

Opening New High Schools:
How Principals Design Cultural Features in Newly Developed
High Schools

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ABSTRACT

Some people seek an alternative high school experience beyond the offerings of the public school system. A positive school culture may be the most important element in a resulting successful school. The principal can play a crucial role in the design, development, and implementation of the cultural features of a new high school. This research study addressed the following question: In what ways principals design, develop, and implement the cultural features of a new high school. This study explored the question in a multi-site case study that examined the similarities and differences of three new private, faith-based, high schools through four lenses:

1. What understanding and interpretation can be gained by looking at the cultural elements in light of Bolman and Deal's "Four Frames?"
2. What understanding and interpretation can be gained by looking at the principals' leadership in light of Deal and Peterson's suggested symbolic roles?
3. As their school cultures' evolved, were there instances where principals seemed to lead by engaging in symbolic actions?
4. Did the principal intentionally initiate and plant the cultural element verses managing its natural growth or development?

The study revealed that each of the principals at the three schools led most often through symbolic actions. Sometimes they led by intentionally inserting cultural elements into their school cultures and sometimes by helping shape a naturally occurring element.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

When the idea to form a new high school is conceived it can be for a variety of reasons. Some are simply relocating a cadre of students to a newer building¹. For others the new high school will be an additional school in the same district – to facilitate district enrollment increases (Stine, April 23-28, 2000). For still others they are attempting to provide an alternative program to the existing options.

Simply inaugurating the idea to conceive a new high school does not “make it so.” Considerable effort will be required before enough gravitas can be garnered to even form the first committee to help manage the future opening of the new high school. There will need to be a vision cast for the new high school and there will need to be advocates of that vision to champion the concept to win the initial support that will be required to affect the required funding or enrollment to allow a site to be procured, teachers hired, and curriculum and materials retained.

One of the alternative programs sometimes being conceived could be categorized as private high schools. These schools are often quite small compared to their public school cousins and because they charge tuition these private schools *must* find a customer base to support their continued existence. Customers that are willing to pay tuition are looking for clear alternatives to the free offerings of their public school cousins. To become marketable these new private schools will have to be successful. What makes a new private high school attractive to customers?

One crucial element is the school culture that will be created in the new school. According to Edgar Schein (1985), organizational culture consisted of three levels: tangible

¹ Fond du Lac high school in Wisconsin was inaugurated in 2001 replacing the former Goodrich High School.

artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions. His experiences in several consultations convinced him that tangible artifacts were a shallow part of the visible organizational culture and easy for a leader to effect change. Concurrently, he observed that the espoused values were imbedded more deeply into the fabric of the organizational culture and though still possible for a leader to effect change, it would certainly take more effort and more time. Existing as the bedrock organizational belief system, Schein concluded that the basic underlying assumptions of the organizational culture would be extremely difficult to change – in part because they were so much a part of the organizational culture that they were usually imperceptible to those inculcated within the organizational culture.

Building on Schein, Deal and Peterson (1990, 1994, & 1999) suggest that principals can and should have a significant influence on the development of their school's culture. Growing and developing a marketable school culture may be the most important element that a principal can bring to a new school. Deal and Peterson suggest several roles that a principal can emulate that will help influence the development of a positive school culture.

Most of the research in the field of education has focused on existing schools, programs, and of late school cultures. Very little research has concentrated on the process of evolving a new school or school culture nor has it focused on how the school leader (usually the school principal) is able to bring about the resulting school culture.

This study will look at the ways that principals will help mold the culture of new private high schools. These new private high schools have not often been the subject of a research study. As the study analyzes the three private schools it will be instructive to note which, if any, of the roles: historian, anthropological sleuth, visionary, symbol, potter, poet, actor and healer (Deal &

Peterson, 1999) will be effectively adopted by the principal of the new private high schools to help build a positive school culture.

Problem Statement

Using a multi-site case study of three new, private, high schools, the question this study seeks to answer is: In what ways do principals' design, develop, and implement the cultural features of a new high school?

The focus of this study will not be the initial period when a founder or a committee is trying to decide *if* a new high school will be attempted. This study will focus on how the principal designs, develops, and implements the cultural features of a new high school after it has opened the first year of its existence.

Conceptual Framework

I will ground this qualitative, multi-site case study in the interpretivist framework. In contradistinction to the positivist paradigm of quantitative methods, this qualitative study will follow the interpretivist framework which Glesne (1999) describes as, "portray[ing] a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing" (p.5). I will work to discern the ontology as understood by the participants' as a means to grasping how and in what ways the participants' impacted their newly created school culture.

Understanding the perspective that principals' hold when they are considering the ways they might influence the resultant school culture is critical to this study. Mintzberg (1973) describes the perspective of a professional manager as one fraught with, "fragmentation, brevity, and variety." Deal and Peterson (1994) see the perspective of many principals to be that of a "professional manager" one that is often caricatured as "distant" and "bureaucratic."

Bolman and Deal (1993) have conceptualized four “frames” that others use to evaluate and sometimes “reframe” the management issues with which they are faced. In this study I will use Bolman and Deal’s Four Frames as a tool to deconstruct the data that I will collect. I predict that I will more heavily rely on the symbolic/cultural frame, but there will be elements that are more able to be understood in reference to the structural, political, and the human resource frames.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This purpose of this literature review is to survey the existing work that has preceded this study. This review will focus on elements that comprise this study under the following subheadings: School Culture, Principals and School Culture, Research in New Public High Schools, and Research in New Private High Schools. The existing works under each subheading will be discussed chronologically.² I will continue to examine the existing literature during the time period of this study.

School Culture

In one of the earlier discussions about the role of culture in schools, Metz (1978) discovers how pervasive the school culture can be in assisting or impeding school leaders. In her study of the authority of leadership in two (three including the pilot study) schools, Metz depicts the challenges of authority in two different school environments: the classrooms and the corridors of schools in the late 1960s. She manages to assist her audience in grasping the many complexities of authority, its perception, and results with teachers, principals, and students. “Superordinates” rights and “subordinates” duties and framed in the “moral orders” to which they “owe allegiances” (p. 26).

Metz also depicts a dichotomy between traditional “incorporative” teachers and enlightened “developmental” teachers. She describes how good practitioners of either pedagogical camp were “granted” superordinate rights and were successful instructors within their unique paradigm. Conversely, she laments that many ineffectual practitioners who gave lip-

² In the event that I am unable to cite from a first edition – I will cite from the edition I have obtained but I will place it chronologically according to its first edition publication date.

service to their espoused pedagogical style were not granted superordinate rights and struggled to maintain authority in their classrooms and the school corridors.

The next work I looked at was Lawrence Lightfoot's (1983) informed descriptions of the six schools she visited. Her "portraits" were extremely vivid and helped the reader feel as if they were visiting the schools. In choosing six successful schools with good reputations, she captured my interest and attention from the start. Unfortunately, even these six schools *good* schools had cultural elements that were anchoring them in a past that no longer existed. She wrote:

A powerful combination of romanticism, nostalgia and feelings of loss for a simpler time when values were clear, when children were well behaved, when family and school agreed on educational values and priorities, when the themes of honor, respect and loyalty directed human interaction. (p. 314)

In attempting to understand organizational culture, Schein (1992)³ developed a model that has become well-accepted in which he describes three levels of culture: Artifacts, Espoused Values, and Basic Underlying Assumptions (p. 17). Like peeling back the layers of an onion, Schein envisions that each successive level is more difficult to change.

Schein defines the first level which he titles "Artifacts" as the visible things a visitor might see or hear in the building:

Artifacts would include the visible products of the group such as the architecture of its physical environment, its language, its technology and products, its artistic creations, and its style as embodied in clothing, manners of address, emotional displays, myths and

³ First edition was published in 1985: Schein, E. H., & Business Library Johnson Foundation Collection. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

stories told about the organization, published lists of values, observable rituals and ceremonies, and so on. (p.17)

Schein makes it clear that while the artifacts level is the easiest to observe it can be “very difficult to decipher” (p. 17). Schools would certainly contain a plethora of artifacts to “decipher.”

The second level of culture to “uncover” for Schein would be “Espoused Values.” Someone originally led or created each group or organization. Schein argues “all group learning ultimately reflects someone’s original values, someone’s sense of what ought to be as distinct from what is” (p. 19). These espoused values are not universally adopted by all members of the organization and at first are sometimes quite controversial but they survive the debate and persist as the accepted party line. They and can be seen and heard by visitors as part of the organization’s culture. Because they are so often espoused by those in leadership – “group members will tend to forget that originally they were not sure and that the proposed course of action was at an earlier time debated and confronted” (p. 20).

Schein called his third and deepest level: “Basic Assumptions.” Schein says that basic assumptions “have become so taken for granted that one finds little variation within a cultural unit” (pp. 21-22). He says when basic assumptions are “strongly held” by a group “members will find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable” (p. 22).

In another study of very different school cultures, Grant’s (1988) approach to describing the Hamilton High that is, was definitely enhanced by backing up to its inception. Sadly, the distinctly different school cultures before, during, and after initial desegregation were representative of many schools throughout the United States. Schein might describe the

organizational culture of Hamilton High as stuck with a Basic Assumption preventing them from seeing or dealing with the desegregation issues.

Grant's work sets the stage so that it is possible to understand the complex cultural circumstances that are probably still influencing Hamilton High School today. As an administrator in a private school, where our history is well preserved and regularly reviewed, I was reminded that many public schools which I have visited are set in a culture that is relatively unaware of their immediate or ancient history.

Grant develops "two essential reforms . . . central to the task of reconstructing . . . intellectual and moral authority: first, let the schools shape their own destiny; second, put teachers in charge of their own practice" (p. 220). These are ideas echoed by Louis and Miles (1990). Site based management is a critical issue for larger school districts. Private independent schools are usually small enough to avoid the burden of district style administration. This is much in the favor of private schools. The idea that teachers should be in charge of their own practice is collaborative leadership. That school cultural shift allowed teachers invest in their own curriculum.

In considering the resistance that embedded (or Schein's basic assumption level) school culture can effect on school reform efforts, Louis and Miles (1990) describe efforts to reform five urban schools (four high schools and one junior high school) with descriptive case studies. They begin with the best examples and move toward the less successful examples. The findings demonstrated that real reform can work in urban schools, but that all reforms are not equal in their success or ability to effectively restructure school culture. They discovered the school culture before the reform effort begins is very important when considering the method to affect change. If a school begins with a healthy faculty which relates well to each other and the school

leadership, then reforms can begin bottom up, in a very collaborative way. If a school's external and internal environments are not healthy, then a more directed approach will be necessary until the faculty begin to get on board with the reform movement.

Principals and School Culture

The previous works have attempted to describe what school or organizational culture is and what its effects on school leadership can be. The next group of literature begins to examine how principals can effectively manage or lead school organizations.

Concurrent with and Louis and Miles(1990) Deal and Peterson (1990) show how the combination of the principal's theory and experience can be effective in leading by engaging in symbolic actions that can help positively shape the school culture. Principals, they assert, can encourage and shape values through rituals, ceremonies, stories, and other symbolic forms. Teachers can choose to follow symbolic leaders and walk away from their entrenched commitments to avoid change.

In their next book, Deal and Peterson (1994) examine how principals can effectively lead complex school organizations. The key point in this book is stated nicely in the introduction when they write, "In our view, education may be best served by principals who are *bifocal*, who can combine managerial tasks with symbolic sensitivity and passion, who are simultaneously efficient managers *and* effective leaders" (p. xii).

Seeming to evolve from the previous discussions, Newmann et al. (1996) change the academic pedagogical landscape with this book. Authentic Achievement seems to be the pedagogical objective to which we should all be aiming!

The concept of shared power in decision making seems to be a natural extension of the preceding books. If a school culture can be transformed so that the teachers and school leaders

jointly pursue the same curricular visions, then it seems obvious it will be an environment more conducive to academic excellence fostered by true authentic achievement.

The organizational structure of schools, loosely coupled as they are require shared power in decision making or the teachers will balkanize, close their classroom doors, and symbolically, their minds to the possibility of school or curricular reform. However, if teachers are drawn into a culture in which they are invested by being part of the group that makes the decisions, then they have a genuine stake in the results. They will open their minds and classroom doors and participate in the culture of their school again.

Specifically, Newmann et al. summarize four cultural and four structural foundations that “keep schools focused in a sustained way” (p. 288). They suggest, “success with authentic pedagogy seems to depend on integrating all the items to promote intellectual quality and professional community” (p.288). The Cultural Conditions listed are:

- Primary concern for the intellectual quality of student learning
- Commitment to maintain high expectations for all students, regardless of individual differences
- Support for innovation, debate, inquiry, and seeking new professional knowledge
- Ethos of caring, sharing, and mutual help among staff and students, based on respect, trust, and shared power relations among staff (p. 289)

In their third book, Deal and Peterson (1999) speak directly to the principal’s role in *Shaping School Culture*. They build on their first book as they show how school leaders can significantly guide and direct critical elements of school culture. The authors highlight several case study examples while driving home the importance of “rituals, traditions, and ceremonies” in the schools (p. xiii). They discuss the importance of the mission and values in each school and

their relevance to the emerging school culture. They also discuss the several roles each school leader should inculcate including “historian, anthropological sleuth, visionary, symbol, potter, poet, actor and healer” (p. xiv). This is an important work in understanding the role of the principal in relation to school culture.

Finally, a strong advocate of the importance of the principal’s critical role of leadership is Marzano (2003). He lists three principles of leadership for change:

- Leadership for change is most effective when carried out by a small group of educators with the principal functioning as a strong cohesive force.
- The leadership team must operate in such a way as to provide strong guidance while demonstrating respect for those not the team.
- Effective leadership for change is characterized by specific behaviors that enhance interpersonal relationships. (pp. 173-178)

Although Marzano is focusing on the leadership for change aspect – he is describing critical school culture elements with his three principles. He is agreeing with those who preceded him about the significant role principals have in managing effective change in their schools. He continues the discussion about the critical role principals have in instilling and guiding the contemporary school culture.

Four Frames

In their book on organizations, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership* (1991), and in *The Path to School Leadership: A Portable Mentor* (1993), Bolman and Deal conceptualized Four Frames that leaders often use to understand and sometimes “reframe” the management issues with which they are faced. The Four Frames include the

political, the human resource, the structural, and the symbolic. Each frame is briefly described below.

The political frame focuses attention on authority, power, and resources. Bolman and Deal point out that authority has limits and that resources are often scarce producing competition. Schools and classrooms, they suggest, are arenas in which individuals and groups vie for power. Because of this competition, goals become by-products of the bargaining and compromising in the arenas where a structural process would allow the goals to otherwise be derived from a rational analysis. Handled wisely, they posit, this political frame can be a source of constant energy and renewal. The alternative is unrelenting posturing, bickering, and a conflictual workplace.

The human resource frame accentuates individual needs, relationships, and personal motives. Instead of political arenas, schools and classrooms are viewed as families that thrive when individuals' needs are met in a caring, trusting environment. Bolman and Deal suggest this frame as the preference of teachers and principals. A family cares about each other and participates in shared decision making. This social construct enlists commitment and involvement. Principals, they report, see the result of including others in decision making yields a sense of ownership, more positive relationships, and trust.

The structural frame draws attention to standards, formal roles, written goals, and productivity. Bolman and Deal, in *Reframing the Path to School Leadership* (2010), posit this is often a preference with leaders who believe "classrooms and schools work best when goals and roles are clear and when diverse efforts are tightly coordinated through authority, policies, and rules" (p. 4). This frame most closely focuses on a factory-like, bureaucratic approach to management.

The symbolic frame puts emphasis on culture, meaning, belief, values, and faith. In describing this frame, Bolman and Deal equate schools and classrooms with temples or cathedrals as leaders work to inculcate into the culture such features as symbols, stories, traditions, rituals, heroes and heroines, values, and ceremonies. This frame they argue works to add joy, a deep sense of shared purpose, and works to eliminate toxicity from the workplace. The symbolic frame incorporates the “culture” of the school.

New Schools

This next section will discuss research involving new schools. Wincek (1995) conducted an extensive ethnography of a newly created K-3 school which in opened in the 1990-1991 school year in the Midwest. She daubed it with the pseudonym Mega Center.

The school was envisioned and planned as an entirely new type of school which would be learner-centered. The founder of the new school was a school board member who “believed that all children could do better than they were now doing” (p. 35). She was “convinced that expectations for children were not high enough and that children were not meeting their potential” (p. 35). She set about putting together a school that would be built around “research findings on how children learn and making it a place that promotes positive self-esteem as a prerequisite to learning” (p.35). It would be ungraded, it would have teachers teach in teams, it would encourage high parental involvement – even helping train the parents to help coach their student’s learning at home. The school would have focus on four principles:

1. **EQUIPPING** students with the skills needed for future academic success. These will include, yet go beyond, “traditional” basics and emphasize the beliefs, habits, attitudes, and expectations necessary for excellence.

2. EXPECTING the best that all people involved in the school have to give. This will include learners, parents, teaching staff, support staff, and administration. We expect excellence.
3. EXTENDING present limits to new realities. The Mega Center format will provide extensive development in thinking skills, creative learning, brain-compatible educating [i.e., derived from current scientific understanding of the human brain], and goal setting.
4. EXPLORING possibilities, potentials, and premises. We intend to develop and promote a school filled with inquiry, discovery, investigation, risk-taking, innovation, and experimentation. (p. 39)

Much time and attention were invested from the beginning into the vision, program, and resulting curriculum. Considerably less time and attention were given to developing a school culture that was conducive for their vision. Because this was to be a magnet school in a large district the new principal was allowed to recruit her staff from the entire district. The vision and preliminary information about the proposed new school was very attractive to the district teachers and the new school was inundated with applications. The new principal was in the enviable position to be able to select experienced teachers with exceptional track records who could not wait to teach in the new school.

The high-quality, motivated faculty would have seemed to secure a successful start to a new school. Unfortunately these veteran teachers “reject[ed] plans to consider how they might develop a collaborative culture among themselves. Saying they all had experience in working cooperatively with others, they chose to move directly into curriculum planning” (p. 50). This was one of many examples of ignoring the investment of developing a school culture highlighted

by Wincek. It led to a school with a faculty that was very stressed and unhappy. By the beginning of the fourth year of the founding twenty teachers only ten remained at the school (p. 125).

New Public High Schools

This section will discuss research that focuses on new public high schools. In one of the few studies related to the opening of new high schools, Stine (April 23-28, 2000) described the opening of Yeats High School which became the second high school in the community in which it was located. The public high school that preceded it was instrumental in helping “plant” its sister school – in fact the previous high school’s principal led the effort and became the new Yeats high school principal when it opened. Stine’s study claimed to have “produced two findings of note: First that the school to be successful, must be interdependent with its community, and second that leaders need to have the skills to approach this possibility” (p. 4). She also listed ten “propositions” which summarize the balance of her study:

- Proposition One: The nature of the school culture is that it is a mirror to the community; that mirror reflects the interdependent nature of the school and the community. (p. 7)
- Proposition Two: A new school develops its own culture; all of the actions that manifest the formation of that culture are magnified in its beginnings. (p. 10)
- Proposition Three: It is extremely important for leadership to understand the nature of the interaction of subgroups within a culture (both internal and external), and to recognize their existence and impact. Actions and Reactions become interdependent and are reflected in the educational outcomes of the children. (p.10)

- Proposition Four: The symbolic behaviors of the principal were instrumental in establishing and reinforcing the culture of the school. (p. 11)
- Proposition Five: The leadership and symbolic behaviors of the principal act as a bridging mechanism between the internal and external environments of the school, playing a major role in the development of the culture of the school. (p. 12)
- Proposition Six: Incoming and outgoing principals need to engage in collaborative processes with each other and the community if the transition is to be a success. (p. 13)
- Proposition Seven: Leadership in transition needs to participate in ceremonies that honor and involve both arriving and departing leaders. (p. 13)
- Proposition Eight: The leadership of a new high school needs to establish a trust base within the community, recognizing that what occurs internally is highly dependent on the community expectations. (p. 14)
- Proposition Nine: The leader of a school needs to function as a collaborative guide and liaison to promote ownership in the school itself. (p. 14)
- Proposition Ten: the environment and the school are inseparable, because the school's purpose is to fulfill the needs of the community; they are interdependent and must be it the school is to be a success. (p. 15)

It is important to note that all ten of Stein's propositions can be drawn from (and indeed she cites) several of the studies in the previous sections to include: Deal & Peterson, 1990; Deal & Peterson 1999; Grant, 1988; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; and Schein, 1992. This study reflected a very positive experience in opening a new high school. The entire community envisioned the

need, voted the funding, and supported the outcome. The principal's role in leading was well received. This is a markedly different outcome than Wincek (1995).

New Private High Schools

Although I have given considerable time to the process of locating studies about the opening of new private high schools and although I have discovered several dissertations that studied the opening of a new public high school – I have not yet discovered a study that focuses on the opening of new private high school(s).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Study Design

For this study I used a multi-site case study and conduct a cross-case analysis of the data using Bolman and Deal's (1993) Four Frames. In particular, I focused on the symbolic or cultural frame. However, each of the Four Frames contributed to understanding how the principals were able to effect the development of the resulting school culture.

Study Sample

Population and Sample

For this study the sample population was three new high schools. The sites were in a reasonable driving distance. All three high schools were opened and operated for not less than two and not more than five years. This helped avoid studying a school effort that was not going to be viable. All three schools are private schools with some religious affiliation or creed adherence.

The first case study will be known by the pseudonym, "Grace High School" (GHS). It is a high school located in a city which will also be known by the pseudonym, "Central City" that is part of a private, multi-school system. GHS identifies its religious affiliation as "Christian."

The second case study will be known by the pseudonym, "Faithful in Jesus High School" (FJHS). It is a high school which emanated from a previously established K4-8 school with which it shares a single building and governmental structure. FJHS is a private, independent school also located in "Central City" that identifies its religious affiliation as "Non-Denominational."

The third case study will be known by the pseudonym, "Faith Lutheran High School" (FLHS). It is a high school located in a rural area just outside of a small town about 45 minutes

outside of “Central City.” FLHS is religiously affiliated with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. FLHS was established as a high school which could be the recipient of the graduates of several small K4-8 schools of the same religious denomination and synod.

Study Participants – Respondents

A variety of people were interviewed who are connected with the three schools and their creation. Before interviewing or visiting each school, the respondents agreed to and signed the internal review board’s *Research Participant Information and Consent Form* (see Appendix B). At each school I was able to interview the principal. At GHS, I was also able to interview the Chief Executive Officer of the school system on which GHS was a part, the past principal who was directly involved in the launch of the school, and the athletic director / teacher who has been part of the launch at the beginning. At FJHS, I was also able to interview two lead-teachers who had been with the school from its inception. At FLHS, I was also able to interview the development director / teacher who had been there since the school was launched. See Table 3.1 which lists the total number of respondents by position, pseudonym, and school.

Data Collection

In this multi-site case study data collection came from a number of sources. Yin (1994) suggests the following six types of evidence to collect when conducting case studies: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts (pp. 246-248). I will address the role of each type of evidence in this study in turn.

Documentation

I collected electronic copies of documents that contributed to the establishment of existent cultural and structural features of the new high schools. These documents varied by

school and included such items as constitutional planning documents, mission statements, statements of faith, organizational development documents, curricula, marketing, and frequently asked questions.

Archival records

At the onset of the study envisioned collecting archival records which may have informed the school culture development process. Once I engaged in the study, it became clear that the relative newness of each of the three schools, and their evolving administrative teams had heretofore precluded the accumulation of official archival records. Therefore, the scant documentation I was able to collect in this category was available on governmental and private information websites. I included these few electronic documents as part of the previous category.

