A Catholic Elementary School: A Qualitative Research Study

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COM 416 Organizational Research

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December 7, 2021

*All names of faculty members have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities.

Introduction

An organization's culture is the component that makes an organization unique, "Each organization has a unique way of doing things. Just as each national culture has its unique language, artifacts, values, celebrations, heroes, history, and norms, each organization is unique in these same ways" (Driskill & Brenton, 2011 p. 5). This semester I immersed myself in and analyzed the culture of (Name of organization) located at lLocation), Illinois. Through my qualitative research, I learned about the history of (Name of organization), was able to identify themes using different methods, and tie these findings to organizational research concepts.

I was curious to see a Catholic grade school's organizational culture and traditions, especially since I have attended a public school for much of my educational experience. Growing up, I used to see my neighbors who went to Catholic school ride their bikes down the block in their school uniforms. I was always wondering about their school experience. I decided to choose (Name of organization) because I observed a music class there when I was an Education major after first transferring to Bradley. After this experience, I wanted to learn more about the school and what it offers to staff and students. Catholicism was a topic I was interested in learning about, too, since I am not Catholic. Although I am familiar with it, I do not have more than a basic understanding. Overall, I wanted to know how the Catholic faith and an academic community create a unique environment and organization.

To gain access to the (Name of organization), I emailed and reached out to their principal after one of my peers informed me that they expressed interest in having a student conduct cultural analysis. In my Sophomore year, I observed a kindergarten music class and watched

fifth-graders sing in the choir at mass. I loved seeing how passionate the students were about music and its connection to their faith. Even though I was familiar with the organization, I was a little nervous because, based on my previous experience observing there, I know they are a small, tight-knit community. I met with the principal to explain the purpose of this cultural analysis in greater detail, and she agreed. My gratitude extends to the whole (Name of organization) community for allowing me to observe and research at their school.

(Name of organization) has been teaching young minds since its origin in 1897. The first (Name of organization)school was a two-story brick building that stood directly behind the church on (Name of street). The original teachers were four Dominican Sisters from St. Bernard's parish. The parish grew steadily, causing an increase of teachers and eventually a new school. The new school, which is the structure that houses (Name of organization)school, was fully complete and dedicated by 1925. (Name of organization)added an addition to the building in 1962 to prevent overcrowding. The range of grade levels goes from preschool to 8th grade. The school is accredited by the State of Illinois Diocese of PeoriaPeoria and The North Central Association/AdvancED. As of 2010, they have over 230 students attending the school, and currently, they have 23 members of their faculty.

(Name of organization)has a diverse student population regarding their socioeconomic status and racial and ethnic diversity, partially because students are dispersed throughout the Peoria area residence-wise. Many of the parishes in the Peoria area, like Saint Mary's and St. Bernard's, do not have school affiliates, so the children that attend those parishes often attend (Name of organization)for school. Forty percent of the students are Hispanic, and students with Haitian, Guatemalan, and South African backgrounds attend the school. To accommodate

students of varying socioeconomic statuses, the school and its affiliate organizations extend

scholarships. They have a uniform sale to reduce the cost of the required school uniform pieces.

The (Name of organization)mission statement found on their website is, "The missions of

(Name of organization) School, with the help of God, is to foster the spiritual growth and

academic life of its students and faculty and to teach students, with the cooperation of parents,

the Roman Catholic Faith" (Name of organization)'s, 2021). Based on this vision, (Name of

organization) places a high emphasis on spiritual growth, moral character, and academic

excellence. They strive to have their students prepared for the future through these different

aspects. Their website details the academic curriculum and the extracurricular activities students

can participate in, from altar server training to basketball and organizations guardians can join

like the Parish School Association. There are many tabs to navigate on their website that feature

opportunities for parents, students, and staff to participate in the school community. All the

memos for the school community are posted to read virtually and have a live feed of events to

keep the community informed and up to date.

