters.
Competition for airtime is not very different than competition for grades, as it is the final grade that HBS students hope to boost by competing for airtime. Therefore, some of the previously cited reasons why Sloan students do not compete for grades can be applied here as well. For example, with a lax grading system and no forced curve, students do not worry about their participation grades. Also, the emphasis on teamwork and the self-selection of non-competitive students both make the environment less competitive in general, potentially deterring competitiveness for airtime.

Lastly, two differences between HBS and Sloan may account for the presence of competition for airtime at HBS and not at Sloan. First, while Sloan has placed a greater emphasis on class participation over time, it has not reached the same level as at HBS. Participation counts for half of a student’s grade in the average HBS class. The Sloan figure is not nearly that high in most classes. The second difference is related to the way HBS and Sloan faculty members use the case study method. At HBS, cases are employed to spark lively debate among students, which often turns into a competition. At Sloan, the case is used as background for discussion rather than debate.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section draws conclusions from the results in Chapters Four and Five while answering the study's primary research question. The second section presents recommendations for future inquiry--questions that have emerged as a result of the study. The third section addresses the study's policy and research implications. Finally, the last section considers the contribution that this study has made to the literature.

Conclusions

The goal of this dissertation is to determine whether, in light of institutional and curricular changes made by the Sloan School of Management, student-faculty and student-student relations have transformed from those described in Van Maanen's (1983) "Golden Passports" article to resemble those attributed to the Harvard Business School (HBS) in the same article and other literature. The findings show that the current Sloan culture resembles the HBS culture in some ways. This is partially attributable to the aforementioned changes--the implementation of the cohort system, the elimination of the master's thesis requirement, and the increase in program size. It is also attributable to a development unrelated to the above changes--the emergent concern with the Business Week rankings. The study also finds that some of the more dramatic potential effects associated with these changes, such as students ganging up on faculty members, students managing one another, and competitiveness among students have not been realized at Sloan.

According to Sloan faculty members and administrators, the implementation of the cohort system has increased cohesiveness among first-year, first-semester students over time. Students spend a semester together in many of the same classes, overcoming similar
obstacles at the same time. Sloan students used the term “family” to describe their first-semester classmates. In this way, Sloan student-student relations have begun to resemble those at HBS.

The increase in program size and elimination of the master’s thesis requirement have affected student-faculty relations as well. As the program size has grown, a smaller percentage of the student body has established close contact with faculty members. Partially due to this increased class size, Sloan eliminated the master’s thesis as a requirement. Students were no longer guaranteed close contact with at least one faculty member while at Sloan. Interviewees felt that these two changes have increased the sense of distance between faculty members and students over time. In this way, Sloan has again begun to resemble HBS. It was this distance between students and faculty members at HBS that helped foster the emergence of an “us-versus-them” sentiment.

Finally, Van Maanen (1983) stated that the HBS student body held more potential power than the Sloan student body through strong student representation on community-wide committees, and that this was partially due to Harvard’s larger program size. Interviewees at Sloan noted that both student representation on committees and the student voice have grown stronger over time. This may be related to Sloan’s increased program size. Several faculty members and administrators mentioned the work of the Sloan Student Senate, which has become more active and has been able to “pass some resolutions and bring some pressure to bear on the administration,” according to an Associate Director of the MBA program. In these ways, the changes that Sloan has made to more closely resemble HBS structurally have also made Sloan resemble HBS culturally.

The increased emphasis on the Business Week rankings, though unrelated to the above institutional and curricular characteristics, has contributed to the cultural similarities between the two schools as
well. Van Maanen (1983) described an overall sense of student power at HBS vis-à-vis the faculty, whereas at Sloan, he found the faculty able to “divide and more or less conquer the student body”. One distinct factor in student-faculty and student-administration power relations at Sloan is the concern for Sloan’s rating in the Business Week survey. Walpole (1998, 1999) and Jennings (1999) described MBA faculty members and administrators as seeking to please students since the Business Week survey weighs student opinion heavily. Sloan faculty members mentioned feeling obligated to meet student requests in light of the survey. Students also reported feeling a sense of empowerment through a survey effect. Again, this is a change that has made Sloan student-faculty power relations more closely resemble those at HBS. It is likely a factor at many other selective MBA programs.