Interviews

In this multi-site case study most of the data came from interviews. These interviews were in-depth and open-ended as I attempted to discern the different factors that led to the existent cultural and structural features of the new high schools. At the onset of this study it was my intention to have multiple-session interviews to sharpen my questions after completing the first round of interviews. As the study evolved I did not return for a second formal interview session, but in several instances I followed up with telephone or face-to-face questions and answers. I also intended to arrange focus-group interviews at each school to discuss the as a group the development of the school culture with as many of the original planning committee members as possible. In practice as original members had departed the organizations and with the relatively few participants available for me to interview I was also not able to make the focus-group sessions happen.

In preparation for the interviews I brainstormed and discussed the scope of questions with my advisor. I was particularly interested in conducting an interview with enough in-depth, open-ended questions that the respondent would feel empowered to take the answers in directions that provided salient insight into their organizations' development of the school culture process regardless of the limits I may have imbedded in my specific questions.

In total, nine interviews were conducted using an established interview protocol as a guide (see Appendix A). The interviews were semi-structured so that although the general order of the questions was followed with each respondent, clarifying follow-up questions were added as needed depending on the responses of each interviewee. Table 3.1 lists the total number of respondents by position and school. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 0.1 Total Number of Interviews and Positions Held

Position Held	GHS	FJHS	FLHS	Total #
Chief Executive Officer	Philip Samuels			1
Principal	Trevon Brown	Veronica Carter	Jeff Smothers	3
Former Principal	Kelly Bakke			1
Athletic Director / Teacher	Stacey Mann			1
Development Director / Teacher			Tom Kohl	1
Lead Teacher		Chanise Greene Lavender Iazard		2
Total # Interviews	4	3	2	9

There were some variations in the positions held by respondents. The difference was in the size of each school and their willingness to grant access and time for me to conduct this study.

Direct Observation

I visited each site as part of at least one of the interviews that was conducted. The data gained during these site visits assisted in understanding the perspective of the participants. When I visited each school I was looking to observe a variety of "school quality markers" which

informed my subjective understanding, based on my experience in leading schools, of their quality. These “school quality markers” included, but were not limited to the external appearance of the building and grounds, the internal cleanliness and general upkeep of the facilities, student dress appearance (were shirts clean and tucked in, was there an apparent uniform or dress code), student willingness to engage in appropriate ways, faculty and staff appearance and engagement, classroom organization and cleanliness, level of student engagement during class, displays of student work in classrooms, hallways, or common areas, the level of noise in hallways, the general demeanor of the students, faculty, and when present, parents, the ambiance of the school office staff, lighting in the classrooms, office, and hallways, cleanliness of the bathrooms, etc. The initial site visit was described as one of the first elements of each of the case study findings.

Participant Observation

Though Yin (1994) suggests the importance of participant observers, because of time constraints I was not able to be a participant observer at the three planned sites. However, concurrent with the conducting of this study I was personally involved in the formation of a new high school that is in many aspects similar to the three schools in this study. Although I was not a participant observer at one of the sites of this study I was influenced in my perspective by my personal experiences in helping form a new high school. In addition, two of the three case studies were of schools located in an urban location very similar to the one in which the high school I helped develop in located, and in which the system of schools I currently oversee are located.

Physical Artifacts

At the onset of the study it was my intention to pay attention to any previous locations where the evolving schools may have been located during their growth and development. I had intended to visit those locations, examine and write about them as they related to the

development of the current schools. When the three schools were selected I became aware that none of them had ever existed in a location different from the one that I visited for the on-site interviews.

Data Analysis

Maxwell (1994) asserts there are three main groups of strategies for analyzing qualitative studies: categorizing, contextualizing, and memos and displays (p. 89). As I analyzed the data in this study I intend to use elements of each group. Maxwell also encourages data analysis to begin “immediately after finishing the first interview or observation, and continue to analyze the data as long as you are working on the research” (p. 89).

Categorizing

Glesne (1999) conceptualizes categorizing or as she calls it, “coding” as “a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data” (p. 135). She suggests “putting like-minded pieces together into data clumps [and] creat[ing] an organizational framework” (p. 135).

Lareau (1996) also discusses categorizing which involved cutting her interview transcripts into individual quotes and after giving each individual a different color code she glued them onto index cards for sorting.

Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999) discuss using a computer program to help organize the categorizing of interview transcripts and fieldnotes. They describe how to discover additional categories and subcategories with a computerized process (pp. 157-161).

Mindful of the rationale for the aforementioned methods, while being instructed by the experience of the several researchers cited, I intended to use a computer based program to help sort and code fieldnotes. As I got into the study, I elected instead to code the data manually as

opposed to using the available software. Each of the schools referred to the various cultural elements with distinctly unique verbiage and I became comfortable sorting and categorizing the interviews and my fieldnotes without the assistance of computer software.

Contextualizing

Maxwell (1994) considers contextualizing a complementary effort to categorizing. He elaborates:

Instead of fracturing the initial text into discrete elements and re-sorting it into categories, contextualizing analysis attempts to understand the data . . . in context, using various methods to identify the relationships among the different elements of the text. (p. 90)

For Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1995) the process of analyzing data begins with simply reading the fieldnotes (p. 142). They encourage a careful review of all that is collected “as a complete corpus” (p. 142). Next they suggest the following:

In this process, the researcher’s stance toward the notes changes: the notes, and the persons and events they recount, become textual objects (although linked to personal memories and intuitions) to be considered and examined with a series of analytic and presentational possibilities in mind. (p. 143)

I complemented the categorizing analysis with a thorough effort to analyze the types of evidence collected. I had the audio tape recordings transcribed from each interview and I spent time post-visit to elaborate and expand my fieldnotes while the visit is still fresh in my mind. I worked to consider the context of all the data and balance that against the decontextualizing coding effort.

Memos and Displays

Maxwell (1994) highly encourages the researcher to, “write memos frequently while you are doing data analysis, in order to stimulate and capture your ideas about your data” (pp. 90-91). Schensul et al. (1999) also suggest their research team has used, “enlarged models mounted on several sheets of posterboard or newsprint and taped to a wall” (p. 173).

I used memos, colored sticky tabs, highlighters, written notes as a way of further understanding the data I collect. As part of the cross case analysis, I created tables to highlight similarities and differences between the sites. I created threefold data analysis combination of categorizing, contextualizing, and using memos and displays which helped me ground my data analysis.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Glesne (1999) suggests, “the credibility of your findings and interpretations depends upon your careful attention to establishing trustworthiness” (p. 151). Trustworthiness (her term for validity) she continues is enhanced by, “time at your research site, time spent interviewing, and time building sound relationships with respondents” (p. 151). She also encourages the researcher to be alert to their own biases and subjectivity, to use multiple data collection methods and sources for triangulated findings, and to share the working data with the subjects to obtain their reactions (p. 152).

Following Glesne (1999) I addressed external validity through the use of multiple site case studies which included multiple role interviews. To address her concerns about time building trustworthiness, I spent time visiting the sites, collecting the data, interviewing, and building relationships with the respondents.

In following Maxwell's (1994) suggestions of multiple data sources I enhanced triangulation of the data sources. At the onset of this study it was my intention to allow each respondent to review their transcripts for accuracy. As the study progressed I was unable to have each respondent review their transcripts, but I did have an independent transcriptionist and whenever there were discrepancies or questions I connected with the interviewee for clarification. Finally, I transparently discussed how I collected and analyzed the data. I hope that anyone reading this study will be able to use this transparent process to see the source of my conclusions.

Limitations

This study will be limited by time and resources. At the onset of this study my role as Head of School at a Preschool through eighth grade school of 320 students allows me to be a part-time grad student and limited the amount of time I had available to spend on site at the different schools. Eight months into the study, I became the Head of School at a K4-tenth grade school on its way to developing into a K4-twelfth grade school of 400 students. Three years later I became the superintendent of a system of four K4-eighth grade schools with 950 students. That system today has six schools with 1,600 students. My time to spend visiting the case study schools was available at a premium.

This study also limited the number of schools to three. In selecting the sites I am limiting the schools to private high schools with a religious affiliation or creed adherence. If I were able to have more time availability and additional resources the generalizations would be able to be much stronger in weight than this small study will allow.

At the onset of this study I had envisioned interviewing more participants than I was ultimately allowed to interview. Though willing to participate in the study, FJHS and FLHS both

seemed very particular as to which people connected to their school communities I was allowed to interview.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Case Studies: Introduction

In this section I present the case studies of three schools, “Grace High School” (GHS), “Faithful in Jesus High School” (FJHS), and “Faith Lutheran High School” (FLHS). In each case study I will briefly describe the school, narrate a description of my first visit, and then examine, in sequence: (1) the motivation behind the school and how it evolved, (2) the development of its mission and purpose, (3) its core values and beliefs, (4) its design and selection of ceremonies, (5) its traditions and rituals, (6) some stories, (7) its symbols, and (8) specifically planned elements.

Case One: Grace High School

Grace High School (GHS) is part of a private school system located in Central City. The system CEO, Philip Samuels, works closely with the building principal Trevon Brown who leads his faculty and staff including the athletic director Stacey Mann. They are all focused on successfully planting GHS in a neighborhood of Central City which they described as having high poverty, significant crime, and lack of positive academic results in the other schools in the neighborhood.

GHS was launched in 2004 with a freshman class (no other grades) of just over 100 students. In subsequent years the enrollment grew as they added grades until GHS reached a high water mark of 326 in the beginning of 2009. After reflection as to the quality of the school culture, an intentional effort to shrink the enrollment of students who did not enter GHS in ninth grade was undertaken with the eventual goal of 125 students in each class (or 500 total) all of whom had matriculated into GSH in ninth grade and consistently re-enrolled until graduation.

The enrollment in 2013 (the last year of this study) began the year with 223 students in grades 9 through 12.

When GHS was launched in 2004, it was initially staffed by two administrators (principal and assistant principal) and four teachers (math, English, science, and social studies). Today the staff has grown to include an athletic director, a couple administrative assistants, an admissions director and a total of ten teachers.

The first year of GHS, the only two sports they offered were boys and girls basketball. The coaches were all volunteers. In 2013-14 (the last year of this study), GHS offered boys cross country, football, basketball, and track. GHS offered girls, volleyball, basketball, and track. Table 4.1 provides a list of respondents and the positions they held in the Grace School system.

Table 0.1 Respondents for Grace School System

Respondents	Position Held
Philip Samuels	Chief Executive Officer, Grace School System
Trevon Brown	Principal
Kelly Bakke	Former Principal
Stacey Mann	Athletic Director / Teacher

Description of my first visit

Traveling to visit Grace High School was a unique experience. Grace is located in a very low income area of Central City. The city is economically divided. It is literally possible to be driving down a street lined by attractive single-dwelling homes with immaculately manicured lawns and a beautiful canopy of trees, cross an invisible city boundary and immediately notice litter in the street curbs, barred windows in the store fronts, and the occasional burned out and boarded up home.

GHS is located several blocks into the city. As I turned onto the street on which the school was located I began to look for a place to park. The school had a faculty parking lot, but it was protected by an unattended gate with an electronic card reader to grant access. Visitors,

apparently, were to park on the street. I drove around the block a couple times before someone vacated a spot and I managed to squeeze into the space.

When I exited my car I needed to transverse the short patch of grass between the street and the sidewalk and I noticed an empty liquor bottle discarded just a few feet from the front door of the school. There were also an abundance of cigarette butts snuffed out on the concrete clearly extinguished by those entering the school. I walked up to the front entrance doors.

The school building itself stood in stark contrast to the majority of the other buildings in this neighborhood. It was obviously new – perhaps only a year or two. It was a two-story building with a façade of alternating colors of red brick and cream stone. The signage, paint, windows, and doors all boasted that this was a well maintained facility that someone obviously cared about.

As I stood there taking it all in, a school bell sounded and I refocused my attention on the front entrance. I opened the door and stepped into a small foyer or entrance landing. There was another set of glass doors in front of me and I noticed a security camera in the top right-hand corner staring down at me. I quickly located a button which was part of a security entrance speaker and buzzed to alert whomever of my desire to enter the school. A voice said, “Come in!” I heard the door latch buzz and I grabbed the handle and entered the school. There was a set of steps which took me to a hallway on what was the second floor of the building. The lighting in the hallway was new and the lights bounced off the ceiling to illuminate the hall with very soft white light.

On the right-hand side of that hall were the main offices the door of which opened into a waiting area separated from the offices by a counter and a counter-height door. There were a few administrative assistants busily answering phones and another deeply engaged in the business of

filing something. I approached the counter and in short order was asked if I could be helped. I told the lady that I had an appointment with Trevon Brown (a pseudonym) whom she obviously knew as the building principal. She picked up the phone and after a few words informed me that Mr. Brown would be right with me and pointed to a seat just inside the office door.

As I waited three female students entered the office and approached the counter. They were dressed in similar clothing that I took to be uniforms – navy blue blazers, light grey pants, white oxford shirts, and crisscrossed (for female students) neckties. One of the three had a light grey pleated skirt instead of pants and all three had different color ties. They made an inquiry of the same administrative assistant and were also asked to wait. I noticed there was a young man in the office before I arrived. He too had a uniform very similar to the young ladies except he wore tan pants instead of grey. He also wore a traditional necktie of a similar color to the female students' ties. When the girls turned around they became aware that I was in the room and all three politely greeted me.

I engaged in a brief conversation with the girls as we all waited. One was a junior, the other two sophomores. All had enrolled at GHS as freshmen and were obviously pleased with “their” school. It struck me at the time and even more so upon reflection later that as soon as the girls were aware a visitor was present they changed their “mode” from students into “hosts.” These girls seemed to be “trained” to focus on visitors, even coached to politely entertain guests to “their school.”

While I was waiting, Trevon came down the administrative hall and called out a greeting. We had met a few times before when I was at Grace for a meeting with Trevon which was unrelated to this study. I had also completed his interview for this study prior to my first visit to his school. As I stood up to move to his office, I excused myself and thanked the young women

for their hospitality. Mr. Brown also greeted the students, by name, and thanked them for entertaining his “friend.”

I met with Trevon in his office for about an hour on an unrelated topic and then he offered to show me around the school before I headed out. We traversed the hallways and poked out heads into several classrooms. The students were engaged in their classes, sitting attentively in their uniforms – asking and answering questions as the teachers – who were dressed in sport coat and tie (males), close to formal business attire (females) conducted the classes. Once, on our tour the bell rang and classes changed immediately filling the hallways with students. They were obviously changing classes while conducting themselves in a manner which included “indoor voices” and an orderly process.

Our tour ended back at the main office. I arranged our next meeting – this one at my location to allow him uninterrupted time for a lengthy interview. I said goodbye and headed for my car. The sidewalk had been swept clean of the cigarettes and the empty bottle was no longer on the grass by my car.

Motivation behind the school and how it evolved

There seemed to be fairly strong consensus by the interviewees about how GHS was founded. They noted several reasons for its founding. They all cited the lack of what they considered to be a quality college-preparatory high school in the immediate neighborhood. A few suggested the need for teaching strong character development from a Christian perspective. It was also mentioned that the earlier development of K4-8 schools were beginning to produce student “graduates” whose educational expectations had been raised and there was an obvious dearth of high school opportunities of the quality of their elementary and middle school experience. The feeling was that all the effort in the lower grades might be seen as wasted if a

new high school were not available. GHS was to become a new high school in a new building governed by the same school management company. The principal of GHS reports to the equivalent of a superintendent in the Grace School system.

All four interviewees suggested that the need for a college-preparatory focused high school near their elementary and middle school neighborhoods of Central City was one motivation behind starting the school. Two of the four directly mentioned the need for a Christian component as well.

How did the school go about developing the mission and purpose?

Waiting to address mission

Mission and purpose were initially relegated to the background as leaders focused on other start-up issues. GHS emanated and evolved out of previous start-up projects with elementary and middle grades. The mission and purpose was developed over time with the help of several participants. It was not created before the school opened but after – as a part of intentionally evolving the school culture.

As I asked the interviewees about the development of the mission and purpose I was given an interesting analogy by one of those who saw himself as a “boots on the ground” participant as opposed to the executive leadership at the top of the organization. He likened the process to being on a battleship that was still being constructed while taking enemy fire (e.g., “fire” from foundations withholding grants until the mission is clear, “fire” from internal and external opponents to the development of the high school, even “friendly fire” from colleagues desiring to focus on tangential elements to the evolving school mission focus). They were being shot at and ducking and still trying to conceptualize how the ship would look when finished.

They couldn't stop and finish planning because the enemy fire was continually coming their way so they kept their heads down and kept building the ship.

He opined that as far as he could ascertain in the beginning there was very limited focus on the mission and purpose outside of the two elements previous mentioned: (1) the need for a college-preparatory high school in the area, and (2) one with strong character development from a perspective of Christian values.

Start a similar high school for the elementary students to attend

The planning for the high school began after the lower feeder schools had four-year-old kindergarten through eighth grades in place. As the leadership in the organization saw the eventual completion of eighth grade by students in the lower schools, they envisioned the need for a similar high school in which they could continue in the same school culture all the way to graduation. When this objective manifested itself to the leadership team they did not start by developing a mission and purpose for the new high school. According to all the interviewees the school's executive leadership team simply hired or repurposed staff and faculty and told these new or repurposed hires (with little other instructions about how) to just "go start the high school."

There was no formal mission statement as the high school was birthed. It seems from the interviewees that it was assumed that the new high school would naturally grow from the lower elementary and middle schools and that there was enough of a mission and purpose already developed to carry the high school to completion.

Drawing from external models

They developed the high school mission statement, in part, by looking to other models to emulate. While developing the K4-8 schools they had been looking at the Knowledge is Power

Program (KIPP) schools which were reportedly finding some success in other urban settings across the United States. KIPP's methods, while understanding and acknowledging the challenges of urban education are centered on a "no excuses" approach making little room for the usual reasons espoused by leadership when urban students struggle. It was only natural that the GHS leaders would also look to the KIPP model when developing the mission statement.

In addition to KIPP there were two relatively successful schools in Central City that were being celebrated for their urban academic success and these also served as models for the elementary and middle schools. One of these schools was a charter school and one was a private Christian school.

One element that was not directly addressed by the KIPP model or the Central City charter model was the Christian character element which was intended to be an essential component of GHS. Those looking to open GHS were actively seeking models or ideas about how to incorporate those elements into their new school. They looked closely at the Central City private Christian school for this element.

Decision to intentionally develop the mission and purpose

When the school was finally operating with a financially sustainable enrollment in all four grades, and it arrived at the place where Trevon Brown said they had some semblance of feeling like it was "a patient that would end up surviving," it was then that they took the time to back up and create (or refine) the mission and purpose of the school. They had just celebrated the graduation of their first class of seniors yet they were feeling like they had hit a developmental wall. One described it as reaching the limit of "scramble mode" in a war or that the tanks had advanced too far beyond the infantry and needed to stop to allow the soldiers to catch up to their

position. They felt the need to regroup before pressing on again. Though making progress they felt out of control in the process.

Mission and Purpose meetings

The interviewees all reported some version of this next step. It seems that only a short time before my interviews took place, those in the school hierarchy held a series of “purposeful planning” meetings with those in leadership to review and refine the elementary and high schools’ mission and vision and to focus on this from a K4-12 school system perspective. A third party was brought in to facilitate the purposeful planning meetings. There were a series of ten day-long meetings with a team that initially included all the administrators, and in subsequent meetings gradually added board members, teachers, and staff at the various schools. They did not, however, include parents or students, nor did they invite anyone outside the organization to share perspective.

The people who had been engaged in bringing the high school into existence discovered during the purposeful planning meetings that some of the variations they had elected for the high school were not the same as the elementary and middle school leaders had been envisioning. In fact one participant described the process as kind of an “institutional defibrillator” jolting them out of their mission and vision complacency. During the meetings, they began to focus on the long-term vision for the school. No longer were they looking at surviving the semester (or week) but they were wondering what the school would be in five, ten, and even twenty years. They took several steps.

First, they looked at elements from the book *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001) and discussed how some corporations developed. In particular they looked at Kohl’s Department store and how it had started with a vision similar to K-Mart, the convenience store selling everything and then

morphed into focusing on clothing and how Kohl's took off and rapidly grew after that major mission and vision adjustment. The principal and others who attended the retreat reported that it spurred everyone's thinking.

This thinking led them to ask, "What would separate GHS from the herd?" One of the interviewees cited a book called *The Art of the Start* (Kawasaki, 2004) which included a list of "commandments" including "Niche Thyself." This informed an extensive brainstorming exercise with several suggestions considered. The brainstorming led to grouping and selecting and discussing. They finally settled, during the retreat, upon "Christian College-Preparatory" as their "niche."

Not without dissension and decisions have career implications

Finding students willing to enroll had always been a major objective for the original staff. Some of those original high-school-starting-pioneers, those who had worked from the beginning to grow the enrollment were very concerned that the new college-preparatory focus would limit the interest of some students, particularly the student athletes who saw their athletic prowess as their ticket out of Central City.

In an official mission and purpose vacuum, they had been focusing on creating a school environment that was safe and would allow all students to focus on graduation, even those who were interested in college or trade school were pushed only enough to achieve graduation. Motivation to learn had been reinforced by supporting student athletes, athletic teams, athletic contests, and building a solid athletic program. As the team settled on "Christian College-Preparatory" during the retreat, some of the early leaders realized the newly adopted niche would require dramatically increasing the expectations for academic rigor and the development of academic support systems to assist the students on their way to college.

Developing the mission came with some challenges

As can happen with change this new mission did not sit well with everybody. Several of those original employees, including the original high school principal, and the original admissions director, had been giving their lives over the last four years to fulfill a mission that had just dramatically shifted into Christian College-Preparatory and that was not the mission they had joined to make happen.

However, dissenters aside, as the retreat came to a close, it was decided that in attempting to “Niche Thyself” they would pursue, “Christian College-Preparatory” which they wordsmithed into their official mission statement (That statement is not included here in order to protect the confidentiality of the real school).

Once they had the new focus the interviewees reported it was as if “blindness” were removed from a lot of the staff. They looked at the mission statement and said in order to do this . . . we need to do that . . . and this. The mission statement was the postulate and now the corollaries were presenting themselves.

Core Values and Beliefs

The core values and beliefs were summarized in what Philip Samuels called, “the three Cs, College-Preparatory, Christ, and Character.” Of the various interviewees, his recollection and descriptions were the most vivid.

Kelly Bakke sighted two core values and then added a personal objective. He started with talking about the seminal role of the Bible being the inerrant word of God and how as an organization they adhere to that in everything, and then secondly that “we” are getting kids ready for college “no matter whom they are, no matter where they come from, that all kids can do it.”

His personal addition was that the school would develop to be a school that he would be proud to send his own child to, and that it would be on the top of his list.

Trevon Brown expressed that “we” want students to love Christ, prepare themselves for college and have that experience become reflected in their lives by their choices.

Stacey Mann was very conflicted in describing the core values and beliefs because she felt that the newly adopted mission and vision had become imposed upon the school community from the top down and that although the words sounded good, she felt that in actual practice the school community was putting lipstick on a pig and not really dealing with the underlying problems as long as the school community looked good on the outside. It is interesting to me in hindsight that she was only one month from resigning her position at the school at the time of the interview.

In summary, the core values and beliefs of GHS are the three Cs: College-Preparatory, Christ, and Character.

The Design and Selection of Ceremonies

In this section I discuss the design and selection of eight ceremonies embedded at Grace High School. These ceremonies are “Grace-na-tising” (they coined a term using the name of the school and I have done likewise, though with a pseudonym to protect the confidentiality of my sources), the Crest Ceremony, Terra Nova week, the Fall Celebration, homecoming week, daily chapel, school choir concerts, , and graduation.

