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A Hispanic-Serving Institution, Its Strategic Human Capital Utilization and the Shift in Institutional Culture After the Merger

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A HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTION, ITS STRATEGIC HUMAN CAPITAL

UTILIZATION AND THE SHIFT IN INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

AFTER THE MERGER

A Dissertation

by

TRINI YUNES

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A HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTION, ITS STRATEGIC HUMAN CAPITAL

UTILIZATION AND THE SHIFT IN INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

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December 2021

ABSTRACT

Yunes, Trini, <u>A Hispanic-Serving Institution it is Strategic Human Capital Utilization and the Shift in Institutional Culture after the Merger</u>. Doctor of Education (EdD), December 2021, 127 pp., 2 tables, 8 figures, references, 74 titles.

In the United States, there has been recent attention to mergers involving higher education institutions. The fact is that mergers and acquisitions (M&A) are not a novel topic but more common in business. The paper will present the findings of a case study of the merger of two Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) in Texas and how leadership used both legacy cultures to create a new organizational culture. The main focus of this study is to compare the relationships, as viewed by staff and faculty, between institutional performance and organizational culture. It will also determine how human capital (HC) utilization is related to institutional performance. It will also establish the human capital factors used towards creating a new institutional culture after the merger. A qualitative method research design is used to analyze the variables and findings. The study seeks to present the findings to consider future opportunities for research and help other HSIs embark on the merger process and consolidate and institutionalize one culture.

Keywords: higher education, Hispanic-Serving institutions, Texas, organizational culture, mergers, employee perceptions, faculty and staff, institutional performance, institutional culture, human resources (HR), human capital (HC)

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Antonio, Anthony, and Alexander, my support system, "mis amores," and my lifeline. Thank you for always understanding how important this work was for my career and for our future. Education transformed me into an accomplished and happier wife and mom; it keeps me motivated. I will forever love you! A mis padres, Antonio y Martha, gracias por enseñarme a ser aguerrida en la vida y a ir en contra de toda predicción.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A transformative initiative was introduced in Texas by Dr. Francisco G. Cigarroa, University of Texas System's chancellor at the time, to merge two Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) as a single university with multiple campuses, including new administrative offices. It was up to Texas lawmakers to determine if the plan, which included a proposed medical school, would "tap into significant state financing sources that the two existing universities" could not access, the PUF – Permanent University Fund (Hamilton, 2013, June 3). A common cause that allowed an opportunity for legislators to make a difference in an underserved group of communities located along the Texas-Mexico Border (Lucio, as cited in Hamilton, 2013, June 3, para. 4). The University of Texas System's prediction that the new university would increase undergraduate students to about 28,000. At that point, the two existing or legacy institutions, as it would be referred to in this study, only had 19,000 and 8,600 at their locations (Hamilton, 2013, June 3).

Legislators also predicted that new jobs would be created, and that the new university would meet the standards from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board as an "emerging research" institution (Hamilton, 2013, June 3). Texas Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa and Texas House of Representative Terry Canales pointed that the new university along with the new

medical school "would become the second-largest Hispanic-enrolled university in the nation" (Legislative Media, 2013, March 20, para. 1). City mayors and community leaders also rallied for the legislature to approve the bill that would merge the two HSIs. "Our community is prepared to make this compromise to gain access to a medical school, and enhanced health care infrastructure, and 'get accesses' to the PUF" (Mayor Garcia, as cited in Legislative Media, 2013, March 20, para. 13).

An emerging research institution would provide the opportunity to have the resources to expand teaching, learning, and primary research. Birx et al. (2013) identify these types of institutions as "those that are leaders in selected areas of teaching and research often leveraging regional resources" (Birx et al., p. 11). The most value to an emerging research institution relies on the educational partnerships, research, and economic resources from the region, community, donors, state and national funding. "The potential results are remarkable if leadership is willing to take the risk." (p. 12). In this study, the legislators, the system administration, and the two presidents of the legacy institutions decided to take the risk to achieve a greater good for the Hispanic students in Texas.

The opportunity to transform and expand the educational opportunities in one of the primary underserved areas in the country while establishing a new school of medicine and merging two well-established universities involved tasks that no other institution in Texas and perhaps the nation had faced in the past. On May 23, 2013, the Texas Legislature approved the merger to establish the new university with a school of medicine, and the administrators and employees knew very little about the vast challenge coming their way. This study seeks to learn and document the strategy developed and implemented during the merger process. Furthermore, the case study will analyze the theoretical framework on organizational culture from the two

legacy institutions' subculture and its success and challenges faced throughout the merger process (Morgan, 2006).

The development of a model for framework creation in higher education's organizational performance (Aljardali, Kaderi, & Levy-Tadjine, 2012) and how it would relate to organizational culture, mergers and acquisitions' success, the human capital, and human resources participation in the process, are the primary research topics in this study. The study will analyze the relationship between success factors, challenges, and the merger process in connection with human capital utilization and human resources management. Hong, Hao, Kumar, Ramendran, and Kadiresan (2012) analyzed human resources practices and their effect on institutional success, which assist in underlying the research relationship with mergers and acquisitions in higher education as important and possibly significant value-added topics in the research. The case study will focus on the merger process of the two Hispanic Serving Institutions or HSIs, as it will be noted for this paper, into one new University. Multiple documents analysis and focus group interviews will be part of the qualitative methodology identified to analyze the merger, organizational culture, and collaborations between staff, faculty, and the administration.

Higher education mergers are not as common as in business with mergers and acquisitions. However, the innovation process has become more customary in institutional reinvention and institutionalization for change and organizational innovations (Cai, Pinheiro, Geschwing, & Aarrevaara, 2016). Financial motivators are the main factors considered in mergers in the private sector. This includes increasing markets, eliminating competition, sharing infrastructure, and combining administrative units. Thus far, mergers' success depends upon the long-term plan and integration strategy to manage cultural issues, communication, and a clear vision (Pinheiro, Geschwind, & Aarrevaara, 2013).

For this study, human capital utilization is defined as an aid to transform an organization's culture. An organization with a firm structure inclined to support its employees will be recognized to have a supportive culture that allows individuals to attempt things, fail, learn from the experience, and try again to succeed. The organization will successfully enable employees to produce successful outcomes with a supportive culture. Outcomes will reflect the employees' performance and overall institutional performance (Bontis, 1998).

While data are critical with institutional performance numbers to determine the funding for higher education institutions, in this case, study, funding was one of the primary drivers for the merger of the two legacy institutions (Texas Legislative Session 83, 2013, June), which provided PUF (Permanent University Funds) for expansion and the establishment of the school of medicine. An analysis of a merger in higher education in Texas is not determined. Thus far, mergers in higher education are not as common in the United States as in Europe (Cai et al., 2016). The authors reported in 2013 from their existing research that out of 14 possible higher education mergers between 2007 and 2011 in Europe, only four mergers finalized its process, one was still under review, and the rest did not pan out as expected and were canceled. At this point, the relationship of human capital utilization with the collaboration of administration, staff, and faculty in the merger process and the effects of developing a new institutional culture after the merger is unknown. Therefore, this study seeks to determine the process and strategy used to merge two institutions of higher education in Texas, the relationship of the collaboration of staff, faculty, and administration in the merger process, and the connection among organizational culture, human capital, and human resources towards the success factors, outcomes, benefits, and improvements after the merger at the new institution.

Definition of Common Terms

Commonly used terms at the merged institution which are unique to the investigative process include:

Legacy Institution

The two institutions were independent and fully established as operational higher education institutions in Texas with their operating budget, degree plans, and resources.

Merger

The process in which the two said institutions became one new university. Nevertheless, per the original Texas Senate Bill 24 (2013), abolishing legacy institutions is used in legal documents. For this study, the merger is the terminology being used. As another more recent reference, Senate Bill 1467 (2021) points out,

> The Texas Legislature established "the new university" with the S.B. 24 in 2013. S.B. 24 established a new university in South Texas by merging "institution A and institution B," adding a medical school, and abolishing the legacy institutions. The new institution opened its doors in 2015, and the medical school opened in 2016.

Staff

Employees full-time equivalency, benefits-eligible, who work permanently under the new organization at a minimum 75% of the time, and who have a fixed cost to the institutional budget.

Faculty

Employees who are teaching, teaching-administrative, lecturer, professor, assistant, or associate professor, with a full-time equivalency, benefit eligible, who work permanently under the new organization at a minimum 75% of the time have a fixed cost to the institutional budget.

Organizational Culture

The values, norms, beliefs, attitudes, principles, and assumptions, verbal, non-verbal, non-written, describe how individuals work in an organization unique to their group or subgroup (Brown, 1998).

Success Factors

Success factors or critical success factors are identified as the essential variables generated by internal or external conditions and impact how effectively an organization reaches its maximum potential by meeting its strategic goals. These generate satisfactory results, which ensure successful competitive performance. (Bullen & Rockart, 1981).

Statement of the Problem

The effectiveness of an institution of higher education after a merger and the correlation between human resources and human capital effectiveness and alignment with institutional success factors is unknown. Human resources have evolved from an administrative function that performs simple operations managed mainly by senior and middle-level management, to the welfare and the administrative period where organizations started to pay attention to the employee's needs on benefits and training, and later to the strategic era, where human resources become a tactical partner and align its purpose with the mission, vision, goals, and financial expectations of the organization (Tubey et al., 2015). Employees' perceptions define institutional performance, success factors, improvements, benefits, and organizational culture changes determined by the staff and faculty's insights. The strategic process followed by the merged institution is described in the research analysis. Also, the impact of the strategic utilization of

employees to achieve the organization's vision, mission, and goals per the strategic plan are undefined (Alani et al., 2018).

The merger experienced at the new university, per the Texas Legislature (2013), allowed the existing legacy institutions to be eligible for the Permanent University Fund (PUF). This was the primary driver of the merger. The merged institutions contributed to logistics, location, employee pool, faculty pool, processes, degree plans, administration, and organizational culture. After the merger, the analysis on the effect of human capital utilization towards developing a new culture has not been determined. Employee perceptions interpretation and qualitative document review are to be used to determine those effects and relationships, if any, from the employee perceptions of institutional performance, human capital utilization, and development of a new organizational culture.

The data gathering, measurement, and theoretical concepts will better the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It will aid in resolving the problem by doing data analysis and interpretation of subjects' statements and records, documents, and artifacts examinations and performances, which will help triangulate (Denzin, 1978).

Need for the Study

Mergers in higher education have become a singularity. They have attracted much attention around the world, primarily in Europe (Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Hungary), South Africa, Oceania (New Zealand and Australia), Vietnam, and Canada (Harman & Meek, 2002; Pinheiro et al., 2013; Puusa & Kekäle, 2015). Puusa and Kekäle (2015 & 2013) identified mergers in higher education as drivers of organizational change,

demanding and challenging for all individuals involved. Additionally, they acknowledged that the expectations from management were high during the merger process, but the time invested in discussing those expectations with staff was limited. The research focused on higher education mergers is relatively scarce (Addae et al., 2008; Cartwright et al., 2007; Mao et al., 2009, Puusa & Kekäle, 2013; Seijts & Roberts, 2011, as cited in Puusa & Kekäle, 2015). Hence, there has not been an analysis of the relationship between human capital and utilization on the impact of institutional performance after a merger. Investigations exist on the human capital's role as the main element in organizational performance (Zlate & Enache, 2015). However, there is limited information and documentation on processing a merger strategy in higher education.

The strategic account of success factors, institutional performance, and benefits after the merger will help measure and report human capital success (Massingham et al., 2019). This study will benefit the understanding of institutional performance, perceived by employees (staff and faculty) after the merger. It will attempt to discover pragmatic findings on perceptions of the human resources function as a strategic partner to evaluate better the ability to achieve university objectives and organizational culture changes (Al-Tarawneh, 2018).

The existing literature does not define the alteration of institutional culture at a Hispanic-serving institution and how leadership places human capital utilization towards the merger's success. A study on how two organizational cultures co-exist, or not, after the merger, or how a new culture is established in an HSI in Texas is determined as a need for the study.

Purpose of the Study

The research aims to achieve the following objectives: To outline the process and strategy used during the merger, identify the collaborations of staff and faculty with the administration in

the merger process, recognize the culture changes after the merger, and outline the effects as viewed by employees on the success factors, challenges, improvements, outcomes, and benefits of the merger.

Significance of the Study

This study focuses on the values of human resources practices and human capital attainment in institutional performance in higher education as viewed by staff and faculty after the merger. This study can identify tools to track a merger process in higher education. This research may influence executive decision-making by providing them with information about organizational culture changes after a merger. It can also help establish the relationship with institutional success factors, challenges, improvements, outcomes, and benefits, considering human capital utilization during a merger. It can also provide valuable information on managing a merger in higher education and how staff and faculty collaborate in the merger process with the administration.

Research Questions

The study was designed to address four research questions: (1) What was the process taken by the two legacy institutions to merge into one organization? (2) How did staff and faculty collaborate with the administration with the merger process? (3) What are the perceptions of faculty and staff after the merger related to organizational culture? (4) What are the challenges and success factors after the merger that inform the findings of this study?

This introductory chapter explained the background information and the purpose of the study. It covers what we know about the merger of two HSIs, how the problem began, who created it, and how the study pursues to answer the research questions. Additionally, details of

the problem, the need, the purpose, and the significance of the study were also discussed in this section.

In the following chapter, the literature review will be discussed a,t length, proving the themes that drive the study and the importance of existing scholarly articles, their relevance, challenges, gaps, and how this study will try to close those gaps. Furthermore, the literature review will focus on existing research in higher education, HSIs, and organizational culture.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Every once in a while, you come up with an idea that has a vision and is compelling. I realized we weren't thinking that big; we were thinking regionally. The more I thought about it, the more I felt convinced that this could be game-changing for Texas. (Cigarroa, as cited in Kiley, 2012, para. 6).

