Ethnography

MOLLY HAKE

Division of Education, Azusa Pacific University

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Ethnography

Part 1: Introduction and Personal Contexts

Introduction

This ethnography takes a close look at the school I have been observing at and have hopes of doing my student teaching or internship at. I learned so much through the process of what it looks like to have a positive and effective relationship network among the community, school, teacher, students, and parents. It doesn't come naturally and so it is important for teachers to study this in their schools and grow in their ability to strengthen it.

The purpose of this ethnography, thus, was to see how I might better serve the school and the community if I am hired there. It was to see how things work in hopes of improving them or continuing to do them that way in the future. After all, what good is research if it insights no change or improvement in at least one life.

To conduct this ethnography, I put myself in the community to experience it for myself, I collected public statistics on the school and grade for academic levels, I observed in a specific classroom to learn about the teacher and student dynamic, I asked questions of the host teacher, and I interviewed a parent and student from my focus classroom. As I collected these varied types of data, I analyzed it in hopes of gaining a better understanding of the community-school relationship as well as the parent-school/teacher relationship. The interviews of the parent and student I compared with each other as well as with the more broad information I gathered. I paired my observations with the statistics and what the teacher told me of the school and class and community situation. When comparing so many types and levels of data about a sphere such as this class/school/community, one can glean quite a bit of insight from the overlapping trends

of opinions and conclusions that are prevalent throughout. This was the general practice I took as I gathered and analyzed the data. Now that I have, I have only to act upon it responsibly.

Personal Contexts

Cultural background

My cultural background can best be described as that of a typical American-born, middle class, homeschooled, Christian girl. I grew up going to church every week as a matter of course. I started following in my parents footsteps and volunteering as early as later elementary. Taking care of each other, our bodies, and everything else God gave us was very important to us. Among these, was taking care of and developing our gifts and talents. We were trained to grow in what we were good at and even in what we thought we weren't. We were taught to honor God in all we did. This translated to a high value placed on truth, family, responsibility, and every other core Christian tenant. Our culture was not based on race or our community or anything like that. Our lives were and are built first and foremost on our faith and I plan to raise my own children in this beautiful and only truly fulfilling culture.

As I was homeschooled, this culture was certainly represented in my homeschool years from kindergarten to 8th grade, as well as my two years at my church's preschool. It was somewhat represented at my public high school, but not entirely as the majority of students there who came from a nominally christian culture were catholic and most did not have life-saving personal faith. It was just something their family was a part of. This did make high school somewhat challenging, but at least most people were not completely oblivious to what my culture was. On the other hand, I was one of the maybe 1% of white students on my campus and while that did not often make too much of a difference, there were many occasions where it

made things perhaps a bit uncomfortable or at least made me feel like an outsider for that reason on top of for the reason of my faith.

Parental Involvement

My parents were heavily involved in my upbringing and education, particularly so because I was homeschooled. Their involvement, as specific as it was within the homeschool setting, cannot really be a model for how I engage with parents in a public or private school setting, but some of the principles they modeled are certainly ones I want to encourage the parents of my future students to have. For example, they believed that it was their responsibility as my parents to ensure that I was getting the education that I needed., that it was rigorous enough, that it was truth-based, and that it was tailored to my needs. Of course as a teacher I have a responsibility to give my students a good education, but it is their parents' responsibility to keep their child in school, whichever one of their choice, and to develop the child's character and attitude towards education. The student belongs first to God, then to the parent, and lastly to me. Too often teachers try to take control of their students' lives. Sometimes this is with the best of intentions, but I believe it can have lasting negative personal and societal effects.

In addition to this principle that my parents modeled through homeschooling, they continued to model it through their involvement in my high school experience. They talked with teachers and with me to stay informed of what I was being taught and how. They occasionally told teachers they were not comfortable with, for example, my watching particularly graphic movies and such. My dad being a teacher at the school certainly aided their ability to stay involved, but they would have done the same in any situation. They also both coached with another coach on my cross country and track teams, which helped them further stay involved. I never felt that they were too involved and always appreciated how invested they were in my

education as it helped me so much practically speaking, but more importantly emotionally

speaking. I knew I wasn't alone as I faced the challenges of a teenager in a crazy world. I

couldn't have received this security from any other place in the school or community.