“Grace-na-tising”

The first “ceremony” the several interviewees described was a combination of a registration week and boot camp to help the new students to understand, adapt to, and become comfortable with the very different school culture that GHS insisted should exist. Trevon Brown

described the three- to four-day week immediately preceding the school year as an institutional “beat down.” These initial days of school were required for all new students (and any returning students that the school felt needed a refresher course). The interviewee who used the phrase “beat down” did not mean a physical kind of hazing, but he did mean that the students were having their understandings of what was “normal” high school student behavior challenged. This step was determined to be a necessary requirement in the establishment of good order and discipline which would allow the school’s mission to be implemented. Another interviewee described the process as “Grace-na-tizing” (in an obvious play on the school name). A student arriving from a different school culture would enter the Grace-na-tizing process and at the end would be properly prepared to receive the instruction GHS desired to impart. I suppose the farm analogy would be that they were preparing the soil (the student’s attitude/demeanor/will) for receiving the seed (academic curriculum and instruction). These days were handled with elaborate preparation and planning by the staff and with considerable marketing to the students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) to procure their buy-in and support. All who were planning to attend GHS knew these days and the successful completion of the program were a “necessary” requirement should they decide to enroll.

Deciding what to teach during this time was more of a borrowed curriculum than original to GHS and its staff. They were heavily influenced by the KIPP schools and the Uncommon Schools (a network of 29 urban charter schools in the state of New York) and the techniques described in the book, *Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques That Put Students On The Path To College* by Doug Lemov (Doug is the managing director of Uncommon Schools) (Lemoz, 2010). Lemoz divides his techniques into the two categories of academic and behavioral

although ascertaining the category the individual elements can be difficult since there is often a great deal of overlap in the purpose and effect of each technique.

During the first days at GHS students were “re-educated” by good classroom management techniques into behaviors which support learning in the classroom. Most of these behaviors seem to be common sense behavioral expectations of all students. What GHS had noticed is that the students who were enrolling in their schools were either ignorant of these basic ideas or they had learned that they could get away with ignoring them and that their previous schools had no idea how to get them to comply.

For example, one of the first behavioral techniques they learn is called, “100 Percent.” The Key idea behind this technique is, “There’s one acceptable percentage of students following a direction: 100 percent. Less, and your authority is subject to interpretation, situation, and motivation” (Lemov, 2010, p.168). The Grace-na-tizing days are all built on this principle. It seems to me very reflective of the process the U.S. military calls boot camp where new inductees are indoctrinated into the ways of the service.

A significant portion of the time is spent on things like the proper posture in which a student is expected to sit while in class which evolved from Lemov’s technique number 32 called by the acronym “SLANT” where the letters represent: “Sit up, Listen, Ask and answer questions, Nod your head, Track the speaker” (Lemov, 2010, p.159). After the students are instructed in the proper technique it then falls on the teacher to remind, reinforce, and cajole the students into a constant state of SLANT. A teacher might address the class generally and say something like, “Class, we are losing our SLANT, let’s adjust and return to the correct position. SLANT in 3 . . . 2 . . . 1 . . . thank you – those are outstanding SLANTS!”

The Grace-na-tizing continues as the faculty and staff at GHS lay a firm foundation for what will be the culture of the school that year. As I mentioned before, these days do not just happen. The GHS faculty spends as much as four weeks before the students arrive, becoming familiar with Lemov's techniques. They have in-service workshops each day in which they practice the techniques and decide how the nuances of Lemov's techniques will be individualized for the GHS experience. This faculty and staff buy-in and alignment is critical to the success of this school culture building process. Unless each teacher consistently holds their students to the very high standards required by Lemov's techniques, the students will play one teacher against another as children might their parents and the educational advantages of a class of students ready to learn will be lost.

The Crest Ceremony (or the Fruit of the Spirit ceremony)

The second major ceremony (and this one is not several days long) started out as "The Crest Ceremony." The GHS principal noticed as the first year played out that the Grace-na-tizing process, though extremely effective in creating a class full of students willing and ready to learn, was developed with an awful lot of negative reinforcement. He noticed that some of the students were becoming angry and frustrated as they were constantly corrected by diligent teachers trying to keep the new school culture intact. They were feeling that the constant attention to Lemov's techniques by the faculty were better suited to elementary school children. The principal believed his high school students chafed at being required to change classes in the halls by lining up and quietly marching to the next class like a group of second graders. Some became so discouraged that they were returning to the schools they had attended before enrolling at Grace.

As a way of providing additional positive motivation for the students, the principal, on his own initiative, conceived and announced a ceremony that would occur in the first week of

October. He sent a letter to the parent(s)/guardian(s) inviting them to attend a ceremony in the school gym after school the first Friday in October. During that ceremony, any student that was still enrolled at GHS would receive an iron-on patch which depicted a school crest. Although the idea was initially conceived by Grace's principal, he did not roll it out without first discussing it with his system administration and the faculty. His idea was celebrated and quickly garnered their support.

His initial idea was a crest with a school mascot which would make any jacket it was ironed on into a kind of school letter jacket. As the executive administrative team discussed the idea – they became enamored with the thought that GHS should create an official school crest in the style of a British boarding school. They saw the identification with a crest which included a Latin inscription as identifying with a rigorous, high quality institution. So a crest was commissioned, approved by the executive administrative team, and the cloth patch that could be ironed or sewn on to a coat was produced in short order.

When it came time for the first ceremony there remained a few more than 100 of the original 120 students. Each one of them received the crest. They were called forward in front of their classmates and parents (those parent(s)/guardians who attended) and stood in front of the principal and received their crest with a handshake and a few individual words of encouragement. Although the crest ceremony was conceived as a gimmick to keep the students focused and enrolled. It worked far better than imagined. The principal took great pride in telling me that the students surprised the administration and faculty by actually seeming to value the crest. They began to put it on their clothing and even when they were not heading to or from school were often observed in the community proudly wearing their crest. It actually seemed to

move the student body past their angst with the plethora of rules and focus them on the academic results of complying!

This ceremony, however, quickly evolved. Several glitches were discovered by the faculty and reported to the principal. For example, some of the students that had received the crest initially were brazen enough in the following weeks to curse at the principal. After mulling it over, the principal realized that the cursers had engaged in that practice before the ceremony in some cases. He decided that they had set the bar for earning a crest too low.

They spent the rest of the first year discussing it on and off so that when the teachers returned for the following year – the ceremony had taken on a new image. It would still be a ceremony in the first week of October but now the bar for getting the crest patch would be significantly higher. In the first year about 100 students earned the crest.

This second year it was closer to 10 students. It was not called the Crest Ceremony but the Fruit of the Spirit Ceremony. It was not held after school but in the early evening. There was an invitation and students, faculty, and parents were encouraged to dress up for the event which included catered hors d'oeuvres. The criteria for earning the crest was character focused (to reflect the Three Cs of College-Preparatory, Christ, and Character) and absolutely zero students brazen enough to curse at a faculty member would earn the award.

The Fruit of the Spirit Ceremony is now a fixture at GHS. The principal keeps the bar high, but the number of recipients each year has become about 40 percent of the new students (freshmen are no longer eligible as this has become an honor you can earn after your initial year in the school).

Terra Nova Week

Another key “ceremony” the interviewees discussed was the pep rally they held the Friday before the week the students would take the standardized test. A good deal of the public evaluation of GHS would be based on the results of the student test scores earned on the annual standardized test.

The principal and his faculty brainstormed how they could help the students become invested in their own success on the test. As they discussed ideas, someone pointed out that athletic contests at GHS and at most other schools in Central City were often preceded by pep rallies. Another reminded the group that often other special privileges were extended such as allowing student athletes to deviate from the usual school dress code by wearing a team jersey. Soon they were remembering the decorating of lockers by cheerleaders, special banners in the hallways, and other special ways to build excitement and interest in the upcoming athletic contest. They decided to reframe the athletic model to support the importance of the Terra Nova test.

The Terra Nova “pep-rally” event was festive. They cancelled Friday afternoon classes and after lunch held a faculty-staff basketball game. They handed out T-shirts and challenged the students to earn higher results. The principal mentioned that the test results improved 5% after his first pep rally and because of that – the second year the faculty planned an entire week similar to a homecoming week. One of the special efforts was to serve especially nutritious food for two weeks and to eliminate all junk food in the school during that time. The principal noted that even if the nutritious food had no actual effect on the test scores – it still helped the students believe the school and their student body was doing everything possible to earn the best scores. It translated, in the principal’s opinion, into more focused test taking.

Fall Celebration

Each fall, toward the end of October, GHS and the elementary and middle schools in the Grace system hold a very elegant black-tie optional celebration. The celebration is both a general celebration to give thanks for another successful year and a specific celebration to highlight the accomplishments of several faculty and administrators who in the opinion of the planning team distinguished themselves in their practice. They hold the event in a Central City landmark location. There is a formal invitation to the event and it costs \$150/person to attend. There is a cocktail reception with lavish hors d'oeuvres and live musical entertainment. The event includes all the Grace system's faculty, staff, and board of directors. Additionally, school parents, most of the private school leaders, significant foundation representatives, and political leaders of the state and in Central City have been invited and many are in attendance.

The event is kicked off with presentations of the successes of the school during the last year. The last event I attended offered a keynote speaker who was an author who had featured one of the Grace schools in a chapter of his recent best-selling book on successful urban schools.

The “magic” of the event is that although it feels like a fund-raising benefit auction which is routinely part of the private school fundraising arsenal, this event is simply a celebration of the school and its faculty and staff. No one is asked during the event to contribute anything beyond the \$150 per/person fee – participants are simply guests to enjoy and witness the celebration. Additionally, many of the participants attend as the result of a donation that someone or some organization provides. The fee covers the meal, venue, marketing for the event, and the costs of the awards presented during the evening.

Several awards are presented at the fall celebration. Faculty and staff and the board of directors are given longevity awards for 5 and 3 years of service (the school is not yet ten years

old). Other awards given include the “Determination Award,” the “Solution-Finder Award,” the “Grace Academic All-Star Award,” the “Faith-in-Action Award,” and the “Team Player of the Year” for each of the schools. The highlight of the evening is reserved to the end as three popular songs which have been produced as amateur music videos which have had new lyrics written by the students and faculty are presented. After we see the videos they announce which one is the “People’s Choice Award” for the year. One year the winning video was picked up by a network news show and played to a national audience. This is a major event and it honors the faculty, staff, and board for their service in Central City in the Grace school system.

Homecoming Week

This tried and true school week of excitement and celebration surrounding the football team’s big game was not left out of the GHS experience. Interestingly enough, when the principal described it to me he said it was a lot like their Terra Nova week. One interesting element was the school homecoming dance. The principal decided to serve as the disk jockey for the event as a way of controlling the music and the event (the principal worked as a disk jockey in his high school days). Another element they incorporated into homecoming was a “cheer clinic” so that the student body would know how to cheer on their team.

Daily Chapel

In direct support of the Three Cs, GHS begins each day in the gym with a daily chapel service. School personnel knew that the majority of the students who elected to enroll at GHS were not members of the church associated with the school, although most would describe their families as adherents of some Christian church. Staff saw part of their mission and vision as an opportunity to help all the students to adopt and internalize the Christian teachings they would be exposed to in the school. They had a faculty member who was gifted in preaching and who held

the attention of the students so it was his role to organize the chapel liturgy. In the opinion of the staff, the chapel was an integral part of the school's cultural transformation.

School Choir and the Christmas and Spring Concerts

Closely connected to the daily chapel service was the participation of GHS students in the school choir. When the school had about 250 students there were about 125 in the school choir. This element connected with the community culture of Central City from which the students emanated. Students were willing to stay after school for practice and the school had a very dynamic choir director that the students liked. This choir was the backbone for two major school productions each year.

There were elaborate sacred themed Christmas and spring concerts. The gospel choir practiced during class and sometimes after school throughout each semester. They worked toward a Christmas concert and a late spring concert where they would perform for family and friends. The dress for the evenings was very fancy (if not formal) for the choir members. The concerts would have refreshments served and an informal time of fellowship for the families.

Graduation

A final ceremony is the high school graduation ceremony. The interviewees described their graduation ceremony as currently run-of-the-mill and in need of enhancing for the following year. I did not sense deep enthusiasm from any of the interviewees about their school's graduation ceremony. The best they could say is that they had one, but were not proud of it yet.

Postscript

I think it is important to add a kind of postscript to this section in that as I reviewed the transcripts it has occurred to me that the four interviewees, in describing the various ceremonies, traditions, and rituals were very aware of how new this school and these elements were. It

seemed to me that the particular interviewee who was most directly responsible for establishing the ceremony, ritual, or tradition about which we were discussing, was almost internally “rooting” for the continuance of that element. Alternatively, when the element was not the one they had been the lead in developing, I sensed less enthusiasm to see the element become anchored for all time in the school’s life cycle. When a decision needed to be made, the principal had the final say as to which element would survive.

The Design and Selection of Traditions and Rituals

In this section I discuss the design and selection of six traditions or rituals embedded at GHS. At GHS, the principal, Trevon Brown, felt empowered to create and affirm traditions and rituals at will. He believed it was his responsibility to establish, nurture, and prune developing traditions as part of shaping the school culture.

Prom

At GHS, the students, and parents have insisted on establishing a spring prom dance. To Trevon it felt like this was one tradition that he did not have the option of avoiding if he had not wanted one. The parents in particular seemed to Trevon to be “living vicariously through their students’ lives.” More than once he heard a parent exclaim, “I didn’t go to my prom and have regretted that ever since.”

Because the parents were so set on having a prom, it made it easier for the administration. The parents were “owning” the prom and taking on the ticket sales, planning, and organizing the students to decorate. Because Trevon was not sure it was the best idea, and unsure if any students would decide to attend, when he received pressure from the parents to act – he kept putting it back on them. One year they held fundraisers and managed to raise about \$400 to augment the \$300 excess from homecoming ticket sales. Trevon saw this as “strategic empowerment.” As he

saw the parents' zeal for prom, although he personally began to soften to the idea and its likelihood of success, he intentionally kept up a public front of opposition to further sharpen the parents' resolve to push forward with the idea.

After the first prom was a success Trevon did not have to work at recruiting the next generation of parent volunteers. Instead they appointed themselves and the fledgling tradition was off and running.

Highest College Placement Percentage

Another "tradition" which Trevon claimed was a student-desired tradition was that each senior class wanted to have the highest percentage of college acceptance in school history. Trevon repeatedly credited the students with this desire but as he described how they managed to get everyone in the junior class signed up to take the ACT test, it sounded like he had a significant influence in their desire and accomplishment. Trevon talked about leading a horse to water, and when it got there having to push its head into the water to get it to drink as a description of this "student- desired" tradition.

Regardless from where the tradition originated, the students did embrace the concept. As Trevon circulated in the building, various students would tell him things like, "Mr. Brown, you are going to be really proud of us. You are not going to worry about anything." As the students took the ACT and applied to various colleges and universities, several began to get acceptance letters. These acceptance letters fueled the interest and follow through of those not yet accepted. It also piqued the interest of the underclass students and they began to "talk the talk" of college ideation. This momentum spurred the idea for the tradition of Announcing College Acceptances on the school public address system.

Announcing College Acceptances

As the momentum grew toward higher and higher percentages of college acceptances in each senior class, Trevon decided to raise the profile of this particular tradition. As the school received letters announcing college acceptances, each student's individual acceptance was read over the announcements. If a student was accepted at several colleges or universities, each acceptance would be read. Trevon said that the pride the students demonstrated when their names were read was significant. He reported that a representative from Yale University showed up at the school looking for one of their students and Trevon was in such disbelief that he asked if it was Yale Community College.

Shout Outs at Morning Assembly

Trevon was very intentional in developing this school tradition. He knew that having a morning assembly could be a positive or negative event if the students did not invest in it. One idea he had was to develop chants, cheers, or shout outs which would be used routinely by the students. An example of a "shout out" would be the leader praising or complimenting an individual student or group of students for something well done which the leader would like others to emulate. Some of the phrases were borrowed from KIPP schools like the chant, "This is the Room." It says, "This is the room that has the kids who want to learn to read more books and build a better tomorrow."

Several other chants and catch phrases were adopted from Teach Like a Champion (Lemov, 2010), like referring to the level of conversational noise as a Level 0 (silent), Level 1 (whisper), Level 2 (conversational tone), Level 3 (teacher tone), Level 4 (shouting). As students are given direction in a group all the faculty and administration use the same nomenclature for

the noise level. It would be totally out of character if a faculty member asked the students to be quiet. Instead they would ask for a Level 0.

Another chant developed was, “We’re a team and a Family.” They had adopted signage in the building that made a big deal about washing feet so chants evolved like. “Washing Feet!” or “Be a Solution Finder!” or “We are Solution Finders.” Another phrase that has stuck is HY STEP which stands for words the students are always supposed to use, “Hello, Yes, Sorry, Thank You, Excuse Me, and Please.”

Trevon had been a disk jockey in his younger years and so he wanted to add some hip hop to the menu. The various classes were given monikers to identify themselves by Trevon. The class of 2010 was given “0 Ten” and the class of 2011 became “Wild Ones.” It is hard to describe, but another thing he had them do was “blow the twos.” They would make a “pfft” sound when they recited twos. The sound was like a rap artist “laying down a beat.” The class of 2012 would say, “pfft OH ONE pfft” to describe themselves. It was rhythmic and catchy. The sound with a group in the gym was tremendous and the students loved the fun identifier.

Faculty Bowling

In considering traditions to build camaraderie amongst the faculty, Trevon cited, “what we do is enjoy our own company.” One activity they routinely undertake is a voluntary night of faculty bowling. The event has caught on and nearly everyone participates. Little else is planned other than announcing the time and place. These informal events are announced on a monthly basis during the school year.

Faculty “Eat Off”

One of the annual events (Trevon laughed as he called it annual since it was the second annual) has become a faculty “eat off.” The day before school starts they all go to Buffalo Wild

Wings and have an “eat off.” They select whatever the hottest wing is and contenders challenge each other to eat the most in a certain amount of time. It has become the “official” faculty way to kick off the new school year.

Stories

Philip Samuels tells the following story: “I was freshly on the board as president of the organization and [two influential members of the organization] came to me as said, ‘Philip, we need to do chapel every day at the high school.’ Still working through school schedules and we were talking about that, and I said, ‘Neither of the two of you have ever led officially outside of GHS, you’ve never actually done what you just described you’re going to do. Let me tell you something, I have been in three different Lutheran high schools and they are in much different neighborhoods than our GHS, with students who are . . . [children of Lutheran professors and the like] the theoretically perfect population. Chapel is one of the most difficult management situations you’re going to ever imagine. What you just described would be an absolute nightmare.’ And so I said, ‘Absolutely, you know, I am advising you not to do this. I am telling you it’s going to be an absolute disaster.’ And they just pleaded with me. [They said, ‘We’re] telling you it is critical for the culture of the school. We need to do this.’ I said, ‘We’ll give it a shot and see what happens.’ Well, they did give it a shot, and it was the key to turning the culture of the high school. I was completely wrong; they were completely right.”

Philip said he tells this story to a lot of people as an example of how it is really important for a leader to listen to the people on the ground and to take their thoughts very seriously. He said that you have to give your people a chance to try something as long as in your risk assessment you feel it will be a manageable risk that will not irreparably damage the mission of your venture.

Trevon Brown tells the following story: “[There was] one kid I acknowledged as [a] good [example], [a] turnaround story, during the first couple of days of school our second year. [That] same day he was outside, passing a half pint of gin and a cigarette to a kid, and you just [want to scream] . . . , needless to say, . . . it was his last day of school [at Grace], but I had just given him a lot of accolades [about his] growth that day, and how proud I was of him, and I guess he was so proud he had to take a swig of gin!” He tells this to illustrate how difficult it is to help urban students become successful. He also tells it to explain to those visiting his school that sometimes the successes are less than they seem on the surface. Trevon said he mostly tells stories of students’ success.

Kelly Bakke tells the following story: “A lot of times the recruitment of students was tough in the early days, so we would go out and walk around all of the time. So we’d walk the streets with just literature, and just walk up to doors and either hang literature, or if people were sitting outside, talk to them. And so, there are just some great stories of kids that I met on the street that were just walking around, and you know, ended up coming to school and kind of staked their claim on their lives.”

Kelly elaborated, “The mission of Grace . . . one of the things we do intentionally when setting up a school is to set it up in the toughest neighborhoods that we can find, so it’s not an accident that . . . the guy who was pulled out [of] his car and beaten . . . it was Juneteenth Parade day . . . it was right by [Grace] high school. There was a girl . . . who just came from a really volatile home situation that . . . changed dramatically over time. You know, she would always argue back, shout, curse, whatever, when she first came, and through being at the school, through constantly working with her, you know, she just developed a sense of calmness, sense of dignity, really charming young lady in the end. She is a senior right now actually . . . and you know her

house is the type of house that if you called at night and she answered the phone, there would be yelling, and you'd hear people cussing in the background.”

Stacey Mann told an elaborate story that I cannot relate in detail because of confidentiality, but it was of a young lady with whom she worked very closely from recruitment to graduation. The home environment was miserable and her educational attainment prior to GHS was almost non-existent, but she was a tremendous basketball player. Stacey helped her manage to get enough of an education to pass the minimal college entrance requirements and become a fairly successful player at the division one level. What was most impressive about the story was the level of commitment to the young lady itemized in the story.

Symbols

The following symbols were mentioned by the interviewees: The crest, uniform ties, and the acronym incorporated into the name of the school. The crest has received significant mention in that it was created to use for the Crest Ceremony. The crest itself was designed by an artist that centered the focal point of the crest on a cross and then attempted to emulate an elite college-preparatory looking symbol. As has been mentioned, the crest is now something which the students value and look forward to earning and wearing in public.

The uniform ties worn by the students are earned by demonstrating good attendance, homework completion, and absence of discipline events. Once earned, they vary in color by class, freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior. Each class has a unique color. In addition, when a student achieves honor roll status, or high honor roll status, they are given a special tie unique to each status. These ties are highly esteemed by the students and worn with pride.

Although Grace is a pseudonym, the real name of the school is both a term commonly associated with religion and an acronym that reminds the founders of the school that it has a

mission to assist the students to graduate and realize their academic dreams. To illustrate the approach used by this school, if Grace were an acronym following this pattern it might stand for “Graduates Realizing Academic Challenges with Ease.”

Specifically Planned Elements

The following specifically planned elements were mentioned by the interviewees: “Normal” high school elements, the morning threshold procedure, a very structured learning environment, and student leadership. As the school culture at GHS was beginning to evolve, the school leadership team was made up of school leaders whose educational experience was mostly in K-8 schools and not high schools. As they worked to create a viable school culture which would be conducive to learning, their initial ideas were all grounded in the elementary school. Asking students to form lines and quietly walk in hallways while being escorted by the teachers had really worked well in the elementary school environments from which the Grace leadership team emanated.

When they asked the GHS students to function with the same rules of the elementary students, there was significant push back. Grace’s leaders desired to offer a high school that had a noticeably different school culture from schools which the students used to attend. They wanted student behavior to resemble well-ordered schools and not schools on the verge of chaos. On the other hand they did not want robotic students void of pride and engagement. As they negotiated the nuances of the school culture they were cultivating, they found the students’ interest and excitement in belonging to the school enhanced as they introduced elements often considered traditional activities of American high schools. Elements like sports, prom, homecoming, and other dances. It was as if they would allow the students to conduct a prom the students would more willingly adapt to the orderly school culture components the school leaders

were installing. It was a positive cycle as when the students were allowed a homecoming celebration; the school leadership noticed they could scale back the rigidity of the hallway procedures and still have good order and discipline. This led to the regular and intentional introduction of “normal” school elements.

The Grace school leaders specifically introduced a morning threshold procedure. The principal would greet each student at the back door (all students enter school through the secure school parking lot where the buses and parents drop off the students), shake their hands and greet them while looking for student eye contact. This threshold procedure was instituted because so many of the students live in very unstable households and sometimes the time they spend at home is traumatic. When students enter the school struggling with their emotions because a parent entered or exited their lives, a shooting happened on their block, they spent the night in a home without proper heating or cooling, or several other regular challenges, school leaders recognized how important it was to help students as soon as they report to school each day. Most of the students comply but a few struggle on certain days to give the greeting or eye contact. These students are asked to step to the side and are allowed to enter the school only when they are ready to greet the principal and give him/her eye contact. In more extreme instances they may need to spend some time with a school counselor or social worker before reporting to class.