It is clear that changes have occurred at Sloan to make its culture resemble that of HBS. However, none of the more dramatic potential effects affiliated with these institutional and curricular characteristics have appeared. With regard to student-faculty relations in the cohort, an “us-versus-them” attitude has not emerged among students, nor have these students ganged up on faculty members in or out of class. The most common explanation was that while the cohorts have brought students closer together, these cohorts have not developed the amount of cohesiveness required to permit or encourage contentious student behaviors. Interviewees cited several factors which have prevented stronger cohesiveness along with other factors influencing student-faculty relations. Regarding student-student relations, Sloan students have not developed impression management skills, nor have they grown competitive with one another for grades or for airtime. There are a number of explanations as to why these behaviors have not emerged either.
Many of the explanations for the absence of dramatic student-faculty and student-student effects can be attributed to differences between HBS and Sloan. These differences have been divided into three broad categories: (a) student differences, (b) institutional differences, and (c) cohort differences. These are addressed below in order.

**Student Differences**
Sloan attracts a different student than does HBS. Four characteristics of the Sloan student body are important to the comparison: (a) the individualistic nature of students; (b) the engineering ethic among students; (c) the high percentage of international students; and (d) the self-selection of students.

Interviewees described the typical Sloanie as "individualistic". This was defined as someone who is not afraid to be "the nail that stands out", someone who "doesn't like to be told what to do, doesn't want to run in the typical path, likes to stride to their own thing a little more". This is different from the very close, almost herd-like student body that Van Maanen (1983) and others found at HBS. Individuality at Sloan prevents the development of the sort of student cohesiveness required for an "us-versus-them" attitude and ganging up on the faculty member. Respect for individuality also lessens the likelihood that students would attempt to manage one another or act competitively.

The sense of individuality is fueled by a second difference between Sloan and HBS students—the "engineering ethic" prevalent among Sloanies. Almost half of the Sloan Class of 1999 earned undergraduate degrees in engineering. Although Van Maanen (1983) does not cite statistics for HBS students in his article, this number dwarfs the percentage of HBS students in the Class of 2002 who earned undergraduate
degrees in either engineering or natural sciences (31%). According to interviewees, the engineering ethic emphasizes "getting the job done". These students are not overly concerned about the impressions they make on each other or the faculty member, thus explaining the absence of impression management at Sloan.

Third, the Sloan culture is influenced by the high percentage of international, particularly Asian, students. International students composed almost 40% of the incoming Class of 1999, and Asians were the most heavily represented ethnic group. Although Van Maanen (1983) did not mention the percentage of international students at HBS, Harvard statistics note that 13% of its Class of 1985 was composed of international students--much lower than the Sloan figure. Interviewees stated that Sloan's international students, particularly Asians, are more deferential to faculty members than their American counterparts. This helps prevent the sort of antagonistic student-faculty dynamics found at HBS. Interviewees also proposed that some Asian students are not able to integrate themselves into the environment immediately, precluding the kind of cohesiveness among cohort classmates that Van Maanen found at HBS.

Lastly, several students mentioned choosing Sloan over HBS when deciding where to attend business school because they sensed the Sloan culture was less competitive. The difference in competitiveness at the two institutions, therefore, is partially a matter of self-selection. By attracting students seeking a less competitive environment, Sloan perpetuates its non-competitive culture.

**Institutional Differences**

Several institutional differences can account for the fact that students do not gang up on faculty members, do not attempt to manage one another, and are not competitive with one another like the HBS students
described by Van Maanen (1983) and others. Five institutional differences are described below: (a) the different emphases on research versus teaching, (b) the different approach and usage of the case study method, (c) the use of a grading curve at HBS and not at Sloan, (d) the different emphases on in-class student participation, and (e) the fact that HBS is a residential campus and Sloan is not. The research versus teaching issue is discussed first.