This chapter will cover five essential sections to discuss for this study. From the historical perspective to understanding concepts such as human capital, mergers, and higher education institutions and their organizational cultural perspective, these are divided into five themes. The conceptual framework is then structured from these themes, which help explain and understand critical topics around the study: a) The history of human capital and human resources role; b) Hispanic-serving institutions and how these organizations have cultural and institutional responsibilities for minority students' identity and the creation of an environment for success and learning; c) Mergers and acquisitions in business and higher education; d) Performance indicators in higher education; And, e) Organizational culture in higher education.

 Human capital utilization determines and transforms the culture of a new organization; it emerges in the studies of a few authors. Mergers and acquisitions are a popular concept in

business, yet it is a relatively new concept in education, with limited literature about it. Hispanic Serving Institutions' performance, strategic approach, and success in education are widely studied. As viewed by staff and faculty, the institutional arrangement is not defined with measuring tools or structured approaches in higher education. Even though many tools exist to measure performance, the employees' perspectives and stakeholder experiences of institutional success are not documented. The theoretical framework with metaphors (Morgan, 2006) and the organizations as cultures provide meaning to the associations from staff and faculty experiences during the merger process and help understand the importance of their experiences. Gareth Morgan pioneered the use of metaphors to analyze organizational change. He identified four images or systems: organizations as machines, organisms, cultures, and political systems. These metaphors, primarily organizations as cultures, will aid the researcher in establishing the theoretical framework for this study and observing the merged organizations, the HSIs as two metaphors with inclinations that fit either one or multiple images from Morgan's theory. Nevertheless, the researcher will be able to fi,t those into theory or see the need to draft a new one until the findings are documented and the data is analyzed. The theoretical framework will explain the usefulness and limitations of the images' application in two merged organizations with their employees' own cultural identity until state regulations force them to become part of one new institution.

Next, the introduction of Hispanic-serving institutions, some statistics, and critical concepts to consider in the works.

History of Human Capital and the Human Resources Role

From the notions of highly skilled workers to how employees affect organizational culture, Katz and Margo (as cited in Boustan, 2014) evaluate the origins of human capital and its effects in the United States' history. As the Americans began to industrialize in the 1820s and later in the late 19th century and early 20th century, the capital-skill complement in the workforce appeared. The evolution of human capital from unskilled laborers to highly skilled jobs grew from 1850 to the early 20th century based on the implementation of technology and electricity. Productivity became a direct relationship between highly skilled workers and efficiencies. Less unskilled workers were needed, and more skilled, highly compensated jobs were available for upward manufacturing demands. A growing segment of white-collar workers and highly skilled operatives were the new members of the organization, who became the organizations' human capital. These individuals had specific needs to develop the high-level skills required in their organizations.

The new organizational framework required a department to support the many needs of employees and provide quality services. The concept of Human Resources, Personnel as it was called then, was introduced in the workplace to provide specific services needed by employees for training, education, and benefits to maintaining records of qualifications on white-collar jobs for compensation purposes. In this study, the researcher will attempt to find the relationship between human capital and human resources strategies and the collaborations from employees (staff and faculty). However, it is imperative to argue that studies referenced, such as Tubey et al. (2015), Kaufman (2008), and Ulrich (1997), failed to find the linkage between people and their collaborations towards executing the human capital and human resources strategy.

The human resources function within the organizations evolved from an administrative process that performed simple operations managed mainly by senior and middle-level management, to the welfare and administrative period where organizations started to pay attention to employee's needs on benefits and training, and later to the strategic era, where human resources became a tactical partner and aligned its purpose with the mission, vision, goals, and financial expectations of the organization (Tubey et al., 2015). Kaufman (2008) marks the 1870s through the 1920s as the roots of the industrial era where the labor relations area was established due to unionization and the need to create policy. Ulrich (1997) describes the strategic partner in human resources as an active participant in creating an organizational structure, working with managers and employees to meet business requirements, following strategic approaches such as alignment of the human resources plan with the strategic plan, measuring accountability to attain business goals, and implementing the balanced scorecard, developed by Kaplan and Norton (1992) as part of measuring performance indicators.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions

In 1992, the U.S. government recognized institutions that serve a large percentage of Hispanics as Hispanic-Serving Institutions. According to the U.S. Department of Education, an HSI is an eligible institution which enrollment of full-time undergraduate students has at least 25 percent of Hispanics ("Definition of Hispanic-Serving Institutions," 2016). In the United States, 14% of all postsecondary institutions are considered HSIs. Among all, they have about 64% of all Hispanic students in the nation (Garcia, 2019).

Garcia's (2019) work provides a framework around the concept that HSIs give access to education to minority students with fewer resources who live in a somewhat marginalized

society. The author also discusses "Cultural Theory" (p. 29) and how culture is part of the administrative, leadership, and institutional identity and its repercussions on managing and administering problems at the university level. Organizational culture is analyzed at length with input from students, faculty, and staff employees. Being an HSI and embracing the responsibilities of serving minorities is defined as portraying an institutional identity, maintaining, and embracing the culture of its students and affiliates. Considering the type of pivotal work and reference to HSIs and its relationship to the cultural perspective, Garcia's work serves as a driver of the conceptual outline of this research paper. The author expands on immense knowledge that helps identify HSIs as critical institutions in the nation with their own identity and culture. Consequently, this study will investigate the merger of two HSIs, their identities before the union, and a new organizational culture.

Managing the organizational identity and shaping the corporate identity is done through a demanding process to profile the organizations' culture. Individuals' values and beliefs are involved in the essential operations of defining that culture. HSIs frequently have faculty and staff that have been with the institution much longer than their leaders. Faculty and staff who work directly with students may hold a different idea of the organizational identity and culture (Nunez et al., 2015). The researchers trace a significant approach to organizational culture from the views and perspectives of faculty and staff. Their work outlines some of the aspects that this study seeks to investigate further. The representation of employees' attitudes and collaborations towards developing a new culture and helping identify the success factors of the new organization will be examined and serve the broadening of Nuñez et al., (2015) work.

Freeman's (2015) study concentrates on the leadership gap in minority Latino/ faculty, staff, and mid-and senior-level positions in HSIs. In 2010 there was only a one-day training

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program for HSIs' leaders offered by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. No degree or certificate program designed to serve HSIs' leaders existed then. Faculty and staff needed to look for leadership development opportunities. The organization studied had to develop its own online higher education leadership designed to serve HSIs' leaders. The main goal was to focus on closing the leadership and educational gap to improve educational opportunity, economic development, and cultural advancement by serving underrepresented minorities, first-generation students, and low-income students. From the needs identified in the study, the perspective from Freeman (2015) and the analysis of HSIs cultural advancement will serve as a ground to explore the organizational culture and the impact on success factors in this study.

Other studies have shown how graduate programs in higher education at minority-serving institutions and one HSI have prepared students for the future. The programs develop students into higher education at minority-serving institutions providing the tools to become leaders of those institutions (Barnett et al., 2016). The study also references Freeman's (2015) work on the only organization to offer an HSI leadership graduate program for student development into serving minority-serving institutions. Nevertheless, Barnett et al. (2016) limit their study and findings to student success and educational programs. The researchers did not explore the involvement of faculty and staff with the development and factors that helped the success of the programs implemented at the HIS. In this study, the attempt from the researcher is to cover those aspects and study the impact from the collaborations with faculty and staff with success factors and changes in the culture at the merged HSIs.

Following is the literature review on mergers and acquisitions in the business sector and their origins worldwide, and how mergers were introduced into higher education.

Mergers and Acquisitions in Business and Higher Ed

In the business sector, mergers and acquisitions in the United States sector were first identified in the early 1900s in the automotive industry. In ten years, from about 500 carmakers, companies merged, and the number got down to 200 (Anonymous, May 19). Newspapers also had their share of mergers and acquisitions. In monopolies, the smaller local papers revive the macroeconomic and receive hundreds of employees into established and more standardized businesses (Adams, 1995).

Mergers and acquisitions are among the most important financial events in history. Per Garfinkel and Hankins (2011), mergers are triggered by economic factors such as cash flow increases. Merger waves, or merger stages, are periods when numerous mergers occur in multiple sectors, followed by periods with fewer mergers. These cyclical patterns are prompted by complementing one wave to the next. Where profitability is high with the first merger, subsequent ones become ever more lucrative (Zheng, 2012). Mergers in higher education are not as common and deep-rooted as business mergers and acquisitions. Higher education has had its limited share of mergers and acquisitions in a bit of setting with limited schools around the globe.

Cai et al. (2016) epitomize the higher education mergers into two primary types, integration and diversification. The authors reviewed mergers in education in the Netherlands and Australia that applied the first model to foster integration and collaboration among institutions. There is a need to profile the types of institutions and follow national rules in those countries to improve retention and revenue for institutional advancement. The second type of merger, the diversification type, profiles institutions that wish to complement each other by merging their

programs into a more prominent and reputable organization. According to the authors, this model is more common in the United States.

Higher education mergers are similar in form and context to business mergers by incorporating lines of business and types of products they produce. In other words, academic, medical, and health professions, and liberal arts universities, for example, would be the line of business, and two-year degree and four-year degree programs would be considered the types of products.

Rowley (1997) analyzes 30 cases of higher education mergers in England. The factors analyzed include input, the process followed during the merger approach, and outcome and effectiveness. The author identified critical drivers for higher education that composed mergers from academic resemblance, not competition, vision, going in the same direction, survival through difficult economic and regulatory times, entering new markets, developing new programs, and producing higher education changes in the emerging research programs. Since mergers in higher education have become a new attraction to executives and administrators as they try to innovate and establish strategies towards higher revenue and spreading territory and reach to larger communities and increase enrollment, the existing research lacks in-depth analysis in the united states and Texas, as this study seeks to cover. Studies in Europe (Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Hungary), South Africa, Oceania (New Zealand and Australia), Vietnam, and Canada (Harman & Meek, 2002; Pinheiro et al., 2013; Puusa & Kekäle, 2015) debate about mergers in higher education and its advantages to student success and financial strengthening. Some attention was given in the literature to higher education mergers as drivers of organizational change and its impact on employees, students, and administrators (Puusa & Kekäle, 2015 & 2013). Still, these investigations failed to investigate

the participation of staff and faculty and how their involvement and collaboration affected the merger and the changes in organizational culture. Moreover, other researchers acknowledged that the expectations from management were high during the merger process, but the time invested in discussing those expectations with staff was limited. Overall, research focused on higher education mergers is relatively scarce (Addae et al., 2008; Cartwright et al., 2007; Mao et al., 2009, Puusa & Kekäle, 2013; Seijts & Roberts, 2011, as cited in Puusa & Kekäle, 2015), so this study will have the opportunity to expand the literature on the topic with a particular focus on higher education mergers, organizational culture, success factors identified after the merger process, and the collaborations from faculty and staff in the merger strategy.

In the next section, the performance indicators in higher education are reviewed to assess the importance of the measurement tool in tracking educational success, cultural changes, and employee performance and institutional performance relationships.

Performance Indicators in Higher Education

With Kaplan and Norton (1992), measurement tools became widespread in business performance tracking, and it helped establish a clear picture for management of strategic success with specific, measurable objectives. The concept of managers wanting to know more, not just financial results resulted in creating comprehensive, results-oriented measurement tools that included operational and economic outcomes. Employees and leaders wish to identify and understand their business trends quickly. By combining measurements aligned in one single tool, Kaplan and Norton identified 12 companies researched using similar tools for tracking results. The financial results are combined with operational, customer satisfaction, internal processes, and innovation and learning results. Their concepts were developed around the customer,

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continuously improving questions to identify what was important to maintain or improve and better serve its stakeholders. Such high visibility measurements keep managers focused and working on what matters the most. It is the company's way "to operationalize the vision at the top of the organization" (Kaplan & Norton, 1992, p. 73) and ensure success on critical performance indicators. The study also showed that business performance is linked to employee performance. That accountability at the employee level is related to business results, encouraging higher performance levels.

A similar concept was recognized by Taylor and Baines (2012) that assisted in focusing on strategy and policy in business and operations. Their study pays attention to the importance of determining the audience for tracking results and educating employees and managers on performance standardization. Performance results are linked to the mission and vision of the institution. The perceptions of stakeholders and employees must be aligned in all its angles to the organization's strategy to help measure attainment and success.

Benchmarking the institution's performance is also documented by Taylor and Baines (2012). All the institutions researched in their study benchmark their results wherever possible. Careful consideration of goals that are not easy to measure must be given to track these goals successfully. Taylor and Baines' study considered the original idea from Kaplan and Norton (1992) that employee performance is linked to the organization's success. Nevertheless, they could not confirm such a relationship since the results analyzed did not include the connection to that level in the organization.

Some have used performance measurements of people and operations to become helpful in different areas such as funding, research, operations, outreach, and customer service. (Al-

Tarawneh, 2018; Arzamastseva & Khayrullina, 2017; Lin et al., 2016). These studies have also evaluated the challenges of using the tool in higher education.

Al-Tarawneh (2018) surveyed private universities that implemented a measurement tool to evaluate how rapidly the institution adapted to change. Challenges around innovation and improvement are addressed in the study and how these correlate with sustainable performance. The research includes an analysis of the systems used by the surveyed universities to plan, implement, control, evaluate, and administer, and not only to measure organizational performance. It also worked with success factors and helped institutions adopt the measurement tool to track institutional excellence.

Arzamastseva observes challenges of working in higher education with performance measurements, and Khayrullina (2017), where these measurements are directly interrelated to organizational objectives and strategic goals that are must be understood by management. The tools show a fundamental relationship with the strategic map of the institution and its measurement of results and objectives. However, these objectives were selected before determining the interrelationship with the plan, and they were set by management under unaligned goals.

Lin et al. (2016) evaluated the concept and its implementation in education by breaking it into two areas, quantitative and qualitative, a modified approach from what Kaplan and Norton (1992) suggested. Lin et al. defined strategic goals by meeting social, environmental, and economic performance. Their proposed performance measurement tool adjusts the quantitative and qualitative information into equivalent scales. Ultimately, their study includes an adapted

model to measure critical characteristics of the institutions on sustainability, internal processes, and learning.