Another specifically planned element is the very structured learning environment. The *Teach Like a Champion* (TLC) taxonomy and examples like the KIPP schools have lead the way in establishing high quality seats in urban schools nationwide. As the GHS leadership team dreamed about what Grace’s learning environment would look like, they envisioned schools with the TLC techniques in the forefront.

The last specifically planned element was to encourage a student leadership model to evolve. As the school leaders worked to introduce “normal” elements into Grace’s high school culture, they wanted to have the specific ideas originate as much as possible from the student leaders. This student leadership teamwork with school administrators helped students more rapidly accept and assimilate into the GHS culture.

Summary

Table 4.2 summarizes the information provided by GHS respondents.

Table 0.2 Summary of GHS School Culture Development

Cultural Aspects Examined	Elements Present
Motivation behind the school and how it evolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of what they considered a high quality college-prep high school in the immediate neighborhood • Perceived need for teaching strong character development from a Christian perspective • Need for a high school of similar quality to the K4-8 schools they had previously started
Development of GHS mission and purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed after the launch of the new high school • Drew ideas from external models • Held Mission and Purpose “retreat” • Looked at elements from the book, “Good to Great” and discussed how some corporations developed • Considered from the book, “The Art of the Start,” a list of “commandments,” including “Niche Thyself” • Discussion over narrower scope of new mission statement “weeded” some employees that did not agree
Core Values and Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three “C:” College, Christ, Character • No excuses allowed for failing to get students ready for college • “We” want students to love Christ, prepare themselves for college and have that experience become reflected in their lives by their choices • Dissension which led to resignation of position
Design and Selection of Ceremonies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Grace-na-tising” • The Crest Ceremony • Terra Nova Week • Fall Ceremony • Homecoming Week • Daily Chapel • School Choir Concerts

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation
Traditions and Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prom • Highest College Placement Percentage • Announcing College Acceptances • “Shout Outs” at Morning Assembly • Faculty Bowling • Faculty “Eat off”
Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to people “on the ground” • The example student on moment expelled the next as a reminder of how difficult urban education can be • Recruiting students on the street • Commitment by a faculty member to recruiting a student-athlete from a difficult family background
Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Crest • Uniform Ties • Acronym incorporated into the name of the school
Specifically Planned Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Normal” high school elements • The morning threshold procedure • A very structured learning environment • Student Leadership

Case Two: Faithful in Jesus High School

Faithful in Jesus High School (FJHS) is a private school located in Central City. The building principal Veronica Carter leads her faculty and staff which includes two lead teachers, Chanise Greene and Lavender Izard. They are all focused on successfully operating FJHS in a neighborhood of Central City which they described as having high poverty, significant crime, and lack of positive academic results in the other schools in the neighborhood. The school is located on the same property of the Faithful in Jesus church which originally created a K4-8 school in 1990.

FJHS was launched in 1996 with a freshman class (no other grades) of four students. In subsequent years the enrollment grew as they added grades until FJHS reached a high water mark of 40 in the beginning of 2002. The enrollment in 2013 (the last year of this study) began the year with 34 students in grades 9 through 12.

When FJHS was launched in 1996, it was initially staffed by two administrators (director of education and principal – both had duties in both the lower school and high school) and three teachers (all of which also taught in the lower school the first year). Today the staff has grown to include a total of four teachers. Table 4.3 provides a list of respondents and the positions they held in the Faithful in Jesus School.

Table 0.3 Respondents for Faithful in Jesus School

Respondent	Position Held
Veronica Carter	Principal (K4-12)
Chanise Greene	Lead Teacher (K4-12)
Lavender Izard	Lead Teacher (K4-12)

Description of my first visit

My first visit to FJHS brought me to a neighborhood in Central City which was even more disheveled than the neighborhood in which GHS was located. FJHS was a true church-school as it is physically connected to a church that carries the same name as the school. The school is housed in a building which looked to be from the early days of the 20th century and has three stories and a steep shingled roof.

I found parking on the street about a block from the front doors of the school. The street was lined with parked cars on both sides which forced all the traffic in both directions to yield and pull to the side to allow the oncoming car to proceed. As I walked to the entrance the students were out in the parking lot of the school which was paved with blacktop, painted with lines for basketball, foursquare, hopscotch, and other games. The parking lot was encircled by fencing which extended at least 15 feet into the air. The joyful sounds of students playing at recess filled the air.

I mounted the two flights of concrete steps which led to the front door. I opened the first set of doors and needed to take a moment to allow my eyes to adjust to the poorly lit entryway.

There was a camera in the upper part of the room staring down at me and a buzzer next to the door that had to be pressed to gain access. I pressed the buzzer and nothing happened. I waited a minute or two and reluctantly pressed the buzzer again. A gruff female voice came from somewhere (I could not see the speaker) and asked what I wanted. I told the voice that I had an appointment with Veronica Carter (the building principal). The voice seemed to not know who that was. I restated my request, careful to clearly enunciate the name. Apparently, in addition to enunciating the name I had spoken more loudly because the voice told me I did not have to shout and that I could come in for my meeting with Mrs. "C."

I stepped through the glass security door and into the school hallway. It was an older building with high ceilings and it was very poorly illuminated. My eyes were still in the process of adjusting when a student and his mother exited the main office, an office shared by the lower school and the high school, and headed toward me. The mother exchanged a quizzical greeting – I guessed that since I was a new face she was wondering why I was there. The office was up a third flight of tiled stairs and then once through the office door – down a flight of stairs into the office waiting room.

I met the author of "the voice" who turned out to be a very pleasant woman probably in her early 60s. She explained that Mrs. "C" was meeting with a student and would join me shortly. She pointed to a chair and I sat down. The office was a virtual beehive of activity. Parents, students, and teachers were coming and going. I had apparently arrived at the end of recess and it was a popular time to visit the office. The students were dressed in khaki or navy blue pants (not-jeans) with three or four colors of polo shirts (red, white, and green, as I recall). The boys tucked their shirts in and had belts on their pants. The girls apparently were not required to tuck in their shirts. It was during February and I noticed there was a sweater vest

option which seemed to require “oxford” button-down long-sleeved shirts for either the boys or the girls. FJHS was a K4-12 school and the variety of ages “weighted” the school to seem more like an elementary school than a high school.

After about ten minutes, Mrs. Carter emerged with a warm greeting. We knew each other from a schools’ association board of directors on which we both served. She offered to show me around the school. She led me up to the top floor where we started the tour. The building was in the shape of a rectangle and we walked around the hallway that was in the middle of the rectangle. The floors were covered with dark green and blue shades of linoleum tiles which were under a glossy wax. The building was very well kept but it was obviously very old and the hallways were dark and not very inviting.

We wandered through the building stopping at nearly every classroom. When we entered the students would immediately stop what they were doing, turn and face us, and exclaim in unison, “Good afternoon, Mrs. C!” Veronica would respond, “Good afternoon, boys and girls. Please have a seat. I have a visitor with me today . . .” and she would tell them a bit about me and my research project.

One observation that stuck with me during my tour was that the students in the classrooms did not often seem to be engaged in the learning process. There was always a teacher in the room, but students in most of the rooms we visited seemed to be working independently, working individually with the teacher or aide, or were watching television (or a video/DVD) when we entered the classrooms. In two of the middle school rooms the television was playing popular Disney full-length movies and the students were either napping or watching the movie.

Although I was aware of the poorly lighted hallways, I could see the obvious pride the principal and administrators held for their school. Their pride was clearly written in smiles on

their faces. The students also appeared to be happy. After the tour, Veronica led me to a room on the second floor with a Spartan décor. The entire room, perhaps 30 feet by 20 feet held a single table and two chairs. In the style of the older building, the ceiling was very high, at least 15 feet. We sat down to begin the interview and Mrs. Carter left the door to the room open to one of the hallways. Shortly after we began the interview – a student “discovered” Mrs. “C,” interrupted our interview and asked what the student felt was a critical question. Mrs. “C” was extremely gracious and patient with the student. Though she was meeting with me, she completely focused all her attention on the child and answered her question as thoroughly as possible. Only after the student departed did Mrs. “C” refocus on my interview questions. This practice of interruptions continued throughout our hour-long interview and Mrs. “C” never became frustrated or tired of the students’ interruptions.

When I departed the school after the interview and walked into the bright sunshine, I reflected on what at first blush seemed to be a loving, accepting, and close community. The faculty, students, parents, and staff with which I interacted during my brief visit seemed on the surface to be quite satisfied with FJHS.

Motivation behind the school and how it evolved

FJHS is a 4K-12 school. The school started with a couple lower grades and then added a grade each year until it was time to add high school grades. This study is focused on new high schools and my questions to the principal, Veronica Carter, and two lead teachers, Chanise Greene, and Lavender Izard (pseudonyms) were about the motivation behind the high school and how it evolved. They all were in agreement that the motivation derived from how the school evolved. When the school finally offered eighth grade the students and families began to insist on developing a high school so students could finish their schooling in a similar educational

atmosphere. Apparently at least four of the long-time students threatened (in jest) that they would be returning for a ninth grade year even if they did not begin a high school! They were so satisfied with the school's culture and spiritual formation that they were in effect refusing to leave after eighth grade.

How did the school go about developing the mission and purpose?

The process for developing a mission and purpose was very simple for FJHS. They simply asked the church pastor what she expected and she told the school leaders. There was no debate or discussion. It began with the church parishioners asking for a Christian school culture that would meet the academic needs of their children. Christian morals, values, and beliefs dovetailed into traditional education values to develop lifelong learners. Recognizing the difficulties of the urban setting, they also focused on instilling educational rigor which would allow for matriculation into a university or college of their choice. These principles became their mission. The school principal, Veronica Carter expressed, "We believe that . . . aside from my belief that Jesus is the Son, you know, our Christian belief, we believe that every child can learn, but they learn differently . . . and that we have a responsibility to find out how each one learns and then approach it in that way." What the church pastor decreed was put into practice by her compliant flock. School personnel did not seem conflicted on the topic nor did they express any angst over their lack of control. They had their direction and they were giving their best efforts to successfully carry out the mission and vision.

Core Values and Beliefs

The three interviewees at FJHS shared a common theme but gave me fairly unique answers to this question. As related above, Veronica, the first interviewee started with the elements of her Christian faith which she summarized quickly and then said that we believe

every child can learn, but they learn differently. She went on to say it was their responsibility to discover how each one learns and then approach them that way. She said they also incorporated a multiple intelligence approach in this effort. She said they “meet learning needs.”

The second interviewee once again began with the essential elements of her Christian faith and how what they believe and worship in church transfers into the school. Then she said that high academic standards are set and mentioned college-preparatory as their goal and mission. She said that “we” provide the curriculum for the students to be able to go to college. She added that it is their belief that students need to be well rounded and capable problem solvers. They have to read well, write well, and speak well. They have to develop into good persons. She said it was all about being a person of integrity in addition to being well educated.

The third interviewee was less articulate but more passionate in her response to the question. She focused her answer through a lens of love. She said it all must be done for love. How we interact with each other, how “our” love for the Lord is what pushes “us” to do our best in work, homework, in schooling, and so on. The students at FJHS should want to represent God and Jesus to the best of their abilities. She added this phrase in summary, “Pray, pray, pray. Praise, praise, and more praise!”

The Design and Selection of Ceremonies

In this section I discuss the design and selection of four ceremonies established at FJHS. FJHS is a very small high school and all of the ceremonies described in this case study are shared with and part of the K4-8 section of the school with the single exception of the high school graduation (in the lower school there are also eighth grade and kindergarten graduation ceremonies). FJHS has regular ceremonies that they believe are important to the school culture.

They have a daily worship and praise service, a student-of-the-month ceremony, a quarterly honor roll ceremony, and a high-school graduation ceremony.

Design

In each instance the principal conceives and initially plans the ceremony and then submits it to the church pastor for review, modification, and final approval. As the principal is conceiving the ceremony, she is acutely aware of the need to obtain final approval from the pastor, so she is mindful of this as she considers the ceremony. The principal of FJHS, Veronica Carter, expressed considerable respect for her pastor. The design process of these ceremonies is not contentious; rather she seemed to be expressing a happy symbiotic partnership, in which she enjoys her subordinate role.

Selection

Decisions about which events to include are also the responsibility of the school principal, and again the church pastor reviews and provides consent before moving forward. Ms. Carter repeatedly cited the need for building self-esteem as a seminal rationale for the various ceremonies.

Daily Worship and Praise Service

Each morning, at the beginning of the school day, students gather in the church sanctuary for a worship and praise service. The church pastor leads the service. A theme for each service is derived from the church calendar. Students are taught why they are supposed to praise, tithe, and take communion. During the services they also grow in their understanding of the foundations of their faith. They also explore the purpose of their Christian foundation. As the school-year progresses they incorporate the students into the worship and praise service as they begin to actually lead the service, contribute with their musical instruments and vocal talents. Some of the

students will participate at the lectern by reading the scripture passages for the service. The service usually lasts about 30 minutes after which the students report to class.

Student-of-the-Month

Working in conjunction with the federally-funded Title IA program (a program which sets aside significant funds to support the parental involvement of students who participate in the Title I assistance program for students struggling with reading or math), in an effort to involve parents, they recognize a Student-of-the-Month. The parents and extended families receive invitations to lunch with the principal. It is a special lunch honoring the student for his or her improved scholarship. The lunch is funded by Title IA funds.

Quarterly Honor Roll Ceremony

The ceremony has varied over the years and has often been held in the morning. However, the most recent version was held at night and dubbed “An Evening with the Stars,” this academic quarter concluded with a night of fun. Parents received invitations and were encouraged to bring their cameras.

Students were notified if they qualified for one of several categories of honor. They were added to the honor roll with a grade point average between 3.0 and 3.49. If they earn a 3.5 or higher, then they are on a list called, “the Principal’s Pride.” They have an award for “Most Improved,” and for character in the categories of, “Person of Integrity” and “Hallelujah Praiser.”

The ceremony is held in the church sanctuary. Parents are encouraged to line the sides of the center aisle of the sanctuary with their cameras, in effect becoming the paparazzi. It so happens that the center aisle of the sanctuary is adorned with a plush red carpet and it all adds to the ambiance, creating a Hollywood-like celebrity red carpet walk. All awardees are “called forth” on the public address system. The principal explained she modeled her public address call from

the *Price Is Right* television show. She would call the name of the student, cite the award category, and follow it up with, “COME ON DOWN HERE!”

As the awardee traverses the red-carpet aisle, the students, faculty, and parents honor them with “little chants and cheers.” For example, the principal announces the category, “Honorable Conduct” and the student’s name with the invitation to “COME ON DOWN HERE!” The assembled students, faculty, and parents respond in unison, “HONORABLE CONDUCT?” and the principal repeats on the public address system, “Honorable Conduct!” The assembly repeats, “HONORABLE CONDUCT?” and then answers themselves with “Awardee’s first and last Name - HONORABLE CONDUCT!” This continues while the awardee is being photographed by the “paparazzi” on the red carpet until the awardee arrives at the front. Another chant/cheer specifically mentioned was, “most IM-prooooooved.” The awardee is then given a certificate and a small monetary incentive gift which varies in amount but is about five dollars.

High School Graduation

As I was interviewing Veronica Carter, FJHS was in the planning stages for the 2010 high school graduation. They had already decided to hold the graduation off campus. Unlike the eighth grade graduation, high school graduation has always been held off campus rather than in the church sanctuary. Veronica said, “We have been pretty much all over the city.” This year graduation would be at the Sheridan Hotel. The actual ceremony would be in the park (near the Sheridan). The students would wear “cap and gown” and the faculty their academic regalia. Last year, the students processed in to “Pomp and Circumstance.” This year, she said, the students were still deciding on their processional music.

Veronica said that the students “actually create their program.” She did report that the program was to be reviewed by the church pastor and school administration before being

finalized. The ceremony would include a section where each student described their memories of school life, their thanks to influential people in their lives, and their future goals. There would be addresses by the salutatorian, valedictorian, and the church pastor. College scholarships would be announced and presented. Finally, the diplomas would be conferred and the ceremony would conclude with a benediction.

The Design and Selection of Traditions and Rituals

In this section I discuss the design and selection of three traditions or rituals imbedded at FJHS. The three are Word-of-the-Day, Faculty Lunches with the Pastor, and Faculty Barbeques. It is important to note that the relatively small size of FJHS and the shared facility with the lower school results in shared traditions or rituals throughout both the lower and upper schools.

Word of the Day

The faculty came together in an effort to emphasize academics and decided to inaugurate a Word-of-the-Day tradition which routinely happens two or three times each week. Each grade level focuses on its own word. The students participate in researching the word, learning what the word is, and then being able to use the word properly in a sentence. The students have begun to anticipate the word of the day and eagerly anticipate the process. This was cited as “a tradition . . . that is being built.”

Faculty Lunches with the Pastor

Occasionally the pastor invites a selected group of teachers to lunch with her. She selects times that coincide with holidays. The teachers are relieved of their lunch duties and classroom responsibilities so that they can gather with the pastor for lunch. This time is considered a special honor by the teachers.

Faculty Barbeques

Three or four times a year the faculty itself will gather in someone's backyard or home for a barbeque or dinner. The meal has evolved routinely as a potluck style with everyone bringing a dish to share. This is a coveted time of building collegiality.

Stories

I asked Lavender IZARD what stories she tells about the school and she told the following generic recruiting story: "It's a great school . . . having been here for a few years now, I can tell [customers] . . . it's always a positive place. It usually comes out of someone who's feeling discouraged about something that is going on with their own children, or with the school that they have had their children in, then I can tell them that . . . in this place I've had the opportunity to see children grow and develop, and that's the great thing about being in the same place, and we can see them mature and sometimes we have expectations of it all should be immediate, and everything doesn't have to be immediate. Change happens over time, we just [got to] keep encouraging them, keep sending them the . . . messages [of] positivity to the kids."

Lavender also told this story: "I did work in the high school for quite some time, and I remember one [student] that at the beginning of the high school, of it was just so difficult, just challenging, challenged on everything, and you know, the love just kept getting poured in, it got so much better to the point that after he graduated and you know, he's in college, he wanted to come back and he wanted to give back, and he was grateful for all the work poured into him. And that's just the greatest thing, you know. I think of my first impression, to what I saw coming back – it's just a whole different person . . . so it's great to see."

Chanise Greene told this story which she would relay to anyone considering enrolling their students in FJHS: "We've been a church school since 1990. We kept the numbers small on

purpose. We are a Christian school first. We have praise and worship every day. We greet our kids with a morning hug at the door. If there is a problem that we need to discuss, we'll pray with them as they confide in us, for the direction and we work that with [the pastor]. We have high standards, and we know that what is usually an A in other schools is not an A here. So a D here is 70% and up, so it's passing. Anything below a 70 is an F for us. We strive for kids to go beyond getting a grade of B, 90% is most schools might be an A, but it's a B here. So we set the standard pretty high."

Veronica Carter told a story about some former students: "We have a pretty high [percentage] going on to college. We do have one of our [former students who] was a Marquette student, did a double [major] with [a] political aspect, and he went to Washington as part of Marquette. I can't recall exactly what he is doing there. We also have [famous person] who is a singer/songwriter, and doing quite well. He wrote the score to [a famous and popular movie]. He [comes back to visit] all the time. He is from Central City and he goes to our church."

Symbols

The following symbols were mentioned by the interviewees: The eagle, the color purple, and hugging students at the door each day. The eagle has become the school mascot. Originally, the school mascot was a warrior, but after deciding warriors had significant negative connotations, the school held a contest among the students to name and draw a new school mascot. The drawing sealed the deal and they are now the eagles. Chanise pointed out that "eagles soar" and "eagles fly above the storm."

Purple is the school color. Lavender mentioned that, "purple is the color of royalty and we talk about the kids being royal. You are royal, you come from a royal lineage . . . you know we are pre-dated for great things."

Lavender described the school policy of having school leaders meet each student at the door every morning and extend a hug. The hug symbolizes the beginning the day with love. Lavender said, “. . . we already know that our kids are coming from many different places, many different backgrounds. They could have experienced their whole life with who knows what before coming to us, so we always want to start our day with love, because we’re hoping to shatter whatever negativity they might have before they came to see us, and if they have positivity, then we want to add to it.” Most of the students want the hugs, if any are unwilling, the school leaders verbalize that they love the student as they walk by and eventually they start participating in the morning hugs.

Specifically Planned Elements

The following elements specifically planned were mentioned by the interviewees: Bishops Bucks, praise & worship, and being a multiple intelligence school. The leader of the FJHS church enjoys being personally involved in the life of the school. Her title is “Bishop” so one day as she was interacting with students at the school she instituted “Bishops Bucks” which could be earned at the whim of a teacher or staff member by students who were obedient, completed all their work, or some other commendable action. The Bishops Bucks are able to be used at the school store at the end of the week.

Each day specifically begins with praise and worship at the church. This has been instituted intentionally and teachers often observe that the morning praise and worship will lead to students breaking out in song in the hallways or on the playground essentially extending the praise and worship throughout the day.

School leaders have also intentionally worked to help the school faculty encourage students’ success in multiple intelligence categories. The focus has been intentionally to

understand and acknowledge musical/rhythmic and bodily/kinesthetic intelligence. This focus was intentional as the school leaders realized how many students in the school exhibited Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder symptoms. In the opinion of the staff those particular students were much better able to demonstrate their intelligence in musical/rhythmic or bodily/kinesthetic ways. They count this focus as the most salient success of the school.

Summary

Table 4.4 summarizes the information provided by FJHS respondents.

Table 0.4 Summary of FJHS School Culture Development

Cultural Aspects Examined	Elements Present
Motivation behind the school and how it evolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for a high school of similar quality to the K4-8 school they had previously founded
Development of FJHS mission and purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the church pastor decreed was put into place without discussion, debate, or questioning
Core Values and Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children can learn but they learn differently; multiple intelligence approach to meet learning needs • Christian faith informs students' integrity in the context of rigorous curriculum and college-prep school culture
Design and Selection of Ceremonies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily Worship and Praise Service • Student-of-the-month Ceremony • Quarterly Honor Roll Ceremony • High School Graduation
Traditions and Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word of the Day • Faculty Lunches with the Pastor • Faculty Barbeques
Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change happens over time and we have to keep encouraging students with positivity • Difficult student who comes back to give back after graduation • High standards as a recruitment story • Stories of several former students doing well in college
Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Eagle • The Color Purple • Hugging students at the door each day
Specifically Planned Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bishop's Bucks • Praise and Worship • Being a Multiple Intelligence School

Case Three: Faith Lutheran High School

Faith Lutheran High School (FLHS) is a private school located about 40 minutes outside of Central City in the middle of a vast rural farming area. The principal, Jeff Smothers and the development director / teacher, Tom Kohl have been striving to plan FLHS since its opening in August of 2001. They described the surrounding rural area as having mostly middle and upper class families, virtually no crime, and relatively positive academic results in the other schools within a 45 minute driving distance. The new school was joint initiative of several Lutheran congregations within 45 minutes of the location each of which operated their own K-8 Lutheran school.

FLHS was launched in 2001 with freshman and sophomore classes (no other grades) totaling 39 students. In subsequent years the enrollment grew as they added grades and additional students until FLHS reached a high water mark of 198 in 2013 (the last year of this study).

When FLHS was launched in 2001, it was initially staffed by two administrators (principal and development director/teacher) and four teachers (math, English, science, and social studies). Today the staff has grown to include an athletic director, a couple administrative assistants, an admissions director / marketing director and a total of 17 teachers (only four of which are full-time teachers).

The first year of FLHS the only two sports they offered were boys and girls basketball. The coaches were all volunteers. In 2013-14 (the last year of this study), FLHS offered boys cross country, football, soccer, basketball, baseball, golf, and track and field. FLHS offered girls,

volleyball, field hockey, soccer, basketball, softball, and track and field. Table 4.5 provides a list of respondents and the positions they held at Faith Lutheran High School.