Part 2: The World of the Student

Community Assets Analysis

Introduction

All my life I have lived in view of an elementary school. This school has now become my

home for the observation hours I have done. Thus not only do I have an interest in the school for

what it is to me now, I also have an interest for what it has been my whole life. I remember going

on runs with my dad or walks with the family and passing the school, wondering what it was like

inside. Now I have been given the opportunity to take an even deeper look into this school and

the community and discover the assets it has at its disposal. The purpose of this deeper look is to

"recognize the importance of local assets and develop strategies to enhance the quality of life by

using these resources" (Green & Goetting, 2010, p. 9). After all, knowledge is rather pointless if

it is used for some beneficial purpose.

Description of the Community

Community can be defined as " a network of social relations marked by mutuality and

emotional bonds," (Bender, 1982, p. 7). While the physical community surrounding the school is

a rather defined one, the community of the school by this definition includes more and in some

ways less than this physical area. Still, for the purposes of now, we shall focus first on the

physical community. The little neighborhood surrounding the school is full of two to three

bedroom, middle class homes. The addresses for this neighborhood all say, we'll call it "Avenue"

as the city, but the area is not technically a part of the city and is considered an unincorporated

district of Los Angeles County. This means we deal with the LA Sheriff and not the "Avenue" Police and it means we don't have all the same city laws and such. Within this neighborhood, aside from the homes and the school, there is a church and a grocery store that has a few little businesses in the lot. It is by no means a wealthy area, but it is not a particularly poor area. In fact, it lies between a wealthy city and a rather poor city.

Community Resources

There are several resources in the community of this elementary school. There is the church and grocery store within the immediate neighborhood. Beyond the immediate neighborhood are community centers that provide classes in almost anything, there are tutoring agencies, though not for free, there are public libraries, and there are countless other businesses and educational organizations at the disposal of those who can find and afford them. There are a few extracurricular activities and such at the school itself like after school programs, clubs, sports, music, student government, etc. The high school that this feeds into, that many students have older siblings at, offers educational courses for parents to help with things like college.

Community Events

One of the events I attended was a Sunday service at the church down the street from the school. No one who goes to the school goes to this church, but the pastor talks a lot about being a light to the community and connecting with neighbors and peers and coworkers. Back when there was a preschool at the church, there would be kids who went the preschool and then went to the public school and so at least were a little connected to the church, but as it has been a few years since the preschool closed down, and there is now a new pastor, that connection is sadly dwindling.

For the second event, I went to the grocery store in that neighborhood. A lot of alumni

from the high school that this elementary school feeds into work there and there are lots of

people from the community who shop there. It really is a hub for the area and it is common to

see kids from the school, or from the private school nearby, or from girl scouts selling things

outside the store. From both "events" I was able to conclude that while there is potential in the

community, this potential is generally unreached.

Description of the Interview Experience

For my interview, I asked questions of a 6th grade teacher, we'll call her Dr. K, who has

been at the school for many years. She believes that "The main assets of our community are

foremost the people who of course lead the organizations and utilize their associations to make

the community cohesive and a workable living part of the physicality called [city name]."

When I asked what she would like to see in the community ten years from now, she said

she "would like to see the community even more diverse and accommodating than it already

is,…would like to see more commerce and industrial resources brought to the community to

establish a more robust economy as well as provide more jobs," and "would also like to see the

addition of more social activities/ events which would help solidify and build on the community

feel of our area." She then explained what she thought could help the community reach this

vision when she said having a forward looking philosophy would help the community determine

what is needed to make positive changes to our society. She argued that "Leaders can investigate

the needs of the society to better meet social constructs… [and] can also identify areas where

commerce and industry can occur and reach out to those corporations so that this can be offered

to our residents as well as attract new residents to our community." When I asked about what

limitations stood in the way of her vision for the community, she told me that the "Limitations

are always time and money," but that "Involving more people in the process can help divide the

time needed to reach this vision."