(Name of organization)Facebook pages have a promotional video that features their Early

Childhood Education Program. It shows one of their preschool classes playing with paint and

singing in a circle. During the video, words and phrases drifted across the screen like, "We plan

and adapt the curriculum to our students." They also post live streams of Sunday masses to

watch at home. Their Facebook features posts about celebrations like Hispanic Heritage Month

and the Blessed Mother Mary's birthday. They also post about fundraiser flyers, often with a

student incentive to wear (Name of organization)spirit wear instead of their uniforms if they

choose to participate. They post pictures showing students attending mass, doing hands-on

activities, and playing at recess. They also do faculty and alumni spotlights where they discuss accomplishments and highlight the importance of these people.

(Name of organization)is a communication-dense organization internally; they communicate information through various mediums. They communicate via group text to address last-minute changes during school, like lunch menu alterations. There is also a PA system that allows them to convey information verbally, and they utilize walkie-talkies during dismissal to make sure every student gets to their ride. Throughout the day, verbal communication is used, especially during lunch in the faculty lounge when staff can unwind. They use email to communicate about more formal aspects like policy changes. The principal also sends the staff a weekly email to inform them about upcoming events and other essential information.

(Name of organization)was featured in the local news in May of 2021 because the Kindergarten and Preschool classes were raising money for a classmate who was undergoing treatment at a St. Jude affiliate. The school participated in their fifth annual "Trike-a-thon," a biking riding event where the goal is to complete as many laps on the track as you can within a 10-minute time limit. They raised more than $3500 for St. Jude between the event and in-classroom donations.

Methods

I collected data at (Name of organization)by observing academic classes, lunch periods for students and faculty, separate planning meetings for Kindergarten through Second Grade and Third through Eighth grade, and an all-staff meeting for ten hours over three months. During these observation periods, I would write down findings of the school's physical appearance,

interactions between staff, the topic of conversation in meetings and classrooms, and how external factors and events affect the school environment.

Cumulatively, I gathered 57 pages of raw data through the observation process. I found aspects of this process to be difficult for two reasons. The first is that some of the observation periods took place during a short duration of time due to the lunch periods and meetings. I wanted to make sure that I gathered as much data and learned as much as possible, given the time constraints of observing. Another difficulty I had during the observation periods was I noticed myself filtering out certain aspects that I felt may appear controversial or unnecessary, especially as I formed connections with various faculty members.

Another method of data collection I utilized in this study is conducting semi-structured interviews with five (Name of organization)faculty members. I used convenience sampling to select these interview participants from a pool of school faculty, "Convenience Sampling involves using respondents who are "convenient" to the researcher. There is no pattern whatsoever in acquiring these respondents" (Galloway, 2005). I interviewed three teachers with varying grades and experience levels and two additional faculty members. The range in experience ranged from a first-year staff member to a staff member who had worked at the organization for eleven years. I used the Driskill interview protocol, which had 25 questions highlighting different school staff work experiences, community, and values. The interview sessions ranged from approximately 30 minutes to 46 minutes, with an average of 41 minutes and 30 seconds. I recorded these interviews at the school using the Voice Memo app on my iPhone. I transcribed four of them via the Otter app and one by hand.

The interview transcriptions were cumulatively 113 pages long and ranged in page length from 19-26 pages. The total time of recording throughout all the interview sessions was

approximately 3 hours and 41 minutes. During the interview process, I encountered the challenge of finding time during the school day to interview teachers and faculty uninterrupted, as they are busy with their classes and other school-related obligations like meetings during the day. Also, the scientific wording of Driskill's interview protocol caused some confusion among some participants.

I also collected organizational texts. I analyzed one of the texts, a 3-page section of a 30-page student and parent handbook that discusses different policies and expectations about the educational experience at (Name of organization)'s. This handbook was a physical printed copy from the school that I requested. I analyzed a one-page message from the principal on the (Name of organization) website that contained the goals and aims of (Name of organization)organizational experience. I also examined a one-page weekly Marksmen Memo that the principal sends out to the school community to inform them of events and happenings at the school. Both the message from the principal and the memo are digital. I also explored the (Name of organization)Facebook page, especially the picture section, to see the photos of the different events and activities the students and faculty participate in and on the (Name of organization)website. I analyzed the school's motto and mission statement in the handbook.