Table 0.5 Respondents for Faith Lutheran High School

Respondents	Positon Held
Jeff Smothers	Principal
Tom Kohl	Development Director / Teacher

Description of my first visit

FLHS is located outside the boundaries of Central City, requiring nearly a 45-minute drive into the country to reach its location. It stands in the middle of several hundred acres of Midwestern farmland. The parking lot is expansive. The school is all one floor – no premium on real estate in this location! The school is also surrounded by expansive athletic fields – one for football, another for soccer, another for a baseball diamond and yet another for a softball field.

I wondered to myself if any of the students at FLHS would even qualify for free or reduced lunch. I drove into the parking lot and followed the directions to the door which was open for visitors. I was arriving at the end of the day in the spring and most of the students had exited the building and headed home for the day or they were busily engaged at after-school sports practice. The door to which I was directed was one of the back doors – near the gym. When I entered I could hear the loud music emanating from an open door next to the gym. I needed to pass by the door and as I did I could see approximately 40 high school boys and girls enthusiastically lifting weights. This room was clearly one of the places to hang out after school in this rural community.

The students were not dressed in their school clothes and unfortunately during this visit I am not sure I saw their typical school clothing. According to the student handbook, students are not required to wear uniforms. They are, however, expected to dress modestly. Shorts are

permitted in warm weather months, though not if frayed or made of denim. Boys must wear shirts tucked in.

I wandered down several halls following the signs to the main office. When I entered the large office reception area – I was alone. I called out my presence and the principal called back from one of the rooms where he was typing on his computer keyboard.

Jeff Smothers was seated at his desk. He motioned me into the room and waved at one of the overstuffed chairs while he returned his focus to the keyboard. He was typing furiously and I had a moment to take in the room. His desk, several tables, and expansive file cabinets were all buried in massive paper piles. There were an abundance of athletic trophies haphazardly strewn throughout the room. Some were displayed in obvious display locations, while others were lying on their sides or backs perhaps serving as paperweights for the massive piles. I could not help feeling that I was in the presence of an excessively busy man.

While Jeff typed, he managed to carry on a conversation with me. We had not met in person before, but we discovered we had several common acquaintances. While he typed he motioned to a banner hanging on his door which contained the image of what I took to be a school mascot. He asked me what I thought of the image – telling me that he just received this mockup from a printer and they were deep in the process of selecting a new mascot.

Eventually, Jeff stopped typing, closed his laptop, and squared his body to face me across his paper-strewn desk. We would spend the next hour and a half conducting the interview Jeff gave me for this study.

When our interview ended, Jeff picked up his office phone and placed a call to Tom Kohl, his Director of Development, part-time teacher, and more importantly my next interview at FLHS. We continued to make small talk until there was a knock on his office door and I was

introduced to Tom. We left Jeff's office and walked down several hallways until we reached Tom's office.

Tom's office stood in stark contrast to Jeff's. Tom had a single desk with two plastic chairs. Instead of piles of paper strewn all over the room and piled on his desk, it was immaculately clean with only a few items claiming space. He had what appeared to be a wire mesh inbox, a clean writing blotter/calendar, a telephone, a coffee cup filled with pens and pencils, and a picture of what I assumed to be his family.

Tom was an individual that gave off airs of being a distinguished gentleman. I wondered a couple times during our interview – during which he graciously participated – if he were a true “volunteer” or if perhaps he had been “drafted” by Jeff to fulfill my request to interview more than just Jeff at Faith Lutheran. I never found myself wondering about that during any of the other interviews at either of the other schools – but it was a pervasive feeling in this instance. Tom politely answered my questions for the next 45 minutes or so – but when we were finished – he quickly said goodbye and allowed me to find my own way out of the school.

I wandered down a couple hallways looking into the empty classrooms. They were very attractive, new, clean, well-equipped classrooms. Each room had one wall that was an exterior wall lined with expansive windows. Even during this spring evening, it must have been about 7:30 p.m., there was plenty of ambient light to see without the need to flick on the lights. All the desks looked to be less than a couple years old. The square footage vastly exceeded the requirements of the 18 desks I counted in most rooms.

After my short excursion I realized I was turned around and needed to ask directions of one of the janitors to find my way back to the exit by my car. As I reached the exit by the gym – I noticed there was a vibrant group of students still hanging out in the gym playing pickup games

of basketball and wandering in and out of the weight room. In an area which probably served as a place for concessions during games there were several lunch-room-style folding tables filled with students working on homework or just talking and hanging out. I noticed several adults intermixed around the gym and concessions area that were probably teachers. I assumed this was a duty they were assigned.

I exited the building and located my car in the expansive parking lot. Most of the cars parked in the faculty area had departed but the student parking lot was still quite full as the afterschool activities continued into the night.

Motivation behind the school and how it evolved

The two interviewees were closely aligned in their answer to this question. Both mentioned the significant population of Lutherans in their immediate area and how over a 20-year period of consideration, there emerged a movement of like-minded people who were members of the several area congregations who wanted to provide a Lutheran high school option that was significantly closer than the existing Lutheran options which required 30 minutes (or longer) of additional driving each way. They both mentioned that while the high school had a Lutheran “DNA,” the mission was to a larger Christian community and any families that were attracted to the school’s mission were welcome. It should be noted that some Christian schools require a signature from parent(s)/guardian(s) affirming their faith as a condition of enrollment. FLHS is a Christian school that does not require an affirmation of faith as a condition of enrollment and therefore their motivation to launch a new Lutheran high school was broader than the need to minister to the Lutheran families of the area. They were also looking to serve the broader population with a Christian school option.

How did the school go about developing the mission and purpose?

The two interviewees at FLHS did not describe an intricate process to develop Faith's mission and purpose but rather they deferred to the standard model of Lutheran education with which both had a long affiliation before FLHS was inaugurated. The planting of FLHS in its rural location was not seen as an entirely new entity to be imagined and evolved, but rather another Lutheran high school in a new location. Their objective was to replicate a form of education that was largely successful in similar environments in a new location to serve the needs of a growing population interested in a private Christian high school. One interviewee posited that when you look at Christian school mission statements they are roughly the same and that FLHS focused on being servant leaders to the church, community, and families.

Core Values and Beliefs

The two interviewees were in agreement about FLHS core values and beliefs. They both saw the core values and beliefs as emanating from their mission. They affirmed that they see Christ and the gospel as central to everything at the school. They work hard to develop servant leadership based on that premise. They desire the faculty, staff, and administration to serve as role models for the students as they live out quality servant leadership in their lives and careers.

Beyond the faith values they both focused second on providing a solid core of academically rigorous and challenging curriculum and they focused on providing a solid extracurricular core of experiences for the students. It was also emphasized that the priority of these areas and keeping the priority in the correct order over time was perhaps a fourth core value or belief. In summary they saw Christ, academics, and extracurricular experiences as their core values and the importance of keeping the priority in that order.

The Design and Selection of Ceremonies

In this section I discuss the design and selection of six ceremonies established at FLHS. These ceremonies are Opening Day, Biweekly Chapel Service, Academic and Music Awards/honors, Athletic Awards, Feast Day, and Graduation.

Design

Jeff Smothers is the founding principal at FLHS and led the design of each of the ceremonies with the exception of the biweekly chapel service. When describing the design of the ceremonies he always used the collective “we” but stopped short of specifically naming his accomplices.

He was very detailed when he described the feast day ceremony, and it seemed clear he was very proud of “stealing” the idea and how well it has been received in the school community. He credited another school with the idea and volunteered that, “Everything we’ve got here, I stole.”

To create the biweekly chapel service he deferred to his Lutheran synod and chaplain for the design.

Selection

When I asked about the selection of the specific ceremonies he had to think for a minute. He said they made their selections “seasonally.” He said the first year kind of happened and after the fact they realized that they wanted to include the ceremonies they have continued to hold. The academic, music, and athletic awards are timed with the three sports seasons, fall, winter, and spring. He said the academic and music awards didn’t happen the first year, only the athletic awards. Starting in the second year they added the academic and music awards to the list. During the first year they made most of the academic and music awards at the end of one of the chapel

services. It was in the second year they realized it would be more special if they held the awards in the evening and sent special invitations to the parents. However, after a year of evening awards ceremonies, they realized that only the students who were receiving the awards and their parents were attending. Given that data, and desiring the entire student body to participate in honoring the academic, music, and athletic awardees, they reversed course. They returned the various award ceremonies to the end of selected chapel services during the school day. Jeff said, “[they] evolved more than [they were] planned.”

Regarding “feast day,” Jeff said the school he stole it from did the event just before Christmas break but that he didn’t want to do it exactly the same way as the other school so he modified it and held it the Monday before Thanksgiving.

Opening Day

They begin the school year by inviting the parents to an Opening Day Service. Jeff described it as a “glorified” chapel service. After listing it as one of his school’s ceremonies, he confessed, “It’s not that big of a deal as far as a ceremony.”

Biweekly Chapel Service

They hold a school chapel service twice each week. They are a seminally important focal point of each week. They emphasize the importance to the students and work to help them see how valuable the chapel services are to the school, faculty, and administration. One of the points of emphasis is that the students demonstrate respectfulness to the scriptures and for the chapel service itself.

Academic and Music Awards/honors

The academic and music awards are presented as part of one of the chapel services. It is important to the faculty and administration that the students see that awards and honors are worthy of being part of the seminally important chapel service.

Athletic Awards

Jeff pointed out that athletes are often honored in the local media and therefore need less of a value added emphasis from the school. However, the student-athletes receive their athletic awards as part of one of the biweekly chapel services timed at the end of the athletic season.

Feast Day

On the Monday before Thanksgiving, instead of having several lunch hours, all the students eat at the same time. The schedule is modified so that instead of a 30-minute lunch there is an hour scheduled. FLHS does not offer a hot lunch program so on typical schooldays students bring sack lunches. On “Feast Day” volunteers cook ten turkeys and all the trimmings. The event symbolizes the thankfulness and gratefulness to God for abundant blessings. It has become one of the highlights of the school year and school culture.

There is no requirement for student participation in “Feast Day and they can still bring in their own sack lunch and opt out of the feast. The administration and pastors of the participating congregations recruit 20 to 25 people to cook and serve the feast. At first there were only a small number of participants (the first year 39 kids, the second year 60), but now nearly every student joins in. With over 160 students feasting the event has become a permanent fixture at FLHS.

The students have now granted “Feast Day” a special status where they are heard to comment that they don’t want to miss “Feast Day.” Some parents take advantage of the short Thanksgiving week and begin their Thanksgiving vacation early opting out of three days of

school that week. Since “Feast Day” has become a fixture, students have been asking their parents if they can go to school on that week and hold off on their vacation plans.

Graduation

The graduation ceremony at FLHS at the time of this interview was still controversial in the Lutheran synod. According to Jeff, the controversy is between a graduation ceremony that has a spiritual focus (like the one he has helped institute at FLHS) versus one that is an official worship service (as several other Lutheran schools in the synod). Jeff considers himself a bit of an innovator in this regard trying to create a graduation ceremony that bridges the gap between the traditional Lutheran family attending his school and the several other families that value the Christian perspective of the school, but are not members of a Lutheran church.

The ceremony is, in Jeff’s words, a “spiritual service, but I’m not going to call it a worship service.” There is prayer, singing, student speeches, and a keynote speaker. The school-year themes for the first nine years are on the wall of the gym where the ceremony is held. At one point in the ceremony, while nice background music sets the ambiance, all the graduates have submitted four or five pictures of themselves growing up and they are projected onto the walls of the gym.

When it comes time for the diplomas to be granted, and the graduates ascend the platform when their names are announced and family and friends are allowed to cheer. Jeff focused on this point. He said that other Lutheran graduations which are cast as a worship service would forbid cheering as a disruption to the solemnity of the service. Jeff sees graduation as a celebration and encourages the families and students to celebrate before God with their cheers.

The faculty and administrators “robe up” in their academic regalia and the students wear caps and gowns. There is actually a dress code for the graduation. Though not a formal worship

service most guests and family members dress for the occasion in business attire. Students are forbidden to wear jeans, shorts, and T-shirts. The dress code is the same for students during regular school days.

The Design and Selection of Traditions and Rituals

In this section I discuss the design and selection of ten traditions or rituals embedded at FLHS. They are Homecoming Week which includes Powder Puff Football, Alumni Day, Bonfire, and the Homecoming Dance; Watermelon Bowl, “Mother Faith,” Senior Skip Day, and the Senior Prank.

Homecoming Week

Homecoming week has become a focal point of building the traditions at FLHS. Embedded within homecoming week are several traditions or rituals as well. There is Powder Puff Football, Alumni Day, Bonfire, and the Homecoming Dance.

Powder Puff Football

According to Jeff Smothers, Powder Puff Football has become the biggest event of the year in the minds of the girls at FLHS. Some of the girls who attend FLHS who do not mind getting dirty and physical divide into teams and play a game of flag football. They are coached by some of the boys who play on the football team. Often, the flag football rules are discarded in favor of actual tackles. The crowd cheers but all the fun is often interrupted by a twisted ankle or other injury. The freshmen and sophomores beat the juniors and seniors the past school year for the first time. It was a huge event and Jeff said, “. . . the entire school was out there to watch the game.”

Alumni Day

“Alumni Day” is a developing tradition since there are relatively few alumni of the new high school. The tradition has being started very intentionally by the administration as part of building an alumni database – especially as future benefactors of their alma matter. The morning of the homecoming football game, which is always scheduled for a Saturday afternoon, the alumni are invited to a pre-game event which includes treating them to food and beverages. They are given preferential seating at the game and have seating sections formed around their graduation years. They are introduced as a group during halftime over the public address system. After the game they are encouraged to attend the homecoming dance.

Bonfire

The Thursday night before the homecoming game, FLHS holds a huge bonfire on their expansive property. In remarking that it was a huge bonfire, Jeff bragged that the flames will shoot up 70 or 80 feet in the air! The current students and any alumni (they are invited and several live in the area) may stay up most of the night at the bonfire. The cheerleaders lead cheers, the football team attends and are introduced, and the team captains and the coaches make some inspirational speeches. Sometimes, the crowd sings the school fight song. Both faculty and parents are there chaperoning and they plan to cover the whole night just in case some would stay through. It has intentionally been cast as a family event to include younger siblings, parents, and grandparents too.

Dance

The homecoming dance occurs after the Saturday football game. It is at the school in a decorated gym, with chaperones, and like the bonfire it is intentionally designed as a family

event – all are welcome. Though the majority of the attendees are students, a significant number of parents and families do attend the event.

Watermelon Bowl

At the end of the August football pre-season training camp, the last day is an inter-squad scrimmage event. The parents are invited and they all bring a watermelon and crack them open at the end of the game. Since the weather in late August is usually hot and humid, the watermelon really hits the spot for the players (and their families). It has become such a keynote event that the parents get T-shirts made for the event and so throughout the year you will see students wearing “Watermelon Bowl” T-shirts.

“Mother Faith”

This tradition fell into the “evolved on its own” category. One of FLHS’s perennial football rivals has become the “arch enemy” of FLHS. In calling them their “Arch Enemy” they seem to do it “tongue-in-cheek” manner, since both schools belong to the same Lutheran synod and have fond appreciation for each other’s faculty. During our interview Jeff reiterated his appreciation and respect for several of this “Arch Enemy’s” faculty and administration.

No one seems to know where they found the picture, but early in the rivalry, someone brought a big framed portrait of an old lady which they dubbed, “Mother Faith.” They invented the rumor that Mother Faith founded FLHS. When playing their Arch Enemy they would always bring Mother Faith to the game – home or away. They made T-shirts with Mother Faith on them and set about winning the game for Mother Faith. As the years progressed, it did not matter how successful either team had been with other games, the game was played with all the energy both teams could muster. FLHS always rallies to win the game for “Mother Faith.”

Senior Skip Day

The seniors do not just arrange this day in secret as it seems often happens in some schools. Instead the seniors send an official delegation to the principal and negotiate an approved “Senior Skip Day.” Parents struggled with the day more than the school personnel. Some parents would forbid their students from skipping and ask the principal if it was an approved or an unapproved day. The principal struggled with that as well because he knew that if it became an officially approved day – then the students would not feel it was special to “skip” as it would just be another vacation day. So the principal insisted to parents that it was “unofficially official.” He tells parents’ participation will not hurt students’ grades, but that they will be marked absent. He also tells the parents it was still their responsibility whether their children spent the day together away from school.

The seniors started the first couple years by having a breakfast at a local restaurant. Jeff told me that the first couple years he met them at the restaurant and had breakfast with them on Senior Skip Day. Some students said, “This is weird . . . how could the principal be here?” However, Jeff said, “But it is who we are. It is just funny.”

Senior Prank

Jeff said that a couple years ago they caught the seniors in the middle of trying to pull off a senior prank. They caught them about 11:00 o’clock at night. The students were surprised at the response which was to say, “Okay, this is good, now clean it up!” “What?!” the students asked, (not right now). Yes, the administrator said, “Clean it up; we’re not going to disrupt the school day.”

Jeff reported that during the current school year the administration did not happen to catch them in the act. The prank was to scatter Rice Krispies all over the floor. Jeff admitted it

was “funny” that the students never consider vandalism as a prank, but something cute or bothersome without causing lasting damage to the buildings. After they pulled off the Rice Krisipes prank the seniors asked if they could help clean up. Jeff responded, “Can we help clean up? No, you’re going to clean up on your own.”

One year the seniors removed some bolts from some doors so the school would not open. The seniors asked if he would like them to show him where they hid the bolts. Jeff told them he did not want them to show him where the bolts were, he wanted them to get the bolts and rehang the doors so they worked like new. Jeff celebrated the pranks because he saw it develop a spirit of camaraderie and because they kept selecting relatively harmless pranks and that they did not resist cleaning up the mess. He elected to support the spirit of camaraderie as opposed to throwing down the gauntlet and starting a war of escalating potentially damaging pranks in the future. The school community now expects a senior prank and parents know how the administration is likely to respond to the pranks that are relatively harmless. That has become another FLHS tradition.

Stories

I asked Jeff Smothers what stories he tells about the school and he told the following generic recruiting story: “They ask you, ‘What makes us different than a public school?’ or, ‘What makes you different than most schools?’ My first response – pretty much a pat answer is ‘we discipline in love and forgive.’ That’s the biggest difference. We have sports, we have academics, a lot of things you’ll find, but one thing you’ll find us doing is . . . pick kids up, we expect our kids to fall, we expect them to fall short of the glory of God, but we will pick them [up], dust them off, and set them on their way, just like we’d all want . . . it’s like our Lord does for us. I mean that’s our mantra here [embedded] in our faculty, we’re very student orientated.

This is a place about and for students, not about faculty, not about administration. We built the school for kids, that's what we're here for. So . . . I think [it] is important that we understand that . . . first and foremost we are here for our student body. I preach it to my faculty, constantly. They would all say the same thing, and I've actually been hearing them repeat that to me now and then . . . and I'm smiling, because it's not about us."

When asked about the success of his graduates he told the following story: "We have kids at [major university], we have kids at [another major university], you know, highly respected institutions around here. We have kids that are National Merit Scholars, those kinds of things, Service Academy kids. I think the proudest stories we tell are kids that are at seminary, you know. Our kids are in seminary now. And while that's not always the best recruiting tool, that our kids are becoming Lutheran teachers and pastors . . . I tell the faculty . . . this speaks volumes for you, because they go through and say, 'we want to be them.' That's what they're doing. Okay, that's who we want to be."

Tom Kohl told this story: "I had two young men on my tennis team last year . . . and the father is on disability. The mom is a teacher aide, so obviously to be able to pay twice their property taxes and now another tuition bill was impossible. As so, they're two young men who had a great experience in terms of academics and athletics, and plus I had them in class, because I had them on my team, because I had been in their house, because I've been in the bus with them and so on . . . I hear the stories. And one was a senior last year, one was a junior, and by listening to them and seeing what they had chosen. The oldest has chosen to go to [a Lutheran college of the same denomination as the school] and be either in secondary education or in pre-sem[inary] . . .and to listen to those young men, and I have had the young men themselves get up

in front of people and say, ‘my experience was something that was beyond my expectations spiritually, academically, socially.’”

Symbols

The following symbols were mentioned by the interviewees: The school name, the Logo, the mascot, and the school colors. The school name came from one of the churches which supports the high school. Jeff Smothers, in retrospect, would have worked harder to find a name that was not one of the several churches which support the school, a name representative of instead which would not seem to be identifying the school as being owned by a single church. Jeff reported however that by the time he began to have that thought the signs and planning had advanced too far to change it without creating what would have been an unnecessary hurdle to the successful opening.

The Logo or school symbol consists of a shield with a multicolored heart separated into quarters by the outline image of a cross. Emanating from the center of the cross is a sunburst. The school symbol is a careful amalgamation of the traditional Lutheran symbol but updated and modernized. The symbol or some version of the school symbol is making its way into all the school marketing materials. The symbol was designed by a graduate of the school who is now working as a graphic artist.

The school mascot is a timberwolf. In the early years of the school they held an incoming freshmen retreat. They held this retreat annually for the first five years. During the first retreat, one of their tasks was to come up with the school mascot and colors. The timber wolf was not the first pick; the students selected The Inferno as their mascot. Upon further review, however, a couple pastors objected to the possible tenor reminding them of Daunte’s *Inferno* and its constant reminder of hell. The pastors and school board members suggested a more neutral mascot like an

animal. The students wanted a unique mascot and they wanted one native to their geography, hence the timberwolf.

The school colors are silver and black. Jeff Smothers shared that the students picked colors; he really wanted silver and black so he “pushed” and the students settled on his choice. He said he thought the colors looked good.

Specifically Planned Elements

Jeff Smothers believes that of all the events listed at FLHS 80% were specifically planned and only 20% evolved. He specifically cited the earlier discussed ceremonies: Opening Day, Biweekly Chapel Service, Academic and Music Awards/honors, Athletic Awards, Feast Day, and Graduation as being intentionally planned and not evolving.

Summary

Table 4.6 summarizes the information provided by FLHS respondents.

Table 0.6 Summary of FLHS School Culture Development

Cultural Aspects Examined	Elements Present
Motivation behind the school and how it evolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lengthy distance from other Lutheran high schools but a high proportion of Lutheran families in the area • School mission is broader than Lutheran – wanting to offer a Christian high school to all families in the area
Development of FLHS mission and purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deferred to the standard model of Lutheran education
Core Values and Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ, Academics, and Extracurricular Experiences
Design and Selection of Ceremonies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening Day • Biweekly Chapel Service • Academic and Music Awards/Honors • Athletic Awards • Feast Day • Graduation
Traditions and Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homecoming Week • Power Puff Football • Alumni Day • Bonfire • Dance • Watermelon Bowl • “Mother Faith”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Skip Day • Senior Prank
Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline and forgive • Graduates becoming Lutheran teachers and pastors • Story highlighting how financial aid can make a difference for a student
Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school name • The logo • The mascot • School colors
Specifically Planned Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening Day • Biweekly Chapel Services • Academic and Music Awards/Honors • Athletic Awards • Feast Day • Graduation

Summary

Grace High School, Faithful in Jesus High School, and Faith Lutheran High School are newly developed high schools. They are still growing and evolving but each is developing a distinctive school culture. The next chapter will consider more closely the similarities and differences between the three schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The question this study seeks to answer is: In what ways do principals’ design, develop, and implement the cultural features of a new high school? This study explored the question by examining the evolving new schools’ cultural elements through four lenses:

1. What understanding and interpretation can be gained by looking at the cultural elements in light of Bolman and Deal’s “Four Frames?”
2. What understanding and interpretation can be gained by looking at the principals’ leadership in light of Deal and Peterson’s suggested symbolic roles?
3. As their school cultures’ evolved, were there instances where principals seemed to lead by engaging in symbolic actions?
4. Did the principal intentionally initiate and plant the cultural element verses managing its natural growth or development?