Al-Hosaini and Sofian (2015) examined the standpoints more relevant to public higher education institutions. They identified four perspectives as the primary measurement areas within the organization: financial, internal processes, learning and growth, and customer service, almost identical to Kaplan and Norton (1992). The study method demonstrated that the institution's strategy is linked to employee contributions that impact organizational performance. It also provided a framework to visualize cause-and-effect to connect the results with key performance indicators in higher education.

Others have used their research to develop a model for framework creation in higher education to evaluate organizational performance and its implementation of performance measurement tools (Aljardali et al., 2012). The study revolves around steps to create and implement a specific measurement tool. Instead of how-tog into an already modified tool, it is the "how-to" on evaluating institutional performance. To successfully implement the adjusted, balanced scorecard, the institution must follow the specific methodology to create, implement, develop procedures, monitor results, change findings, and enjoy long-term benefits.

Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010) evaluated the performance indicators in higher education to determine if the leadership style from the head of the institution had a relationship with overall institutional performance. The investigation was done around questions on the key performance indicators related to the age of appointment and length of appointment in higher education from the Vice-Chancellor as the organization's leader. Institutional type is another factor in the relationship between leadership role and university performance.

Azma (2010) finds a correlation between factors: facilities, research, processes, education and technology, cultural and social services, faculty, employees, students and graduates, and financial affairs to measure institutional performance. Those factors were defined as performance indicators, and they are clear pointers to organizational objectives. Azuma described these indicators as the guide to decision-making. The research points to data revealing the importance that managers and faculty give to institutional factors to measure improvement and performance.

The impact of strategic utilization of employees to achieve the organization's vision, mission, and goals and the use of the performance indicators is also evaluated by Alani et al. (2018). Their research explores strategic planning as a solution to management failures and how performance measurement impacts the departmental strategy and staff performance. Nevertheless, the concept is not fully known among their participants, demonstrating that the tool needs an introduction at all levels in the organization.

Brown (2012) analyzes the opportunities and challenges of deploying the performance measurements to improve communication in higher education institutions with the institutional strategic plan in mind. It also pays attention to what matters and how communication builds trust. The instrument consistently provides motivators of change at the institutional level.

Performance indicators are part of the measurement tools identified in the studies. However, the perceptions of stakeholders and employees must be aligned in all its angles to the organization's strategy to help measure attainment and success. This is not covered in any of the studies; even though performance indicators have a relationship with some organizational characteristics and its success factors, it is not defined what makes an institution more successful as viewed by employees. Additionally, a study that examines the perceptions from staff and

faculty on what makes an organization successful and how these factors contribute towards results at a merged institution is lacking. This study will seek to recognize the success factors identified after the merger in the new organization. It will explore the views of individuals involved in the merger strategy as they collaborated with the administration.

The following section reviews the literature on the relationship between human capital and human resources in the organizations and the impact of the merger process and the cultural change in the organization.

The Relationship Between Human Capital and Human Resources in the Organizations

Research exists on the role of human capital as the main element in organizational performance (Zlate & Enache, 2015). An analysis of the human capital concept around the organization and its participation in training, expertise, and innovation. Zlata and Enache evaluate the capacity of individuals to adapt within the institution to constant change. They define adaptable and successful employees as those who meet the demands, perform well within the organization, and have goal-oriented leadership skills and an excellent work ethic. However, the population surveyed had to meet specific requirements, primarily fully aware of the terminology and concepts around human capital and its impact on institutional performance. The main findings show that employees consider cooperation, training, and skills the main contributors to the university's performance.

Lawler and Mohrman (2003) established their research around the notion that the human resources area becomes a strategic partner. A partner whose role is an essential contributor to the organization's strategy. A place that strengthens the human capital by taking a leadership role and playing a role in applying change management. Human Resources functions can engage not

only in operational activities but also in engaging individuals on important skills and actions that add value. The study determines how strategic the human resources area has become by measuring how much time individuals spend on organizational strategy and other events. Identifying employee and management development activities and career planning are actions observed and determined as strategic within human resources. Also, human resources are determined to be strategic by matching business needs with those of the organization's development. The other affirmation on the strategic approach from the human resources area is that the organization works better by self-service within information technology for employee-related transactions. Human resources' involvement in the application and implementation of integrated information systems confirms that human resources are engaged in improving the business strategy. Finally, human resources' knowledge and information system advance focus on human capital success and business strategy improvements.

Employee retention has also been widely researched in higher education to determine its effects on institutional performance. Hong et al. (2012) studied the impact of certain factors on employee retention. Training, performance evaluation, pay, and empowerment was the main contributors to keeping lecturers on the job. Empowerment was less of a contributor since the study was performed in Asia, and there is a strong understanding and culture toward hierarchy and decision making. The assessed factors help high morale and cooperation, enhancing output and high-quality customer service. The human resources area clearly understands influential factors to promote employee retention with the findings.

Kwon (2009) recognizes people as the most critical organizational asset using the terminology of human capital, human and capital or human, and value is the human ability to create added value. The paper revolves around the concept of a new method to measure human

capital. It includes investing in employee education and evaluating the quality and results of the investment. Kwon calculates human capital on a human development level. It outlines the importance of other factors such as social capital or social relationships, which give a more significant value to individuals depending on how extensive their network is. Knowledge is another non-monetary factor measured by Kwon's study.

More recently, Massingham et al. (2019) came up with the idea of tracking and measuring intellectual capital. They evaluated the importance of giving human capital a value within the balanced scorecard, introduced by Kaplan and Norton (1992). The scorecard measures employee morale, best practices, and knowledge. It attempts to measure better what is considered the weakest section in the balanced scorecard. They kept score on human capital accomplishments through learning to track performance improvement. The concept of human capital tracking was broken down into four measurement areas: lessons learned, identifying gaps, responsiveness to change, and speed in decision making and learning growth.

Organizational Culture in Higher Education

The understanding of organizations and the dimension of how culture and the human factor affect them, specifically in higher education, is identified as a joint research topic by academics (Owens & Valesky, 2015). Organizations are described as full of "contradiction, ambivalence, ambiguity, and uncertto158). Nevertheless, clarification how organizational culture has evolved, we first need to look at it from the perspective of the organizational theory.

From the early 1950s to the mid-1970s, researchers shared the concepts of organizations and viewed concerns related to the differences in theory that applied to education. Research had taken place to explore organizational theory from the quantitative and mathematical approach,

with numbers. However, organizational theory in education meant dealing with people and having them as the typical driver of perceptions, feelings, and behaviors. Organizations are composed of people, and they are the drivers of the reality of the "organizational system" (p. 159).

A more subjective approach was needed to focus on people, and organizational theory evolved. The qualitative research method became common in educational research as it aided researchers in describing the metaphors and stories that academics with abstract forms and models could not expand. Carl Rogers 1963 (, as cited in Owens & Valesky, 2015) defined individuals' behavior in post-secondary institutions as an applied art. Phenomenological knowledge involved framing the theoretical concepts around individuals' behavior and hypothesizing by drafting the frame of mind, collectively understanding observations, and interpreting feelings.

In the 19th century, organizational culture evolved into organizational climate (Efeoğlu & Ulum, 2017). A group of people in a set environment who share doctrine, beliefs, principles, symbols, and rituals is later defined as an organizational environment contributing to the culture. Then, the structure of educational organizations is defined as a system that resides in one type of form or a mixture of forms. The hierarchical form, for example, is linked to the organizational leadership of a pyramid style with the top-down leadership approach. Or in a more incorporate styles organizational style, such as the humanistic one, decisions are made considering employees' feedback and direction (Owens & Valesky, 2015). From the roots of the humanistic and the human relations approach, organizational culture evolves into what researchers studied from "gathering ideas, beliefs, values, behaviors, criteria, and measures which may be both

explicit and implicit." (Efeoğlu & Ulum, 2017, p. 1). And these roots are also based on internal and external responses to trouble and success.

Other researchers such as Ian McNay (as cited in Lacatus, 2013) developed models to describe the organizational culture of higher education institutions in the form and intensity control and the policy and strategy models. These models are drafted from the concepts of national culture, and the government policy on education applied in teaching and research. As defined by Lacatus, the "competing values framework" (p. 422) builds upon developing a matrixed organizational culture. It involves four quadrants that result in dimensions of control, structure, internal and external, short-term and long-term positioning in the market. The quadrants also refer to "hierarchy, market, clan, and adhocracy cultures" (p. 423).

School culture, as defined by Teasley (2016), is formed by the administration, teachers, and the staff's "healthy behaviors" (p. 3). It has positive and negative implications based on "satisfaction, effectiveness, morale… inefficiency, low trust, and lack of transparency in leadership." The negative pointers drive the need for a shift in the organizational culture of schools, and the importance of identifying these pointers in the culture is imperative for school success. Organizational culture is also defined by MacNeil et al. (as cited in Teasley, 2016) as the quality environment in an organization. School administrators and the top leadership must understand the role that culture plays in their organization's success.

Cultivating a culture of high achievement focused on attaining goals and objectives with high expectations is one of the main tasks of school leadership (Brown 2004, as cited in Teasley, 2016). Promoting growth in student learning, managing the human capital, and developing faculty and administrators drive improvement in building a culture of high expectations in adult

and child school environments. The formation of a positive organizational culture through "professional development, continuing education, faculty meetings, hiring practices, and career counseling" (p. 4) are apparent significant interventions in the school environment.

Researchers also identify school social workers, counselors, and staff as change agents who form organizational culture through relationships. Their interactions are in the school atmosphere's emotional investment and building capacity (Brown 2004, as cited in Teasley, 2016). School climate research demonstrated that strength and success in organizational culture emerged from the sense of community where management participates through communication, relationships, and effective leadership. An additional contribution of the study points to school culture's influence on student academic outcomes.

Wrapping the concepts of organizational culture in higher education to the relationship with organizational theory in education will be analyzed in this paper, considering the administrative theory periods in mind. From the classical top-down leadership approach to human relation employees' involvement in decision-making, the behavioral sciences' systematic theory, and finally, the modern-day inclusiveness theory that shows change management and adaptation to organizational culture.

The constructs in the study have been covered in the literature review. They are from the history of human capital and the human resource's role in organizations and higher education to the early establishment of automotive manufacturing facilities in the late 1800s. Later, the human resources area is created to support employee needs and develop human capital to improve productivity, efficiency, and profitability. The definition, history, and statistics of HSIs in the United States, and how these institutions have a responsibility with minorities and Latina/o

students to establish organizational identity and culture-driven and enriching educational programs. The studies included in the literature discuss the challenges Hispanics and minority students face and the gap in leadership roles with Hispanic faculty and staff in HSIs. Mergers and acquisitions in business and higher education are topics also explored. The intent is to cover the limited literature around the merger concept in higher education in the United States and better understand this study's position in creating a bridge from the existing studies of how organizational culture is transformed or not after a merger. The BSC and KPI constructs are also profoundly explored to relate the organizational strategy, the role of the human resource, and the human capital utilization in the transition and the culture change process. Lastly, the relationship between human capital and human resources in the organizations is also visited in detail to appreciate the relationship between employee performance and institutional performance as a strategic approach to organizational success.

The research methodology for the qualitative analysis will be developed in the next chapter. The procedure used to carry out the study will be described. The qualitative analysis and the population, sample selection, the focus group formation, interview questions, data gathering, and data analysis, not only from the subject interviews, staff, and faculty, but also from the document review, and artifact analysis, will be enclosed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the design and methodology used in the study to identify the

process and strategy applied during the merger of two Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in

Texas. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section focuses on the research

methodology, the second discusses the research design, the third details the instrumentation and

preparations for data gathering, the fourth section details the data collection, and the final section

cover the procedures used for data analysis.

Discussions on qualitative research and case study analysis are also covered in this

chapter. The "interpretative, performance paradigm" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, as cited in

Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) is the new reference to remarkable growth in qualitative research.

Nevertheless, what is qualitative research, the interpretation of data based on community-built

understandings? As the researchers identify, qualitative inquiry is a combination of assumptions,

knowledge, research questions, answers, subjects, objects, reality, and language. This research

methodology, which is now a globally accepted method of research (Clark et al., 2015, as cited

in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), is combined in three assumptions: Ontology, epistemology, and

methodology. "Qualitative research is the collection, analysis, and interpretation of

comprehensive narrative and visual (non-numerical) data to gain insights into the particular phenomenon of interest." (Mills & Gay, 2016, p. 25). The case study is the single or multiple case instance, for this research – single case, where the researcher applies direct interpretation and "draws meaning from it… It is a process of pulling the data apart and putting them back together in more meaningful ways." (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 475).

This study used the qualitative research method to learn about the assumptions and interpretations given by a group of people on multiple sites (campuses) from different origins (two legacy institutions) to a problem of social and political nature (the merger). The methodology aided the researcher in understanding the naturalistic setting, the people, and their peers. It helped analyze the data from the findings to reflect and interpret the problem so that the scholar could generalize organizational culture changes after the merger.

As described by Mills and Gay (2016), the case study was appropriate when the scholar seeks to get answers, particularly descriptive, to a specific question related to what happened and where participants can expand to the topic's knowledge. Explaining how and why things were done in a certain way allows the researcher to learn first-hand the process utilized, in this case, how a merger took place and what processes were used, in a bounded system, the two merged institutions. Qualitative research was also appropriate for this study since the researcher acted as a critical instrument to collecting data by documenting examinations, observing participants, and interviewing via focus groups (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Also, the technical and complex inductive and deductive logic application assisted the researcher in this study to work "back and forth between the themes and the database until a comprehensive set of themes" (p. 87) is identified to explain the phenomenon.

Additionally, the researcher positioned herself via "reflexivity" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 88) to convey her background, work, organizational, and cultural experience and interpret the information gained from the study. Furthermore, the methodology fostered an "emergent design" (p. 88) that allowed the researcher to better the inquiry process by changing its phases and expanding it. For example, while gathering data, the researcher would change the interview questions or the forms of data collection by altering as the intent was to engage in the best practices to obtain the relevant information.