The primary method of textual data analysis I used was content analysis, "a method of developing categories from the text (e.g., newsletters, interview transcripts, email correspondence, etc.) and developing a method of counting material related to each of the categories" (Driskill & Brenton, 2011). I identified recurring themes throughout my interview transcripts, observation field notes, and organizational texts. Whenever a recurring theme or finding would be present in the text, I would annotate in the margin to keep track of the theme. I also conducted a sentiment analysis using the website Monkeylearn for the weekly memo from

September 3rd, 2021, and a message from the principal on their website. Monkeylearn and Tagcrowd were programs I used to extract keywords and phrases.

I utilized thematic analysis throughout the data analysis process. When reading through my interview transcripts, observations, and organizational texts, I focused on the persuasiveness and salience of different mentioned values, concepts, and occurrences, "Culture theme has to do with the pervasiveness and salience of some important aspects of culture" (Safford, 1998). I identified relevant evidence by annotating and analyzing recurring ideas surrounding one central theme. I also looked across all interviews to see the relevance of specific findings and beliefs. I looked for repetition of elements in all my data and made notes in the margins every time a significant value was mentioned or displayed. When ultimately creating my themes, I looked at which ideas were most present throughout my data how they connected, and my experience at the school. Data triangulation was a critical aspect of my data analysis process, "Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena" (Patton, 1999). To apply this method of triangulation, I used my interview transcription, observation field notes, and organizational texts and compared elements of each form of data to create themes.

Findings

Through collecting and analyzing my data, I identified five themes that pertain to various aspects of the culture of (Name of organization)'s, from emphasized values to examining components of different relationships. The first theme I was able to identify was, "Catholic faith at the center of the mission leads to both bonding and resistance." This theme speaks to the Catholic faith's duality that brings the (Name of organization)community together. Still, resistance to these beliefs in one's personal life can cause tension within the organization.

Walking through the main office and down the hallways, on my first initial visit, I saw many faith-related artifacts like a giant statue of Jesus by the office door, crosses, and bible verse canvases that adorned the walls of the faculty lounge. Bulletin boards with phrases like, "Pray the Rosary every day" and "Every child brings us God's smile" lined the hallways. While walking the hallways with Ms. Coyle, she described the new faith-based early elementary Montessori program and how the students take religion classes in addition to traditional academic courses. Even from a first impression, it was evident that the Catholic faith played a significant role in their school and intersected with the students' academic lives.

Upon sitting down to talk with Ms. Murphy, she described the importance of faith to the (Name of organization)community, "I mean, we're, we're definitely a Catholic, faith-based. And that really kind of dominates everything. It's the root of what we're doing here. The use of the phrase "root" stood out to me, it told me that everything the school does stems from the teachings and high value placed on the Catholic faith. When asked about the beliefs and values that dominate (Name of organization)'s, another faculty member, Ms. Reynolds, said, "We have visual reminders, right here everywhere, just about prayer, and worship, and things like that. So I feel like that's a big bonding, bonding thing for us, teachers, the students". The Catholic faith is an aspect that provides bonding for both the staff and students. Their daily rituals, religious curriculum, and physical artifacts throughout the building reflect this idea. Multiple faculty members talked about attending an all-school mass once a week. When I sat in academic classes, the whole class and the teacher prayed at the beginning and end. The same ritual occurs at the all-staff meetings. They would set intentions and discuss people and causes that they would pray over. This aspect of the ritual further unites them in their purpose. The ability to join over a common faith by celebrating religious holidays and partaking in these faith-based rituals brings

the community of (Name of organization)together. This practice was vastly different from my

public school experience, where celebrations and academic teachings were secular. It was

heart-warming when students in the classroom would ask for prayers for people in their lives

battling cancer and the safety of people who were traveling over the long weekend.