Perhaps a less asked question is how the school can serve the community, but to this question, Dr. K replied with, "The school should help develop leaders, not just in the students, but also in the families served by the schools. The school environment should teach and support adult leaders just as they support student learners." She made the excellent point that, "Schools can also be a breeding ground for grassroots change whereas our community members become actively engaged in the school community then have that activism be transformed into the society in general rather than just in the school setting."

Through the process of interviewing Dr. K, I was able to see the big picture of what the school and community need from each other and what might be done to reach those goals we ought to have.

Overview of community strengths and weaknesses

Aside from the church and businesses discussed above, perhaps the biggest resource the school has lies simply in the people of the neighborhood. After all, "social interactions" is one of the top four categories of ways in which parents are able to be supported as they support their children in their education, (Louque & Latunde, 2014). The double sidewalk around the school is a main thoroughfare for the neighborhood's walkers. This helps make the school feel more connected to the community as a whole, but it has not really made that connection stronger. Growing up, I remember parents and students coming to our door to ask for donations for the jogathon, but nowadays I hardly see neighborhood kids around. It seems more and more that the neighborhood is home mostly to older couples who bought homes when it was cheap and to young couples without kids who are wealthy enough to afford the higher prices. This disconnect along with the disconnect between the church and school are not dramatic, but they aren't what is

best. In fact, in my mind, they simply provide an opportunity for the biggest asset, people, to be used more fully in the future.

Another unfortunate aspect of the community is a rise in the homeless population. They are not around the school much, but they are often by the grocery store and many live on the trail that quite a few students cross to get to and from school. There have been times when they have been hostile and so it is concerning what this means for the safety of the kids, but since the homeless hub has been removed from the trail, it has gotten a little better. I hope that through the growth in the connection of the people of the community, the problem can continue to improve for the safety and security of the students.

Analysis of My Positionality Within the Community

My position within this community is unique in that I am now connected to both the church and school like no one else really is. This position affords me the opportunity to foster a better connection between the two. I can make personal relationships with the students there and show the character of Christ and of the church that represents Him. I can use my influence at the church to suggest and perhaps lead in events that attract attendance from school families or connect the two entities. Whether it is on a small scale or a large scale, I can use my position to make a positive impact in this community.

Conclusion

From all that I have seen in the community, in my years of growing up as well as in these recent times of looking at it as a teaching, I can conclude that, while perhaps they are not being used to their full potential, the community surrounding this elementary school has many quality assets.

School and Classroom Context

Introduction

As described in the above portion of this paper, the school at which I have been doing my observation hours and now some teaching has a quality community of resources. Within the school itself data can be gleaned about the population, academic achievement, school and district policies, parent and community involvement, and what a typical class setup is like. This information will help determine more specifically what assets are being used and how to improve upon or maintain these uses.

Location Within the Community

The school is located in the center of a small, somewhat square neighborhood that has a wash on two sides and busier streets on the other two sides. Not only is the school at the physical center of this little neighborhood, it is also the general hub of action as well. The percentage of homes in the neighborhood that have a view of the school from their front yards is impressive. The nearest hospital is about 15 minutes away and the nearest parks are 1-2 miles away. There are numerous restaurants and stores within a 15 minute radius. Some students walk to school, many get rides from their parents, and a good number take the bus. Thus, while the school is central to this little neighborhood, the neighborhood is in the midst of a much larger, bustling area that has much to offer.

School Population

Some may call this K-8th school very diverse, but it is perhaps surprisingly consistent, having a diversity score of 0.38 compared to the state's score of 0.63. The school is 77% Hispanic, 18% Asian, 4% White, and 1% Black. Of the 653 students, 55% qualify for free lunch and 28% qualify for reduced lunch. The school has programs including ASPIRE, GATE, Leader in Me, Dual Language Immersion programs in Spanish and Mandarin, a TK Readiness academy,

and other extracurriculars like music and lego robotics. In short, the school offers many tools to help improve student achievement generally and academically.