The previous chapter explored the various approaches to fashioning the resultant mission and vision components as well as describing the evolving cultural elements. This chapter will provide a cross case analysis of similarities and differences through the four lenses to gain insight into the question studied. Finally, conclusions drawn from the study will be explored, with consideration to suggestions for future research and implications for practice.

Initial General Observations

Before looking at the three case studies through the four lenses it may be helpful to look at similarities and differences in a side-by-side comparison. Table 5.1 compares the various cultural elements at the three sites.

Table 0.1 Side-by-side Comparison of the Three Sites

Cultural Aspects Examined	GHS	FJHS	FLHS
Motivation behind the school and how	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of what they considered a high quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for a high school of similar quality to the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lengthy distance from other Lutheran high

it evolved	<p>college-prep high school in the immediate neighborhood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived need for teaching strong character development from a Christian perspective • Need for a high school of similar quality to the K4-8 schools they had previously started 	K4-8 school they had previously founded	<p>schools but a high proportion of Lutheran families in the area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School mission is broader than Lutheran – wanting to offer a Christian high school to all families in the area
Development of the school's mission and purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed after the launch of the new high school • Drew ideas from external models • Held Mission and Purpose “retreat” • Looked at elements from the book, “Good to Great” and discussed how some corporations developed • Considered from the book, “Art of the Start,” a list of “commandments,” including “Niche Thyself.” • Discussion over narrower scope of new mission statement “weeded” some employees that did not agree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the church pastor decreed was put into place without discussion, debate, or questioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deferred to the standard model of Lutheran education
Core Values and Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Cs, “College, Christ, Character • No excuses allowed for failing to get students ready for college • “We” want students to love Christ, prepare themselves for college and have that experience become reflected in their lives by their choices • Dissension which led to resignation of position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children can learn but they learn differently; multiple intelligence approach to meet learning needs • Christian faith informs students’ integrity in the context of rigorous curriculum and college-prep school culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ, Academics, and Extracurricular Experiences
Design and Selection of Ceremonies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Grace-na-tizing” • The Crest Ceremony • Terra Nova Week • Fall Ceremony • Homecoming Week • Daily Chapel • School Choir Concerts • Graduation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily Worship and Praise Service • Student-of-the-month Ceremony • Quarterly Honor Roll Ceremony • High School Graduation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening Day • Biweekly Chapel Service • Academic and Music Awards/Honors • Athletic Awards • Feast Day • Graduation
Traditions and Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prom • Highest College Placement Percentage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word of the Day • Faculty Lunches with the Pastor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homecoming Week • Powder Puff Football • Alumni Day

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcing College Acceptances • “Shout Outs” at Morning Assembly • Faculty Bowling • Faculty “Eat Off” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty Barbeques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonfire • Dance • Watermelon Bowl • “Mother Faith” • Senior Skip Day • Senior Prank
Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to people “on the ground” • The example student on moment expelled the next as a reminder of how difficult urban education can be • Recruiting students on the street • Commitment by a faculty member to recruiting a student-athlete from a difficult family background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change happens over time and we have to keep encouraging students with positivity • Difficult student who comes back to give back after graduation • High standards as a recruitment story • Stories of several former students doing well in college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline and forgive • Graduates becoming Lutheran teachers and pastors • Story highlighting how financial aid can make a difference for a student
Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Crest • Uniform Ties • Acronym incorporated into the name of the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Eagle • The Color Purple • Hugging students at the door each day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school name • The logo • The mascot • School colors
Specifically Planned Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Normal” high school elements • The morning threshold procedure • A very structured learning environment • Student Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bishop’s Bucks • Praise and Worship • Being a Multiple Intelligence School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening Day • Biweekly Chapel Services • Academic and Music Awards/Honors • Athletic Awards • Feast Day • Graduation

In looking at this table several things stand out:

- All three schools developed from a similar motivation to provide a high school option commensurate with existing faith-based options at the K-8 level.
- Two of the three schools deferred to existing religious authority to establish the mission.
- All three schools emphasize faith and academics and as a result have developed symbols, ceremonies, traditions, and rituals that likewise reflect those two overriding aims of the schools.

- All three schools have a mix of events purposefully planned by faculty and others that have evolved over time.
- Two of the three schools emphasized a special threshold ceremony at the beginning of the day.
- All three schools focused on the importance of getting their graduates prepared for college.
- Nearly all of the traditions, rituals, and ceremonies were student-centered, though a few faculty-centered events were identified that focused on building collegiality. No respondent identified a cultural event related to teachers' attempt to address improved teaching and learning or their use of student data to that end.

Though each school was faith-based, GHS's leaders were not as constrained by their church leaders or denominational models as were the other two schools. As I analyzed the interviews and data this difference stood out significantly. In the next four sections I will consider the case studies through the aforementioned four lenses.

School Culture Elements through the Lens of Bolman and Deal's "Four Frames"

Introduction

The evolving cultural elements will be considered in the same categories itemized in the previous chapter through the lens of Bolman and Deal's "Four Frames," (1) the motivation behind the school and how it evolved, (2) the development of its mission and purpose, (3) its core values and beliefs, (4) its design and selection of ceremonies, (5) its traditions and rituals, (6) some stories, (7) its symbols, and (8) specifically planned elements. Each school in turn will be examined and then any cross case similarities or differences will be discussed. The

consideration will be from my line of sight since I am not aware if the interviewees were consciously considering the Four Frames as they were leading.

In trying to decide how to categorize which cultural element aligned to which of the Four Frames, I was looking to see how the principals (or other school leaders) rolled out (or helped shape the evolution of) the cultural element. It is important to note that the design of my study focused intentionally on cultural elements; all of which may seem to fit nicely in the symbolic frame. Instead of simply assigning each of the cultural elements to Bolman and Deal's symbolic frame, I looked to see from my analytical perspective which, if any, of the frames that the school leader was intending to use when introducing (or shaping) the cultural element. Therefore as I categorized the cultural elements with the Four Frames, the most salient consideration from my analytical perspective became the leader's intended impact on the school culture and the intended frame used by the school leader in introducing or shaping the cultural element.

The motivation behind the school and how it evolved

GHS

At GHS there was fairly strong consensus among the interviewees as to the motivations behind the school's founding. They all cited the lack of what they considered to be quality college-preparatory high schools in the neighborhood. They all also expressed the desire to continue the work their K4-8 schools had begun by the establishing of a similar high school. This seems to be framing the motivation with a structural frame. The organizational ethic focused on excellence as they saw it. There is also an element of growing the fledgling organization into an educational "factory" or "machine" equipped to provide their unique version of education from kindergarten to high school graduation.

FJHS

At FJHS the motivation behind the school and how it evolved was presented in each of the three interviews as being the result of eighth grade graduates and their parents insisting the school add a high school. This too seems to be framing the motivation with a structural frame. The organizational ethic focused on excellence as they saw it. There is also an element of growing the fledgling organization into an educational “factory” or “machine” equipped to provide their unique version of education from kindergarten to high school graduation.

FLHS

At FLHS the motivation behind the school and how it evolved was initiated by several congregations of Lutheran K4-8 schools in an area some distance from other similar (same synod) Lutheran High Schools. In this outside-the-organization perspective the framing may still be seen as the structural frame. The external congregations were looking to append the high school grades to their existing K4-8 schools. In this instance the framing may also be seen from the political frame as the synodically rooted congregations were looking to create a high school of their own synod (there is a preexisting Lutheran high school in the immediate area that is not of the same synod).

Cross Case Discussion

In all three cases the evolution of a high school was a continuation of lower school affiliates. In all three there was a high degree of agreement across the various interviewees of the reasons to form a new high school. All three saw a market niche and the development of the high schools were an effort to fill that market niche. All three sets of leaders framed the process structurally.

The FLHS leaders also seemed to frame their efforts symbolically as they “planted the synodic flag” in the new location. This did not seem to be a big part of the other two school leaders thinking.

The development of its mission and purpose

GHS

The school leadership team at GHS initiated a considerable process to evolve and cast the mission statement into its current form. The first understanding was that mission and purpose would be developed while the school start-up was in process not before. This intentional waiting to address mission and purpose may be viewed through the Four Frames lens as leadership engaging both the political and symbolic frames.

Viewed through a political frame focused on power, conflict, competition, and organizational policies, the final form of the mission and purpose intentionally remained fluid. The school leadership team, which was comprised of individuals with competing and sometimes polar opposite agendas, focused on their efforts to enroll enough students to make the school financially viable. While they kept the mission and purpose development idea fermenting in the background, they banded together to facilitate the enrollment, hire the faculty, design the initial curricula, create the processes, and generally shepherd the new school community into existence. Though it may have been an unintended positive consequence this decision allowed Stacey Mann to be a critical part of the team, helping garner the necessary enrollment with her focus on growing an athletic-centric high school before she eventually resigned from the team as the mission and purpose did not focus as much as she wanted on the athletic dimension.

Viewed through a symbolic frame focused on culture, meaning, metaphor, stories, and heroes, the delay in the final form of the mission and purpose added to the repertoire of stories.

There were elements of pride evident when the building principal, Trevon Brown likened the delay process to being on a battleship that was still being constructed while taking enemy fire. This concept of moving forward despite the difficult odds seemed to be an intentional symbolic framing effort.

Once the decision to focus on finalizing the mission and purpose was engaged, the school leaders, especially the chief executive officer, Philip Samuels seems to have intentionally focused on the human relations frame. This focus on relationships was evident as he initiated the series of “purposeful planning” meetings. Care was taken to invite just the right people, in what he imagined to be the best sequence, with a third party facilitator with the dual purposes of crafting the mission and purpose for GHS and obtaining organization-wide buy-in to the finished product. When the congealing of the mission and purpose into “Christian College-Preparatory” occurred and Stacey Mann was unwilling to remain part of the team, though disappointed in the decision, she left the organization without causing a major rift. She had not been excluded from the discussions, she had ample opportunities to persuasively make her case, and the majority had concurred with the decision. If the chief executive officer had conceived the new mission statement in private perhaps with only a few other leaders, Stacey may not have been the only team member to depart. It seems the human relations framing effort was successful in this instance.

FJHS

The process of developing a mission and purpose for FJHS was simple. They asked the church pastor what she expected, she told the school leaders, and they carried out her wishes. From the building principal’s perspective, this process and decision covered all Four Frames. Politically and structurally, Veronica Carter’s job depended on this approach. Dissention would

not have been allowed. However, Veronica gave no indication, nor did the other interviewees that adopting the church pastor's mission statement was even slightly objectionable. From a human resource frame, the church pastor was also Veronica's personal pastor. The three interviewees were all fully invested in a school that was being operated by the church they all willingly attended. From the human resources frame they were relationally invested.

Symbolically, the adoption of the pastor's mission and purpose could be likened to kissing the Pope's ring as a symbol of fidelity to the mission and ministry of the church.

FLHS

At FLHS the process of developing a mission and purpose was political and structural. The envisioned new high school was to be a replication of other Lutheran high schools of the same synod several of which existed within 200 miles of FLHS. To look through the political lens, both interviewees' jobs depended on creating a "replication." From the structural lens this replication would be a continuation of the K4-8 schools of the supporting churches allowing a true K-12 school system. From the symbolic frame, the establishment of a same synod Lutheran high school in proximity to another Lutheran high school of a different synod would bolster the "gravitas" of the synod.

Cross Case Discussion

In this category of mission and purpose development, GHS's leaders invested significantly more leadership capital into the process than the other two schools' leadership teams. The leadership team intentionally delayed the focus on mission and purpose until the school was well under way and then the process they used was intentionally framed from the human resources perspective. Unlike the faculty and staff at the other two schools who had become affiliated with those schools primarily because of the denomination or synod of the

schools, the GHS faculty and staff were not inherently united around their denomination/synod. One reason for this dichotomy was the absence of denomination or synodic allegiance on the part of GHS. The leadership at GHS needed to intentionally recruit them to the new mission/purpose.

Core Values and Beliefs

GHS

At GHS the four respondents were united in their understanding that the core values and beliefs were summarized by the three Cs: “College-Preparatory, Christ, and Character.” While these three Cs had been crafted from the purposeful planning sessions that settled the mission and purpose, Stacey Mann, athletic director / teacher, was still reeling from this conclusion and at the time of the interview was only months away from tendering her resignation over this issue. Stacey posited that she believed the statement sounded good but was like “putting lipstick on a pig” since in actual practice she believed the college-preparatory portion was significantly oversold. She saw the focus on college-preparatory as a challenge to her athletic recruiting efforts of great athletes with less-than-college-preparatory abilities. In this instance, the human resources framing by the CEO, Philip Samuels did not recruit Stacey to the vision, but it did allow a relatively drama-free exit for her and few others in the organization felt as she did and followed her lead. This intentional human resources framing process may have prevented a potentially critical team division in an early stage of the fledgling organization.

FJHS

At FJHS the three respondents shared a common theme but added their own unique perspectives to their understandings of the schools’ core values and beliefs. Veronica Carter, the building principal began by summarizing the tenants of her Christian faith and then quickly

emphasized that “we believe” every child can learn and continued on to focus on her multiple intelligence approach to learning.

Chanise Greene, lead teacher, also began with the tenants of her Christian faith and then focused her comments on the goal “we have” of college-preparatory. She discussed reading, writing, and speaking well and added that becoming a person of integrity was as important as being well educated.

Lavender Izard, lead teacher, did not begin with a summary of her faith but focused her entire answer through the lens of “love.” She emphasized the motivation had to be to represent “the Lord” in doing our best.

All three seemed to be operating in a human resource, family, relational context as they discussed core values and beliefs. While it was clear that the answers to what they believed originated in the teachings of which the church the school was affiliated, the constructs of the interpersonal relationships between leadership and staff were much less structural or political as relational. Veronica did not seem to be a leader who pushed her power on others, instead she presented in her own words and the words of her “subordinates” as part of the school family and the one empowered to finalize decisions. While this was also probably not true as the church pastor held all the real power, in the eyes and minds of the faculty and staff, Veronica was relationally centric.

FLHS

At FLHS, Jeff Smothers, the principal and Tom Kohl, the development director/teacher, were united in their statements about the schools’ core values and beliefs. They both started with affirming the centrality of Christ and the gospel to the school and then each also discussed the

objective of providing an academically rigorous and challenging curriculum set in an environment rich in extracurricular experiences for the students.

With Jeff and Tom I did not sense the nuisance of the human relations lens as much as the structural lens. When they discussed the faculty as family it was set in the context of operations not discussions about operations.

Cross Case Discussion

From the Four Frames perspective it seems clear that the CEO of GHS, Philip Samuels intentionally lead the development of the core values and beliefs through the human resources frame. The other two schools seem less intentional or if the leadership framing occurred it was most likely unintentional. In the instance of FJHS, the closest framing seemed to be the human resource frame while at FLHS the structural frame seemed to be most evident.

Design and Selection of Ceremonies

GHS

At GHS, CEO, Philip Samuels led the effort to start the school each year with the self-described, “Grace-na-tising” process. He led this effort with two lenses in place. First there was a structural lens because the other K4-8 schools in the Grace school system were also engaged in the annual Grace-na-tising process and he wanted to insure that the process carried on systemically.

In investing significant time and faculty and staff preparation for the Grace-na-tising effort, Philip was also looking at this through the symbolic lens. He wanted to have the culture of the new high school look and feel as it did in the lower schools of the system. The lower schools had adopted this process because they believed it was the best practice for creating a school culture conducive to learning.

Principal Trevon Brown totally owned the conception, design, and announcement of the Crest Ceremony. The lens he chose was symbolic. Truthfully told, Trevon knew the Crest they would present to the students did not have any intrinsic value. He also knew that since most of the students had endured the “Grace-na-tising” cultural transformation but were not thrilled with the rigorous, as he described it, “beat downs,” and that without some positive reinforcement soon they may be exasperated permanently. The Crest Ceremony symbolized hope of eventual success. During the interviews this ceremony was perceived by all the interviewees as being significant and successful in improving the school culture.

Terra Nova Week was the offshoot of a faculty brainstorming meeting initiated by the principal. The design and implementation of Terra Nova Week was collaborative with the principal and faculty using a human resource and symbolic lens to approach selling this to the students.

CEO Philip Samuels was behind the Fall Celebration idea. He framed it as purely symbolic yet it was also a significant element in developing the relational component of the Grace school system. The impact of the Fall Celebration was much broader than the internal staff and faculty; it grew relationships among external supporters, foundations, and friends.

Homecoming week was conceived through a structural lens as most high schools in the area with a football team celebrated a homecoming and GHS needed to have one too. When the principal, Trevon Brown decided to be the disk jockey of the dance he was electing a symbolic lens. Trevon knew that the students were longing for a high school that allowed “normal” high school activities. His intuition told him that the homecoming dance was one of those critical events that if withheld by a conservative school administration for fear of allowing immodest dancing to racy music, the students’ enthusiasm for positive engagement in the developing

school culture would wane. Because Trevon had been a disc jockey in a former life situation, he decided that the students (who knew the administration was struggling to allow a dance) would consider his stepping in as a disc jockey to be the deciding factor allowing the dance. He also knew his stepping in would result in appropriately “taming” the event in the minds of his conservative administrative colleagues. Though others may have seen this calculation through the political lens, to Trevon his volunteering as the disc jockey was a symbolic gesture to demonstrate to his conservative administrative colleagues and his faculty that personal involvement with the students’ lives was powerful and made a difference. He hoped others would emulate his actions in the future.

Holding a chapel service at a Christian school was probably an assumed “ceremony,” but choosing to have a chapel to start each day was a definite choice. The faculty and principal worked this one together and the structural, symbolic, and human resource frames were all employed. The structural frame informed the daily agenda at the school. The symbolic frame focused on the daily investment to ground students in a spiritual mindset. The human resource frame was engaged as the faculty and Trevon brainstormed this idea collaboratively.

At the time of the interviews, graduation had not yet become a ceremony they were proud to talk about. The principal and faculty held graduations because they had to have them and that was a very structural lens.

A summary of the eight different ceremonies which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.2.

Table 0.2 GHS Ceremonies by Four Frames Lens

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	Ceremony	Leader(s) Implementing
Structural	“Grace-na-tising” Homecoming Week Daily Chapel	CEO, Philip Samuels Principal, Trevon Brown Principal and Faculty

	Graduation	Principal and Faculty
Human Resources	Terra Nova Week Fall Celebration Daily Chapel School Choir and Concerts	Principal and Faculty CEO, Philip Samuels Principal and Faculty Principal and Faculty
Symbolic	“Grace-na-tising” The Crest Ceremony Terra Nova Week Fall Celebration Homecoming Week Daily Chapel School Choir and Concerts	CEO, Philip Samuels Principal, Trevon Brown Principal and Faculty CEO, Philip Samuels Principal, Trevon Brown Principal and Faculty Principal and Faculty
Political		

FJHS

At FJHS, principal, Veronica Carter, worked in partnership with the church pastor in designing and selecting each of the ceremonies. The daily worship and praise service set the tone for the school culture. The Four Frames lens she led through was very structural but it was also symbolic and human resource driven as well. The school faculty and church community were invested in this element and considered it critical to the success of the school.

The student-of-the-month brought parents, students, and faculty together while recognizing and honoring a student. The symbolic frame was engaged in leading this celebration.

The quarterly honor roll ceremony became a favorite of the school community. Principal, Veronica Carter’s integral involvement and personality led through the symbolic frame and her unique announcing of names made the event.

Graduation, as our interviewing took place, was becoming quite the production. It had moved off campus and was being led through a human resource lens as the students themselves were creating the program. A summary of the five different ceremonies which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.3.

Table 0.3 FJHS Ceremonies by Four Frames Lens

Four Frames Lens (or	Ceremony	Leader(s) Implementing
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lenses)		
Structural	Daily Worship and Praise	Principal, Veronica Carter
Human Resource	Daily Worship and Praise Graduation	
Symbolic	Daily worship and Praise Student-of-the-month Quarterly Honor Roll	
Political		

FLHS

At FLHS the opening day ceremony was described as a “glorified” chapel service. It was however, something they invited parents to attend and although it was described by the principal Jeff Smothers as, “not that big of a deal” it was a part of crafting the school culture. If Jeff used any lens of the Four Frames it would have been the symbolic lens in this instance. Jeff was influenced by other Lutheran high schools that routinely hold a ceremonial opening day ceremony. Jeff was signifying by this ceremony that FLHS was like all the other Lutheran high schools.

The Biweekly chapel service at FLHS serves as the focal point of the spiritual component. As with all the other ceremonies at FLHS, Jeff Smothers led the design and implementation. To this Lutheran school the Four Frames lens for the chapel services was structural. As Jeff considered the agenda for the daily life of the school, the biweekly chapel service was an important structural consideration.

Incorporated into one of the second semester chapel services were the academic and music awards/honors. In a school where extracurricular activities were one of the three main values of the school, and where athletics received considerable play in the local media, having a special academic awards ceremony was a symbolic gesture that Jeff purposely imbedded in the school calendar. Combined with the music awards, this special chapel service highlighted those students who excelled in non-athletic capacities at FLHS.

The athletic awards, still necessary, were seen by Jeff as less important to make a big deal about because unlike the academic and music student accomplishments, the athletic accomplishments had usually received considerable play in the local media. When Jeff thought about guiding the school community toward this ceremony his lens was structural.

Feast Day was a very special ceremony and Jeff spent more time describing this ceremony than anything else during the interview. Though he claimed to have stolen the idea from another school, Jeff totally wrapped himself and his personality in this event. To Jeff, this was a highlight of each year, it was very symbolic of the family approach the school aspired to create and served to build relationships throughout the school community and in that capacity was also viewed through the lens of human resource.

Graduation was the second most anticipated yearly ceremony behind Feast Day. This was certainly a structural event but as it was designed with lines to recite and costumes to wear, like a play with the plot line focused on showing off how important the ceremony was, it became highly symbolic as well. The faculty in their academic gowns and the students and families celebrating as part of a special worship service put the special spiritual signature on the event envisioned by Jeff. A summary of the six different ceremonies which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.4.

Table 0.4 FLHS Ceremonies by Four Frames Lens

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	Ceremony	Leader(s) Implementing
Structural	Biweekly Chapel Services Athletic Awards Graduation	Principal, Jeff Smothers
Human Resource	Feast Day	
Symbolic	Opening Day Academic and Music Awards/Honors Feast Day Graduation	
Political		

Cross Case Discussion

Interestingly, in looking at the leadership lenses of the three principals in initiating ceremonies, I did not see evidence of any use of the political frame. With a total of 18 different ceremonies across the three schools and the potential to use all Four Frames for each of the 18 ceremonies it seems there were 14 symbolic, eight structural, seven human resource, and zero political instances in which the different frames were employed. Table 5.5 summarizes the Four Frames by school.

Table 0.5 Ceremonies by Four Frames Lens (or Lenses) by School

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	GHS	FJHS	FLHS
Structural	“Grace-na-tising” Homecoming Week Daily Chapel Graduation	Daily Worship and Praise	Biweekly Chapel Services Athletic Awards Graduation
Human Resource	Terra Nova Week Fall Celebration Daily Chapel School Choir and Concerts	Daily Worship and Praise Graduation	Feast Day
Symbolic	“Grace-na-tising” The Crest Ceremony Terra Nova Week Fall Celebration Homecoming Week Daily Chapel School Choir and Concerts	Daily worship and Praise Student-of-the-month Quarterly Honor Roll	Opening Day Academic and Music Awards /Honors Feast Day Graduation
Political			

One possible explanation for the lack of the political frame’s use is that the principals felt choosing the ceremonies was clearly in their purview to lead. Another thought is that the ceremonies themselves were not the focus of any power struggles in the three schools. The abundant use of the symbolic frame seems to fit an obvious rationale for the ceremonies. Several times when the principal engaged the human resource frame their faculty was part of the team crafting the ceremony.