      From observing, I witnessed how the significance of the Catholic faith brought the (Name

of organization)community together, but sitting down and talking with faculty members gave me

a different perspective that the beliefs of the Catholic faith bring to the community and the

consequences of not adhering to them. When I sat down with Ms. Wilson, she mentioned an

incident with a faculty member that was a member of the LGBTQ+ community, "I've heard in

the past that there was someone that was homosexual, and they ended up getting, well, they

didn't get fired, but they got a notice. And then they left because it's against the Catholic faith to

be gay, so then they left, it was kind of a nudge rather than being fired". This quote gave me

insight into a Catholic belief and how contradicting one of these beliefs, even in a faculty

member's personal life, can be a source of tension between the organization and the individual.

In connection to this idea, when speaking with Ms. Chandler, she said, "We still have to kind of

find follow the, or, like, say, we're married and, or we're not married, we're living with our

boyfriend or something, it's technically, we could technically get fired for it...I mean, we sign

that paper at the beginning of our year, stating that we will follow, you know, our faith and the

Catholic religion". The staff at (Name of organization)are held to high standards and

expectations set by the Catholic faith that they promise to adhere to when becoming a school

staff member via the signature of a contract. These guidelines govern their personal and

professional lives, and violation of these faith-based principles could lead them to be fired. Upon

hearing this, I was surprised that an aspect of someone's personal life could lead to their termination.

My second theme is "The Relational Highs and Lows of a Small Village Community." This theme proposes contrasting relationship dynamics in a close-knit school community through events and interactions that promote positive community bonding and tensions within a small staff. One of the days I was at (Name of organization)'s, I was sitting in the gym, where the students eat, observing the lunchtime routine for the students. I noticed a colorful banner on the wall for the custodian. I was later informed that it was Custodian Appreciation Day. This occurrence made me think about the small community that the faculty of (Name of organization)creates. In addition to Custodian Appreciation Day, they also have days dedicated to recognizing the principal and the teachers. In addition to these days, the staff celebrates birthdays by giving birthday cards. These celebratory days and practices allow the (Name of organization)student body and the staff to appreciate the hard work and dedication of different positions that make a difference, bringing the community together to appreciate the hard work of prominent staff members.

I learned that the faculty spends time together outside of work by talking with various members. Staff members celebrate Christmas with a staff Christmas party and have a teacher's Thanksgiving feast. These events allow staff to spend time together outside of school hours and personally get to know each other. They also go to happy hours together, and Ms. Murphy mentioned that she wants to plan more activities like a group cooking class.

They also enjoy time together during planning periods and lunch. I witnessed the teachers venting about their classrooms during lunch, discussing their favorite movies and their families. At the more formal parts of the grade-band meetings, they collaborate on techniques to help

different students, standardized testing, and event planning. They exchange ideas and help each other out. In a planning meeting, teachers talked about getting supplies for the 50th Day of School celebration, and a teacher said, "We can tag-team it." This happening displays how they support each other while dividing up responsibilities. The staff at (Name of organization)have formed a community and enjoy spending time together in different informal settings, inside and outside the school.

When describing the sense of community within the staff population, Ms. Reynolds said, "As a whole, we work together as a team. We're a small school." The size of the school and the smaller population create a team environment where faculty feel supported and work together to achieve goals. It also allows for closer relationships because faculty do not have as many people to get to know. Another faculty member, Ms. Chandler described the closeness and bond of the staff community, "...it is more like a family, you know, the staff here and the students, the parents... everybody's so close-knit too. So I would say that's the the biggest difference between here and other schools is just a bigger sense of community." The phrase "close-knit" was used to describe the faculty in multiple interviews and speaks to the strong relationships of the staff members and the positive impact of a small population.

