

Notes

"Only those narratives will count as identity-constituting which are *reifying*, *endorsable* and *significant*. The reifying quality is recognizable by the use of verbs such as *be*, *have* or *can* rather than *do*. ... A story about a person counts as *endorsed* if the identity-builder views it as faithfully reflecting the state of affairs in the world."

not interested in "discovering" other people's identities. Rather, our focus is on the *activity of storytelling* known as *identifying* which, so we believe, grows out of, and feeds back into, the activity of learning.

To fathom the way identities impinge on one's actions, it is useful to split all the reifying, significant narratives about the person into two subsets: *actual identity*, an ensemble of stories believed to reflect an actual state of affairs, and *designated identity*, a set of narratives presenting a state of affairs which, for one reason or another, is *expected* to be the case, if not now then in the future. Actual identities are usually told in present tense and are formulated as factual assertions. Statements such as *I'm a nice easy going man*, *I'm being a little bit indecisive at times*, *I have an average IQ*, *I am army officer* are representative examples. Designated identities are stories believed to have a potential to become a part of one's actual identity. They can be recognized due to their use of the future tense or of words that express wish, commitment, obligation or necessity, such as *should*, *ought*, *have to*, *must*, *want*, *can/cannot*, etc. Narratives such as *I want to be a doctor* or *I have to be a better person* are typical of designated identities

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I use the concept of identity in Erikson's sense of a mature construction of self that begins to emerge in late adolescence and young adulthood and functions to integrate a person within a psychosocial niche in the adult world while providing a new answer to the question, "Who am I?" This structure must integrate a person's sense of self in time - - who I was, who I am now, who I may be in the future. This kind of integration is accomplished, in part, via an internalized and evolving narrative of the self, which itself IS identity, or at least part of identity -- I call it "narrative identity." So, the story is identity. If a researcher wishes to access or tap into that identity, however, he or she is likely to ask a person to tell the story of his or her life. That story that gets told is an account that, we assume, provides clues as to what the narrative identity is. So, the storied account is a methodological tool for getting at narrative identity. Put simply, it is a (manifest, performed) story about a (latent, inner) story. The latent inner story is narrative identity. Narrative identity, furthermore, evolves considerably over time, influenced in part by the nature of these manifest tellings. In this last sense, then, any interview is a kind of intervention as well.

The Stories Schools Live By: A Preliminary Exploration of Organizational Identity as Story

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Introduction

Scholars use identity mostly in reference to individuals. However, some scholars have applied the construct of identity to organizations (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

Organizational identity refers to those characteristics believed by organizational members to be central, distinctive, and enduring about the organization in which they work (Albert and Whetten, 1985).

In this paper we undertake a preliminary analysis of organizational identity in schools by examining the stories that teachers' and administrators' tell about their school. Stories are important because they touch on basic issues of who we are as individuals and collectives. We also consider relations between a school's identity as an organization and those organizational conditions thought critical for adult learning and change including staff collegiality, teacher commitment to school, teacher's access to new ideas about instruction, teachers' opportunities to try out new ideas, and making classroom practice public.

Theoretical Anchors

Our exploratory analysis of organizational identity in schools draws on separate areas of empirical and theoretical work concerning identity and story. Two literatures are especially important in framing our work – the literature on organizational identity and the literature on narrative, drawn chiefly from personality psychology, anthropology and education.

Organizational Identity

Scholars use the construct of organizational identity in a variety of ways. Some scholars, for example, use organizational identity to denote the projected image of the organization that managers present clients or the public writ large (Gioia, et al., 2000). Another take on the construct suggests that organizational identity focuses on organizational members' view of the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). In this usage, organizational identity refers to those characteristics of the organization that members see as central and that contribute to how they define the organization and their identification with it (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). "Organizational identity consists of those attributes that members feel are fundamental to (central) and uniquely descriptive of (distinctive) the organization and that persist within the organization over time (enduring)" (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 1996, p.20). It is this latter usage of organizational identity that we adopt in this paper.

For organizational theorists, organization identity is important in that it is one means by which individuals act on behalf of the organizations in which they work. Organizational identity enables us to understand the motivation of organizational members and the processes of innovation, action and inaction in and by organizations. Identity is "an internalized cognitive structure of what the organization stands for and where it intends to go..." (Alberts, Ashforth, and Dutton, 2000, p. 13). While we believe that people do adapt a sense of organizational identity – one might say internalize an organizational identity - we believe that the exclusive focus on "inside the head" is problematic. Specifically, we believe that these stories reside not just inside the heads of organizational members but also in their day-to-day practices and interactions in the

organization. Though important, individual mental scripts are only part of the process through which organizational identities are constructed, lived by, and changed. (For the purpose of this preliminary exploration of organizational identity in school, however, we do not dwell on this distinction though it is central in our ongoing analysis).

While organizations may have an overarching or meta identity, multiple identities that sometimes compete, are also found in organizations (Partt & Foreman, 2000). These multiple identities should not be confused with identity conflicts among subgroups in an organization, though such conflicts may be relevant to the emergence of multiple identities. Multiple organizational identities refer to how different groups see what is central about the organization as an entity in different ways.

Organizational identity is conserving as organizations work at preserving their identities (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). This is especially relevant when it comes to an organization's capacity to learn and innovate. Scholars argue that while organizations can engage in minor changes to their existing routines without changing their identity, fundamental change in an organization's routines necessitates changes in organizational identity (Brown and Starkey, 2000).

Organizational Identity As Narrative

We examine organizational identity through stories told by organizational members about their school. We draw on work on individual identity as storied from anthropology (e.g. Langness & Frank, 1981), psychology (e.g. McAdams, 1993; Bruner, 1990), and education (e.g. Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Identity exists for individuals in

the form of narrative or stories. As Gardner points out, stories “touch on issues central to who we are, as individuals and as a society” (Gardner, 1995, p.?).

The uniqueness of a story comes from its ability to convey meaning and express human intentionality in a particular context (Bruner, 1985, McAdams, 1993, Gardner, 1995, Schank, 1990). Contrasting the paradigmatic mode of cognitive functioning and the narrative mode, Bruner explains that the narrative mode is “concerned with the explication of human intentions in the context of action” (Bruner, 1985, p. ??). Whereas the paradigmatic mode is prescriptive, logical, and detached from emotion, the narrative mode is “value-laden,” infused with a purpose and intent and context-bound. “If we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.17). Individuals come to know themselves and their identities through stories, and these stories then frame and guide the ways in which individuals understand and act on the world (McAdams, 1993; Bruner, 1990).