Researchers such as Mills, Miles, Huberman, and Merriam (as cited in Mills & Gay, 2016) have identified a case study as the study of a phenomenon that is bound to a unit in a specific identifiable context. Further, the case study allowed the researcher to expand knowledge, which will be interpreted by the readers, who are particularly affected by the context and who are interested and invested in the topic—also described as the epistemological approach to a particular theme (Stake, as cited in Mills & Gay, 2016). In this investigative work, the case study and its framework appealed to the researcher since it permitted to connect with the processes involved, such as interviewing the participants, analyzing the data, and writing the findings using metaphors and analogies. Additionally, its use furthered the complementation of the theoretical framework help with metaphors (Morgan, 2006) and understanding organizations as cultures.

Merriam (as cited in Mills & Gay, 2016) adds that case studies describe particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic phenomena. The particularistic approach focuses on a particular topic and the situation where the investigation allowed the reader to understand the problem in everyday practice. A descriptive approach helped the reader with thick description, variables' presence, and analysis of the interactions of those being studied. Furthermore last, the heuristic approach assisted in the illumination of the reader's understanding of the phenomenon being

studied (Merriam, as cited in Mills & Gay, 2016). Since the researcher's intent in this study was to answer the questions related to changes in organizational culture after the merger. It also helped determine how staff and faculty perceived the change and its effect on success factors and challenges. Then, the case study aided in exploring the real-life scenarios in the bounded system using multiple sources of information.

Moreover, the case study in the educational setting focused on the metaphors of institutional programs, behaviors, and practices and how the legacy institutions have changed over time. Regardless of the type of program studied or the event or process evaluated, the intent in the case study was to extensively describe the phenomenon (Patton, as cited in Mills & Gay, 2016).

Stake (2005, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) identified the single case study as the study where one single process is outlined and evaluated to answer the who and what questions. The researcher used techniques that allowed singularity and generalization from subjectivity. It assisted the reader in generalizing on the case being studied from their own experiences. Some misconceptions about the case study analysis (Flyvbjerg, 2011, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 557).

- general rather than case knowledge was more valuable,

- one cannot generalize from an individual case,

- the case study was not suited to theory building,

- the case study tends to confirm the researcher's biases, and

- it was challenging to develop generalizations based on specific studies.

A case study was also recognized as a holistic or descriptive method that studies the common and intrinsic phenomena. It gave a voice to people who had an impact in a naturalistic

setting where the researcher studied the instances and continued to add more models to the study. Alternatively, "until she or he stopped learning something new about the phenomenon" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 608). Alternatively, until there was a repetition of data gathered from the interviews or document review process, the process with instances selection was also known as replication logic described by Yin (1994, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Research Methodology

Data gathered using the case study design helped determine a process and strategy used during a higher-education merger in Texas. At the same time, the study focused on identifying the method used to merge two HSIs. The researcher intended to identify the collaborations of staff and faculty with the administration in the merger endeavors. Additionally, the case study pointed to the perceptions of staff and faculty on cultural changes after the merger. Further, the researcher provided an outline of the methods used in the study. It analyzed vast information on how the participants contributed to the study, from what population they were drawn to, and what tools were used to analyze their responses with the group interviews and document analysis. Also, the instrumentation, treatment, research question, hypothesis, data collection procedure, data analysis, and study limitations were discussed.

The research methodology in the study assisted in categorizing and organizing data into patterns and producing a descriptive narrative on the findings. With the support of the extensive interactions of the participants, while they were situated in the bounded system, the researcher sought to answer the research questions guiding this study: (1) What was the process taken by the two legacy institutions to merge into one organization? (2) How did staff and faculty collaborate with the administration with the merger process? (3) What are the perceptions of

faculty and staff after the merger related to organizational culture? (4) What are the challenges and success factors after the merger that inform the findings of this study?

A case study was necessary for this research to obtain in-depth knowledge on how two HSIs merged and how the merger affected the culture of the newly created organization. A case study or a descriptive case study analyzes problem-solving (Leake, 1996, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). It followed case-based reasoning in understanding a problem and identifying a solution. The case study served as knowledge-based, case-based reasoning. In some way served as a representation of a "broader set of cases." (p. 609).

The characteristics of the case study research through qualitative data collection techniques included participant observations, interviewing, source data review, and focus group responses (Mills & Gay, 2016). The researcher's qualitative data collection methods for this particular study were document review and focus group interviews. The latter explored any significant changes identified by employees, both staff and faculty, from the cultural and organizational fluctuations. The document review aided in determining how the merger process took place and what steps were followed to have employees collaborate. Furthermore, an analysis of how the legacy institutions in the case study contributed with personnel, faculty, infrastructure, degree programs, students, and the state contributing to Permanent University Funding (PUF).

Research Design

The data for the research project was obtained using qualitative analysis (Mills & Gay, 2016). Two data types were collected via the qualitative method, document review and focus group interviews. Two types of groups were tested in four focus group sessions, current staff employees employed since September 1, 2015, during the merger, who worked for either legacy institution under a full-time equivalency (FTE) of at least 75% effort on their job. Faculty who

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worked for the institution under the same criteria like staff, regardless of tenure status. All participants answered demographic questions and questions related to their experiences with performance, leadership, human capital practices, engagement practices during the merger process, perceived changes in culture after the merger, and perceived challenges and success factors.

Target Population, Sampling Method, and Related Procedures

Qualitative research was not required to collect data from many individuals. The population was designated in the given study, and a subset or sample that meets the required criteria was selected. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), "the sample size in qualitative research is not only to study a few sites or individuals but also to collect extensive detail about each site or individual studied." (p. 253).

The group of individuals that the research study intended to evaluate was drawn from a total population of 6423 employees, of which 1615 were faculty, 2783 were staff, and 2025 were student employees (ineligible population for this study). 1,521 employees met the criteria for the case study. (HR Balanced Scorecard August 2021). Faculty and staff employees who transitioned to the new HSI as of September 1, 2015, did not have a break in service and had enough years of service with either legacy institution to be considered active employees during the merger. 154 employees were identified through purposeful selection by reviewing the listed participants on the working groups' final reports. These potential participants who actively participated in the merger process collaborated with either one or more working groups – groups formed before the merger to assist with policies, business process, organizational development, and structure. Of those, 71 worked at one legacy location (LV) and 83 at the second location (UV). All 154 employees were emailed regarding the focus group sessions. Four focus groups were set to hold

interviews with 20 employees (faculty and staff) in total, 10 participants from 'LV legacy institution' and ten from 'UV legacy institution.' These groups facilitated determining satisfaction, success factors, challenges, and collaboration in the merger process.

Krueger and Casey (2014) recommended that the focus group size exceed 10 participants. Focus groups with more than 10 participants were challenging to manage, and the group itself limited the ability for all participants to share insights. Also, the authors identified participant characteristics and the study topics as relevant in deciding group size. If the researcher intended to understand "people's experiences, the researcher typically wants more in-depth insights" (p. 68), then a smaller group was preferred to allow lengthy discussions from participants' understandings. In this study, the researcher investigated specific collaboration practices in the merger strategy that influenced higher employee satisfaction with leadership and the administration regarding human capital utilization. Hence the need for the researcher to set four separate focus group sessions. Reducing the impact of managing more than 5-6 participants' interactions per session allowed me to successfully document ample comments, perceptions, and feedback from both faculty and staff from both legacy institutions. Ultimately, examining the merger impact allowed the researcher to draw conclusions on the two separate organizational cultures and how these were merged into one with more prevalence from a specific location.

Triangulation, as described by Denzin in the 1970s (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), was the systematic approach to qualitative research that secured a combination of methodologies to analyze a particular phenomenon. For this research, triangulation was established by combining different data sources "examined at different times, places and persons." (p. 779). The researcher approached the data gathering from multiple perspectives and by employing different sources in order "to enhance the validity of research findings." (p. 780) due to the advantages that this study

provided while using forms, documents, statutes, press releases, website pages, organizational and institutional documents, and the focus group information comparison. The design's popularity in higher education research studies of obtaining different but complementing data were also considered when selecting this method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The technique brought together the strengths and weaknesses of the qualitative investigations by concluding the evaluation of multiple sources of data and the complementation of the focus group interactions from the subjects' interviews.

The qualitative data model facilitated the validation and later expansion of the findings from the data review and focus group discoveries. Both data types were collected for the qualitative analysis as triangulating and complementing solutions to the research methodology. The findings aided the researcher in providing quotes from the individuals in the sample to validate the conclusions of the document review.

Setting

The data for the study was collected at the primary locations for the HSIs in Texas. The reviewed documents are available online via the merged institution's website and the State of Texas Legislature website. Also, copies were available via local and state online newspapers. Two overall groups were identified from the merged institution's locations in Texas: (a) Group 'LV' consisted of active full-time equivalency (FTE, at least 75% effort) staff and faculty employees, who worked for the new HSI since September 1, 2015, and work before the merger with the legacy institution in the lower valley. (b) Group 'UV' consisted of active full-time equivalency (FTE, at least 75% effort) staff and faculty employees, who worked for the new HSI since September 1, 2015, and performed before the merger with the legacy institution the upper valley. For faculty employees, their participation was regardless of tenure status.

Recruitment

On a small group scale, individuals held interviews via focus groups (no more than six participants per group), selected via purposive selection for the qualitative analysis. Initially, the researcher identified all staff and faculty who met the selection criteria from the most current headcount report available via the HRIS report in the Office of Human Resources. These were individuals, faculty, and staff employees who transitioned to the new HSI as of September 1, 2015, who did not have a break in service and had enough years of service with either legacy institution to be considered active employees during the merger. Once all individuals were identified with name, job title, FTE, email address, hire date, and location, the researcher decided who met the criteria and invited all participants via email. All 154 individuals were active employees who participated in the working groups created for the merger methodology. The names were identified from the online accessible working groups' final reports. Each working group report listed the participants in the chair, co-chair, and member roles. These participants collaborated with either one or more working groups. Of the 154 participants, 71 were from legacy location 'LV' a,' 83 were from 'UV.' Furthermore, all 154 employees were emailed regarding the focus group sessions with two options to participate with a limit of 10 participants per location. Then, whoever replied to the email on a first-come, first-serve basis, got officially invited to the focus groups with maximum participation of 10 participants from the 'LV' and 10 participants from the 'UV". All 20 participants in the study replied to the request to participate per the IRB guidelines established voluntarily.

The invitation to participate in the research includes requirement criteria, dates, and times for the two focus group sessions available per group. Since there were two sessions available pr legacy location, the invitations differed with that specific information for each group. Overall,

there were four focus group interview sessions scheduled. Since all 20 participants required for the study responded to the original invitation, they were not asked to invite others per the snowballing recruitment process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Instrumentation

The initial focus group identifications were made using the institution's Office of Human Resources balanced scorecard, August 2021 data. It assisted in collecting demographics: Name, employee identification, email address, hire date, employment status (staff and faculty), campus location, and legacy institution origin. Later the document analysis procedure facilitated the review of forms, documents, statutes, press releases, website pages, and other organizational and institutional documents. Interviews were used to collect qualitative data that included 11 open-ended questions.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used in the case study:

(1) What was the process taken by the two legacy institutions to merge into one organization?

(2) How did staff and faculty collaborate with the administration with the merger process?

(3) What are the perceptions of faculty and staff after the merger related to organizational culture?

(4) What are the challenges and success factors after the merger that inform the findings of this study?

Validity

Content validity was executed to measure how the interview questions were performed about the studied topics. Moreover, the document analysis combined with the second qualitative

research method, focus group interviews, was used as triangulation. "The combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (Denzin, 1970, p. 291) such in the case of this study, permitted the researcher to conclude the multiple sources of data: Documents, statutes, press releases, website pages, organizational and institutional documents, and the focus group information comparison to corroborate and validate information obtained from these sources.

By triangulating data, the researcher attempted to provide "a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility" (Eisner, 1991, p. 110). Moreover, by examining information collected through the different methods, the researcher confirmed the findings via multiple data sets and reduced the impact of potential bias from the case study, where the researcher was involved as an employee and a legacy institution participant. The researcher also used member checking or participant feedback (Creswell & Poth, 2018) as another validity method in the study. The researcher reached out to participants via email once the findings were drafted from the video recordings and transcription to make changes or corrections as needed.

Reliability

The interview inquiry reports developed in a sequence of events and themes of inquiry assisted in establishing the reliability of the study's design. The interviews and the data transcriptions also facilitated the study's reliability to the final stages of generalizing and reporting findings. The dissertation paper and study also helped establish the findings' credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirm results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Using an electro codebook book in the NVIVO software, with themes coded with colors and specific work, facilitates the study's reliability. It identified what participants said and filed their answers to all questions in case folders. These cases aided in describing the context and sentiment of each

participant. Also, the instances in NVIVO supported the expansion of content analysis for reliability in this study.

As described above, the triangulation also provided reconceptualizing, validity, and reliability, as Lather (1991) explained. The authenticity and criticality of the case study, its relevance to higher education, organizational culture, mergers, and its findings, was also used to establish the study's credit survey (Whittemore et al., 2001; Lincoln et al., 2011).

Last, Creswell and Poth (2018) identified the research process itself and the combination of the qualitative research strategies as other ways of establishing reliability. The researcher's closeness to the participants and research topic itself with thick description aided in securing the reliability of this study.

Data Collection

Mack et al. (2015) defined qualitative data as it seeks to "explore phenomena using instruments that are flexible, which categorize responses to questions, and use a semi-structured research method such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observations." (p. 3). These methods provided a greater level of "spontaneity and adaptation" from the researcher to interact with the participants. The researcher asked open-ended questions that were not posed in the same manner to all participants. Then, participants responded in great detail and provided extensive responses that facilitated the exploration of multiple constructs. These comprehensive and detailed responses allowed the researcher to follow up with subsequent questions to gather additional details.