There is also a physical artifact corresponding to this idea of staff community bonding. It is a journal that gets passed along from teacher to teacher. The journal is filled with compliments and encouraging words about the work of a teacher. It serves as a form of positive reinforcement. Ms. Reynolds explained how the journal cycles around spreading uplifting, "...If I noticed that the second-grade teacher has been doing a really good job at this. I would write a comment to her, a compliment. And I would give her the journal, and then she would have to compliment someone else." The journal provides internal recognition, allowing teachers to learn from their

co-worker's strengths and acknowledge them. It can serve as affirmation for new teachers or overwhelmed staff experiencing doubt.

People in small villages can thrive off of a sense of familiarity with the people in the town and feel closely connected and bonded to them. Still, small communities can also have low relationship dynamics, especially when stress runs high. Corresponding to this idea, faculty members have described (Name of organization)as a family regarding community ups and downs. Ms. Reynolds expressed this concept when she said, "But obviously, there are some negatives, there are some people that get along better than others. So I would say, overall, we're like a family. And that includes the good and the bad. And we work together as a team. But you know, there's, we're only human, there are some days where people just get moody or just need to complain sometimes." Families support each other, share ideas, and collaborate, but families also have conflicts and tensions that arise and work through them together.

When I talked to Ms. Murray about the impact of having a small school community, she said, "I think it makes for very tight-knit groups of kids and as an extension, then their families become very tight-knit. It's a, it's overall a very positive environment. I think sometimes people can just like any, anywhere like it. It can become a little bit too catty and familiar." In a small community setting, like (Name of organization)'s, the employees spend a great deal of time with each other, and tensions can run high, especially in stressful situations or settings where everyone knows what is going on with each other. There are also fewer people to interact which leads to close relationships, but also people can occasionally grow tired of each other.

In the grade-band planning meetings, teachers would discuss and plan events for their students. On one occasion, a teacher offered to come in over the weekend to decorate the hallway for an event the school had coming up. Another faculty member mentioned that she was the

coach of a school athletic team on the side. Hearing them discuss these aspects made me reflect on all the effort and dedication the faculty has for the school and how much personal time they spend here for the benefit of the children. This idea corresponds with the theme, "Being short-staffed creates a tension between "going above and beyond for the kids" and "being stung thin."

While walking through the hallway on my initial tour, Ms. Coyle explained that the faculty here play multiple roles in the school community. For example, an academic teacher also teaches physical education classes, and the secretaries also serve as school nurses. Ms. Wilson explained how this practice of wearing multiple hats was a significant distinction from the school she attended growing up, "I know that my school like my grade school that I went to, we had somebody that was in a separate office that was like our school nurse versus our women in here that kind of play that role too, um, they definitely have a lot on their plate, but they get it all done." I witnessed this in my time at the school, a student would come into the office feeling sick, and the faculty working in the office would take care of them and comfort them while simultaneously performing their job duties. The faculty directs an abundance of effort and dedication towards the students and their needs. High levels of effort and commitment can strain the staff's well-being. Ms. Murphy said, "And just the all the extra effort that we put in. (name of faculty) really tries to do what she can to let us know that she appreciates that we are kind of strung thin and doing everything really going above and beyond, everything we can". This quote speaks to the demands and strain that staff feels trying to serve the students and each other to their best ability in a short-staffed setting while maintaining their personal lives.

When the staff gives their all towards the student population, personal boundaries become blurry. This idea came to light when Ms. Bailey described how the office at the school was

different from other similar institutions, "I don't think we have very good boundaries, meaning the doors don't shut at three and we go home. Where I know a lot of schools in the area, if you call at three, they are out the door…." Ms. Murphy brought up these boundaries when talking about helping students by giving them rides home from school, "So some of the professionalism that you would see like in another school like you wouldn't be giving kids rides home from school, but here it, it blurs a little bit." The staff is available and devoted to the needs of their student population, even sacrificing aspects of professionalism and their boundaries or personal time, all this effort. Even though their energy is well-directed, it can cause staff to feel strained and overextended.