School Achievement

The school unfortunately has lower test scores than the district and state averages in both math and ELA. For 6th grade specifically, the school had 73.5% not meet the math standard and 65% not meet the ELA & Literacy standards. This is compared to the 66.8% and 55.8% for the state of California. The state scores are sad enough, but the school is even further behind and will need to work hard to catch up.

Major School and District Policies

The school's motto is "Be Responsible. Be Respectful. Be Kind." At the school level, students are not allowed to use their cell phones on campus or in the buses. The district has policies that ensure the public community is informed of the necessary things, taking into account language and disability needs. They also have a policy that parents and the community are involved in the forming of the district vision.

Parent & Community Involvement

The asset of parent and community involvement is often under tapped, but it is very important. "Just as citizen participation is fundamental to democracy in the United States, so too is parent and community participation fundamental to student academic achievement," (Grant & Sleeter, 2011). Also, "Parental involvement is a key factor in student success, yet schools struggle with effectively engaging diverse families in the education of school-age students," (Latunde, 2017). They argue that this is because parents of different cultures have varying views on what involvement looks like. That is why there is often contention between schools and parents when trying to find that balance of involvement that is between neglect and interference.

At this focus school, parent involvement varies a lot. However, the school does a good job of enabling and encouraging more involvement. They offer to parents things like a parent handbook, a parent liaison, nutrition services, the Jeff Seymour Family Center, and a district child development website. Parents serve as field trip supervisors and are included in their child's education through parent teacher conferences as well. Newsletters and such are sent home with the students regularly.

Description of One Classroom

In my focus 6th grade classroom, the host teacher does an excellent job of mixing around student groupings so that cliques are limited and not particularly recognizable during class time. There are clear procedures for every routine including noise level, collaboration, technology use, movement about the room, etc. If students have behavioral issues, there is a reflection and form for them to fill out before gaining good standing again. The process is clear for them and their parents.

Classroom Map
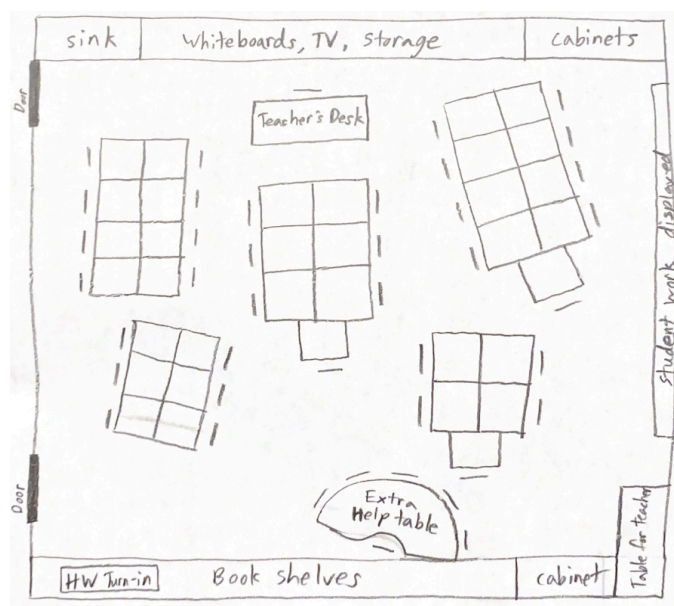
Students and Families

Introduction

Within my focus class, I was able to interview one student from a low-income, broken family and his mother to gain a better understanding of how they view the class and the school, what their home life is like, and what the student's academic history is like. This personal example helps give me more insight into the school and the community as a whole which will give me the knowledge I need to serve the school and community better.

Part 1: The Student

The student, Ed we'll call him, though in the 6th grade class, is at a 3rd grade level in both math and ELA according to the standardized tests. He generally gets grades equivalent to Ds, but sometimes even gets "no-effort fail" grades. His teacher said that his biggest problem is his lack of motivation. She has talked to him and he says that he never feels any stress because he just doesn't care about anything. This saddens his mother, Ava we'll call her, and based on what I gleaned from interviewing her, it is one of her biggest areas of concern and her goal is to help him improve in that. Thus, generally speaking, not only is he far behind academically, he is not currently making progress towards reaching grade-level expectations. Through the interviews and the information I gleaned from listening to the parent-teacher conference, steps are being taken in the right direction by Ava, but it has yet to be seen if Ed will follow suit.