Van Maanen (1983) noted that HBS students held more potential power through the course evaluation system than did Sloan students since teaching was weighed more heavily for tenure decisions at HBS than at Sloan. While Sloan faculty members and administrators insisted that the emphasis on teaching and course evaluations has increased at Sloan, they also noted that teaching has not reached the same level of importance as research in tenure decisions. As a result, Sloan students do not hold the same potential power as HBS students. Sloan students seemed acutely aware of this, suggesting that top researchers who are less capable in the classroom are more likely to attain tenure than inspiring teachers with comparatively poor research records. Without this sense of power, Sloan students are less likely to gang up on faculty members in the classroom.

Another institutional difference between the two business schools is the use of the case study method, particularly in concert with cold-calling. Elderkin (1996) stated that cold-calling instills fear within HBS students. Sloan students and faculty members similarly noted that cold-calls make a classroom environment more tense. But while nearly every class at HBS begins with a cold-call, Sloan faculty members use it much more sparingly. This likely eases student-faculty relations and prevents the development of an “us-versus-them” attitude among Sloan students.
Elderkin (1996) also proposed that the case study fuels competitiveness at HBS, being "designed to divide the class over a series of issues to promote class debate". Sloan faculty members, however, claimed to use the case study as background to illustrate a theory rather than as a technique to spark lively debate. This may help explain the absence of malicious in-class student-student relations and the lack of competition among students in the Sloan classroom.

The third major institutional difference is the presence of a forced grading curve at HBS but not at Sloan. A forced curve promotes competitiveness at Harvard, as students vie for a limited number of passing grades. Sloan's environment is more collaborative since assisting a classmate does not affect one's own grade at Sloan. This clearly prevents the development of competition among students for grades and for airtime, and may also help promote healthier student-faculty relations as well.

In addition to the fact that Sloan faculty members do not employ forced curves, interviewees noted that Sloan professors are very lenient graders. It is not difficult to obtain high marks, both students and faculty members reported. While this is not a comparison to the conditions at HBS, this likely reduces the sense of competitiveness among Sloan students and perhaps prevents antagonism between students and faculty members.

The fourth institutional difference between HBS and Sloan is that HBS places a much greater emphasis on class participation than does Sloan. In most HBS classes, a student's participation has traditionally counted for half of his or her final grade. At Sloan, while the amount for which class participation counts has increased over time, it rarely reaches the same proportion as at HBS. As a result, there is less competition for airtime at Sloan than there is at HBS.
Lastly, it was proposed that student living arrangements influence the HBS and Sloan cultures as well. HBS provides dormitory housing for its MBA candidates. Living together heightens the sense of cohesiveness among students. Sloan does not create the same effect with student living arrangements. Sloan students reside all over the Boston metropolitan area. This is potentially one more factor which reduces cohesiveness among Sloan students and influences student-faculty relations.

**Cohort Differences**

The final set of differences between Sloan and HBS lies in the cohort structures at the two institutions. The Sloan and HBS cohorts differ in the following ways: (a) cohort purity, (b) cohort length, (c) the use of formal study groups while students are in cohorts, and (d) cohort room assignments. All are discussed below.

Whereas HBS cohorts are pure—meaning the same students are in all of the same classes together—Sloan's "oceans" are not pure cohorts. Each sixty-person ocean is divided in half to compose two smaller sections for the Communication for Managers core course. Second, each ocean houses approximately five students from the Leaders for Manufacturing (LFM) program. These students enroll in three of the six required MBA core courses. Third, first-semester MBA students are permitted to enroll in the Finance Theory class as an elective, but not all students participate. In concert, these three factors dictate that Sloan cohort students do not have the same set of classmates in all of their courses. This reduces cohort cohesiveness thus influencing student-faculty relations. This may also prevent students from managing their oceanmates: spending less time together reduces friction among students caused by overexposure to one another, the sort of friction which led to managing in HBS cohorts.
The fact that Sloan cohorts last only one semester—versus two semesters at HBS—may not provide students enough time together to become highly cohesive as a group, affecting student-faculty relations. It was also proposed that one semester is not enough time for individual students to feel comfortable enough among their oceanmates to challenge professors in the classroom. In addition, as with the less pure cohorts, the shorter cohort length may reduce the friction among students that leads to cohortmates managing one another.