Another faculty member described the challenges of working at a school while balancing being a parent. Ms. Murphy said, "I struggle. I still feel like I need to be doing all of these extra things. I also struggled and realized the more time I'm spending here at school and on things at school as less time getting spent with my own kid at home". This quote speaks to the difficulties of wanting to and feeling like they have to dedicate high levels of energy, commitment, and time to their job while feeling guilty about not devoting some of that effort and care to their own families. Coming in over the weekend, being active in a school committee, and staying late benefits the students and the school community and can take away from their time. Overall, They want other faculty to perceive them as being present and engaged in the school community and helping the students while also having a life with their children outside of school.

One feeling I experienced at the school was the genuine care and connection between staff and students through physical acts of nurturing and joking nature displayed. Seeing the strong bonds and friendship between staff and students reminded me of mother birds nurturing and protecting their young while they live in the nest. This metaphor led to creating my third

theme, "The Bird's Nest: Nurturing and encouragement between staff and students leads to building positive relationships." On September 30th, I sat in the gym waiting for all the students to leave so I could go upstairs where the grade-band planning meeting was. While I waited, a group of students attending the after-school program trickled into the gym, their meeting location. Among the flock of students, a young student waddled in hysterically crying. Ms. Bailey walked over to her and picked her up to hug her. Another faculty member got her a cup of water. On November 4th, when I was in the gym waiting for the all-staff meeting, a similar incident occurred with the same little student. This time Ms. Chandler held her hand and walked her around the gym to comfort her. These interactions were different from what you would have seen at my public elementary school, where there were more boundaries in terms of physical contact between staff and students. I could feel the faculty's love and care for this young student.

Towards the end of a middle school class, the teacher used the last few minutes to chat about weekend plans. In all the conversations, one interaction stood out to me. The teacher joked around with a student because she said her family drives a Tesla to school, and the teacher said something like, "I've seen your car before." They both laughed. The teacher was genuinely interested in what the students were doing over their weekends and had a joking, fun rapport with her class community. During this same class period, she worked with a small group during independent work time that needed extra help. During the work session, she told one of the students that she was proud of her. The affirmation given from teacher to student displays how much the teacher cares about the growth of her students and how they are encouraged for their improvements. Also, students who need a little extra help receive individual attention in a small group setting shows that the teacher cares about their academic progress and needs.

I walk into the gym to wait for the students to dismiss before the all-staff meeting. Ms. Elliot is in the gym with her students, waiting to go home. To help pass the time, she says, "Today has been a crazy day! Do you guys want to sit in a circle and talk"? Some students gather in a small circle while others sit with their backs pressed against the wall. The teacher then asks the students who are not part of the circle if they are sure they don't want to join. She wants everyone to feel included in their conversation. The students go around the circle and talk about their day in class. From Ms. Elliot's body language, I could tell that she cared about what they had to say, leaning forward and looking at them as they spoke. She communicated with them on an individual and group level, and her demeanor seemed friendly, warm, and approachable. I walk into the gym to wait for the students to dismiss before the all-staff meeting. Ms. Elliot is in the gym with her students, waiting to go home. To help pass the time, she says, "Today has been a crazy day! Do you guys want to sit in a circle and talk"? Some students gather in a small circle while others sit with their backs pressed against the wall. The teacher then asks the students who are not part of the circle if they are sure they don't want to join. She wants everyone to feel included in their conversation. The students go around the circle and talk about their day in class. She fist bumps them one by one as they leave. As they left, this gesture was a meaningful and fun way to say goodbye to them and make them feel valued in the class community.

My fourth finding is, "An emphasis on staff professional development creates an organization focused on personal growth and development." For example, the November staff meeting was devoted to having the faculty learn about new strategies and resources to teach students more effectively learning English as a second language. A speaker from the district came in to share these techniques, explain the language learning process and what that process looks like for Hispanic students in the classroom. The staff seemed engaged during this

presentation in both speech and body language. I saw some teachers typing the information shared while others wrote it down in a notebook. The faculty asked questions throughout the meeting and participated in an activity the presenter had planned. They want to learn more about the techniques and resources available for teaching English-learning students to better themselves in their classrooms and help their students succeed.