I was able to learn a lot about Ed from my interview with him. His parents are divorced, but his family helps him a lot, not just with school, but also with any ideas of projects and such that he wants to do. He says the thing his family values the most is supporting each other well and that was made evident to me through what I learned in both interviews. He told me that while all the adults in his life seem to value school and think his education is important, his mom is the one who talks to him the most about it and helps him the most with it.

On a typical morning, he gets changed, his mom packs his lunch, and he gathers his stuff. He then walks to the bus stop, which isn't far, and sits next to his friend Henry everyday. This friend is who he says he spends the most time with outside of his family, but Henry is in a different 6th grade classroom at the school. When he gets home from school, he has a quick routine of putting his things away, cleaning up, and feeding the cats. He gets to rest until dinner which is then followed by more freetime until his mom is ready to work on his homework with him. He then showers and has free time until bed. During this rest and free time, he can be on his phone, play video games, watch tv, or anything else he wants. His routines show that he is well taken care of, but also that perhaps according to some, that he is not required to do very much work at home, which may translate to his attitude that school is also a place at which he can have lots of rest and freetime.

Outside of school and home, he said he spends the most time at a couple of neighborhood parks playing with his friends. He told me he likes the neighborhood because "there aren't a lot of dangerous things happening." In other words, he thinks it feels safe. This made me happy to hear because a lot of students in the district do not live in as safe of neighborhoods as this one. I was glad to see that he appreciated that, though of course it is sad that he knows that many communities are not this safe.

He told me that he generally likes school and does think it's important, but this does contrast with his apparent apathy towards it when he is asked to actually do his work. His least favorite subject is reading, "because it is boring," and his favorite subject is math because, "even though [he] is not good at it, it is a challenge so it isn't boring." I thought that was rather interesting given his lack of motivation to do anything hard. By my own speculation, perhaps he hasn't felt he's had to do anything hard in life and so while it intrigues him, he may not have the

character yet to actually complete something difficult.

I asked him what he would change about the school and his classroom if he could and he said he liked everything about his classroom, particularly that they all sat in such large table groups. On the school side, he also did not have much to complain about except for the food being gross and the bathrooms sometimes being dirty. These are common complaints in most schools and so I was happy to hear that even a student who is not succeeding academically doesn't have much to complain about when it comes to his class and school. It is a sign that the school and his teacher are doing a good job of providing what they students need and desire.

When I asked what he thought was most unique or special about him, he first shrugged and said he didn't know, but when I pressed, he mentioned his green eyes and his participation in summer wrestling camp. I believe this is another sign of his apathy towards most aspects of life. He doesn't appear to feel very strongly about very many things, if any.

However, he was able to tell me a rather complete and detailed plan for his adult life, which surprised me. It wasn't glamorous by any means, but it was sufficient and wise. He said he wants to start small with a job at McDonalds, or something like that, and then move to a store, and then work his way up to manager.

Overall, I agree with my host teacher's sentiment that Ed's biggest hurdle is his motivation. He has the tools and the mind. He just needs to want success more than he currently does. In other words, the school and the community and his family are giving him all he needs to succeed, so his low academic level is a reflection on him, and not the school or community.

Part 2: The Student's Family

While my interview with Ed was insightful as to his personal situation, my interview with his mother, Ava, was insightful both into Ed's situation, but more importantly into the school and

community as a whole. She described the school as organized with great integration and communication with parents including connecting with them about classroom news, campus news, and information about events and resources. She said the school provides lots of activities and field trips and events like movie nights. She also mentioned the fact that they offer connections to college savings and parent workshops, both of which she takes advantage of. In short, she had nothing negative to say about the school except that she agreed with her son that the food could be better.

She is heavily involved in the school as a volunteer for school site council who meets with the principal to discuss how finances are to be spent, as a volunteer in the classroom and as a chaperone on field trips. She also volunteers with the PTA and worlds on fundraisers. She praised the community as well saying that it offers many convenient amenities like parks and doctors and anything else they need. It is also the neighborhood in which she grew up, so she has many connections there and several extended family members live nearby, which is a huge asset to her.