No data was collected until the Institutional Review Board secured approval at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley to meet ethical standards and research procedures involving human participants. The groups identified from the sample received an email inviting

the participants to be part of the study. A simplified consent form was used, and an electronic copy of the document was emailed before the interviews and kept on file for the study. Once the researcher received confirmation and acceptance from participating in the study, participants were invited to join a 60-minute Zoom (video conferencing application) session for the focus group interviews.

As Zohrabi (2013) explained, the qualitative method involved focus groups categorized as Group 'LV' and Group 'UV.' Interviews were performed, but not before obtaining IRB approval, and simplified consent forms were emailed to all agreed participants. Interview protocols were utilized, and video audio-recorded from the Zoom (video conferencing application) and transcribed records were maintained for this study.

Data Analysis

Busetto et al. (2020) pointed to document analysis as the review done by the researcher from the written materials. The materials in this study were obtained from documents, statutes, press releases, website pages, and any other organizational and institutional documents that helped guide the qualitative research process. Also, as explained by the authors, the document study or analysis was used for validity and triangulation through information comparison to another form of qualitative methodologies, such as, in this case, focus groups interviews. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the document review, discussions, and focus groups and how information and comparison of findings were utilized while doing data collection.
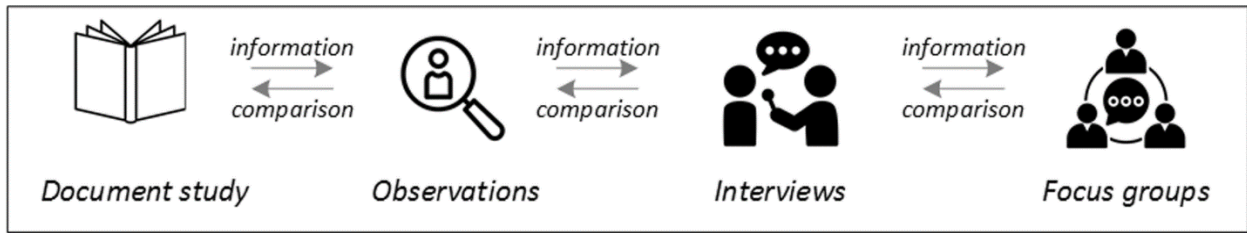
Figure 1

Combination methods for data collection (Busetto et al., 2020)

Note. Observations were not used as a data collection method for this study.

Figure 2 shows the correlation analysis for the four focus groups regarding answers, perceptions, evaluations of the merger process, overall experiences with the process, and identified organizational culture changes from both 'LV' and 'UV' groups.
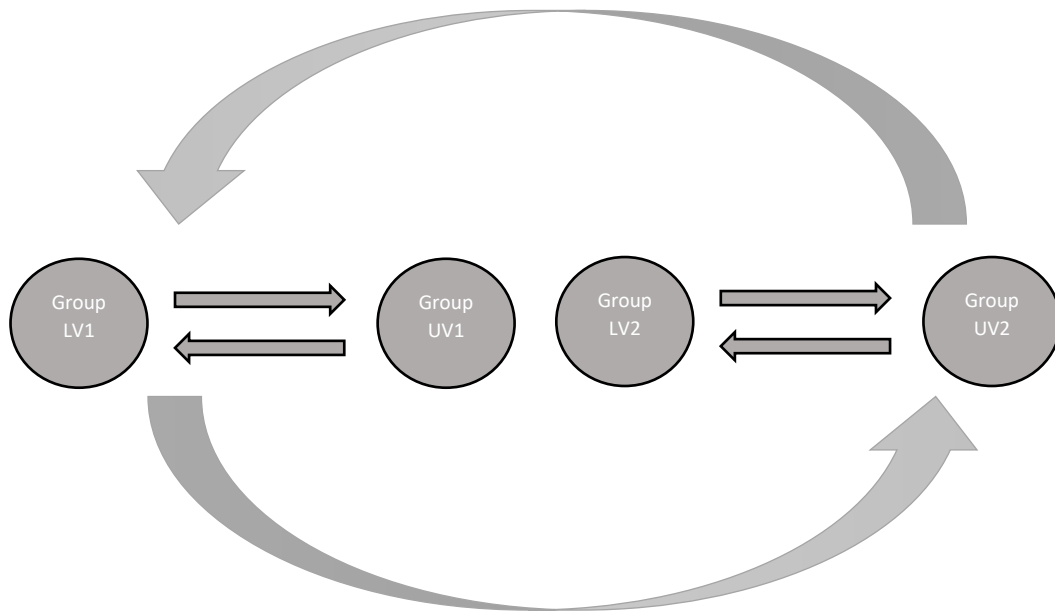
Figure 2

Correlation graph

Note. Two focus groups were gathered from each legacy institution referenced as 'LV' and 'UV.''

The qualitative data analysis took place using the audio-recording review and tallying joint statements, identifying who said what from each interview group, and designating a relationship with exiting themes or identifying additional themes involved in the findings. Coding was utilized to correlate the statements and themes, and a report produced findings. In addition, a small narrative section helped classify quotes from individuals on the most relevant results.

The researcher established a common platform for coding from the original notes taken during the focus group interviews and with the assistance of NVIVO. These were initially identified as top base themes and subthemes and were later run through sentiment coding for positive and negative perceptions. The code list developed with colors and specific words further separated pieces and subthemes, but not before the audio transcription and video recordings were

read and reviewed multiple times. Later, the codes identified were matched in the NVIVO software along with the transcripts of the focus group interviews. Once the software coded its preliminary results from the words specified by the researcher, it also helped identify additional possible codes that the researcher considered to expand the themes and subthemes. Ultimately, there were five themes, and two subthemes identified, which will be explained in the findings in Chapter IV.

Creswell and Poth (2018) proposed that a word table be formed to exhibit the data from the individual case to code to the study's framework. The researcher identified the similarities and differences among the participants' answers facilitating the coding based on topics, subtopics, and even color-coding themes. Later, the researcher developed accurate life generalizations from studying the data. The readers can acquire from the case, apply learnings to a population or similar issues or transfer them to another similar setting.

Currently, there is multiple coding software available in the market. To mention some, MAXQDA, ATLAS. Ti, NVIVO, and HyperRESEARCH are available for data analysis, yet it is essential to understand their features, functionality, advantages, disadvantages, and ease of use (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Considering Creswell & Maietta's questionnaire (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018), which includes nine features to consider while deciding on what software to use, this scholar opted for the Nvivo software since it allowed the conceptualization of different levels of abstractions from the children and parent codes. Moreover, the program permitted the researcher to examine the "relationship between the raw data and the broader themes." (p. 330). The researcher used the levels of data analysis with rigor, NVIVO and assisted in the document and focus group interview analysis. It took the form of "scientific reports, with a structure resembling quantitative articles" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 60).

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Limitations of the Study

This study had some limitations. Sampling errors could occur from the purposeful sampling method used, and the data collection and analysis represented a challenge where the researcher could become involved "in the issues, events, or situations under study." (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 810). Since it was unknown who would decide to participate in the study, overall positive or negative perceptions from employees were portrayed differently depending on the merger experiences and the involvement in the process.

Also, the lack of an extensive literature review on the HSIs in Texas, its culture, and the merger created some gaps that could affect how this study was formulated. However, this also allowed the study to be a foundation for future research. In addition, once the identification of qualified participants took place, the researcher noticed that the new HSI institution no longer employed many potential participants due to different reasons such as retirement, death, better job opportunity, or job transfer. Similarly, some of the selected and agreed to participate in the study mentioned that their involvement in the merger had been years before the focus group interview, making it challenging to remember all these. The researcher asked participants to contact her to add comments to their answers or recall any additional details to address this limitation.

Additionally, the researcher bias was disclosed based on the relationship between an administrative role in the merger process and being employed to one of the legacy institutions as part of the merger. Nevertheless, the axiological perspective of the study, and the role and value that the researcher played, assisted in using the researcher's interpretations in pair to those of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a methodological bricoleur, the researcher was familiar with the data collection and analysis methods, encompassing understanding the history of the

case study and hands-on experience with each method. This way, the study's limitations

reinforced the materials and interpretation practices and supported the researcher (Denzin &

Lincoln, 2018).

Researcher Bias

As a current administrator at the merged institution involved in the case study, the

researcher found her motivation from what was seen and experienced from coworkers: staff and

faculty and from her involvement with the changes in organizational culture following the

merger from the two legacies HSIs. After reviewing the literature available on higher education

mergers and discovering that the concept had limited research in the United States, it was evident

that the topic had significance. As mergers are more common in business and with the existing

experience that the researcher had on mergers and acquisitions in manufacturing, there was a

level of bias and exposure in the study. However, through self-awareness, the researcher

addressed both the higher education and the merger and acquisition biases. The researcher

removed herself from the discussions in the focus groups, limiting her interaction with the

groups as an interviewer and listener. The researcher also kept herself from giving her opinion,

sharing her experiences, or using her involvement to address the findings.

Member checking or participant feedback (Creswell & Poth, 2018) was also used by the

researcher as another method for validity and to address researcher bias in the study. The

researcher reached out to participants once findings were drafted to make corrections as needed.

Furthermore, from start to end, the researcher created a thorough research plan that included

deadlines, specific steps to follow in the research process, focus group information, contact

names and phone numbers, invitations, and confirmations, and worked closely with the

dissertation committee chair for peer research review. Lastly, the researcher developed general questions for the focus group interview sessions and kept the same questions for all groups.

In this chapter, the researcher provided the definitions and historical perspectives of the scientific method being used, qualitative research. Also, the specific methodology, case study, was explained for general scholarly purposes. Further, the researcher explained the reasons for using qualitative research and case study in the dissertation paper. The approach on how the methodology was implemented, the research design, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, selection of participants, recruitment, setting, reliability, validity, and study limitations were also explained. To finalize, the researcher included the researcher's bias statement towards investigating the merger process and the changes experienced in the organizational culture at the new HSIs.

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to outline the research methodology used to answer the research questions. The researcher addressed the methodology, population, sample, demographics, limitations of the study, and researcher bias. A qualitative method was used to develop the theory on what motivated the merger process by administering the human capital at the new HSI. The study's participants shared their perceptions and positive and negative sentiments towards helping explain the merger methodology and their participation. It helped outline the importance of the participant's knowledge and depth on the research topic. In the next chapter, the researcher will discuss the findings and analyze the answers to the research questions using the methodology described in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, the results from the case study are presented from conducting document review and focus group interview sessions on addressing the following research questions: (1) What was the process taken by the two legacy institutions to merge into one organization? (2) How did staff and faculty collaborate with the administration with the merger process? (3) What are the perceptions of faculty and staff after the merger related to organizational culture? (4) What are the challenges and success factors after the merger that inform the findings of this study?

The structure of this chapter will first cover in a general manner the emergent themes and subthemes from the focus group interviews. These will be listed and described but later designated as supporting the research questions.

Both groups identified from the legacy institutions were drawn from an overall population of existing employees as of September 2021. Table 1 includes the demographics sample at the new HSI. From the total population of 6423 employees, of which 1615 were faculty, 2783 were staff, and 2025 were student employees (ineligible population for this study), 1521 employees met the criteria for the case study. Faculty and staff employees who transitioned into the new

HSI as of September 1, 2015, did not have a break in service and had enough years of service with either legacy institution to be considered active employees during the merger.

Table 1

Demographics sample

Employee Classification	Headcount	Eligible/Ineligible Sample for the Study	Total Eligible
Faculty	1615	Eligible	640
Staff	2783	Eligible	881
Student	2025	Ineligible	0
Total	6423		1521

Later, 154 employees were identified through purposeful selection as potential participants from the merger process. All 154 individuals were active employees who participated in the working groups created for the merger methodology. The names were identified from the online accessible working groups' final reports. Each working group report listed the participants in the chair, co-chair, and member roles. These participants collaborated with either one or more working groups. Of the 154 participants, 71 were from legacy location 'LV' a,' 83 were from 'UV.' Moreover, all 154 employees were emailed regarding the focus group sessions with two options to participate via Zoom (video conferencing application) with a limit of 10 participants per location. Then, whoever replied to the email on a first-come, first-serve got officially invited to the focus groups with maximum participation of 10 participants from the 'LV' and 10

participants from the 'UV". Additionally, two participants were kept as backups if others did not make it to the focus group sessions. Yet, their assistance was not needed the day of the interviews since all confirmed individuals participated. All 20 participants required for the study replied to the request to participate per the IRB guidelines established voluntarily.

The participants in the study were involved in the merger process through direct contribution in the working groups, which included areas such as community and public service, education, health professions, biomedical science, social sciences, business, information technology (IT) processes, athletics, accreditation, the association of colleges, transportation, community engagement, startup activities, business processes, change management, auxiliary services, and enrollment management. Furthermore, participants' job titles and job responsibilities encompassed teaching and administration roles such as associate professor, professor, dean, associate dean, associate vice president, assistant vice president, executive director, director, assistant director, "athletics" (specific role not stated due to possible identifier), and "information technology" (specific part not displayed due to possible identifier).

Additionally, some participants stated that they collaborated in the merger efforts by being faculty or staff senate members and the strategic planning committee. Table 2 includes the demographics for all focus group participants.

Table 2

Demographics for focus group participants

Focus Group Participant	Employment Type	Legacy Institution	Gender
P1	Staff/Faculty	LV	Male
P2	Staff/Faculty	UV	Male
P3	Staff	LV	Male
P4	Staff	LV	Male
P5	Staff	LV	Female
P6	Staff	LV	Male
P7	Staff	UV	Male
P8	Staff	UV	Female
P9	Staff	UV	Female
P10	Staff	UV	Female
P11	Staff	UV	Female
P12	Staff	UV	Male
P13	Staff	UV	Female
P14	Faculty	LV	Female
P15	Faculty	LV	Male
P16	Faculty	LV	Male
P17	Faculty	LV	Male

Table 2 Continued

Demographics for focus group participants

P18	Faculty	LV	Female
P19	Faculty	UV	Female
P20	Faculty	UV	Female

Note. Two participants held administratively and teaching roles, described as staff/faculty. Those listed as faculty had only teaching roles, and staff participants held administrative positions.