We use this work on individual identity as narrative to frame our work on organizational identity. Both anthropologists and organizational scholars have pointed to the importance of story in understanding life in organizations. Research using stories to examine organizational behavior and culture suggests that stories are an important means for telling about past experiences and weaving this experience into current events, and for distinguishing the organization one works in from other organizations (Schwartzman, 1984; 1993; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Clark, 1972). Further, stories are an important way of socializing new members and they play an important role in constituting an organizational reality for organizational members as they shape images of the organization in which they work (Bolman and Deal, 1991). Among other things stories

are ways to keep organizational traditions alive and they convey information and values to organizational members (Bolman and Deal, 1991; Weick, 1995). What we seek to do in this preliminary analysis of our data is to explore the idea of an organizational story or stories – a narrative about the organization - as a means of capturing organizational identity.

Methodology

This paper is based on data from the Distributed Leadership Study, a five-year longitudinal study of elementary school leadership. The theory building, hypothesis building study began in the winter of 1999 involving 13 elementary (some k-8) schools in the Chicago area, eight of the schools were intensive study sites. The purpose of the study was not to examine organizational identity in schools but rather to examine school leadership as a distributed practice and school efforts to improve instruction. We did not set out to investigate organizational identity through the stories school staff told about their schools. Our interest in organizational identity and story emerged more recently as part of our ongoing data analysis. Specifically, we became interested in organizational identity as a way of unpacking how and why similar organizational structures and routines enabled teacher learning and innovation in some schools and not in others. An initial case study of one school – Adams – illustrated how the story that school staff told about their school feature prominently in motivating and guiding daily practice in that school.¹

¹ All school and personnel names used in this paper are pseudonyms

Sites

We used a theoretical sampling strategy (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) selecting schools based on five dimensions. All 13 schools are elementary schools located within the Chicago Public School District. All schools in our study are high poverty with at least 60% of students receiving free or reduced lunch.

For the purpose of this paper we focus on two of the schools – Adams and Kosten. Located on Chicago's Southside, Adams is a K-8 school where all students are African American and 96.6% are eligible for free/reduced lunch. In 1988, Adams had approximately 10% of students reading at grade level as measured by ITBS. By 1998 these figures had jumped to over 40%. Located on Chicago's Northwest side, Kosten is also a K-8 school serving an ethnically diverse student population. Over the past decade the Caucasian student population dropped from 51% to 40%, while the African-American, Latino, and Asian populations grew 2%, 6%, and 3%, respectively. The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch increased from 44% in 1990 to 73% in 1998. ITBS reading and mathematics scores increased gradually between 1995 and 1999, with 42.4 % of the students scoring at national average in reading in 1995 and 53.3% in 1999.

Both were multi-year study sites. Researchers spent time collecting data at Adams from winter of 1999 to spring 2003 and at Kosten from winter 1999 to fall 2001. We confine our discussion of data collection and data analysis to the data from these two schools.

Data Collection

Data was collected using a combination of semi-structured interviews, participant observations, network surveys, and videotape data and was collected between winter 1999 and early 2003. Interviews and observations were audio recorded and transcribed whenever possible (90% of the time). For this paper, we had coded a total of 35 interviews with 28 interviewees in the two sites. This constitutes approximately one-third of the total interviews for each school. The amount and types of interview for each school are shown in Table 1 below. We also draw on field note data though we have not managed to systematically code for story a large proportion of that data as yet. The activities we observed included administrator meetings, grade level meetings, faculty meetings, curricular meetings, professional development days, school assemblies, teacher lunchroom interactions, and informal hallway interactions.

TABLE 1: Coded Project Interviews

Position of Interviewee	Adams (coded)	Kosten (coded)
Principal	2	2
Assistant Principal	2	2
Specialist	1	1
Teacher leader	2	3
Teacher	7	11
Other- LSC, Parent	0	2
Totals	14	21

Data Analysis

For the purpose of this paper, we coded our interview transcripts around three broad issues – the school story, story themes, and any story that subjects told during an

interview. For this coding we used TAMS Analyzer, qualitative data analysis software designed to code text, store coded text and retrieve coded text and selected excerpts using a general search function.

To investigate the school story, we examined the chronology of that story (stories) as reflected in peoples' talk. All stories contain certain key elements including setting, characters, initiating event, an attempt, consequences, reactions, climax, and denouement (McAdams, 1993). We used each of these elements as codes. The *setting* creates a context for the audience and situates the story in time and place. There are *characters* and an *initiating event* that motivates a character to make the *attempt* to reach a certain goal. The *attempt* leads to a *consequence* that provokes a *reaction* out of the character. As the story develops the character performs more attempts and then reacts to the consequences in a cycle that creates tension within the story. Finally there is a *climax*, "a high or turning point in the drama" that leads to the resolution of the plot called the *denouement* that completes the story (McAdams, 1993).

The second category concerned the thematic nature of the story people told about their school: "Stories are less about facts and more about meanings" (McAdams, 1993). Hence, we also coded for common themes in the school story. "A story theme is a recurrent pattern of human intention. It is the level of story concerned with what the characters in the narrative want and how they pursue their objectives over time," (McAdams, 1993). Finally, we also coded all interviews for all stories that the interviewee told. In this case, every time an informant told a story regardless of whether it was about something that happened that morning or five years previously we coded it.

Moreover, we included all stories in this analysis, not just those that had to do with the school.

We also used our field notes for this paper though the systematic coding of these data for story is still in very preliminary stages. Often meeting observations or personal shadows revealed the themes and stories in practice. We coded field notes to examine how stories are used in practice. Finally, we drew on prior analysis of field notes, video data, and interviews to characterize teacher and administrator learning and innovation in schools.

We also analyzed the tone of organizational stories. In this preliminary analysis we used a text analysis application called Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC). The application contains a set of default categories and “target” words related to each particular category. Words are grouping into particular domains (such as positive emotion) and these words are counted to identify the verbal speech patterns in the text. In order to get a preliminary sense of differences in tone between stories, this application allowed us to compare the number of statements containing expressions of positive affect (words such as "like", "love", "excitement", "revelation", etc.) to the number of statements containing expressions of negative affect (words such as "hate", "fear", "dread", "dislike", etc.).

It is important to keep in mind that this approach to coding stories for tone is preliminary and has limitations. Of the 74 default categories we analyzed our interviews using 26 categories. Not all 26 categories produced significant differences between groups, but those with significance of $p < 0.05$ are reported. T-tests were performed on each comparison to determine the significance of any differences and Mann Whitney tests also used to verify these measures.