Third, the use of formal study groups at Sloan, called flocks, influences student-faculty relations. Sloan places a great deal of emphasis on flocks through group assignments. One Sloan student described the first-semester experience as "a bunch of spheres running around in a bigger sphere," meaning the primary unit for first-semester students is the flock, then, secondarily, the ocean. This emphasis on the smaller group dilutes the cohesiveness of the cohort. At HBS, students did not have these subgroups. Again, it was suggested that these groups reduce cohort cohesiveness and prevent antagonistic student-faculty relations.

Lastly, the fact that Sloan students do not remain in the same room all day while the faculty members shuffle in and out, like at HBS, prevents student territoriality at Sloan. Administrators noted that this was one specific characteristic of the HBS cohorts they chose not to adopt. Sloan students sit in different classrooms for each course. The lack of territoriality helps prevent contentious student-faculty relations.

In summary, while it is clear that Sloan has begun to resemble HBS in certain ways, Sloan has not witnessed some of the more dramatic potential effects on student-faculty and student-student relations found at HBS. These relations, however, are an ever-evolving phenomenon. As
the below recommendations for future inquiry show, there may be signs that changes have wrought some contentious behaviors or negative effects at Sloan.

Recommendations for Future Inquiry

During the course of the study, a few questions arose that could not be explored given the time allotted. The answers to these questions would strengthen the results presented above. Below are five recommendations for future inquiry.

The first two issues are related to the sense of consumerism and tardiness among Sloan students. Although students were cited as having a consumer attitude in and showing up late to both cohort and non-cohort classes, it was never determined whether a "carry-over effect" was in place. In other words, it is possible that familiarity among students bred by cohorts emboldens students to be demanding of faculty members and walk in late to class. Once students enter non-cohort classes, they may simply continue these learned behaviors. These are potentially critical issues, for if a carry-over effect does exist, this means that some of the cohorts ill-effects have begun to emerge within the Sloan culture.

Third, the syllabus analysis showed an increase in clauses seeking to deter student absence from class. It was never determined with certainty, however, whether absences have increased over time at Sloan. Faculty members did not cite this as a change over time, and the increase in absence clauses may simply be a result of faculty members comparing syllabi and attempting to make policies more uniform across all classes. But an actual increase in absences may have also driven this change. Has a high student absence rate always been a part of the Sloan culture, or has the absence rate increased over time at Sloan? If
the rate has increased, is this a result of any adopted institutional or curricular characteristic?

Fourth, has easy grading been a constant Sloan characteristic over time? As mentioned in Chapter Four, students and faculty members agree that good grades are not difficult to acquire at Sloan. Has this always been the case? It was also noted that some faculty members feel the need to please students in light of the *Business Week* rankings. Are these factors related? Are students given high marks to boost their satisfaction with the program and thus Sloan’s rating in the *Business Week* survey?

Lastly, what is the interaction between student ratings and recruiter ratings in the *Business Week* survey? As mentioned in Chapter Four, some faculty members felt compelled to consider student requests for less rigorous workloads in light of the *Business Week* rankings, since student satisfaction composes half of the survey. The other half of the survey, however, is composed of comments from recruiters asked to rank programs based on their company’s experiences with employees from business schools. Is a dumbed down curriculum influencing student performance in the workplace? Are Sloan students less prepared once they enter their professional positions? Does one half of the survey affect the other?

**Research and Policy Implications**

This section answers the following questions: (a) How do the study’s findings jibe with the literature? and (b) What do these findings mean in relation to practice?