Emergent Themes

This section denotes the emergent themes of the focus group discussions from amongst all participants. Themes were identified by reviewing audio transcription from all four sessions held with employees from both legacy institutions and the use of NVIVO. The software helped identify the emergent themes by pointing to repetitive patterns and keywords. Then, the researcher identified the prevalent themes and outlined the thick description from participants in quote format as a method of validity and thick description (Creswell and Poth, 2016). The use of references by the employees also helped identify the emergent themes. There are five emergent themes: (1) Change, (2) Us vs. Them, (3) Job security, (4) Community service, and (5) Student success. Furthermore, one subtheme was listed under the Change theme: (a) Political influence.

Change

Participants mentioned change, its impact, and repercussions because of the merger at least 32 times throughout all sessiisThis is the most significant theme identified in the case study results. The change was recognized as one of the most prevalent themes used. Its significance

regarding coding sentiment was spread towards positive rather than negative. There were twelve moderately positive comments and two very positive. Change-related results cascaded down to at least one subtheme, political influence. Thus far, by reviewing the description from the participants, changes in organizational culture had some impact on other themes such as us vs. them on the negative aspect. Moreover, the positive feature of change represented the majority of comments and participants' statements regarding community service and student success themes.

Political influence. The references to political influence and its impact from the merger identified political influence as a subtheme directly related to change. Comments under this theme were moderately positive to very positive from participants at both legacy institutions. Political influence was portrayed from an angle of change and leadership influence. For example, P5 referred to perceiving the merger process as focused on the leadership changes and the administration "rather than serving the student population." (P5). The participant expressed that the process was highly politized. (P5). Participants also outlined the importance of political influence by creating the new HSI focusing on hiring more "Hispanics in upper administration." (P16). Participants also commented on the need to better represent the minority students' student body by engaging faculty and administrators who belonged to the same minority group.

Us vs. Them

The second most prevalent theme was used among participants' opinions and comments. Its significance regarding coding sentiment was spread evenly toward negative and positive responses. There was a total of 22 references to this theme, and primarily, individuals from the 'LV' campus felt more negatively towards this code. As outlined earlier in this study, the change generated by the merger and its repercussions affected the perceptions of participants in us vs.

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them perspective. Individuals gave examples of feelings of division and segregation in the new HSI. As P17 described, "We felt like we weren't being listened to…We felt like things were being imposed on us, and that a lot of the things that were being imposed on us reflected steps backward." (P17).

Job Security

The third theme identified in the qualitative case study was job security. Participants mentioned job security about change as described in the previous section. This theme was mentioned at least 15 times in all focus group sessions. The researcher identified it as third in importance from all themes. However, the connotations were negative in most instances with this new theme. The impact of job security in participants during the merger was consistently considered stressful. For example, one participant said, "where am I going to end up? Am I going to have a job in the new institution?" (P4). The comments as coded via sentiment by the NVIVO software were moderately negative to very negative. The positive impact of job security for some participants came after decisions were made regarding the organizational changes. Employees favorably impacted by the expanded job duties and pay increases identified the job security theme as positive.

Community Service

Equally crucial as in job security, community service was identified as the fourth-ranking theme, with a similar number of mentions. It was discussed by participants at least 16 times. All references were on the positive sentiment spectrum. Participants admitted to feeling encouraged by the "community focus" (P8) given to the institution after the merger. An enhanced marketing strategy implemented after the union allowed the university to expand its recognition nationwide.

As P8 mentioned that the institution gained recognition from "getting its name out there… and communicating what the new focus was. It helped a lot." (P8). Another participant stated, "we are committed to offering the best education to students and the community." (P14). Therefore, the positive sentiment after the merger was directed to "serving the community and improving health." (P4). The new focus was to improve the region's health through the vision and mission of the new HSI and its campuses across the valley, to include the "Medical School." (P4).

Student Success

Student success was the last highly positive driven theme mentioned in fifth place with a similar number of references as the previous two themes. It was cited 14 times through the focus group sessions. Some of the comments were directed towards overcoming obstacles during and after the merger since "at the end of the day, it's about the students, that's why we're here." (P4). Yet, it is essential to mention that the 'LV' employees expressed some concerns about the changes in location and programs being transferred to the 'UV.' The concerns focused on students who had to drive or take the university-provided transportation to their classes. Additionally, one participant referred to these issues as opportunities to continue addressing the "student-centered university" (P5) goal. Ultimately, there was a positive sentiment from the 'LV' legacy employees regarding student success; as P16 cited it, "we need to grow into a research university without losing our focus on teaching." (P16).

In the next section, the research questions were investigated using thick descriptions. The participants' discussion related to the research questions includes highlights and pointers from relationships established by the themes in the case study.

Research Question One: What Was the Process Taken by the Two Legacy Institutions to Merge into One Organization?

The document review initially addressed the first research question. There were multiple public documents from the new HIS's Project South Texas website that helped answer the research question:

- Project South Texas guiding principles,

- Project South Texas transition structure, roles, and responsibilities,

- working group final reports for academic programs, bicultural studies, engineering college, SACSCOC, business plan, business college, nursing college, accreditation and institutional effectiveness, sponsored research, social sciences, university advancement, faculty affairs, graduate enrollment and admission, academic assessment, education college, teach, biomedical sciences, academic support services, campus master plan, and facilities, change management, and human resources,

- presentation of general themes from all working groups,

- strategic plan committee presentation, and

- strategic plan foundational work and processes.

The processes followed by the new HSI involved staff and faculty collaboration from both legacy institutions in November 2013, two years before the official merger date. The methods outlined in the guiding principles were set as goals for the working groups to address the new HSI's needs. According to the guiding principles from the project South Texas document (2013), the goals were:

- technology integration and customized learning for student success

- post-secondary education access and promotion to the diverse student body

- high level of faculty and staff hiring practices

- streamline academic and administrative programs with program redesign

- arts and humanities programs promotion for bicultural, bilingual, and biliterate education

- develop strengthened science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and health programs

- develop a medical school of the first class

- become a global leader in higher education with research and emergent technology focus

- address research for local, state, national, and global needs

- build economic activity for the State of Texas

- foster economic and community partnerships

- promote innovation and knowledge in the region's workforce

- build a hub for inventions and intellectual property

- serve as "Gateway to the Americas" through partnerships globally

- strengthen the higher education Texas System

The transition document (Project South Texas transition structure, 2013) described the New University's Steering Committee (NUSC) forming multiple cross-institutional teams, 13 academic programs working groups, 14 academic administration working groups, and 15 operations administration working groups. In addition, other groups began, such as the student-only working group, the new university transition team, the medical school team, the communications and engagement team, and the steering team.

According to the institution's strategic plan, the new HSI established five core priorities after the merger (UTRGV, 2021): Student success, educational opportunities, community engagement, research impacting the area, and health and medical education. Student success was

identified in this study as a theme due to the repetitive references and examples by the focus group participants. Similarly, community service was identified as a theme related to one of the five core priorities at the new HSI. Even though the steering committee established the core priorities well after the merger, participants referenced these as critical in meeting the new institutions' demands and needs for a new organizational culture.

Later, with the focus group discussions, participants also helped identify the working groups as the primary strategy to merge the two HSIs. According to them, these groups were established in 2013. Individuals participated in the functional groups in areas such as community and public service, education, health professions, biomedical science, social sciences, business, information technology (IT) processes, athletics, accreditation, an association of colleges, transportation, community engagement, startup activities, business processes, change management, auxiliary services, and enrollment management. The focus group sessions had participants from all working groups listed. In addition to the document review that covered the procedures used to establish the new HSI, participants shared statements regarding their involvement and understanding of the merger method. One participant, for example, talked about the involvement in establishing new academic disciplines:

> I was in the academic working group representing my department. We worked with
> different academic disciplines and were told to dream big. We developed different
> scenarios creating a school to include similar disciplines using research. I also worked with
> the inter-institutional curriculum committees. (P20).

Two other participants referenced their participation in the technical aspects of the merger from deciding on software use, implementation of new technologies, and hardware while

collaborating in the working groups. Participant P10 stated that the working group participation involved business processes development related to information technology. The participant also assisted in the project management component of the merger process. (P10). Participant P4 stated:

> I don't remember how many working groups I was a part of, where at least one or two, maybe three, that I participated in. So, we, you know the working groups, were tasked with exactly figuring out how we were going to envision the new university. However, also, what were the tasks that had to happen.

The same participant explained that the working groups were visionary in their approach at first. Still, their involvement quickly got to where things needed to get done and processes documented. So, their participation was more operational in the later stages than visionary. (P4). Additionally, the same participant mentioned:

> I was responsible for integrating the XYZ systems of the two institutions. We also had the school of medicine component, which we spent a lot of time making sure that the regional Medical School that belonged to San Antonio was integrated into the 'new HIS.' There was a lot of work done, helping just transition from two institutions and ensuring that we had one set of systems working across all institutions. We were also making sure that the users were informed about what to do, which method to use and which ones to stop operating in some cases. We had to deal with two systems until we decommissioned one of them, integrating our networks, telephone systems, and all of that. So, I was involved, but I was just one person; hundreds of people were involved in this. (P4).

Others referred to the same working group strategy and how, after the merger, the input from the working groups did not continue with the new strategy of the HSI:

I was a member of at least one working group…; it involved a lot of program development envisioning it; as I mentioned, a lot of that though it didn't come to anything, in my view. We did a lot of talking. We were very enthusiastic at that point, but I think there was a bit of a letdown later on as all those things didn't come. This is not to say that you shouldn't be talking, but no one expects results now. I was chair of my department…, which incidentally was separated in X, Y, and Z until we had a brand-new department, XY, which is housed in the XY School, unfortunately. It was an exciting time. (P16).

The merger process involved many revisions of contracts, services, and the collaboration of student government with student involvement, as activities assigned to members in the working groups:

I was on the auxiliary services committee (working group), looking at different contracts and things of that sort that we had to bring together. I was also on the student success committee (working group) looking at getting that together and then played a massive role in bringing together the student government associations. Furthermore, classically convening a constitutional convention for all of our students and talking about you, know, the primary issues to be concerned about, including transportation availability. By that time, the announcement was all about athletics. Are we going to be at the 'UV' campus? So, it's kind of, you know, healing some of that hurt. (P6).

Comments regarding the use of best practices and consultant work were also shared as a method used in the merger for collaboration and review within the working groups:

I participated in the working groups and the reporting while working with consultants and

business mapping and then identifying best practices for proposed new business. It took a

lot of learning and reviewing where we were and wanted to improve and be. So that was an

extensive process that undertook a lot of meetings and a lot of discussions, led by the

consultant. (P8).

Additionally, participants identified the second merger strategy, the strategic planning

committee, which came later, two years after the actual merger in 2017. Some participants were

involved in both merger strategies. The first one, the working groups, and the latter, the strategic

planning committee, were before and after the merger. Participants confirmed no direct

connection among all activities from before after the merger. They felt that there was no

continuation, follow up, or outcome from the efforts of the working groups, as participant P17

stated:

I also participated in the working group for health professions. 'LV' and 'UV' members

met on the 'health professions' campus and got together to plan what we thought would be

the optimal college of health professions. I was heavily involved, actually very heavily

involved in the transition, so I was a member and 'leadership role' of the working group on

XX sciences. I was also 'leadership role' in the academic working groups. I was also on the

faculty senate. In general, we felt like those of us who had been involved in the merger, and

the process of the working groups all fell into a kind of a black hole. And, in fact, as a

member of the strategic planning committee, not a great deal of attention was given to the

products of those working groups. (P17).

Nevertheless, research question one addressed the operational and methods used in the merger process. These are from participants' experiences as the actions were performed from their involvement in the working groups.

Research Question Two: How Did Staff and Faculty Collaborate with the Administration with the Merger Process?

The focus group interviews addressed the second research question. Participants provided examples of the administration from both legacy institutions collaborating in the merger process within their working groups. However, no higher-level or executive positions were identified as participants in the working groups to mediate the merger conversations. As one participant mentioned, "I'm trying to think if there was anything in terms of collaboration with the administration, I don't remember honestly. I don't remember any vertical collaboration; it was horizontal, you know, with other departments." (P12). Individuals mentioned that there was some level of fighting and hate at first among members of the working groups; these statements are also found in the us vs. them theme:

> Before the merger, there was a lot of stress because everyone had to fight… Not fight, but everyone had to compete for their positions, and you know, had to go through the interviews, as if it's a brand-new job, and so there were times when you wondered, you know what the outcome would be, so yes, that caused some stress. (P11).

Participants also referred to fighting the administration for resources and more budget. As participant P5 mentioned, the budget "was not enough to serve the students" (P5). So, to build more programs, participants had to appeal for more money to meet the expectations of the new HSI. Participant P15 also referred to the same concept of having to fight the administration:

We had to develop a new department, with the help of the new Dean, who saw the inequalities, so I am the XX administrative position of that new department. We are offering these programs, so we are looking at that still right now. But I don't know if it is happening across the campus. I haven't heard any other story like that, but this just happened this September 2021. And we kept on fighting, we kept on telling them to look, I mean if there is no budget no staffing, etc., then you know the 'LV,' it is not going to survive, and like it's a miracle, I considered it a miracle that so far, the 'LV' has survived I don't know for how long though. (P15).

As the comments from P15 and others from the us vs. them theme relate to this research question on collaboration, it is essential to mention that there is still a sense of resentment years after the merger. But also, there is a sense of hope for unity:

I will also agree that we've made a lot of progress since 2015, and I think people have gotten a lot over that. And now, there's a lot more unity. (P4).

After the merger, the culture was about unity in my department and bringing the group and leadership together. We had to do the processes… in the same manner at each campus as much as possible. (P9).