Organizational Identity as Organizational Story

We examine organizational identity as reflected in the organizational stories of two schools in our study. We begin by describing each school's story or stories, both chronologically and thematically, identifying two types of story. Although it was not our intent when we started our data analysis, we found that these stories were similar to the types of stories that McAdams has identified in his work on the life stories of individuals – the redemption story and the ruination story. It is also possible that as our data analysis proceeds, other organizational stories will begin to emerge in one or both of these schools. We characterized Adams as having a single organizational identity as reflected in a redemption story that people at Adams tell about their school. In contrast, Kosten has at least two competing organizational identities as reflected in the two stories that teachers and administrators at Kosten tell about their school. One story is the redemption story, while the other is the ruination story illuminating how staff members at Kosten see what is central and distinctive about their school in different ways.

Next we identify the central themes in these organizational stories and we then consider the tone of these stories as reflected in the language that organizational members use in telling the organizational stories.

The Redemption Story: Organizational Identity At Adams

At Adams School, staff members, be they thirty-year veterans or relatively new arrivals to the school, tell a story that is remarkably consistent across storytellers. The **setting** they describe is a school that serves a poor, inner-city neighborhood (on

Chicago's Southside) with children who live in poverty, whose parents are often not present, and whose lives are difficult. As staff members at Adams tell the story, they highlight problems the school faces that stem from the population of students the school serves. A 2nd grade teacher noted,

Parent involvement is a joke. I have some great parents, but out of 30 kids, 10 of them live with a foster parent or grandparent, and 20 live with just their mother. Most have no male figure in their lives.

Another aspect of the **setting** as told by staff at Adams, centers on a school where teachers worked in isolation in the past, rarely collaborating and the two buildings in which the school is still housed felt estranged from each other. A second year teacher noted, "Years ago before Williams [current principal] came this school was a mess. No one worked together." An Assistant Principal explained,

Basically we [teachers in the two buildings] didn't have too much of a rapport. We only saw these teachers when there was a staff meeting where everybody was together. So the primary issues were always the primary issues. And the upper grade issues were always the upper grade issues.

The Adams story contains a very definitive **initiating event** with the arrival of a new principal, Dr. Williams, in the late 1980s. Staff at Adams cast Dr. Williams as the protagonist and her character often described with redeemer characteristics. She set new expectations for staff and held them accountable for student learning. She insisted that children at Adams could and would learn and in doing so upset the equilibrium. An assistant principal recounted,

I saw the transition. I really did. I could remember the very first day that she came in and we had a meeting...And it was a meeting that set forth her goal to come here and to make sure that academically we were growing...And she set before us, the challenge that we have and she knew that there were things that were gonna have to take a turn...

The arrival of a new character in the person of Dr. Williams upset the equilibrium in the story.

As staff members tell the story, many teachers at Adams were excited about the new ambitious goals that Dr. Williams set for the school. In the story, the **attempt** involves meeting the expectations for teaching and learning as set out by Dr. Williams and her leadership team. Some teachers, however, resisted (another version of the attempt).

The **consequences** and **reactions** in the Adams story are of two sorts depending on the attempt. As the story is told, those teachers who resisted chose to leave and find positions elsewhere. Dr. Williams herself recounted,

We had a lady in the computer lab...she thought it was her lab, and she had been in this lab for I don't know how long, and it was a prescription-learning lab. She had no dialogue with the regular teachers...I brought the data to a meeting that really documented the progress of the kids who have been in this program over time, and it was in black and white...The children had not performed any better as a result of their participation in this particular program...I moved her out of the lab and out of the building.

The **consequences** were different for teachers who stayed and worked with Dr. Williams' changes. As the story unfolds teachers that got on board were given increased responsibility and often were promoted into leadership positions – the consequences for signing onto the new agenda set forth by Dr. Williams and her leadership team. An assistant principal noted,

I came in as a 4th grade teacher and taught 4th grade for 2 years. Then, the chairperson of the math science department was retiring so I had shown certain expertise in that area. So I took over that position and taught 6th grade.

Dr. Williams story about another Assistant Principal captures a similar chain of events.

These accounts capture the cycle of **attempt, consequence, and reaction**.

The major **attempt** in the story of Adams as told by staff centers on bringing the two buildings in which the school is housed together – the primary and middle grades.

As noted earlier, prior to Dr. Williams' arrival the faculty shared little interaction between the buildings. As Dr. Williams tells it, the divide was a fundamental problem within the school:

[The two buildings] have been one unit number, but they were not together. The perception in the primary building was they used to call it the country club, because the teachers in this building did not feel that the teachers in that building worked over there, because it was so difficult in this building because kids were older, and you had different issues. They did not like each other.

In the Adams story the great divide was just one example of a larger problem – the lack of interaction and cooperation among staff. The principal notes,

There may be four classes at a grade level and they did not even talk. They did not have a clue at what was going on in each other's classrooms, they just basically closed the door....

At this point in the story, Dr. Williams makes a conscious attempt to bring the buildings together and to get teachers work together, within grade levels and between grade levels.

As the story is told, teachers from the two buildings and across grade levels slowly became more comfortable with one another and began to create programs together for the entire school. The **consequence** of this **attempt** to bring the schools together was positive and other teachers' **reactions** were extremely favorable. One teacher of 39 years speaks of the bridging of the two buildings, "Dr. Williams has pulled things together.

I've seen it. It's more of a whole now." As the story is told, this bringing together of the teachers in the two buildings marked an important turning point for the Adams School. It

allowed the programs that had been created to exist within both buildings. It brought the faculty into closer contact changing the way teachers in the school interacted with one another and creating a feeling that Adams is one school – a single identity. A 7th grade science teacher noted: “It used to be in the school each teacher was like an island ... It’s the communication within grade level that makes the difference.” A math teacher said, “So we share. We believe in sharing here.”

In the Adams’s story, bringing the two buildings together and strengthening the teaching community also reflects Dr. Williams giving more responsibility to teachers. Test scores began to rise. Attendance improved and the school gained recognition within the Chicago Public School system. Dr. Williams was recognized when Adams was rewarded for being an exceptional school that had made dramatic improvements in student achievement. School pride increased. With this new recognition the hard work began to pay off and the story came to a **climax**. As attitudes began to change the school took on a new identity. A parent-volunteer at the school noted,

I’ve seen the test scores come up. I’ve seen some kids come in with bad attitudes that change...I believe it is many things. The different groups, different programs, they all help. The networking...keeping everything toned. And the different grade levels doing the same programs

The climax of the story occurred with the recognition that began to pour into the school. As a result and the **denouement**, school pride has come to resonate throughout the school and is evident in the collective organizational story as told by the characters in the story. In the Adams story, Dr. Williams is the protagonist, a redeemer of sorts. As one 6th grade science teacher said, “Dr. Williams is probably the glue, I’m hoping that when she leaves you know we’ll still have the same foundation.”