*Traditions and Rituals*GHS

Prom at GHS was instituted mostly because of parental insistence. Principal, Trevon Brown was less eager to launch this traditional high school event. As his enthusiasm for the event was low and since the parents' enthusiasm was high, he engaged a political lens and allowed the prom but pushed all the organization onto the parents.

The students at GHS, according to Trevon, were behind the establishment of a senior class, verses succeeding year senior classes' competition to have the highest percentage of college acceptances. This competition zeal to outdo the class ahead of them, according to the interviewees fueled interest in the possibility of actually attending college after high school. As this study concludes (spring of 2014) it is interesting for me to note that when the interviews were conducted, no one at the school could have imagined what happened. The last two senior classes (2013 and 2014) at GHS managed to get 100% of their class accepted to college! In deciding to focus attention on college acceptances, Trevon was focusing on the symbolism of what success would look like at GHS. In working with the students' idea and encouraging the initiative, Trevon was using the relational human resource lens.

Trevon jumped on this bandwagon of student interest in college and when letters arrived announcing the college acceptance of a student it was read during the morning announcements. He was using the symbolic lens to inspire the students.

Trevon engaged the human resource frame as he instituted a morning assembly replete with student "shout outs" which encouraged positives. His approach empowered the students choosing to behave and strive for the positive. He gave a voice to those who might otherwise be intimidated into championing less worthy behavior and goals.

Both the faculty bowling and “eat off” traditions were framed through the human resource frame as Trevon looked to build a sense of family and relationship. A summary of the six different traditions or rituals which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.6.

Table 0.6 GHS Traditions and Rituals by Four Frames Lens

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	Traditions and Rituals	Leader(s) Implementing
Structural		
Human Resource	Highest College Placement Percentage Shout Outs at Morning Assembly Faculty Bowling Faculty “Eat Off”	Principal, Trevon Brown
Symbolic	Highest College Placement Percentage Announcing College Acceptances	
Political	Prom	

FJHS

Principal, Veronica Carter and the faculty collaboratively instituted the “Word-of-the-Day” tradition at FJHS. Despite the newness of the tradition and that it happens only two or three times each week, the tradition, because it was collaborative effort between Veronica and the faculty, has been framed from a human resource lens.

A faculty lunch with the church pastor seems to be an honor being bestowed on select faculty by the church pastor directly. The lens would be the human resource lens as it has been received as an honor and comes with the additional benefit of being relieved of your lunch-time duties.

The quarterly faculty barbeques tradition has evolved into an informal and coveted faculty event. Veronica, responding to the faculty interest in building a family atmosphere on her

team is using the human resources lens in this instance. A summary of the three different traditions or rituals which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.7.

Table 0.7 FJHS Traditions and Rituals by Four Frames Lens

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	Traditions and Rituals	Leader(s) Implementing
Structural		
Human Resource	Word-of-the-Day Faculty Lunches with the Pastor Faculty Barbeques	Principal, Veronica Carter Church Pastor Principal, Veronica Carter
Symbolic		
Political		

FLHS

At FLHS, principal Jeff Smothers, in supporting the core value of extracurricular activities has encouraged and imbedded a significant allotment of traditions or rituals as part of the fall football homecoming week. These include Powder Puff Football, Alumni Day, Bonfire, and the Homecoming Dance. Each of these activities is an effort to grow relationships within the school community and to expand the school family to alumni and parents. Jeff has effectively engaged these traditions through the lens of human relations.

Perhaps the first tradition of each school year is the annual watermelon bowl marking the end of pre-season football training camp. Its scope is designed to include a much broader component of the school family than just the football players. Families are invited to join the players. It seems to be another activity cast through the human resource lens.

The tradition of “Mother Faith” appears to be another effort to highlight the football season. Perhaps born during a time when the football team needed to manufacture interest in a team that was less successful, the tradition has provided added spark to one of the games which includes the schools’ “Arch Enemy.” This “Mother Faith” game provides the extra inspiration to perhaps defeat their perennial football foe. In addition to the added emphasis to winning the

game, this tradition also provides another reinforcement that everything done at FLHS is from a faith perspective. In this instance, Jeff seems certainly seems to be using the symbolic lens of the Four Frames.

Not lost on Jeff is the annual battle to keep seniors engaged at the end of the year in productive endeavors. Senior Skip Day is designed through the political lens as Jeff attempts to control what may happen outside his control sans his sanctioning of the event.

Similar to the motivation of Senior Skip Day is the Senior Prank tradition. Once again Jeff is employing the political lens to manage to control an event that has routinely occurred in similar schools in the area without the sanctioning of school leaders. What Jeff agrees to allow and sanction will be a better option than what may occur without his involvement. This is certainly the political lens. A summary of the eight different traditions or rituals which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.8.

Table 0.8 FLHS Traditions and Rituals by Four Frames Lens

Traditions and Rituals	Leader(s) Implementing	Four Frames Lens (or lenses)
Structural		
Human Resource	Powder Puff Football Alumni Day Bonfire Homecoming Dance Watermelon bowl	Principal, Jeff Smothers
Symbolic	Mother Faith	
Political	Senior Skip Day Senior Prank	

Cross Case Discussion

In this category, traditions and rituals, the three principals (and one pastor initiated event) majored in the human resource lens of the Four Frames. There were a total of 16 traditions or rituals described with 11 human resource, three symbolic, and three political lenses engaged. In

the three political instances, the political lenses were helping to exhibit control of students or parents instead of faculty or external entities. Table 5.9 summarizes the Four Frames by school.

Table 0.9 Traditions and Rituals by Four Frames Lens (or Lenses) by School

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	GHS	FJHS	FLHS
Structural			
Human Resource	Highest College Placement Percentage Shout Outs at Morning Assembly Faculty Bowling Faculty "Eat Off"	Word-of-the-Day Faculty Lunches with the Pastor Faculty Barbeques	Powder Puff Football Alumni Day Bonfire Homecoming Dance Watermelon bowl
Symbolic	Highest College Placement Percentage Announcing College Acceptances		Mother Faith
Political	Prom		Senior Skip Day Senior Prank

It is interesting to note in this category that there are no instances of a structural lens framing any traditions or rituals. This is aligned with a common sense understanding of the structural frame as emphasizing standards and productivity, something not often associated with rituals or traditions.

Stories

GHS

At GHS, CEO Philip Samuels told a story in which he concluded it was a good example of the need for a leader to listen to "people on the ground" and take their thoughts seriously when making management decisions. That he tells that story is an example of reassuring himself of the importance of using a human resource lens and also modeling that lens and mode to his subordinate leaders in the school system.

Principal Trevon Brown told a story of a student who after being affirmed as a positive example was caught that same day destroying most of the positive and making Trevon seem to

be foolish for having praised the student. The Four Frames lens Trevon seemed to be using while telling that story was the symbolic lens. He was casting the difficulties of successful urban education into a realistic scenario while still defending the positive affirmation approach in most instances.

Kelly Bakke, past principal at GHS told a story of the difficult neighborhood in which the school was located and the challenge of recruiting students. His story was told through the symbolic lens. It was intended for the faculty and staff to fortify their commitment to the hard work of urban education.

Stacey Mann, athletic director / teacher told a very elaborate and lengthy story about a basketball recruit and the extensive challenges she and the school had in helping her to be successful. Her story was also cast through the symbolic lens. A summary of the four stories which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.10.

Table 0.10 GHS Stories by Four Frames Lens

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	Stories	Leader(s) Implementing
Structural		
Human Resource	Listening to “your people on the ground”	CEO, Philip Samuels
Symbolic	Difficult Student Difficult Neighborhood Challenging Recruit	Principal, Trevon Brown Past-Principal, Kelly Bakke Athletic Director / Teacher, Stacey Mann
Political		

FJHS

Lavender IZard, lead teacher at FJHS told two stories about successful students. She told me that she uses each story as part of the school recruiting effort. Since they were stories and designed for the purpose of recruiting they seem to be through the symbolic lens. In addition, because the stories were essential in enticing the parents to enroll and because the school is financially dependent on enrollment, Lavender uses the structural frame lens here as well.

Chanise Greene, lead teacher at FJHS also told a recruiting story about the spiritual climate of the school and the academic rigor. This story seemed to be through the symbolic lens. In addition, because the stories were essential in enticing the parents to enroll and because the school is financially dependent on enrollment, Chanise uses the structural frame lens here as well.

Veronica Carter, principal, also told a story about students, but this time former students and their after-graduation life success. Once again, a story designed to help recruit students and seemed to be through the symbolic lens. As with the previous two stories, because the stories were essential in enticing the parents to enroll and because the school is financially dependent on enrollment, Veronica uses the structural frame lens here as well. A summary of the four stories which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.11.

Table 0.11 FJHS Stories by Four Frames Lens

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	Stories	Leader(s) Implementing
Structural	Recruiting Story Recruiting Story Recruiting Story Recruiting Story	Lead Teacher, Lavender Izard Lead Teacher, Lavender Izard Lead Teacher, Chanise Greene Principal, Victoria Carter
Human Resource		
Symbolic	Recruiting Story Recruiting Story Recruiting Story Recruiting Story	Lead Teacher, Lavender Izard Lead Teacher, Lavender Izard Lead Teacher, Chanise Greene Principal, Victoria Carter
Political		

FLHS

Jeff Smothers, principal at FLHS told two recruiting stories. Once was differentiating between a public school and his alternative private, Christian school. The other was touting the success of graduates, particularly citing the most successful placements and including students electing church-related careers and colleges. The stories seemed to be through the symbolic lens.

In addition, because the stories were essential in enticing the parents to enroll and because the school is financially dependent on enrollment, Jeff uses the structural frame lens here as well.

Tom Kohl, development director / teacher focused on the success of a student that was made possible only through a generous financial aid grant from the school. The story also seemed posited through the symbolic lens. A summary of the three stories which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.12.

Table 0.12 FLHS Stories by Four Frames Lens

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	Stories	Leader(s) Implementing
Structural	Recruiting Story Recruiting Story Recruiting Story	Principal, Jeff Smothers Principal, Jeff Smothers Development Director, Tom Kohl
Human Resource		
Symbolic	Recruiting Story Recruiting Story Recruiting Story	Principal, Jeff Smothers Principal, Jeff Smothers Development Director, Tom Kohl
Political		

Cross Case Discussion

In this stories category there was strong alignment of stories designed for recruiting purposes. All those stories seemed to be posited through both the structural and symbolic lenses. The one outlier was the Grace school system CEO Philip Samuels who told a non-recruiting focused story through the human resource lens. Table 5.13 summarizes the Four Frames by school. A summary of the three symbols which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.13.

Table 0.13 Stories by Four Frames Lens (or Lenses) by School

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	GHS	FJHS	FLHS
Structural		Recruiting Story Recruiting Story Recruiting Story Recruiting Story	Recruiting Story Recruiting Story Recruiting Story
Human Resource	Listening to “your people		

	on the ground”		
Symbolic	Difficult Student Difficult Neighborhood Challenging Recruit	Recruiting Story Recruiting Story Recruiting Story Recruiting Story	Recruiting Story Recruiting Story Recruiting Story
Political			

Symbols

GHS

At GHS there were three symbols mentioned in the interviews, the Crest, uniform ties, and the acronym incorporated into the name of the school. It is hard to see these symbols at GHS in any other lens than the symbolic lens. A summary of the three symbols which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.14.

Table 0.14 GHS Symbols by Four Frames Lens

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	Symbols	Leader(s) Implementing
Structural		
Human Resource		
Symbolic	The Crest Uniform Ties Acronym of school name	Principal, Trevon Brown Principal, Trevon Brown CEO, Philip Samuels
Political		

At FJHS there were also three symbols mentioned in the interviews, the eagle, the color purple, and hugging students at the door each day. Again, except for the eagle, it is difficult to see a lens other than symbolic being employed. In the instance of the eagle, Principal Veronica Carter held a drawing in which the students participated and the eagle was selected. In addition to the symbolic frame, the eagle was also created through the political and human resource frame lenses. Veronica decided to share some of her power in allowing the drawing. In doing so with the students, she built a sense of being in that decision together. A summary of the three symbols which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.15.

Table 0.15 FJHS Symbols by Four Frames Lens

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	Symbols	Leader(s) Implementing
Structural		
Human Resource	Eagle	Principal, Veronica Carter
Symbolic	Eagle Color Purple Hugging Students	Principal, Veronica Carter Principal, Veronica Carter Principal, Veronica Carter
Political	Eagle	Principal, Veronica Carter

At FLHS there were four symbols mentioned in the interviews, the school name, the logo, the mascot, and the school colors. Once again, with the exception of the mascot, it seemed that the symbols were posited through the symbolic frame. In the instance of the mascot, Principal Jeff Smothers asked students about it at a retreat. They selected a problematic mascot and Jeff had to negotiate with some church leaders and the students to arrive at the final selection. In this process Jeff engaged both the political and human resource frame lenses. A summary of the three symbols which are listed along with the affiliated Four Frames lens is in Table 5.16.

Table 0.16 FLHS Symbols by Four Frames Lens

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	Symbols	Leader(s) Implementing
Structural		
Human Resource	Mascot	Principal, Jeff Smothers
Symbolic	School Name Logo Mascot School Colors	Principal, Jeff Smothers Principal, Jeff Smothers Principal, Jeff Smothers Principal, Jeff Smothers
Political	Mascot	Principal, Jeff Smothers

Cross Case Discussion

In this category of symbols, it seemed there was a high percentage use of the symbolic lens in positing the symbols. Only in two instances did the principals engage the students and in doing so both the political and human resource frames. In interviewing the principals this

category seemed to be something they felt empowered to affect in their school communities.

Table 5.17 summarizes the Four Frames by school.

Table 0.17 Symbols by Four Frames Lens (or Lenses) by School

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	GHS	FJHS	FLHS
Structural			
Human Resource		Eagle	Mascot
Symbolic	The Crest Uniform Ties Acronym of school name	Eagle Color Purple Hugging Students	School Name Logo Mascot School Colors
Political		Eagle	Mascot

Specifically Planned Events

This final category of school culture elements emanated from the specific questions asked during the interview process to specifically ask the interviewees which elements were intentionally planned. It was assumed that in the general interviewing process there may have been some ambiguity about the specificity of the intentionality and this category was an effort to clarify that point. The elements itemized by the interviewees have all been discussed in this section earlier so instead of rehashing those discussions they are summarized in Table 5.19.

Table 0.18 Summary of Specifically Planned Elements by Four Frames Lens

Four Frames Lens (or lenses)	GHS	FJHS	FLHS
Structural	VERY structured learning environment	Praise and Worship Multiple Intelligence school	Biweekly Chapel Service Athletic Awards Graduation
Human Resource		Praise and Worship	Feast Day
Symbolic	“Normal” high school elements Morning threshold procedure VERY structured learning environment Student Leadership	“Bishops Bucks” Praise and Worship Multiple Intelligence school	Opening Day Ceremony Academic and Music Awards/Honors Feast Day Graduation
Political	Student Leadership		

Cross Case Discussion

In this final category of cultural elements to consider in light of Bolman and Deal's Four Frames it appears that there is a heavy emphasis on the symbolic frame in the elements that were intentionally instituted.

Summary of Four Frames Consideration

It is reasonable to conclude after considering the cultural elements through Bolman and Deal's Four Frames that the school leaders, particularly the building principals had significant influence and ability to affect the design, development, and implementation of the cultural features of a new high school.

Principals' Leadership in Light of Deal and Peterson's Suggested Symbolic Roles

Introduction

The three principals' leadership will be considered as they influenced the cultural elements in their schools in light of Deal and Peterson (1999)'s "eight major symbolic roles." The roles are 1) Historian, 2) Anthropological sleuth, 3) Visionary, 4) Symbol, 5) Potter, 6) Poet, 7) Actor, and 8) Healer. The consideration will be from my analytic perspective since I am not aware if the interviewees were consciously considering the symbolic roles as they were leading. That is, I did not ask the leaders to describe their leadership style or their approach to establishing the ceremonies, traditions, rituals, and symbols their schools developed.

GHS

Historian

At GHS, Principal Trevon Brown, during his interview, provided examples that alluded to each of the eight major symbolic roles that Deal and Peterson champion. When I asked him about the beginnings of the school, Trevon, without looking at any notes, quickly listed the major

events that led up to the opening of his school and started describing the events even two years before his affiliation with the organization began. Throughout his interview sessions, whenever I asked about a ceremony, tradition, etc., he would describe the element in the context of how it came about in addition to the element itself.

Anthropological Sleuth

Trevon also fit into the symbolic role of anthropological sleuth. During his interview as we discussed the “Grace-ta-nizing” process, Trevon spent considerable time explaining to me how the culture in which the students lived was broken, and how important it was to establish even arbitrary rules and standards that would give his students an arena in which they could learn how to conform to societal norms without the high stakes of expulsion for violating an important rule that really mattered. He cited particularly the Lemov (2010) Technique 31: Binder Control in which students keep all written materials in a to facilitate their organization and help them keep track of their homework and notes. I asked Trevon, “Can you please list the various ceremonies, both formal and informal, that your school celebrates throughout the school year.”

He replied:

It’s hard to stick with one or two, because we’ve changed them various times for several reasons. This is when I realized I was thinking like a teacher, and I was told by an instructor at [an area college] that I need to stop thinking like a teacher and think as an administrator and think about *why* I did them not *that* I did them. So there was the first year beat down of the students; it was very brutal because [the] students were very resistant to the nature of walking in lines and . . . there was a 1, 2, 3, Click ceremony of . . . Click Ceremony was the procedure of opening your binders and closing your binders. We made them have mandatory

binders to keep them organized, because we felt that they needed organization skills.

To clarify, I asked him, “Okay, so that side you’d close, and then you go, “One, two, three, Click?” He continued:

Yes. So instead of everybody click, click, click, click, click, click . . . so you go through that thing. I remember one of the teachers kind of being a little bit of a dissenter, like “what difference does it make?” And the kids are doing the same thing, But that was just one of the things we just beat . . . I mean you can imagine we were just beating them down with that. And if you beat too much law, you know, people start getting angry, so then need something to celebrate. So out of the blue came one ceremony, it was the Ceremony of the Crest, which was going to basically be the rite of passage of those students who have lasted as long as they have through the beat downs. So, the only [criterion] was that you showed up for the ceremony.

Trevon routinely demonstrated that he was in touch with, understood, and worked at understanding the culture of his school.

Visionary

Trevon often cast vision as to where he believed his school should be five, ten, or even twenty years into the future. At one point he speculated that if the school existed 100 years from now that he hoped some version of the Crest Ceremony would also still be around. When Trevon caught on to the students interest in promoting higher percentages of the graduating classes being accepted to college he was able to help cast a vision that someday 100% of every class would be accepted to college.

Symbol

Almost everything Trevon did at his school was a symbol. Trevon dressed impeccably because he believed that it would wear off on his students and that dressing for success would serve them well. Trevon had an office but it was hard to find him in the office. He was seemingly omnipresent at his school. If they had a class or an assembly, Trevon was often right in the middle of what was going on. He cited the prom and then mentioned he served as the disk jockey. He described the “shout outs” but often invented them and led them himself. To the faculty, being willing to engage with the students was much less problematic when their “omnipresent” leader was modeling how to do it all the time.

Potter

Trevon did not require that he would personally invent a tradition, ritual, or ceremony for it to be included in the life of the school. If the parents demanded prom, he would allow it but then help shape it. If the students valued college acceptance, he would champion college acceptance. If the teachers liked to eat wings, he would come and try to eat more than anyone. Trevon was a quintessential potter at GHS.

Poet

Trevon really understood the power of language and how important it was for success in the world. As I visited the school, I never heard Trevon or any of his faculty chastise the students for speaking in slang or colloquialisms which were very much a part of the urban culture in which they lived. However, I noticed many instances where Trevon himself or one of the teachers would notice a grammatical irregularity and take the time to correct the usage and then explain that at GHS we want everyone to learn to use “the language of the college or job interview.” Trevon sought the time and place to actually be poetic. During his morning

assemblies as he trained each class to respond with a “shout out” or chant like having the class of 2011 call themselves “wild ones” or the class of 2010 calling themselves “O Ten.” His practice is reminiscent of scenes in the movie 1988 *Stand and Deliver* when actor Edward James Olmos portraying the real life super teacher, Jaime Escalante, led the class in unique creative chanting following certain routine classroom moments. Trevon used his “street knowledge” of the students’ culture to appropriately direct them in positively framing whatever event in which he was engaged.

Actor

Trevon was a consummate actor at GHS. His most memorable improvisations were as the school disk jockey at the prom and homecoming dances. In his role of principal, Trevon was always aware of the various subpublics watching his every move. He knew the students, especially the boys were always looking for him to break character and show them his public persona was really deep down inside fake. His faculty was watching to see if he would throw them “under the bus” with either the parents or students. The parents were watching to see if he would show favoritism to one student over another – or perhaps if he would defer unreasonably to the teacher and allow an injustice to their child. Trevon knew when he was in public, especially at GHS, he was on stage, center stage with a spotlight trained on him.

Healer

During the interviews, Trevon showed me that he was a healer as he explained the various lengths he went to bridge the “good ideas” from the board and CEO, Philip Samuels, and the reality of making the ideas work for the faculty, students, and parents at his school. One instance discussed earlier from Philip’s perspective was that when Trevon was suggesting a daily

chapel service and Philip was resisting, Philip ended up acquiescing to Trevon's idea and it turned out to be an extremely positive element of the GHS culture.

FJHS

As I interviewed Veronica Carter, principal at FJHS, I did not see evidence of all eight of the major symbolic roles. I did see the roles of historian, symbol, and potter.

Historian

Every instance in the interviewing when I asked about the origin of something, Veronica would look at the ceiling and then start back as far in the school history as was necessary to fully explain the element. She had been part of the school from its lower school origins and she was perhaps the leading historical expert on the school.

Symbol

Very similarly to Trevon, Veronica seemed to be almost omnipresent at her school. As with Trevon, I did not see Veronica near her desk or office except the very first time I came to visit, when she was waiting for me and handling a parent with a question who had preceded me. The teachers, from their knowing looks, were used to Veronica's presence in their classrooms, the students hardly looked up when we entered a room until they were officially greeting a visitor.

Potter

Veronica, in her subordinate role to the church pastor, managed to be the gatekeeper of who the school hired, how the ceremonies were organized, and helped focus the school community on celebrating successful graduates. Her three big focal points in our conversations were the spiritual inculcating, the multiple intelligence considerations, and the stories of successful alumni making it in the world.

FLHS

Jeff Smother, principal at FLHS seemed during his interview to take on some but not all of the suggested major symbolic roles. I saw evidence of historian, anthropological sleuth, potter, and actor.

Historian

As in the two previous cases, Jeff was the consummate historian of FLHS and everything associated with the school. Jeff was the first employee hired and had been in the middle of every decision and action taken since then. He did not need to consult notes and was very willing and able to fill in details about how things were.

Anthropological Sleuth

It seemed that Jeff was very careful during his interview to always start with the Lutheran angle on the topic being discussed. Then having that out of the way, he next framed the answer from a broader Christian perspective, before he lapsed into his obvious favorite the extracurricular component. Jeff reminded me of other suburban principals who do not have the necessity of directly recruiting the students to engage in education and this was in stark contrast to Trevon of GHS, Trevon spent most of his energy figuring out how to engage the students. Since Jeff's student population was relatively unencumbered by the vicious challenges of living in poverty, he was much more focused on how he might be able to "one-up" the other school in the conference with one of the extracurricular activities. The fact that he understood his clientele and that his parents would even expect him to take this perspective underscored this role.

Potter

Jeff's fingerprints were on every ceremony, celebration, ritual, or event at FLHS. Jeff made it clear he had the sole responsibility to shape the culture of the school and that as much as possible it would be the stereotypical Lutheran high school of which he was so familiar.