In many ways, the results of this study contradict much of the existing literature on student-faculty and student-student relations at the Harvard Business School. Policies that were shown to have certain effects at HBS have elicited different effects at Sloan due to their
interactions with other environmental factors. The impact of the cohort is addressed first, followed by other curricular and institutional characteristics.

The Effect of the Cohort on Student-Faculty Relations

This study shows that the cohort implementation at Sloan has encouraged students to develop nurturing "family groups" within their cohorts similar to those found at HBS (Van Maanen, 1983; Ewing, 1990; Reid, 1994; Elderkin, 1996; Fombrun, 1996). The cohort system at Sloan, however, has not brought many of the more dramatic effects on student-faculty relations found in the HBS literature. Even when faced with the same sort of overwhelming workloads which spurred antagonistic relations at HBS (Van Maanen, 1983), Sloan students do not develop a similar "us-versus-them" attitude towards faculty members. Sloan students do not view themselves as victims or prisoners of the faculty, as Henry (1983) depicted at HBS. Nor do Sloan faculty members perceive the student-faculty relationship as a boxing match, as it was portrayed at HBS by Reid (1994).

There is no evidence from this study to suggest that simply placing students in cohorts creates power for the group vis-à-vis the faculty member, as literature on the HBS cohorts (Orth, 1963; Van Maanen, 1983; Ewing, 1990) and undergraduate cohorts (Newcomb, 1962) proposed. There were no observations or reports of Sloan students ganging up on faculty members--which is how Van Maanen (1983) noted that HBS students employ power derived from cohorts.

In terms of policy implications for the cohort method, this study shows that institutions can reap the benefits of familiarity among students but prevent some of the more negative effects on student-faculty relations by diluting the strength of the cohort. This can be accomplished in a number of different ways, such as by breaking up the
group for certain classes, shortening the duration of the cohort, or placing an emphasis on smaller groups. It is also clear that not permitting the cohorts to establish territorial rights to a specific classroom eases student-faculty relations as well.

Other implications have to do with student recruiting. This study finds that the type of student enrolled can influence student-faculty relations in the cohort. Individualistic-minded students tends to shun action en masse. The presence of international students, those who show deference to faculty members, also decreases the likelihood of antagonistic student-faculty relations in the cohort.

Finally, factors related to the faculty member can affect student-faculty relations as well. The behavior of faculty members—"setting the proper tone" in the classroom—prevents student flare-ups. Not using the cold-call technique seems to ease tension in the classroom. And the amount of emphasis placed on student evaluations clearly influences student-faculty relations as well. Students feel less powerful, even in cohorts, when attending an institution where research is weighed more heavily than teaching in tenure decisions.

The Effect of the Cohort on Student-Student Relations

This study shows that a cohort implementation does not necessarily lead to some of the more dramatic student-student relations effects found in the literature regarding HBS. Sloan students do not manage their cohortmates as others found at HBS (Van Maanen 1983; Ewing, 1990; Reid, 1994; Elderkin, 1996). Sloan students do not develop any sort of equivalent to Van Maanen's impressions management skills. Nor has any equivalent of the HBS Sky Deck Awards as described in the literature (Reid, 1994; Elderkin, 1996) emerged at Sloan. Finally, the fact that a cohort provides common measures for comparison has not wrought Sloan
student competitiveness for grades, as Van Maanen (1983) seems to suggest it would.

There are policy implications for student-student relations as they pertain to the cohort. This study makes clear that not all cohort students take it upon themselves to manage their classmates. At Sloan, most students reserve that duty for the faculty member. Regarding out-of-class student-student relations, this study shows that the type of student enrolled influences the amount of managing that occurs. Again, more individualistic students tend not to manage one another. This is applied more specifically to those with engineering backgrounds.

Student recruiting also affects competitiveness in the cohort classroom. Non-competitive students perpetuate a non-competitive environment. Other institutional policies influence competitiveness as well—in particular, the use of a forced curve and the difficulty of grading. Students are less competitive in a class that does not impose a forced curve and one where it is relatively easy to obtain high marks. Finally, an emphasis on collaboration reduces student competitive, especially if this emphasis is embedded in graded assignments such as group projects.