Story Themes

Consistently across interviews two sets of themes permeate the Adams story as told by staff at the school - 'hard work and personal responsibility' and 'this school is a family and 'together we can make a difference in these children's lives.' In the Adams story, Dr. Williams's sets the standard as a hard worker with high standards. Dr. Williams is frequently cast as the hardest worker of them all. A teacher remarked, "Starting with Dr. Williams...we have a very good team here. If they weren't who they are, we wouldn't be who we are. If the administration had not set the tone, we would not have adopted this tone, hard work." Another teacher in the school said, "This is not a place you want to work if you don't want to work hard. Dr. Williams will not ask you to do anything that she will not do herself. She's the hardest working woman that I've ever seen."

Another prevalent theme in the Adams story is that the school is like a family, everything done in the school is done for the children, and by working together the school can make a difference in these children's lives. This theme features often as staff members tell the Adams story. One teacher

...constantly emphasized the fact that Adams prides itself on being "like family." She often repeated the mantra, "We're family here." She added, "We may not always agree. We have our share of problems like any other school. But you know, even brothers and sisters disagree."
(field notes)

A related sub-theme in the story is that everything done in the school is done for the children. Dr. Williams explains, "It is devastating what some of these children have to live through. For some of them, school is the best part of their day. So it is our

obligation to make their time here as positive as we can. That's what all the effort is for—it's for them." This theme is reflected in an Assistant Principal's account:

[Dr. Williams] came in here and we all had this feeling for the most part that she was here for us and she always let us know that our job is to meet the needs of the student. We wouldn't have a job if it wasn't for the kids...I mean, we're here for the sole purpose of these children, to meet the needs of the whole child, as stated in our mission plan.

A veteran teacher uses the same language to explain how she approaches her work, "We're all here for one reason—the children. We all have one common goal and we know it'll be okay because we're all doing the work for the children."

These themes featured prominently in day-to-day interactions among staff in the school as well. At a professional development meeting, Dr. Williams remarked:

It would be ideal if all of our kids came to you ready to move on to the material that you would like to teach them, but #1, that's not going to happen...What I was suggesting...is there is an opportunity to respond to the needs of the individual students through the 4 blocks [curriculum program]. In terms of who comes into our classrooms, I don't know who's coming in. All we can do is tailor our curriculum program to the students we get...You have to think about how you need to spend your time to reach these children.

The themes of 'hard work and personal responsibility' and 'this school is a family and together we can make a difference in these children's lives' are used frequently in daily practice at Adams school.

Dueling Organizational Identities:

Redemption Story and Ruination Story in Competition

At Kosten School, staff members tell one of two stories about their school. The first story resembles the redemption story at Adams school. However, the redemption story at Kosten is more tentative compared to the redemption story as told at Adams,

giving a sense that the story is still being worked out and potentially subject to change. This is to be expected considering that the initiating event in the redemption story at Kosten is relatively recent. At Kosten, the school administrators and several teachers are the key tellers of the redemption story. Of those teachers many are new to the school, but some are veterans of Kosten. The second organizational story at Kosten is distinctly different, though it follows a similar chronology, and is reflected in the accounts of at least five teachers. We term this the Struggle Against Ruination Story (Ruination Story for short). We briefly describe the redemption story at Kosten (readers should be familiar with this story sequence based on the account of Adams just above) and then describe the competing ruination story.

At Kosten the organizational stories appear to be in a state of flux. Our account below is based chiefly on our first year of data collection. Some preliminary analysis of second year field notes and interviews suggests that at Kosten the redemption story may be losing popularity while the ruination story may be gaining in popularity with staff.

A Redemption Story in the Making at Kosten²

The **setting** for the story is a school that serves inner-city youth from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Further, the student population is shifting with the immigration of families from Eastern Europe into the neighborhood over the past few years prior to this research. As one 5th grade teacher tells it,

The neighborhood in which this school resides in changed a lot. It's like a "mini United Nations." ... Many parents don't speak English but they are as supportive as much as they can be. The parents try to work well with the school but they may be either intimidated by it or may be apathetic.

² We are especially grateful to Tim Hallett for data collection at Kosten and for his assistance with data analysis. For an analysis of the social organization of turmoil at Kosten, see Hallett, T. (2003).

A key aspect of the setting as described in the redemption story at Kosten centers on a time in the not too distant past when things at the school were not “done by the book.” A school counselor explained, “there were a lot of things that were not done according to snuff ...” the Local School Council chair described it as, “a disordered situation.”

The **initiating event** in the redemption story as told by some staff at Kosten involves the arrival of a new principal in 1998. In this story, Ms. Koh, the **protagonist**, begins to institute changes through a number of **attempts** to establish routines and structures in the school. Ms Koh noted, “When I came in the old administration didn’t leave anything, so we’re really starting from the bottom ... it’s hard when there’s a history of things that are done, and you don’t know anything about it ... everyone has their own way” (field notes, 10/12/99). A similar sense of challenge is evident in some teachers and the Local School Council chair’s telling of the story:

The fact is that Denise (Koh) came into a school where there were no records, where there was no structure, and she had to create it, from scratch ... she was actually trying to bring order to a disordered situation.

Ms. Koh’s **attempts** involved changing teachers’ room assignments, establishing new routines for teachers to follow, and disciplining teachers for poor teaching. As Ms. Koh tells it,

I made some room changes when I came in because there were two valuable teachers who were housed in the supply room... so I basically made those changes ... I had another teacher who I observed sleeping in the classroom for about 10 minutes when there was a student teacher in their teaching and I wrote her up about it....

The computer and technology specialist explains, “Ms. Koh came in and she really cleaned house which is really good.”

In the redemption story as told at Kosten, the **consequences** of Ms. Koh's **attempts** were positive. A 5th grade teacher told of how the new administration made her feel important as a part of the school because they "set the tones and guidelines" for how the school was to run, noting that teachers "have more input into curriculum and school policy." Her account was similar to other teachers, who told about positive consequences. Another teacher put it like this:

Things are getting more organized ... simple things like attendance, uniform policy, or truancy, or now you know that that kind of a thing seems to be a little more organized. The report card system is a little more organized.

The school counselor relays the story in a similar way noting the emergence of order as a consequence of Ms. Koh's attempts, "Now reports go in, in a timely fashion. Reports go in correctly," (Interview, 5/30/00).