The (Name of organization)school leader also encourages the teachers to grow their wealth of knowledge continuously. This aspect of motivation came up when I asked Ms. Murphy about an influential figure at the school, "I think she's always continuously like reading books and learning and trying to push us to do the same...So we're all kind of continually learning and just being, becoming the best we can." Ms. Reynolds expressed the same belief when she said, "So I feel like as for (Name of Organization) we have a lot of teachers who are always looking to improve the way they teach and are willing to develop, or to start a new curriculum, or to try something new." The growth mindset present at the school inspires teachers and other faculty to strive to improve their skills and teaching strategies just like their students strengthen their academic and social skills at school every day. Promoting the incorporation of new methods in the classroom impacts the school community because teachers can implement aspects that keep their classes engaged and accommodate them.

On the (Name of organization)Facebook page, there are pictures of leadership attending various seminars and conferences. For example, on June 24th, there is a picture of a conference room filled with leaders and educators at the Partners in Mission conference. The attendance at these events shows that (Name of organization)school leadership is networking with other Catholic school educational leaders, which allows her to form relationships with these other leaders and learn about what their organizations are doing, opening her up to new perspectives.

Also, these conferences foster gaining new insights to improve and bring new ideas and strategies to her school community through the sharing of ideas. Overall, these events show the leader's dedication and drive to grow in professional development for her whole staff and a desire to improve the school community.

Discussion

A theoretical organizational concept that connects to this study is fostering diversity, focusing on racial and ethnic diversity within the (Name of organization)community. In Holvino's Multicultural Organizational Development Model, (Name of organization)is in the Positive Action section of the Transitional Stage, "Committed to making a special effort to include others, especially those in designated protected "classes." Tolerates the differences others bring" (Holvino, 1998). I put (Name of organization)into this classification because, based on my observations and interviews, it appears that the faculty is making a genuine effort to be inclusive and supportive of different races and ethnicities. This idea is shown through the translation of parent emails, increased representation when learning about another culture, and the incorporation of Hispanic culture through prayer in Spanish and celebrating Hispanic holidays.

In schools, mentorship between staff and students is a critical aspect, "Persons of color tend to have limited access to social networks, blocked mobility, and often do not have mentors or sponsors" (Allen, 1995). This idea relates to (Name of organization)because of the racial and ethnic diversity present within the student body but not within the staff population. Students of diverse backgrounds benefit from role models and mentors that they can relate to at school, people that resemble them and speak the same language, "As role models, teachers of color believe they can motivate and inspire students and contribute to improvements in academic outcomes. Recent studies not only support their beliefs but document the benefits of having

diverse teachers for all students" (Griffin, 2018). Furthermore, diversified staff populations allow students and faculty to learn from different backgrounds and perspectives.

Economizing is an organizational concept relevant to this study, "The economizing continuum involves the tensions of short-term profit values and human values of a sustainable cooperation" (Driskell & Benton, 2011). (Name of organization)economizes through job consolidation. Consolidation can save the organization money because they are not paying additional position salaries, "The consolidation of business activities reduces operational redundancies and eliminates superfluous staff and administrative functions" (Nordmeyer). This job consolidation looks like the school faculty performing multiple roles and wearing different hats within the workplace. The school also has a system similar to the floater nurse that allows them to help each other and be adaptable even when short-staffed. The system (Name of organization)utilizes draws similarities to the "Forensic Float Nurse" concept in the medical practices, "The "Forensic Float Nurse" concept was piloted to provide readily available, highly adaptable, skilled forensic nurses to assist in times of unpredictably heavy workloads and/or unplanned staffing shortages" (Cyr & Paradis, 2012). The system creates an environment where flexibility is possible while performing tasks for multiple job roles.

The organization's leader takes a human resources approach in governing the organization, "Leaders who excel in this way of seeing the organization often adopt a servant leader model and see their role as supporting organization members to achieve goals" (Driskill & Brenton, 2011). Human resources leadership is applied at (Name of organization)because the leader supports the professional development and growth of the staff by providing them with opportunities to learn and implement new pedagogical perspectives into their classes. She also

appreciates the team's dedication and hard work by putting themed treats in the faculty lounge to recognize their effort.