The Effects of Other Institutional and Curricular Factors

Other policies in addition to the cohort were analyzed in this study. Increasing program size and eliminating the master’s thesis as a requirement clearly influences student-faculty and student-student relations, as Van Maanen (1983) hypothesized. At Sloan, the combination of these two policies has increased the sense of distance between students and faculty members. So while institutions might boost revenues from tuition by increasing program size, and while the advising load is lessened for faculty members by eliminating the thesis, these
policy changes have an effect—presumably deleterious—on student-faculty relations.

Literature on the HBS class experience found that the heavy emphasis on class participation created student competition to speak in class (Henry, 1983; Van Maanen, 1983; Reid, 1994; Elderkin, 1996). A similar increased emphasis on participation has not elicited comparable competitive conditions at Sloan. There are several policy implications for these findings. Perhaps the most obvious factor is the degree to which participation counts in a student’s grade. It appears that at higher percentages, where participation counts for 50% or more of a student’s grade, there may be more competitiveness than at lower percentages. Other implications are that faculty members can dictate the amount of competitiveness in the classroom by providing ample opportunity to participate and by monitoring the number of times individual students speak. Student recruiting may influence this factor as well. Less-competitive students and those who are quantitative-oriented may be less eager to compete for opportunities to speak in the classroom.

Lastly, this study confirms the presence of a Business Week survey effect at Sloan, as Walpole (1998, 1999) and Jennings (1999) reported finding at selective MBA programs. Sloan faculty members reported feeling obligated to capitulate to student requests regardless of how this impacted the educational outcome. By doing so, they ensure student happiness and raise the probability that students would then rate the Sloan program highly in the Business Week survey. Faculty members reported lowering the rigor of certain classes in response to student requests. This adds to the literature on the Business Week effect and confirms its presence in at least one specific highly-selective MBA program.
Contribution to the Literature

First and foremost, this study contributes to the literature by testing the hypotheses posed by Van Maanen (1983) in his "Golden Passports" article. The article posed that the cultures at the Sloan School of Management and the Harvard Business School contrasted based on their different institutional and curricular policies. This study determines that, in many ways, the Sloan culture has not begun to resemble the HBS culture after several policies were adopted to make Sloan resemble HBS structurally.

As stated in Chapter One, there is scant literature on MBA programs other than the one at the Harvard Business School. This study contributes to the literature by examining a school other than HBS and by providing information on a program that is nearly absent from the MBA literature. There is also very little literature on specific institutional and curricular characteristics within MBA programs such as the use of the cohort system, an increase in program size, and the elimination of the thesis as a master’s degree requirement. Again, what does exist focuses primarily on HBS. This study expands the breadth of the literature by examining these factors at an institution other than HBS, and by doing so at Sloan for the first time.

Finally, the results of this study contribute to more than just the MBA literature, they also contribute to that for all of education. As mentioned in Chapter One, this study examines institutional and curricular characteristics that can be found in all fields of education. Whether a different institution is considering the adoption of a cohort system, the elimination of a master's thesis, a proposed increase in program size, or any of the other policies examined here, this study can provide valuable insight as to how these policies influenced student-faculty and student-student relations somewhere else.
APPENDIX A

Interview Script for All Faculty Members

Thank you very much for meeting with me today. I’m conducting a study on the effects of recent changes here at Sloan. John Van Maanen, a professor here in Organization Studies, wrote an article in 1983 comparing Sloan to the Harvard Business School. He found that due to certain institutional and curricular differences, these two institutions had different student-faculty and student-student relations. So I’m just going to ask you a few questions about the relations that you’ve had and observed here at Sloan.

1. How would you describe student-faculty relations, in general?
2. Have you ever observed an "us-versus-them" attitude among cohort students, where they separate themselves from you the faculty member, or view you as an opponent?
3. Have cohort students ever ganged up on you in the classroom?
4. How would you describe student-student relations, in general?
5. Do cohort students ever try to manage one another in or out of the classroom?
6. Are cohort students competitive with one another for grades?
7. Are cohort students competitive with one another for "airtime"—opportunities to participate in class?