What is striking though, in contrast with the redemption story as told at Adams, is that at Kosten there is a strong sense in which the story is still being constructed and worked out by staff. Specifically, the consequences of Ms. Koh's attempts are frequently cast in tentative or uncertain terms. The sense that the organizational story at Kosten is still under construction is also reflected in the language that storytellers use. Storytellers at Kosten use the present tense more frequently compared to storytellers at Adams where the past tense is used more often. Storytellers at Kosten less often use the pronoun "we" while storytellers at Adams are more likely to use "we" in their accounts (see Table 2). Moreover, there is a real sense in which redemption story at Kosten is still lacking a real **climax** and no clear **resolution** is evident.

The (Struggle Against) Ruination Story

In some respects, the setting is similar to the redemption story in the ruination story though storytellers tend to dwell more on the changing student demographics. A veteran teacher stated “We’re getting more and more kids now with problems at home ... “There’s no discipline in the household, and I can model things here, but if they don’t get it at home.”

In the ruination story, however, one aspect of the **setting** that is distinctly different from the redemption story concerns how the period prior to the initiating event is cast. In the ruination story, teachers describe this period as a ‘golden era.’ A veteran teacher recalls:

When I first started in 1991 ... we have a lot of creative teachers in this school and you pretty much were able to do what you needed to do and use your creativity and kind of go with your own flow more or less. (Interview 11/15/99)

Another teacher said:

It was so calm, and you could teach, no one was constantly looking over your shoulder, they [administration] knew, exactly what was going on, I mean, they ordered books, ... we were allowed to teach (Video Transcript 2/23/01)

In the ruination story, this golden era is described as a time of harmony and peace among teachers and between teachers and administrators. It was a time when there were lots of creative teachers in the school and when teachers were free to teach and be innovative.

The ruination story involves many references to “back when” in pre-Koh times.

In the ruination story, the **initiating event** is identical to the redemption story – the arrival of Ms. Koh – but with decidedly negative **consequences** and **reactions** to Ms. Koh’s **attempts**. In the ruination story, Ms. Koh is the antagonist whose character is contrasted with prior administrators. In the ruination story, Ms. Koh’s **attempts** have negative consequences and receive negative reactions from staff. In contrast with the

redemption story, then, the outcomes of the “**event – consequences – response**” sequences in the ruination story are negative. Among the key events that feature prominently in the ruination story are the departures of veteran teachers from the school, the firing of the long-term assistant principal, and the closure of the student newspaper.

One of the “**attempt – consequences – response**” sequences goes like this. Teachers who resisted or were not in agreement with Ms. Koh’s attempts to introduce change, were challenged by her. As the story is told, these teachers experienced negative consequences receiving in their mailboxes from Ms. Koh advertisements for position openings at other schools, and some eventually “disappeared.” A veteran teacher cast it in rather stark terms:

I mean we have had people disappear and not know what happened to them. That’s the way it happens in the business world. You know its one thing to say “so and so has been transferred” or they’re going to take a position at this (other) school, it was we came back (from summer vacation) and 25 people out of 100 were gone. (Interview 5/12/00)

In the ruination story, some teachers responded negatively to the disappearance of longtime colleagues, complaining to the LSC and refusing to attend faculty meetings. Other teachers are cast as being angry and disillusioned but too afraid to speak out for fear of Ms. Koh.

Similar to the redemption story at Kosten, the ruination story is still being worked out by staff. The ruination story still lacks a definitive **climax** and **resolution**, though storytellers do suggest some possibilities. For instance, the district office investigation of the school in response to teacher’s complaints and a formal request for an investigation is suggested at times as a climax in the story. In this account, teachers struggle and do battle against the ruination brought about by Ms. Koh and manage to make some gains by getting the district to appoint a formal investigator to examine the problems at the school. The school district appointed an investigator

who conducted extensive interviews at the school. Still, there is no clear **resolution** or **denouement** in the ruination story. The “horrors” continue and tellers of the ruination story tell of attempting to minimize the negative consequences by keeping to themselves as much as possible. As one teacher put it, “Sometimes people come from the outside in here [her classroom] and they bring me tidings of the horrors that are out there, but I’m not directly in the center of it.” Comparing the redemption and ruination story at Kosten illuminates how what matters is not just what happens but what it means; in these two stories, the same events take on different meanings.

Themes in the Kosten Stories

The main theme that runs throughout both the redemption and ruination stories at Kosten, is one of conflict, strife, and lack of unity. Whether staff subscribe to the redemption story or tell a ruination story, conflict, strife, and disunity figure prominently. An art teacher remarked, “there are other people that feel totally disconnected and I wish there was something to bridge that.” While conflict and strife enter the ruination story with the arrival of Ms. Koh, in the redemption story these are themes that existed prior to Koh’s arrival. A computer teacher remarked, “It was a climate that was here even before the other administration. It was not just her [Ms. Koh]. I think the climate was there before.”

Tone of Organizational Stories

As we described earlier, we also conducted a preliminary analysis of the tone of the organizational stories at Kosten and Adams, using LIWC software to quantify the narratives (see Methodology Section). We found significant differences in the tone of the

organizational stories between Kosten and Adams, and between the redemption story and the ruination story at Kosten (See Table 2 & 3). (The numbers generated by the LIWC software are the percentages of words in each category as they appear in the text). Our analysis here is very preliminary and just an initial step in unpacking the tone of these stories.

TABLE 2: Comparing LIWC Results of Stories at Adams and Kosten

Variable Name	Adams Mean (standard error)	Kosten Mean (standard error)	t-value	Significance (p-value)*
We	2.527 (0.383)	1.386 (0.103)	-2.876	0.012
Affect	1.781 (0.076)	2.571 (0.151)	4.668	0.000
Positive Emotion	1.421 (0.077)	1.798 (0.089)	3.079	0.004
Negative Emotion	0.359 (0.051)	0.770 (0.079)	4.344	0.000
Anxiety	0.051 (0.011)	0.114 (0.013)	3.661	0.001
Anger	0.063 (0.017)	0.234 (0.042)	3.771	0.001

*significant at $p < 0.050$ (measures also verified by Mann Whitney test)

We found significant differences between the organizational stories of these two schools on several measures of tone. Most notably, the usage of “we” was significantly different as was the expression of negative and positive emotion. In the Adams story staff members are generally more positive, optimistic and speak using language about the efforts of the organization as a whole. Compared with the organizational story at Adams, the Kosten organizational stories are significantly less positive and significantly more negative in tone. Similarly, the Kosten stories involve significantly more anxiety and anger compared with the redemption story as told by staff at Adams.

There are also significant differences between the redemption and ruination story

at Kosten in terms of negative emotion, anxiety and sadness (See Table 3). Specifically, the ruination story, as one might expect, was more negative and involved more anxiety and sadness compared with the redemption story at Kosten. As the redemption story is about turning things around for the better whereas the ruination story centers on the negative consequences and reactions these results are to be expected.