Actor

Jeff was a skilled actor. He, like Trevon, knew that his school community had their eyes focused on him and that he had a role to play. In his school, his faculty did not expect him to routinely enter their classrooms and may have been offended if he came around too often. On the other hand, the faculty did expect to see him at every extracurricular activity working the parents, students, and alumni. He was a fixture on the sidelines of every sporting event and his parents expected him to be there. When he worked with the senior class to plan the senior skip day and senior prank he had a role to emulate and he played it very well.

Summary of Symbolic Roles Consideration

At each of the three schools the principals seemed to take on several if not all of the roles posited by Deal and Peterson. When the roles were engaged, they seemed to have positive effects helping transform the toxic elements of the school cultures onto more positive ground.

Instances Where Principals Led Through Symbolic Actions

Introduction

In this section the three principals' efforts to lead will be examined in instances where it seemed they attempted to lead through symbolic actions. Each principal's efforts to lead symbolically will be identified and examined to see if there is anything else we can learn from their efforts.

GHS

At GHS, Principal Trevon Brown seemed to attempt to lead in at least five instances through symbolic actions. He led symbolically in instituting the Crest Ceremony, championing Terra Nova week, becoming the dick jockey at dances, announcing college acceptances, and modeling “shout outs” at morning assembly.

Crest Ceremony

Trevon supported the Grace School System’s “Grace-na-tizing” process and knew it was critical in order for his students to have an environment conducive for learning, but he disliked how it “beat down” the students’ enthusiasm for school. When Trevon conceptualized the Crest Ceremony, he was looking for a positive that would encourage his students that enduring the culture change was a worthy objective. The Crest Ceremony became a huge success and has endured over almost a decade since Trevon conceptualized the ceremony.

Terra Nova Week

Trevon’s system leadership focused tremendous attention on the summative, annual test scores of Trevon’s students. Many of Trevon’s students had recently elected to attend his private school over failing public schools they had attended previously. Taking the Terra Nova test was not a new experience and past experiences had often resulted in very negative results. It is likely that few of the students were excitedly looking forward to the week of testing. Trevon saw an opportunity to symbolically change the game by treating the week of testing similarly to how the school ginned up energy for the annual homecoming football game. As he did in instituting the Crest Ceremony as a positive framed event, so he also did with the Terra Nova week activities. In this instance he went one step further in symbolism by engaging his faculty in the idea formation, planning, and carrying out the activities of the week. Reportedly, several students

who had refused to try while taking the test in past years made a wholehearted effort following the Terra Nova week activities. Overall, the test results at GHS improved and it might be argued some of the increase was due to the Terra Nova week activities.

Disk Jockey at Dances

If Trevon had decided to prevent student dances at GHS his system leadership would have supported his decision. Left to his own proclivities, Trevon would have avoided the difficult social complications of urban dance moves that he would have considered inappropriate. Pressed by his students and their parents, Trevon allowed the dances to occur but he symbolically inserted himself squarely in the middle of the dances by “volunteering” to be the disk jockey. Occupying the critical controls and carefully selecting the music choices and order, he could regulate the level of intimacy and potential inappropriate dancing. Trevon was not against inserting a selection of polka music should the atmosphere of the dance stray in a direction he did not approve. The dances occurred; the parents and students were pleased with the results.

Announcing College Acceptances

When the students in the senior class pressed to have a competition with succeeding classes over the percentage of each class accepted to college, Trevon not only encouraged that activity but he went another step further. He began the practice of using the public address system at the school to routinely announce each time a senior was accepted to a college. He took a risk in making the announcements because several of the seniors each year would be unlikely to have their name read. Once again, Trevon was symbolically siding with the positive perspective and promoting his students and their successes. As reported earlier, the last two years have seen 100% of the seniors at GHS earn college acceptances.

Modeling “Shout Outs” at Morning Assembly

One component of the “grace-na-tising” was to begin each day with an assembly in the school gym. Few students have ever requested the “privilege” of lining up in the gym before classes each day and having a mandatory pep rally. From Trevon’s perspective, the morning assembly was just one more necessary but unpleasant element of the “beat down” process of creating a school culture conducive to learning. When he decided to own the assemblies and encourage unique class “shout outs,” Trevon took another symbolic step toward positive framing of the school culture. With Trevon’s guidance and participation it became something his students would have fun with instead of simply the drudgery of lining up and having uniforms inspected and announcements read.

FJHS

At FJHS, Principal Veronica Carter seemed to attempt to lead in at least two instances through symbolic actions. She led symbolically in championing a multiple intelligence approach to learning at FJHS and instituting the Quarterly Honor Roll Ceremony.

Championing a Multiple Intelligence Approach to Learning

At FJHS, Principal Veronica Carter was well aware that in Central City there were very few private schools that effectively addressed learning differences. Her own background included multiple certifications and a master’s degree in special education. She also knew that often parents elect private schools to avoid the labels that can be affixed to students and Christian parents are sometimes even militant in their disdain for the perceived labeling. In symbolically leading the school to a multiple intelligence approach to learning, Veronica was standing up for what she knew was right and best for her students. At the time of the interviews the FJHS community had accepted and adopted the multiple intelligence approach.

Quarterly Honor Roll Ceremony

In orchestrating the Quarterly Honor Roll Ceremony, Veronica elected to make this a huge production. The students at FJHS live about as far from the lifestyle of the rich and famous as is possible in modern urban America. With great insight into the lives of her students, Veronica concocted a setting that they might watch on television, and even dubbed it, “An Evening with the Stars.” Parents are send formal invitations and they line the aisles of the sanctuary with their cameras as Veronica does her best to imitate the public address call from the *Price is Right* television show, naming the students, citing the award and then saying, “COME ON DOWN HERE!” The whole event would not have been imaginable without the symbolic leadership of Ms. Carter.

FLHS

At FLHS, Principal Jeff Smothers owned the design and creation of most of the ceremonies and traditions, but he also seemed wedded to the traditional Lutheran High School model that he had grown up with personally. In considering instances where he seemed to lead symbolically, unless his leadership would steer the resulting event in a different direction than the traditional Lutheran model it was discounted as an instance of symbolic leadership. He did seem to attempt to lead in at least three instances through symbolic actions. He led symbolically in envisioning and bringing into reality the Feast Day, he managed to head off potential difficulties by sanctioning but then controlling Senior Skip Day, and the Senior Prank.

Feast Day

Feast Day at FLHS was uniquely Jeff Smother’s in every aspect. He had heard of a similar event at another school (this time not a Lutheran school) and he even refashioned the event to fit the FLHS circumstances. In a community of families able to support their children

through significant tuition to attend a private high school, Jeff decided to make one of the annual highlights an event focused on giving, service, thankfulness, and gratefulness. The perennial excitement about this event and the significant parental support in making the event possible testify to its success.

Senior Skip Day

In deciding to officially sanction Senior Skip Day, Jeff took several risks leaders are good at avoiding. For one thing he probably created a legal situation in which unsupervised students doing stupid or bad things may be the legal responsibility of FLHS. Another risk was parental frustration if they were not ready to allow their student(s) to be unsupervised and instead forced them to go to school the parents would be under tremendous pressure from their children to cave and that pressure was created by Jeff.

Putting aside those concerns, betting on a positive and calm outcome, Jeff sanctioned the senior skip days and even attended the opening day breakfasts. To date his gamble has paid off and the sanctioning has avoided the unscheduled, unsanctioned event and its customary suspensions and graduation complications.

Senior Prank

The narrative for Jeff's official sanctioning of a Senior Prank is very similar to the narrative of the Senior Skip day. Once again, Jeff gambled on the character of the seniors and their accrued wisdom. An interesting element in this annual scenario was Jeff's routine insistence that after the prank was complete the seniors would clean it up and make things at the school return to how they were before the prank. Again, like with the Senior Skip Day sanctioning, Jeff seems to have successfully navigated these treacherous waters.

Summary of Leading through Symbolic Actions

When the three principals stepped out and elected to lead symbolically it seems they were largely accomplished their various objectives. Of the three, there was evidence that Trevon Brown at GHS chose the symbolic leadership style more often than the other two principals.

Principals' Initiating or Managing the Cultural Element

Introduction

During the interviews with the various respondents the principals were each asked to identify which cultural elements were specifically planned elements. These have each been discussed and considered previously. Therefore, in this section I will list the elements by principal in Table 5.11, and then compare them in a cross case analysis of similarities and differences.

Table 0.19 Specifically Planned Element by Principal and School

School	Principal	Specifically Planned Element
GHS	Trevon Brown	“Normal” high school elements
GHS	Trevon Brown	Morning threshold procedure
GHS	Trevon Brown	VERY structured learning environment
GHS	Trevon Brown	Student Leadership
FJHS	Veronica Carter	“Bishops Bucks”
FJHS	Veronica Carter	Praise and Worship
FJHS	Veronica Carter	Multiple Intelligence school
FLHS	Jeff Smothers	Opening Day Ceremony
FLHS	Jeff Smothers	Biweekly Chapel Service
FLHS	Jeff Smothers	Academic and Music Awards/Honors
FLHS	Jeff Smothers	Athletic Awards
FLHS	Jeff Smothers	Feast Day
FLHS	Jeff Smothers	Graduation

Cross Case Discussion

Each of the three principals claimed to specifically plan at least three cultural elements. In addition, each also managed or shaped the cultural events that presented themselves in the course of events. In the course of examining the principals' involvement in cultural events at their schools from several different perspectives, it seems clear that when each chose to engage in specifically planning cultural elements, they had tremendous influence in their school environments.

Summary and Conclusions

At the onset of this study I set out to discover what ways principals' design, develop, and implement the cultural features of a new high school. I predicted in looking at the data through Bolman and Deal's Four Frames that the analysis would rely more heavily on the symbolic/cultural frame. At the conclusion of this study I feel that I have a much clearer understanding of the elements which inform the practice of principals attempting to mold the culture of a new high school. I did discover from the Four Frames perspective that the symbolic/cultural frame is a significant contributor to the formation of the new school culture.

There is, however, a caveat to consider, in that the design of my study focused intentionally on cultural elements that would seem to fit naturally in the symbolic/cultural frame. As I categorized the cultural elements with the Four Frames, the most salient consideration from my analytical perspective became the leader's intended impact on the school culture and the intended frame used by the school leader in introducing or shaping the cultural element.. This, however, is an analytical perspective choice and what I observed may well have been analyzed differently by another observer. The design of my study focused on the school culture elements.

The questions that were asked of the respondents (see Appendix A) were such that the design of my study may have influenced the direction of their responses in the symbolic frame direction.

I discovered amongst the three case studies that the leadership which supervises the principal also has tremendous influence in determining how much latitude the principal has in owning their developing school culture. In instances where the principals' boss(es) chose to exert influence over the development of the school culture, it became necessary for the principal to yield and support their employers. When unencumbered by their superiors the three principals in this study were quite willing and able to establish a school culture with their "fingerprints" all over it.

At this point it will be helpful to summarize any "answers" to the four questions I posed at the beginning of this chapter. I will look at each in succession.

1. What understanding and interpretation can be gained by looking at the cultural elements in light of Bolman and Deal's "Four Frames?"

It is reasonable to conclude after considering the cultural elements through Bolman and Deal's Four Frames that the school leaders, particularly the building principals had significant influence and ability to affect the design, development, and implementation of the cultural features of a new high school. It is also interesting to note that the principals did not favor all of the Four Frames equally, and that certain categories of the cultural elements seemed to be framed with similar lenses in all three schools.

In establishing which instance of Bolman and Deal's Four Frames fit in which category, Table 5.20 is calculated from the previous tables (5.2 – 5.19). Table 5.20 shows the instances of Bolman and Deal's Four Frames use by cultural element. Table 5.21 shows the total usage of Bolman and Deal's Four Frames.

Table 0.20 Bolman and Deal's Four Frames Analysis School-by-School Totals

Cultural Element	GHS				FJHS				FLHS			
	Structural	H.R.	Symbolic	Political	Structural	H.R.	Symbolic	Political	Structural	H.R.	Symbolic	Political
Motivation behind the school and how it evolved	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Development of its mission and purpose	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Core values and beliefs	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Design and selection of ceremonies	4	4	7	0	1	2	3	0	3	1	4	0
Traditions and rituals	0	4	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	5	1	2
Stories	0	1	3	0	4	0	4	0	3	0	3	0
Symbols	0	0	3	0	0	1	3	1	0	1	4	1
Specifically planned elements	1	0	4	1	2	1	3	0	3	1	4	0
Totals	6	11	20	3	9	9	14	2	12	8	18	4

Table 0.21 Total Usage of Bolman and Deal's Four Frames

Structural	Human Resource	Symbolic	Political
27	28	52	9

The heavy concentration of symbolic framing and dearth of political framing are each worth noting. Though I did not specifically ask the principals about the Four Frames or about their motivation(s) in choosing a method or lens in rolling out the cultural elements, it seems reasonable, given the differences in the frequencies of specific frame use, to conclude the principals were intentionally electing a symbolic frame and omitting a political frame.

Another nuance could be that the two schools with strong ecclesiastical ties (FJHS and FLHS) instigated more cultural elements through the structural lens because they could get away with it. They may have a faculty and school community preconditioned to accept decisions from church leadership through a structural frame lens.

2. What understanding and interpretation can be gained by looking at the principals' leadership in light of Deal and Peterson's suggested symbolic roles?

At each of the three schools the principals seemed from my analytical perspective to take on several if not all of the roles posited by Deal and Peterson. When the roles were engaged, they seemed to have positive effects helping transform the toxic elements of the school cultures onto more positive ground. Table 5.22 is a summary of Deal and Peterson's symbolic roles by school.

Table 0.22 Summary of Deal and Peterson's Symbolic Roles by Principal

Principal	Historian	Anthropological Sleuth	Visionary	Symbol	Potter	Poet	Actor	Healer
Trevon Brown	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Veronica Carter	✓			✓	✓			
Jeff Smothers	✓	✓			✓		✓	
Totals	3	2	1	2	3	1	2	1

Trevon Brown, principal of GHS seemed to take on each of the roles. From my analytical perspective it appeared to be part of his leadership style to be observed in the various roles.

Though I believe I observed him in each of the roles, I would speculate from my conversations and observations of Trevon that he actually relished the role of actor more than the others and internalized the idea that he could represent the other roles better if those faculty, students, and parents who were observing him noticed him in the role.

Conversely, in observing Veronica Brown, principal of FJHS, from my analytical perspective, though she fell into the symbolic roles in a few instances, did not relish being in a symbolic role. Veronica was a relatively quiet and undemonstrative leader who it seemed would choose to be in the background, unseen, yet leading from that almost anonymous position. When it was important, as in calling the students forward at the awards ceremony, Veronica was willing and able to be in the spotlight. However, if it were to be her call alone, she would prefer to allow someone else to have the spotlight on her watch.

Much like Trevon, Jeff Smothers, principal of FLHS from my analytical perspective enjoyed the spotlight and was skilled in seeking attention. When he desired to take on one of the symbolic roles, he was confident in the perception his public persona would garner. When interviewed, he seemed particularly proud of his role in establishing the feast day celebration.

The differences in zeal to take on the various symbolic roles between the three principals strike me as an important element in successfully moving a school in a direction with the symbolic roles. It would appear that a principal willing and able to enjoy the spotlight required by the various roles will have greater opportunities to effect school culture change than a principal eager to stay in the background away from the spotlight.

3. As their school cultures' evolved, were there instances where principals seemed to lead by engaging in symbolic actions?

There were several instances where the principals seemed to lead by engaging in symbolic actions. When the three principals stepped out and elected to lead symbolically it seems they were largely accomplished their various objectives. Of the three, there was evidence that Trevon Brown at GHS chose the symbolic leadership style more often than the other two principals.

4. Did the principal intentionally initiate and plant the cultural element verses managing its natural growth or development?

Each of the three principals claimed to specifically plan at least three cultural elements. In addition, each also managed or shaped the cultural events that presented themselves in the course of events. In the course of examining the principals' involvement in cultural events at their schools from several different perspectives, it seems clear that when each chose to engage

in specifically planning cultural elements, they had tremendous influence in their school environments.

In what ways do principals' design, develop, and implement the cultural features of a new high school? At the conclusion of this study I think one of the answers is through symbolic leadership. Symbolic leadership exists through intentionally inserting various cultural elements or by helping shape the evolving natural occurrences. Symbolic leadership can be a solo performance or it can be as part of an ensemble. Symbolic leadership is an opportunity for principals of new high schools.

Implications for Practice and Further Study

My study findings suggest that principals often lead through symbolic actions. The practice of using symbolic actions, I assume, may be taught, learned, honed, studied, and practiced by principals.

Based on the findings of my study, I believe that further research is warranted in the area of symbolism versus each of the other frames. My study focused on three faith-based schools and the predominant lens utilized was the symbolic lens. The percentage ratio of the Four Frames utilized by the schools in my study from highest to lowest was, symbolic (45%), human resource (24%), Structural (23%), and political (.07%). Were the differences between the Four Frames partially because of the religious underpinnings of the schools studied? Would the ratios be the same between secular schools? Would the ratios be different in public schools?

I also believe it would be interesting to ask a much broader set of questions to the respondents that were not focused so tightly on the school culture elements. It would be informative to see how the answers differed if the principals were answering questions in equal

doses from each of the Four Frames categories. In such a study would the principals still favor the symbolic frame as heavily?

I also think that it would be informative to conduct the same study but including questions specifically about Bolman and Deal's Four Frames and Deal and Peterson's symbolic roles. Both tools have become standard elements in principal education programs and the study results would have been clarified if the principals had responded to questions directly about their motivations in choosing various symbolic actions.

My study was conducted with a fairly small sample size. I think further research is warranted to look at the same question with a larger sample size. The three schools were similar in that they were all new high schools, all faith-based, and all private schools. They were not similar in that their church affiliations exerted different pressure on the school leadership. It would be instructive to see the results of a larger sample size. Perhaps the study would be more informative if it included seven to ten schools with more respondents in each school to interview.

Recall that though all three schools were aimed at preparing students for college entrance, none of the respondents spoke about instilling cultural events directly aimed at improving classroom instruction. While it may be that leaders did not in fact, have such a focus other explanations for this result also exist. This result may have occurred because all three schools were new and therefore focused on skills and attitudes they believed to be prerequisites for such a focus or the result may simply be an artifact of the manner in which questions were asked. More research would shed light on when and under what conditions leaders institute traditions, rituals, and ceremonies directly related to the improvement of teachers' work.

Significance of Study

Avoiding toxic school cultures and growing positive school cultures are keys to leading successful and effective schools. Principals have significant influence in the design, development, and implementation the cultural features of a new high school. One significant way they influence is through symbolic actions. This study affirms the notion that principals can influence the development of their school cultures.

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APPENDIX A

Interview questions and prompts

- 1) I'm interested in understanding the motivation behind the high school and how it evolved.
 - a) Why was a new high school being considered?
 - i) Market Niche?
 - ii) Non-public because public unable to accommodate unique mission?
 - b) When did this process take place?
 - c) How did the motivation evolve?
 - d) Who was involved from the beginning?
 - i) Board Members?
 - ii) Teachers?
 - iii) Community Members?
 - e) What was the motivation behind creating the high school?
 - i) Differences with another school?
 - ii) Profit?
 - iii) Control?
 - f) Where did the motivation originate?
 - i) Personal vision?
 - ii) Suggested by someone else? Who else?
- 2) How did you go about developing the mission and purpose of the school?
 - a) Who was involved?
 - i) Committee? Or Individual project?
 - b) With whom did they work?
 - i) Board members?
 - ii) Local residents/parents?
 - iii) Educators? / Professors? / Consultants?
 - c) What was the mission as it developed?
 - d) What was your role in its development?
 - e) Where did the mission come from – was there a template?
 - f) Why was it developed?
 - g) When did it occur?
 - h) How did you develop the core mission?
 - i) How did it change?
- 3) Every school has its core values and beliefs.
 - a) What would you consider to be your school's core values or beliefs?
 - b) Who helped develop these beliefs?
 - c) What was the process by which these values and beliefs came to be?
 - d) Where did these values and beliefs come from?
 - e) Why were these particular values and beliefs chosen?
 - f) When were these values and beliefs picked? Before or after the mission and vision?
- 4) I'm very interested in the ceremonies of your school in the early years.
 - a) Can you please list the various ceremonies both formal and informal that your school celebrates throughout the school-year?
 - i) Opening Day?

- ii) Homecoming?
 - iii) Veteran's Day?
 - iv) Thanksgiving?
 - v) Christmas?
 - vi) Valentines?
 - vii) Athletic Awards?
 - viii) Academic Awards?
 - ix) Graduation?
- b) Who helped develop these ceremonies?
 - c) What were the objectives of these ceremonies?
 - d) Where did each ceremony originate?
 - e) Why did you decide on these particular ceremonies?
 - f) When were each of these ceremonies first included in the life of the school?
 - g) How are each of these ceremonies performed?
 - h) Please describe each ceremony and how it is celebrated.
- 5) Does your school have any traditions and rituals yet?
- a) Who helped initiate these traditions and rituals?
 - b) What are the traditions and how did they come to be considered traditions and rituals?
 - i) Faculty / Staff Retirement?
 - ii) Founder's Day?
 - iii) Special Alumni traditions?
 - iv) Skip Day?
 - c) How did these traditions / rituals originate?
 - d) Why did you decide on these particular traditions and rituals? Were other traditions and rituals "suggested" or "desired" but rejected?
 - e) When did these traditions and rituals first occur and are they still continuing?
 - f) Do you anticipate any of these traditions and rituals to be transient? Or do you believe that if the school is around in 100 years that the students/ faculty will still keep these traditions / rituals?
- 6) When you tell others about your school, what stories do you include?
- a) Who first told each story?
 - i) Does your school have an unofficial story teller? If so, who is it?
 - b) What was the intent of including each story in the description?
 - c) Where did the story first unfold?
 - d) Why these stories – were others considered and rejected?
 - e) When are these stories told?
 - f) How were these stories "codified" into their current forms?
- 7) Do you have any symbols that represent your school or school community?
- a) Who created the symbols?
 - b) What do the symbols represent?
 - c) Where were these symbols first used?
 - d) Why these symbols? Were other symbols considered and rejected?
 - e) When were these symbols adopted?
 - f) How were these symbols developed?
- 8) This school has an interesting and unique atmosphere.

- a) Can you cite specific elements that were intentionally planned and others that seem to have evolved naturally?
 - b) If they were specifically intended – how did you manage to inculcate them into the resulting school culture?
- 9) Is there anything I missed that you would like to explain to me?

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Title of the Study: Opening New High Schools: How Principals Design Cultural Features in Newly Developed High Schools

Principal Investigator: Kent Peterson (phone: (608) 263-2720) (email: kpeterson@education.wisc.edu)

Student Researcher: Charles Moore (phone: (262) 370-3897)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study about the principal's role in developing the school culture in a newly developed school.

You have been asked to participate because you are a recognized leader in your school and may be able to provide insight into the role that the school principal / head has played in the development of the resulting school culture.

The purpose of the research is to discover what if any influence the school principal or school head has had in the development of the resulting school culture at your school.

This study will include principals, school board members, teachers, parents or other adult leaders of the three schools that I will be studying.

The interviews will be conducted at the school site in a room that has been made available for the interviews.

Audio tapes will be made of your participation. Only the interviewer and a transcriptionist will hear the audio recordings. The tapes will be kept for the required minimum three years in a secure situation and then they will be destroyed.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate in this research you will be asked to answer a series of questions about the school, its traditions, ceremonies, rituals, and how those various components came into being.

Your participation will last approximately 20 minutes and will require only one session or 20 minutes in total.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

There will be the minimal risk to the participants in the loss of time or inconvenience.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

We don't expect any direct benefits to you from participation in this study.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

This study is anonymous. Neither your name nor any other identifiable information will be recorded.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today you should contact the Principal Investigator Kent Peterson at (608) 263-2720. You may also call the student researcher, Charles Moore at (262) 370-3897.

If you are not satisfied with response of research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study it will have no effect on any services or treatment you are currently receiving.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print): _____

Signature

Date