On that note, we discussed what she wants Ed to learn about his culture and heritage and where he learns these things. She said that she never learned much about it herself, having a German mother and a Hispanic father who was not particularly proud of his culture. Ava explained that it is largely from Ed's dad that he learns about his Hispanic roots. In other words, she doesn't care nearly as much about Ed's education in this area as she does in other areas.

When I asked what she hoped Ed would learn and achieve in school and at home and what she hoped he would become one day, she told me that she wants her son to be able to work independently, be respectful, and really just be able to take care of himself someday. She would like him to be at grade level by the time he graduates 8th grade so that he might be prepared for

high school. She wants him to be motivated and to "set goals for himself." She wants him to learn to live in the present moment and to show motivation and interest in the things she feels are important for his future.

From all we discussed, it is clear that Ava is using all of the assets available to her through the school and community and her own family to try to make a positive impact on her son for the sake of his future. It was inspiring to see how much she cares and how much she sacrifices for him and it made me want to do my part and as an educator to help parents use what assets are available to them and to be an asset myself for their goal of improving their children's futures.

Part 3: Conclusion

The Larger Social, Cultural, Political, and Economic Context

There are many social and economic factors that impact learning. The fact that over 80% of the school's population is considered to have economic challenges is a big deal and does have a large effect on student academic achievement. Going to school in a neighborhood between a particularly poor city and a particularly wealthy city creates an interesting dynamic for the students. It means they are rather aware of their financial situation in comparison to others. This can create feelings of inferiority and unworthiness. It can lower their expectations for themselves.

This is what some may consider a victim mentality, and whether it is exactly that or not, I do believe it can have the same effect. Many of the students have parents who did not graduate from college, so this paired with what I described above encourages students to be too satisfied with mediocrity, or even inferiority. This is a much broader political and societal issue that covers a range of areas and people groups, but I think it worth bringing to the conversation of

this ethnography.

It was clear, in my observations and in my particular focus on and interview of and about Ed, that a lack of drive and motivation is a common problem among students at this school. In fact, it is my observation and experience that it is a common problem among all students in upper elementary and middle school in at least my sphere of Southern California. I believe that this victim mentality has become prevalent for many political reasons, as mentioned above, but I think that technology use and social media along with the decline of purpose-giving religion. This is where my sense of calling and mission in the classroom comes into play, but more on that later.

The School/Classroom

From the information I gathered, particularly from my parent interview with Ava, it is clear the parents are heavily involved, or at least encouraged and welcomed to be heavily involved. The school does a good job of communicating with parents often and in many forms. They also make sure to send paperwork and such home with students in the language their parents speak. There is a whole program at the school called School Site Council that is a way for parents to give their input on school decisions and Ava is a part of that. I was surprised to hear that she gets to give input on things like the budget even. I am happy that the school encourages this kind and level of parent involvement.

There is certainly a range of parent involvement, interest, and value in their children's education. This is to be expected at a school with so many low socioeconomic families. Some of the parents of these students want to ensure their children get out of that tough situation and do all they can to ensure it. Others want to and don't know how, and some of those use the school resources well. However, still others raise their children the way they were raised, with no

appreciation for or involvement in their children's education and school life. The hope, of course, is that the majority of parents fall within the first or second groups and that the others can be encouraged to join those groups through the efforts and invitation of the school and their children's teachers.

Instruction and Pedagogy

The culture of my focus classroom is considerably good, and certainly rather efficient and effective. The rules and procedures and practices in place are well understood and well practiced by the students and teacher. There are clear expectations. Unfortunately, on the note of motivation in particular, students do not always rise to those expectations, at least not academically and even occasionally behaviorally. My observations were enough to prove this, but the interviews helped as well. For example, I saw students go through the motions of taking care of passing papers, answering the phone, moving from one task to the next, eating and cleaning up from breakfast, all with very little verbal prompting. Students all have jobs and they know how and when to do them.