TABLE 3: Comparing LIWC Results of Redemption vs. Ruination Story in Kosten

Variable Name	Redemption Mean (standard error)	Ruination Mean (standard error)	t-value	Significance (p-value)*
Affect	2.222 (0.166)	2.959 (0.195)	2.874	0.011
Negative Emotion	0.560 (0.074)	1.003 (0.101)	3.542	0.003
Anxiety	0.083 (0.013)	0.149 (0.160)	3.218	0.005
Sadness	0.088 (0.020)	0.227 (0.035)	3.450	0.004

*significant at $p < 0.050$ (measures also verified by Mann Whitney test)

Organizational Stories in Practice: Organizational Identity, Learning, & Innovation

Our interest in organizational identity is motivated by our efforts to understand those conditions that enable and constrain teacher and administrator learning and innovation in schools. Our research in Chicago elementary schools points to the importance of organizational structures, routines, and tools in enabling (and constraining) teacher learning and change. At Adams, for example, structures and routines put in place over the past decade including the Breakfast Club and Five Week Assessment Program, among others have supported teacher learning and change. However, these structures and routines, though necessary, are not sufficient to enable teacher learning and innovation.

Other schools in our study have similar structures, routines and tools but we see little evidence of learning and innovation. We believe that organizational identity is critical here.

Organizational identity is important in that it *can* provide a sense of common direction and purpose for organizational routines, structures, and tools. Organizational identity gives teachers and administrators a sense of who they are, where they have come from, and where they are going as an organization. Organizational stories – chronology, themes, and tone, - can serve as a compass for organizational members as they engage with and in organizational routines, structures, and tools. Of course, the issue is not simply whether a school has a strong organizational identity, the particulars of that organizational identity as reflected in the story are also critical. Further, there is the issue of if and how the organizational story is “lived by” in day-to-day practice.

We do two things in this section. First, we offer some preliminary evidence that stories are not just told, but that they are indeed “lived by.” In doing so, we do not at this point unpack *how* they are lived by – that is the subject of our ongoing analysis. Here we focus primarily on evidence from Adams schools. Second, we marshal some preliminary evidence that organizational identity can enable (and constrain) learning and innovation in organizations. While an in-depth analysis of *how* organizational identity as embodied in organizational stories enables and constrains organizational learning and innovation is beyond the scope of this paper, we do want to offer some evidence that there is a relationship. Unpacking this relationship in practice is the focus of our ongoing analysis.

Organizational Story In Practice: The Case of Adams

Our own analysis, coupled with that of our colleagues in the Distributed Leadership Study (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Halverson, 2002; Spillane & Zoltners, 2004; Zoltners, 2004) offers ample evidence of the redemption story in practice at Adams school. The story is one that administrators and most teachers “lived by.” Adams’ is characterized by a high sense of responsibility for student learning on the part of teachers and administrators. This is reflected throughout the school community from administrators to teachers. School leaders constantly work to create an environment in which teachers emphasized high standards, hard work and effort, and meeting students’ needs. Most striking, the circumstances of children’s lives are not used as an excuse to reduce standards or alleviate teachers’ accountability. The African American Assistant Principal (a former classroom teacher at this school) remarked, “I don’t allow anyone to say to me ‘because he’s this, because he’s that, because he’s the other he can’t do it.’ ... you could have been talking about me, when I was that age. I know given time, resources, and proper teaching he can get it.” The principal uses ordinary conversation with her staff to influence their response to their students and draws on her own childhood experience as a rhetorical device to convince her teachers that the students can achieve. She publicly challenges teachers who point to the students’ backgrounds as an excuse for poor test scores.

This theme of high standards regardless of students’ circumstances was repeated by administrators as well as teachers. Hard work can make a difference. As one teacher indicated, “She [the principal] says that, yes this is an inner city school and the kids do live in poverty, but she doesn’t let you feel sorry for yourself. She gives you a kick in the pants and sometimes you need that.” Therefore the sense of responsibility is instilled in

teachers through both the recognition of students' challenges and a push for hard work as a way of addressing students' needs.

The guidance counselor argues that "a lot of teachers stay late and come early here. You'll find that if you come at 8:15 am, there are no parking spaces left." Parents also recognize the hard work and commitment to students on the part of the teachers and administrators. As one parent shared in an interview, "Teachers take more time with the kids here, they show they care. They get the parents involved and show they care. I know the teachers here work hard." The hard work ethos, a key theme in the redemption story at Adams, is reflected in the day-to-day business of the school.

Organizational Identity and Learning and Innovation

Our prior and ongoing analysis of learning and innovation at Adams and Kosten illuminates striking differences between these two schools (Coldren & Spillane, under review; Halverson, 2002; Hallett, 2003; Spillane & Zoltners, 2004). Our analysis of field notes of formal and informal school meetings, classroom observations, interviews, and teacher questionnaires suggests that at Adams learning about instruction is front and center in the day-to-day practices of the organization. In contrast, at Kosten learning about instruction (despite the plans of some administrators) does not figure nearly as prominently in organizational routines and structures.

At Adams there is a strong sense of teacher collaboration about instruction and its improvement. Teacher collegiality is well above the district average and above Kosten. Further, instructional practice is something that is public and open for teacher discussion at Adams. This is not the case in Kosten (See Graph 1 and 2 for yearly measures of these

dimensions as reported by teachers).³ “Public practice” focuses on the extent to which colleagues share information about teaching practice and participate in collaborative efforts around instruction. Both teacher collegiality and the de-privatization of classroom practice are believed critical in enabling teacher learning and instructional improvement (Louis, 19??).

Teachers at Adams stressed the importance of formal and informal collaboration with colleagues. One 5th grade teacher echoed a sentiment expressed by most teachers at Adams:

We have grade level meetings and we are required to collaborate, but outside of those official meetings I try to get together with other colleagues who are comfortable with answering my questions about different topics that I am having difficulty with I need other ideas I am not set in one mode of teaching because there are different learning styles and I think that I need to address those learning styles using different types of strategies and have that available to me and I think that if I am a teacher for 30 years that I would be constantly learning I hope new techniques and there is something new coming up the pike research has shown that this is how the child learns and we need to try to learn new techniques and you do have teachers who get stuck with how they have been doing something for 20 years and I don't want to be like that there are other ways of doing things and things do change so I want to keep an open mind. It makes you work harder as a teacher too.

Observations of formal and informal meetings over the course of four years suggests that administrator and teacher discussions about teaching are central in the day to day workings of the school.