The collaboration with the administration was also described in the 'LV' focus group sessions as forced when it was stated that members of the working groups had to collaborate since their job security was involved. Job security is another theme identified in research question two:

It meant realigning the program, so we had the graduate programs here, at the 'LV' campus, and they 'UV' had graduate programs in XX science, so looking at this, we

needed to focus on student enrollment at the larger campus. As you know, they have larger

enrollment, so they took the programs and moved them to the 'UV.' From the

administration's point of view, it was more efficient than running two programs, you know,

on two different campuses. So, I didn't know what term to use, but we didn't have a choice;

we had to collaborate. (P15).

Additionally, P11 discussed that employees from both legacy institutions are difficult

regarding job security. The lack of resources and collaboration among employees and the

administration created stressful and challenging times:

Not fight, but everyone had to compete for their positions. And you know, we had to go

through the interviews, as if it was a brand-new job. So there was at the time during the

merger, because a lot of that program went to the Community college side, there was no

staff left. Whatever was left, who didn't get the job, I had already applied to other

departments and had already moved on, so yeah, that was a big challenge. (P11).

Moreover, P13 mentioned how people moved on, and some had to move on because they

could not handle the stress of applying to their jobs during the transition. Others, such as P19,

mentioned that their program had to be dissolved due to the merger and people had to find new

jobs since they were "no longer needed." (P13). Similarly, P9 said:

We all had to apply for our jobs again, so that was a little, you know, there was a little bit

of anxiety there but, it was positive overall. There was a job audit of our duties and

responsibilities and reclassification where it was needed. So, it wasn't just an expansion of

responsibilities; it also came with its perks.

Others referred to differences among people since all leadership roles had more than one applicant, "there was only one job, but there were two people in ' a' similar or same position" (P2), creating some conflicts during the transition concerning job security and lack of collaboration. Still, after decisions were made, people transitioned out, and others had to "stick around." (P2). However, "from that point, then, yes, we went forward to working with the other." (P2).

On a similar perspective but with a different, more positive approach, and a positive outcome, P18 shared comments:

I think it was really challenging to cultivate collaboration when we had so many interim people, so we had interim chairs and interim deans and interim presidents and interim everything… We had like eight different interim deans of our college in that process. It's really hard, because every time you turn around, there's somebody new and temporary and, if you're trying to work with someone collaboratively and then suddenly there's somebody else, and you have to reestablish a relationship or communication, and they have a different style and a different agenda. Yet, I think the best effort was when a group of faculty, actually two groups, were meeting concurrently, and they didn't even know about each other. However, they were meeting after hours, you know, very concerned about the 'LV' campus because the faculty felt alienated. They ended up kind of simultaneously bringing their concerns to XX, the interim provost at the time. And she established the campus connect group, and that was the first kind of productive collaborative information-sharing effort. (P18).

Also, a combination of two other themes fall in research question two as it relates to having to collaborate for the greater good for student success:

I mean the goal was to have what was described, unity. I think we moved in that direction. Certainly, you have to because we're here for the students at the end of the day, and it was a positive change. We're all here for student success in everything we do every day. (P19).

We're here for the students in unity. We got to start looking at what other programs were available and address the students' needs. And then, we (united) set up procedures to develop new programs. Someone can argue either way, but I think it's an increase in the enrollment, there's more options, there are more opportunities, we have more faculty because there's more things we need to do. (P2).

Having student success as the focus of our work has been the platform that brings us together to have a shared mission and vision. We are committed to offering the best education to students and the community. (P14).

Finally, in research question three, participants mentioned a combination of themes, as stated above, related to unity and overcoming us vs. them transition challenges.

Research Question Three: What Are the Perceptions of Faculty and Staff After the Merger-Related to Organizational Culture?

Research question three was primarily related to the theme of change. Most of the comments identified organizational changes in culture from restructuring departments and programs. From the effects of merging the institutions, participants identified the combination of leadership styles and personalities as the causes of organizational culture changes:

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You know, 'the culture changed when' changes in expectations 'occurred.' Change… it

created a great deal of work; I mean in terms of seeing ourselves as creating a new

department, creating new policies for that department [*sic*]. (P17).

Participants also addressed that changes in culture were activated from the changes in

expectations from the faculty. P17 mentioned that change after the merger created a great deal of

work. Moreover, that change after the merger impacted procedures, policy, and people's overall

expectations. P16 referred to organization culture and changes that caused it:

Nevertheless, we had a change of culture somewhat at the 'LV legacy institution,' we were

more of a teaching-oriented institution. Moreover, we then became something more a

research-oriented department, which I think, I welcomed that change. However, we began

to be held to significantly higher standards in terms of publishing. (P16)

Others pointed to the value of student success and collaboration because of the new

organizational culture:

The organizational culture that valued student success, collaboration, and innovation was

essential. We were fostering an environment that guided the design and implementation of

effective services and support to achieve our goals. (P3).

Participants also identified the lack of resources, such as training, to prepare the employees

to navigate cultural changes. "The most important impact is culture. No training offered for

change." (P20). The participant also mentioned that "it was the culture change," which was

stressful. "Stress was a key element, and we were trying to be politically correct." (P20).

Another participant referred to the organization's culture as going "fast and furious." (P9). There was no holding back or against the cultural change in the new organization. Participants mentioned they were moving along to "improve student services" to become more "aggressive" (P9) to succeed.

Others revealed the relationship with "continuous leadership changes" (P13) and how it was difficult and stressful adjusting to the new processes. P13 mentioned that bias was present because they felt part of the old organizational culture. "I was not happy with a lot of those changes." (P13).

Equally, P2 commented on organizational culture and procedure changes, which included faculty tenure and promotion:

We had to focus on making sure that the departments knew there were changes coming. That they were part of that change. They were going to look into their departmental and school bylaws, tenure and promotion criteria, and annual evaluations to apply those changes. (P2).

In research question three, another theme emerged, political influence. This theme was recognized by the implications on who had more political power during the working group sessions. Also, participants referred to this theme as to which legacy institution kept more power and political influence after the merger.

One participant explained how the job promotion received after the merger did not threaten the 'UV' employees because this participant came from a different program. The participant's background and expertise were new to the employees in the 'UV,' so the participant "had an easier time than any of the other teams." (P1). P1 also pointed out that political influence helped

represent what was perceived as the underrepresented campus, the 'LV.' The participant's new role with the new institution facilitated the preparation to meet the demands of the merger at the leadership level. However, the participant felt like voicing an opinion on how the programs needed to be implemented in the College was more of a political decision. These decisions had already been made at higher levels within the new institution.

The political influence theme was also identified in answering research question three. According to participant P15, organizational culture changes after the merger had significance with the administration. The participant pointed to some leadership practices involving decision-making on the new organizational structure. According to P15, depending on who was at the leadership level within the colleges, those individuals would benefit from their legacy campus. They tried to alternate locations between the 'UV' and the 'LV,' "just to be politically correct." (P15). One last comment from P2 described the advantages of the new HSI after the merger, by having more political influence from the "legislative doors." (P2).

Additional positive comments regarding the outcome of the merger, as it relates to organizational culture and political influence as a theme, were stated by P2. The participant expressed growth, equity, merit increases, access to the "legislative doors," and political effect. "It is all good." (P2). Comments regarding organizational culture changes after the merger, with improvements in processes using training and new system implementations, were shared by P8:

> For example, when we launched the XYZ system application, we …tried to integrate a
>
> change management preparation component. And so, our team started right before the
>
> launch and helped prepare employees to accept the change in a positive way.

Participant P8 referred to giving as much information as possible to employees to prepare them for the system-related changes and new implementations. Their responsibility was to help ease the transition and changes faced by employees. Their role involved trying to make it a positive experience.

Others also referred to job security and us vs. them themes related to their organizational culture outcomes after the merger. Participants explained that they saw their job being impacted after the merger. So, they tried to keep a positive outcome based on "duty… so anything we do, we do it for the students, we have a job because of the students." (P5). However, the participants' comments regarding their own jobs' recruitment and applications showed the prevalence of job security schemes. The fact that participants had to reapply for their positions after the merger announcement changed the organizational culture from that it "took a toll on morale." (P18). Also, the differences between us vs. them were present since participants mentioned that employees at the 'LV' were constantly reminded by their counterparts at the 'UV' that they had a job and should feel "fortunate" (P6) because of the larger campus. Participant P6 also mentioned that the "organizational culture appears to be still tilted toward a 'UV' centralized point of view." (P6). The participant stated that the 'LV' campus was "an afterthought" (P6) of the larger 'UV' campus.

Another participant explained that people's behavior towards organizational culture changes was perceived as usual. P4 mentioned "folks were distracted a little bit with their agendas." (P4). Others pointed to the fact that resources and assets were deployed to another location, from the 'LV' to the 'UV,' creating hatred and sentiment of "marginalized… experience." (P15). The same participant explained that "they took the programs or whatever suited them," (P15), referring to the larger campus as taking over the smaller one. Other

programs with students at both locations were moved to the 'UV.' That "created problems… 'the program' suffered tremendously because of that." (P1). Furthermore, P15 explained that "there was a huge loss in enrollment at the 'LV' campus," so overall, the participant perceived the outcome of the merger and the changes in organizational culture as an overall loss to the students and the community.

A different participant described the impact on organizational culture from us vs. them— the relationship in disparity with job openings and hiring impacted the culture. "I think it goes back to the leadership… the hiring and most services were located at the 'UV' campus." (P1intenserticipant P15 also confirmed the intense feelings of a culture of separation and dispute:

> People knew that we were getting divorced, and then there was a merger, you know, some people say it was done on purpose. So that, you know, it would be easier for them 'the UV legacy institution' could absorb the 'LV.' (P15).

> And we kept on fighting, telling them to look; I mean, if there is no budget, no staffing, etc., then we, you know the 'LV,' it is not going to survive. And really, like, it is a miracle. I consider it a miracle that the 'LV' has survived so far. I don't know for how long, but it has happened. (P15).

> It is easier for the administration to meet on the 'UV campus' than to alternate locations to be politically correct. Until this is solved, we will have ongoing issues. It has not been collegial at all. All the budget is on the 'UV' side also. On top of that, we were told that the 'UV' is subsidizing the 'LV.' (P15).

Their campus is the campus that has more research going on, more students, and obviously faculty. It is not usually possible to do research without graduate students, and most graduate students, at least in 'college name,' are in 'UV,' so we cannot blame them. (P15).

The most negative sentiments were expressed under us vs. them, culture changes, and duplication of duties. As one participant described it, "the culture was somewhat strained. There was an atmosphere of us vs. them at many meetings. This was noted particularly where there was duplication of departments." (P19).

Others discussed how the culture at one campus, the 'LV,' was more fitted to handle the organizational changes and the new culture of going lean in the early years after the merger. The 'LV' had experienced the separation from the community college, the impact of the hiring freeze in the early years of the union, and how that had put them at an administrative advantage vs. their counterparts in the 'UV.' (P4). "We went, you know, from 40% reduction in force, which was pretty significant, and we survived. Our 'UV' colleagues were not used to dealing with that as much, so I think that affected them negatively." (P4). The same participant pointed to the transition and organizational culture changes in working together, us vs. them theme, from the concepts of "forming, storming, norming, and finally performing." (P4).

From the perceptions of organizational culture, the ad of positive and more encouraging comments under us vs. them originated as participants reflected on how things have improved six years into the merger. Some comments such as "I will also agree that we've made a lot of progress since 2015 and I think people have gotten a lot over that and now there's a lot more unity." (P4). And "the organizational culture was highly divided at the beginning feeling a loss of identity and not knowing where we were headed as a legacy into the new 'HSI' institution."

(P14). Furthermore, '" there is still vestiges of suspicion about the administration on the part of faculty. Recent efforts by XX Administrator to engage in more transparency and responsiveness to faculty is helping significantly." (P18). Another participant also commented on the administration and leadership and how employees internalized after the merger. The participant also explained how the culture shifted to a new focus on profit and how it moved away from empathy:

> It all comes from leadership; we had a President who led this institution 'UV' with his heart; he loved the students and the faculty. He was extremely engaged with the Community. Everyone in the valley loved him; he was just wonderful, the students loved him, everybody loved him so much, right. And then with the new administration coming, all the services, the business mindedness, 'it changed' you know. It was not good, 'we couldn't feed ourselves' by operating with the heart, you know. I mean, I love Dr. XY; what he's done to this institution is absolutely great, but at that time, just knowing that we moved away from the heart and everything was being dealt with the head or, you know, finances, it was all about business. (P13).

As research question three helped identify the perceptions of staff and faculty toward organizational culture, participants focused on describing the sentiments of disapproval towards the leadership. Because leadership supported the transition of programs to the larger campus, participants from the 'LV' felt their participation and importance in the process were being disqualified. Also, a sentiment of resentment was described by participants as the head of the institution shifted the culture to a financial approach. According to participants, the institution became profitable and recognized, despite losing its empathy to the community and the students.

Research Question Four: What are the Challenges and Success Factors after the Merger that Inform the Findings of this study?

The sentiment on challenges was perceived negatively by participants who focused primarily on three areas: leadership changes, lack of leadership, and distance from campus to campus. On the contrary, the success factors identified by participants on the positive spectrum were related to providing more services to students and serving the entire community. Comments mentioned the difference in location and traveling long miles to get from one campus to another. Employees were not used to these new requirements, and complaints from staff and faculty were identified as a new challenge resulting from the merger. P4 mentioned, "Am I going to change at all? When? Am I going to report to so and so? And I am going to need to travel to the UV or vice versa, to the LV, from one legacy institution to the other." (P4). Oppositely, P9 mentioned that students benefited from the expansion in programs and pointed to a success factor, even when there was travel involved:

> You know, there were comments about whether it was negative or positive for students to go from one campus to the other, but I mean, it was, you know accessibility for students that allowed them to be major in an area where they probably did not have access before. With free transportation to that campus, I think it was just a major positive for students, right. They had accessibility, and there were buses, transportation, so where before, maybe, they had to move to the 'upper valley' without this resource in the past, prior to the merger. (P9).

Others such as P2 referred to the division names and organization changes as a "huge challenge." It was difficult because "the name changed a lot; just keeping that straight was quite a challenge." (P2).