From my interview with Ed I gained more insight into the student view of the classroom in particular as well. It is clear that though he has little motivation to do his best in his work, he does appreciate the classroom environment and wouldn't change anything about it. This says a lot about the way my host teacher runs her room. Normally a student with D grades would have something negative to say about his teacher or the way things are done, but he didn't and it appears from my observations that his classmates would agree with him.

In short, I am of the opinion, based on the data I gleaned, that the teacher's instructional methods and classroom management protocols influence the students positively. She is preparing them well for success in high school and the workplace by holding them to high enough

standards, but at the same time, she is connecting with them and walking with them individually to try to encourage them and incite motivation where she can.

The culture of the classroom seems rather in tune with the culture of the students' homes. In fact, from my own experience in the area, it seems rather common for the school to dictate, or at least be central to, the culture of the home. Because the school has a vast majority of slightly lower socioeconomic class hispanics, that is both the culture of the majority of the students and of the school as a whole. Other cultures are included as well, but not in the same way as many of the teachers are hispanic as well. The idea of school and government provision being necessary for the students' success is prevalent as well. It is a common thing in a lot of schools I see for the administration and even teachers and parents to think that the school has more authority and power and influence than it does, or at least more than it should, but that is somewhat a matter of moral and political opinion. Regardless, the cultures of homes and the school appear to align rather well, especially as seen from the culture of the family I interviewed.

Personal Reflections

Through this whole extensive process of forming this ethnography, I have been able to learn so much about the school and community and the situation of their relationship. However, more importantly, I have learned how to be a teacher, in this school and community in particular, who fosters and invites positive and healthy relationships among myself, my students, their parents, and the school.

Knowing the students at this school at this level now will impact me as a future teacher at this school. For example, knowing how common a lack of motivation is will mean I focus much more on that aspect of my teaching. This is largely connected to my faith as well. As I mentioned briefly above, religion is where most people find their sense of purpose and calling. It is where I

have found mine. When students don't have a higher level of a sense of calling to give them motivation to do difficult things, they simply just won't. In most cases, the praise of teachers or parents is simply not enough and for younger students at least, neither is the pressure of preparing for a career. As a teacher, I want to teach the value of a good work ethic. I want to do all that is in my power to get students to look outside themselves for a reason to do what they should do.

Also as a result of this project, my view of the purpose of education has grown. I now, even more so, see the purpose of education as something to come alongside parents in their task of developing their children into upstanding citizens and human beings. It isn't to take this job over from parents or to make sure that students get into college. It is simply to pour into students in whatever area they can, as positively and as truth-based as possible.

Because I have learned so much by completing this ethnography, it has given me reason to plan to study similar things at whatever schools I end up teaching. Wherever I go, it will be crucial for me to use my position to gather information about my students, their families, the school, and the community and to work actively and intentionally to encourage great relationships among them all.

Appendix

Samples of Student's Work

My birthday is may 14 2012 and my favoite color is light blue, I Also Like to invite my freinds over at my house. my goal is to be a better person and to be smater and Just be a engener. my dream is to be a susreful person in life. and my hopes is to be a good Person Like someone you can talk to. and I just relax at my moms house but at my dad we do stuff.

The lost soul

There once was a muder every night on halloween he wore a mask and a black suit and these teenagers wanted to go look for him. They went everywhere but then they found him in the sewer. looked at them for a second but this time he had no mask and he was wearing glasses then started running at them they ran away but they had to check every corner before turning it. once they got back to there house they went to sleep. When they woke up they went to school and told everyone but no one believed them. But there was this one kid that was staring at them weirdly with the same glasses.. Then when they got out of school the kid keeped on following them with the same glasses. but when they turned around to tell him to stop following them but when they turned around to tell him he was gone the next day it was saturday and they went out back to here they found the killer and they found him but again but he just looked at them with a knife in his hand they went up to him and he was just looking at them then they took off his mask and there was nobody in the mask then they ran out of fear. The next day they went to school then they figured out who the kid name was then ask every one who he was nobody knew who he was until this one kid knew who he was he used to be at the school he said he died 14 years ago.

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