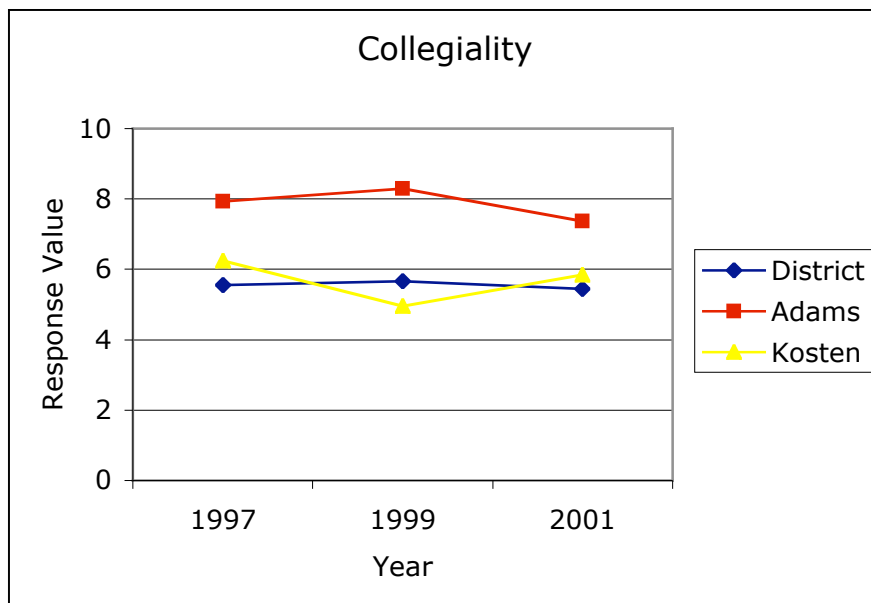
In contrast at Kosten, teachers spoke less frequently about collaborating with colleagues about classroom instruction and its improvement. As one teacher put it the school was, “missing a cohesiveness between teachers.” Further, formal

³ All graphical representations show data from the Consortium on Chicago School Research annual reports for each school.

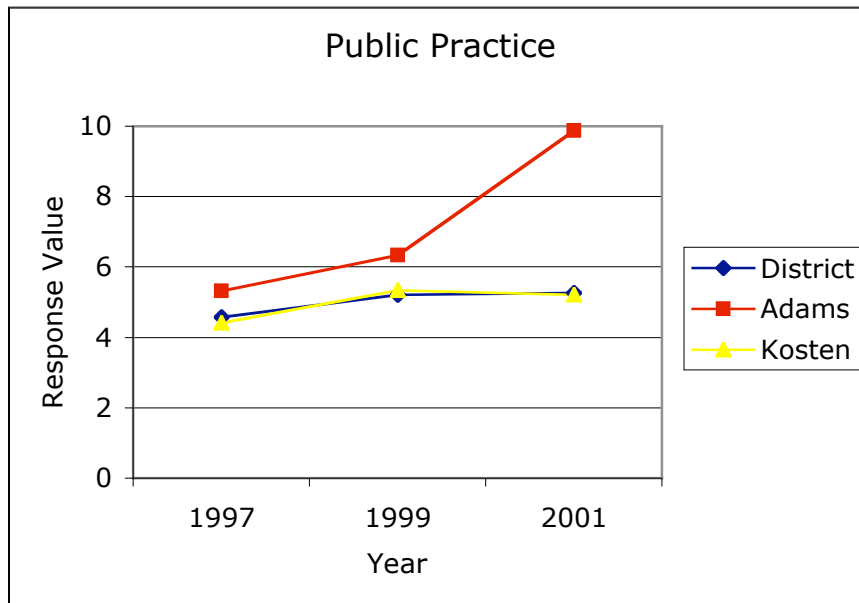
and informal meetings, even those that were designed to address issues of teaching and learning, often ended up on other matters that had little to do with the technical core of schooling.

The importance of organizational identity to learning and innovation concerns the particulars of the identity as reflected in the organizational story. Recall some of the key themes reflected in the redemption story at Adams – “we are family” “hard work” “We’re all here for one reason—the children” – these themes are constantly echoed in meetings at Adams. These themes give purpose and meaning to organizational routines and structures. At Kosten, much time is consumed in arguing about issues that have little to do with teaching and learning – giving play to the two competing organizational stories.

Graph 1



Graph 2



Differences are also evident between the two schools in teachers’ reports of their access to new ideas about instruction and their ability to make changes as they desire. (See Graphs 3 & 4). “Innovation” measures if teachers are continually learning, seeking new ideas and have an optimistic attitude about change. “Access to new ideas” focuses on teacher involvement in professional development and their willingness to change and improve their practice.

These differences are even more pronounced in interviews and observations. At Adams teachers talk frequently about opportunities to learn about instruction and an environment in which they are encourage by school administrators to take risks and try

out new instructional ideas. Teachers talk about initiating and leading programs within the school that enabled them to develop professionally. Over and over teachers and administrators tell about Dr. Williams creating an atmosphere in which teachers are free to try programs and if they fail, they will not be chastised, they will be encouraged to try again or try something new. A 7th grade teacher explained, “I went to a training where I was exposed to the ‘Great Books’ Program. I suggested the program so it became my project. I went to talk to Dr. Williams and she said go for it.” Another teacher described a similar situation, “I suggested doing a history fair, so we’ve had one every year. This was the third year. We do one at the school and then we participate in the citywide fair. This year three kids are finalists and will be traveling with me to Springfield.”

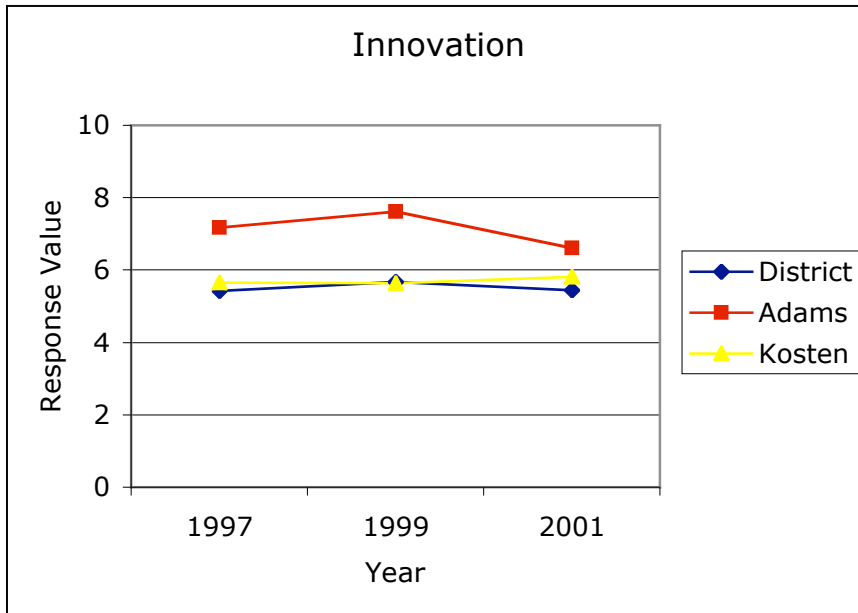
At Adams teachers also take responsibility for many leadership activities, try out innovative programs and are encouraged to attempt these without worries of failure. A teacher remarked:

There’s a high respect for the teachers here. If you show you care and you do a good job, they’ll help you out in any way they can. They always consider the teacher’s opinions.