Work-life balance is another critical organizational topic. This balance deals with managing your personal and work-related obligations in a manageable way, "Achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains, and to do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains" (Kirchmeyer, 2000). Having a solid work-life balance can reduce employee stress and burnout while increasing happiness and a sense of personal well-being, "Individuals experiencing greater work-life balance have better health and wellness, greater organizational commitment, greater job satisfaction, better goal achievement, and family happiness" (Rao & India, 2010). The (Name of organization)staff because many staff members have their families with children to take care of in addition to the students they devote lots of effort to during the school day. Working multiple positions and leading after-school activities while short-staffed could also lead to poor work-life balance if employees spend additional time at the school to finish their work, coming in early or leaving late.

Based on my data and findings, I have some tentative recommendations for the faculty of (Name of organization)school. One suggestion is to hire a Hispanic faculty member, preferably someone with a Spanish language background, since the student body comprises many Hispanic students. Diversifying the faculty will better serve the student population. Students of different backgrounds will have role models who look like them and speak their language, benefiting them socially and academically. A written training guide to serving as an additional resource for non-Catholic faculty could help staff members and student teachers. Since the Catholic faith is a significant and prominent aspect of the school's organizational culture, staff members must be

familiar and comfortable with different faith-based beliefs and practices. I know there is an explanatory mass for new staff members, but having a physical document with information would be beneficial because you could look back at it if you had questions and were apprehensive about asking someone. A small bulletin board in the office or front hallway of the school that features staff accomplishments would give the staff members a feeling of pride and consistent public recognition. Including these accomplishments in the all-school weekly memos could also furnish staff recognition and appreciation. On this note, teachers could use a small reward system and or more frequent feedback to find affirmation in their work. One of the teachers expressed that she sometimes doubts that she is doing the right thing and doing enough for her classroom, and a reward system would provide some guidance and show the staff what is valued here. On a physical level, improved lighting in the stairwells could brighten up the walkways and make the school feel more inviting.

Self-Reflection

Throughout researching (Name of organization), I have learned a lot about different qualitative research processes and myself as a researcher. I felt like I was courageous in my research. It can be intimidating to step into an unfamiliar environment, especially when trying to remain professional while still gaining the organization's trust. I maintained professionalism by dressing in business casual attire when attending the site and being prompt to scheduled events. I waited until I built up a rapport with members of the organization before I started the interview process, which benefitted me because I was more comfortable by the time I scheduled them.

I would have changed if I had focused my research on the staff versus the student population through my probing and overall focus during observations. The differentiation was difficult because the student population is a prominent aspect of the school. I would have also

probed more during the interviews to get a clearer picture and further explore some of the

mentioned situations. I got nervous and felt like I was intrusive regarding potentially sensitive

topics. As I built relationships with the faculty, I felt guilty if they did or said things that

negatively painted the organization, but I tried not to filter the data. Also, I would reword the

interview questions in more straightforward language to be more easily understood. Another

aspect I would have liked to have improved upon is that I wanted to include more of my data and

create more themes to encapsulate the organization better. A limitation of this research was the

time frame of the semester to research and analyze data. I wish I could have attended another

staff meeting, but they are only monthly. Another limitation was the length of time of the

planning periods and meetings. They were usually between 20 and 30 minutes and often took

place during my classes, making it difficult to observe for extended periods.

     In conclusion, through various data collection and analysis methods, I have used my

knowledge as a student researcher, theoretical concepts, and data collected to explore five themes

of (Name of organization) culture. By examining multiple aspects of organizational culture and

the rich history, I have gained insight into the values, rituals, practices, stories, and significant

artifacts that make (Name of organization) a unique place to work and distinguish it from other

organizations. Based on these findings and theoretical research, I have proposed some tentative

recommendations to benefit the organization.

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