Additional Questions for Faculty Members Who Had Been at Sloan Since Before 1993

1. Have you seen student-faculty relations change since you’ve been at Sloan?
2. Are first-year, first-semester students more cohesive now than they were before the cohorts were implemented in 1993?

3. Have student-student relations change since you’ve been at Sloan?

Additional Questions for Faculty Members Who Had Taught Both Core and Elective Classes

1. Do you see any difference in student-faculty relations in cohort versus non-cohort classes?

2. Do you see any difference in student-student relations in cohort versus non-cohort classes?
APPENDIX B

Interview Script for All Students

Thank you very much for meeting with me today. I'm conducting a study on the effects of recent changes here at Sloan. John Van Maanen, a professor here in Organization Studies, wrote an article in 1983 comparing Sloan to the Harvard Business School. He found that due to certain institutional and curricular differences, these two institutions had different student-faculty and student-student relations. So I'm just going to ask you a few questions about the relations that you've had and observed here at Sloan.

1. How would you describe student-faculty relations, in general?
2. Do you see any difference in student-faculty relations in cohort versus non-cohort classes?
3. Have you ever observed an "us-versus-them" attitude among cohort students, where students separate themselves from the professor, or view him or her as an opponent?
4. Do you recall your ocean ever ganging up on the professor in the classroom?
5. How would you describe student-student relations, in general?
6. Do you see any difference in student-student relations in cohort versus non-cohort classes?
7. Did students in your ocean ever try to manage one another in or out of the classroom?
8. Were students in your ocean competitive with one another for grades?
9. Were students in your ocean competitive with one another for "airtime"—opportunities to participate in class?
APPENDIX C

Request for Faculty Interview

Hello Professor ____,

My name is Dan Horn and I am a Visiting Scholar at Sloan (from the University of Arizona) conducting research for my dissertation. I am sponsored by John Van Maanen in Organization Studies. My topic examines student-faculty and student-student relations at Sloan. I would like to interview you at your earliest convenience. Please know that my interview results will be completely confidential. You are certainly not obligated to meet with me, though I would greatly appreciate your cooperation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Dan
APPENDIX D

Request for Student Interview

Dear Class of 2000 student,

I'm a visiting scholar writing my dissertation at Sloan, and I am very interested in what you have to say about the cohort system, student-faculty relations, and any other issues that you feel have affected your experience at Sloan. My research follows up a study conducted by a Sloan faculty member, John Van Maanen.

I invite you to take part in a focus group for my study. Please know that the discussions will be completely confidential, and no real names will be used in the results. Each student at Sloan is being asked to participate in ONE 30-45 minute discussion. I would like to talk to students in groups based on first-semester sections. You will find the times corresponding to your section below.

(Date Specified Here)
Atlantic - 10am
Baltic - 11am
Caribbean - 12pm
Indian - 1pm
Mediterranean - 3pm
Pacific - 4pm

(Date Specified Here)
Mediterranean - 11am
Atlantic - 12pm
Pacific - 1pm
Baltic - 2pm
Caribbean - 3pm
Indian - 4pm

If you are able to participate in one of these discussion groups, please e-mail me the date and time of our preferred session at dhorn@mit.edu (or simply reply to this message). If you would rather meet with me individually, I would be more than happy to arrange a time with you.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Dan Horn
APPENDIX E

Request for Classroom Observation Permission

Hello Professor ___,

My name is Dan Horn and I am a Visiting Scholar at Sloan (from the University of Arizona) conducting research for my dissertation. I am sponsored by John Van Maanen in Organization Studies. My topic examines student-faculty and student-student relations at Sloan. I would like to observe your _____ class. I would not be evaluating you or the performance of your students in any way and I would remain completely unobtrusive in the classroom. You are certainly not obligated to be observed, though I would greatly appreciate your cooperation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Dan
REFERENCES