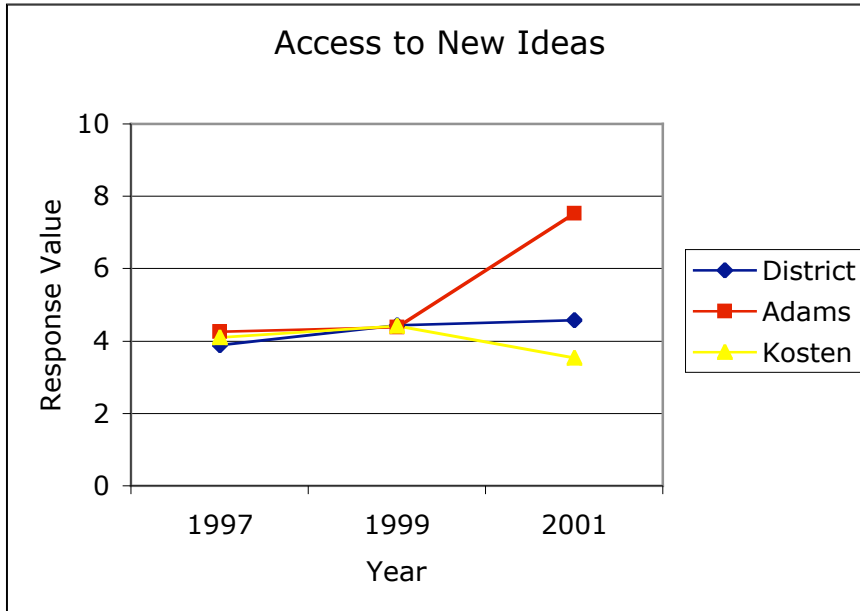
Another 5th grade teacher explained that Dr. Williams’ allows teachers the freedom to be innovative and try new things,

A lot of principals can't relinquish the power ... She's not like that. We know she has the power as the principal. We know that. She allows us to have the power. She shares it. She gives us ownership of our school. She said, this is not my school, this is our school. When I look good, you look good. When you look good, I look good. That's how it works.

Graph 3



Graph 4



We are not arguing that relations between organizational identity and learning and innovation in organizations are linear. As evident in the Adams story, relations between organizational identity and organizational learning and change are complex and we are just in the early stages of unpacking these relations.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our preliminary analysis suggests that the construct of organizational identity as reflected in the story or stories that school staff tell about their school captures a dimension of the school as an organization that is important in understanding learning and innovation in the school. We believe, based on this analysis, that organizational identity can help us understand under what conditions organizational structures, routines, and tools enable learning and innovation in the organization. We continue to analyze our data in an

effort to characterize the stories schools live by and unpack the notion of organizational identity as it relates to schools. In undertaking this initial exploration, we have surfaced many issues for our ongoing analysis. Below, we identify three of these issues.

One issue concerns the construction of an organizational story or stories. While organizational stories frame and give meaning to organizational members interactions, it is also the case that these stories are constructed and reconstructed in and through organizational members' interactions. Organizational identity is storied and re-storied in and through daily practice in schools and the meanings that organizational members give to these practices and events. Kosten provides many opportunities to unpack this process because the organization is unsettled and there are at least two competing stories been told by organizational members. This is especially evident in the interactions of teachers and administrators at Kosten, where the competing organizational stories frame practice and in turn the organizational stories are legitimated or revised through practice. Our observations of faculty meetings, grade level meetings, teacher lunch room conversations, and other formal and informal meetings provide numerous examples of teachers and administrators framing events through either the ruination or redemption story. At the same time, however, teachers and administrators construct, legitimate, and reconstruct organizational stories in day-to-day practice. Our field notes and video data offer powerful instances, for example, of teachers (tellers of the ruination story) narrating and legitimating the ruination story by singling out and framing for others particular actions that Ms. Koh takes in meetings. Similarly, these same storytellers publicly juxtapose Ms. Koh's actions against the actions of other administrators (a new assistant principal).

Adams presents an equally interesting case because the principal and one of her key assistant principals left the school at the end of our second year of data collection. In exploring this issue, we want to move beyond the pre-occupation of many organizational scholars with the notion that organizational identity is something that is inside the head of organizational members and explore how organizational identity resides in organizational rituals, symbols and practices.

A second issue concerns unpacking how organizational story enables and constrains learning and innovation in the daily practice of the organization. We have touched on this issue in the previous section at a rather surface level. Of interest here is the manner in which the organizational story is used and invoked in daily practice and how this use enables or constrains learning and innovation in the organization.

A third issue concerns presentation. Specifically, how the organizational story looks depends on the context in which the story is told. Hence, when a school presents itself to external constituents such as Local School Council, the school district, or parents, the story may differ from that which is presented internally. Public identities tend to be more positive, more monolithic than internally perceived identities. We are pursuing this line of analysis by analyzing the stories that schools tell about themselves in both internal and external arenas. To examine the external we are focusing on LSC meetings. Here we intend to use Sfarid's distinction between designated and actual identities (Sfarid, 2004).

A related issue here concerns relations between an organization's identity and its interaction with other organizations (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Individual identity is constructed, maintained, and reconstructed through interactions with others (Goffman,

1959), this begs the question of whether the interaction of organizations with others (e.g., other schools) contributes to the development of its identity. A related issue concerns shifts in the organizational environment such as school district policies and how these influence organizational identity. Here we are examining organizational identity in schools that were directly impacted by Chicago Public School's district policies.

School reformers often dwell on how new structures, routines, and tools can enable schools to learn and change in order to improve student achievement. We argue that while structures, routines, and tools are critical, they are unlikely to be sufficient on their own; they need a compass, a sense of purpose. We suggest, based on our analysis, that organizational identity as embodied in the story that teachers and administrators tell about their school may serve as that compass. In unpacking organizational stories, we seek to understand the ways in which schools work successfully to promote learning and innovation in and through organizational structures, routines, and tools.

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