In contrast, positive results of the merger through change were mentioned as that the departments became "better units and more complete units." (P5). Likewise, on the positive perspective, P9 referred to gaining experience by going through "all of those changes." P9 also identified the departmental and organizational changes as challenging, but that the unit/division had to quickly "come up with a new model to serve the university with distributed campuses," making it "interesting." (P9) and identified it as a success factor.

Participants also spoke about the changes in leadership and administration as challenges or success factors that inform the findings of this study. How these changes affected or helped the two institutions depended on who was promoted or placed at the head of the division. If an employee from the 'LV' or the 'UV' were placed as the leader of one department, they would show preference or try to benefit their legacy institution and their teams. These comments were also connected to the political influence theme. P17 mentioned:

Because you know, we sort of we are now having to deal with what had already been established, which meant that making any change, any substantive changes would or could be problematic. Things have changed a lot over the past five years, and I think that is because there have been some changes to leadership. There have definitely been issues, I mean early on because the provost of the new university had been the provost at the 'UV legacy institution,' then you know there began a series of transitions. The transition to the

interim provost, and then the change in administration that broke up the executive

'position' into three positions.

Also, other participants mentioned that "since we started, there have been many changes

with top leadership." (P5). These were portrayed as challenging outcomes of the merger. P9 also

referred to the changes after the merger and the interim roles during the transition of some

leaders, such as the "interim provost" at the 'UV legacy institution.' (P9). "So, there were some

shifts in administration, but that didn't really change the work that we were doing… We

continued to work." (P9).

A participant from the 'UV,' P8, identified the changes in administration and job security

as challenges from the merger. The participant stated that coworkers had to move on and find

other opportunities. But the participant also pointed to establishing good relationships with

coworkers from the 'LV' campus as success factors. "We continued to have a that close

relationship, working relationship, that we had already built with the 'LV' with all the

administrators in the 'LV.'" (P8).

Another comment about change, its challenges, and how it affected the new HSI was made

by P4, where the participant identified that the legacy location 'LV' came from "humble

beginnings." The transition into an HSI and playing with the "big leagues"(P4) was a

challenging transformation based on how the institution grew exponentially after the merger.

Moreover, participants commented on the fact that the 'LV' had to adjust quickly to change

due to the consequence of recently having to go through the separation of the community college

and then the merger with their biggest competitor in the region, portraying it as a success factor

and advantage to their campus. P18 affirmed:

Then dean of the College of … at the 'LV' said, "you have to be okay with transition and change because we're going through a pretty ugly divorce and a shotgun wedding at the same time," because the 'LV' was separating from the community college. And we were initiating the process of the merger. He was indeed right; it was a lot of change, and there is still a lot of change. (P18).

Another challenge was also recognized by P3 related to the job security theme since "coworkers were impacted through the process of right-sizing. Additional direct reports and others were impacted due to changes in social networks, policy, and technology relied on to perform work assignments." (P3). A different participant, P13, also remarked on the challenging and stressful times as a result of the merger:

There is a lot of stress anytime there's a big change like that. There was stress among everybody. Everybody was worried they won't have a job, or they'll have to interview all over again, so yeah, there was a lot of stress during that time, and I would call that a negative impact. (P13).

Moreover, P11 mentioned that "there are a lot of details that are just a blur, you know, I think we were all trying to move and had to be part of the change." The participant also stated that the community struggled with the creation of the new HSI and how this represented a challenge after the merger:

Leadership…had to be cognizant of 'the fact' that human beings take time to adjust to changes regardless whether the change is being pushed down on you or not, you know. So yes, we all understood that as being part of this new university. But you always carry the

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baggage, you know, I mean, you carry the baggage, and for the last two to three years,

people continue to refer to us as the 'UV the legacy institution,' not 'the new HSI.' (P11).

That last reference from P11 had connotations regarding two other codes or themes related

to challenges: community service and us vs. them. The participant complemented the comments

with:

When they would refer to our institution as 'UV,' it is not just us, the community was not

adjusting to the new name of the university, or the, you know, this new institution, 'The

new HSI.' There was, I mean to this day, people from different classes 'UV' anyway, on

the upper valley side, or maybe on the lower valley, people refer to it as 'LV' (the legacy

name of the institution). (P11).

Correspondingly, P13 cited that "my friends in the community, you know something, and I

see this, I never correct them." Regarding how people in the community still refer to the HSI as

the 'UV,' the legacy name of the institution. She also noted, "multiple people still have trouble

just saying, the institution's new name," and instead refer to the "legacy institutions." Yet, others

focused their comments on success factors by concentrating on the improvement and the impact

the merger created on students. P19 revealed that:

You have to 'adjust' because at the end of the day, we are here for the students, and it was

a positive change. We are all here for student success in everything that we do every day

that we walk in our offices. That is what we are here for, so we were unified for that

reason. (P19).

P9 also described it as a success factor:

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We are now in a culture of constant change, of course, but it is always to improve our

services to students, and I feel like the changes are more aggressive or are more significant.

Maybe we don't hold back, we're just all in, and it is fast and furious. (P9).

In this chapter, the researcher presented the study's findings from two perspectives,

identifying emergent themes and subthemes and from the participant's discussions in the focus

groups. The researcher also provided answers to the four research questions related to the themes

and subthemes from the case study. Next, in chapter five, the researcher will summarize relevant

findings, a conclusion, and recommendations for possible future studies.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the researcher reaffirmed the problem statement, the research questions and provided a summary of the results with direct interpretation based on the literature review. The study included the applications of the research findings by utilizing Morgan's (2006) theoretical framework to support the themes and subthemes identified in the study. Additionally, the implications of the research findings were discussed to recommend future research and expand the merger topic in an HSI and its effects on organizational culture.

Through a qualitative analysis, the case study reported the effectiveness of an institution of higher education after the merger of two HSIs. The survey results also addressed institutional performance, success factors, challenges, improvements, benefits, and organizational culture changes as defined by the staff and faculty's perceptions via focus group interviews. Primarily, the study outlined the transformational changes in organizational culture after the merger and how its effects endured six years into the merger. The strategic process used by the merged institution was defined in the investigation with the assistance of document review and focus group interviews. Moreover, the study described the relationship and gaps observed by participants from the original pre-and-post merger strategies, using working groups and the strategic planning committee.

Discussions and Implications

The review confirmed that the two organizations began their merger process in 2013 after establishing working groups. However, not without obtaining legislative approval and getting the University of Texas Systems Office involved in appointing leadership teams to oversee the transition and merger activities. These system-level teams were established with members from the executive with the higher education state offices and executives from the school of medicine and academic campuses locally.
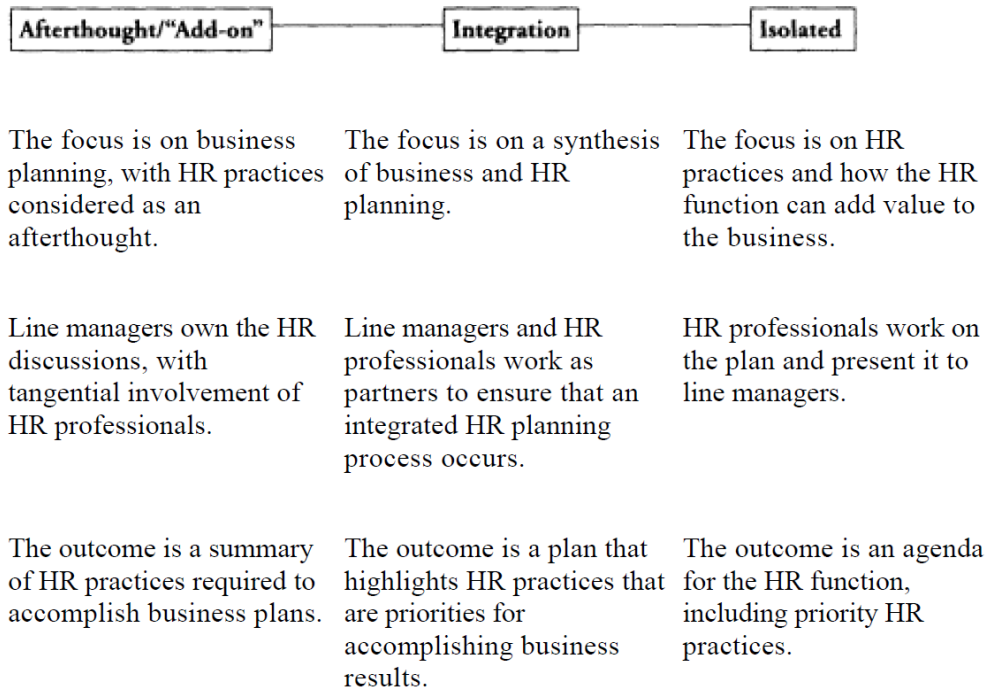
The literature review by Cai et al. (2016) characterized the higher education mergers into two principal types, integration and diversification. However, these research findings are related to higher education mergers in the Netherlands and Australia. The use of a practical merger model to adopt integration and collaboration among higher education institutions going through the merger process was valid and relevant to the findings in this case study. Cai et al. (2016) adopted profiling institution types from national rules, similar to this case study where the State of Texas voted for the merger based on budget needs from the PUF funding. In Cai's research, the desire to increase retention and revenue for institutional advancement was present as a driver to merge those institutions. In this study, the findings suggest that the integration of programs drove the desire to merge towards creating higher revenue for as noted by Cai et al. (2016), the second type f merger by Cai et al. (2016) is defined as diversification and suggests that institutions considering a merger can complement each other by combining their programs into a more extensive and better-recognized organization. This model is more common in the United States, according to Cai et al. (2016). Equally in this study, the findings also suggest that the merger was crafted into law to recognize the new HSI as an emerging research university participants confirmed it, the expectations after the merger were geared towards a "more

research-oriented" (P16) university, something that neither legacy institution focused on before the merger.

Katz and Margo (as cited in Bouston, 2014) indicate that the work of human resources, organizational culture, and collaborations for projects and employees' strategic involvement is less creation to organizations working on organizational restructures and mergers. Research on the origins of human capital and its effects n a merger reveal there are struggles with implementing a new organizational framework that requires that a department or unit support the many needs of employees to provide quality services (Boustan, 2014). The concept of Human Resources in the workplace and how collaborations and forming groups addressed employees' specific needs relating to the findings in research question one. The working groups were established as a merger strategy to meet the new HSI's needs, from training and education to job qualifications. As participants mentioned in the findings, the working groups were tasked with developing a vision, mission, and specific objectives for the new organization. They had to think big, "envision the new university…the working groups were visionary." (P4). Employees from both legacy institutions, 'LV' and 'UV' were required to find the relationship between human capital and human resources strategies through collaborations from staff and faculty (Katz & Margo, as cited in Boustan, 2014). Participants described being responsible for developing the strategy, the vision, and even, organizational charts for the new university (P16 & P5). Even though authors in the literature review such as Tubey et al., (2015), Kaufman (2008), and Ulrich (1997) did not find the linkage between people and their collaborations towards executing the human capital and human resources strategy.

In this study, the researcher was able to identify the relationship of participants, who operationally were able to execute the vision. These individuals were tasked with taking the merged institution to the next level (P4).

Some participants such as P17 shared their concerns on the lack of follow up and linkage between human capital's involvement in the merger process and the strategy used by the institution after the merger "in general those of us who had been involved in the process of the working groups felt like it all fell into kind of a black hole." (P17). This finding strongly relates to Ulrich's (1997) research findings, where human capital does not necessarily drive the organizational strategy and the decisions for the organization are made in isolation. Employees involved in the merger had specific needs to develop high-level skills required in the new organization, yet they felt like their participation was used as a filler and not a genuine contribution to the strategy in the merger process. As Ulrich (1997) pointed out, planning processes deal with "structure, competencies, accountabilities, and a business strategy," (p. 59), and the lack of inclusiveness at the manager, chair, staff, or faculty level, produced a less effective outcome. Figure 3 shows a visual of this approach.

Afterthought/"Add-on"	Integration	Isolated
The focus is on business planning, with HR practices considered as an afterthought.	The focus is on a synthesis of business and HR planning.	The focus is on HR practices and how the HR function can add value to the business.
Line managers own the HR discussions, with tangential involvement of HR professionals.	Line managers and HR professionals work as partners to ensure that an integrated HR planning process occurs.	HR professionals work on the plan and present it to line managers.
The outcome is a summary of HR practices required to accomplish business plans.	The outcome is a plan that highlights HR practices that are priorities for accomplishing business results.	The outcome is an agenda for the HR function, including priority HR practices.

Figure 3

Approaches to Merging Strategic and HR Planning (Urlich, 1997).

On Urlich's (1997) example, an effective strategy is driven by the "add-on" concept, where managers participate in the human capital and human resources strategy. Participants shared that the administration took their recommendations and advisement but did not do anything as it applies to this study. The administration did not take the working groups' strategy through the merger process as "something that they really needed to take seriously." (P17). Consequently, the challenge for leaders in a merger process extends beyond forming groups of individuals. The expectation of having working groups draft, propose, and drive changes after the merger involves promoting collaboration and direct involvement during and after the merger process.

The merger process and strategic implementation required the continuous involvement of individuals who were part of developing the proposed strategy. Even if adjustments or discarding

of recommendations took place, the credibility of the administration and leadership survived the scrutiny of staff and faculty after the merger. This is only as long as the administration continues its involvement in the process. In this study, the lack of follow-up and participation from the working group's participants left them feeling isolated and disgruntled. Participants reported that three years after the merger, in 2018, the sentiment of resentment and low credibility towards the executive team showed in the climate survey performed by an external organization (Boyer, 2021). The study identified opportunities: senior leadership, collaboration, and communication. These climate survey results were strongly related to the findings of this study. Figure 4 and figure 5 show the comparison of 2018 to 2021 with improvements in the areas outlined previously. Some participants mentioned in this study that these results evolved after the merger process. The climate survey, according to participants, points to the difficulties experienced during and after the merger where the administration did not establish a clear strategy.

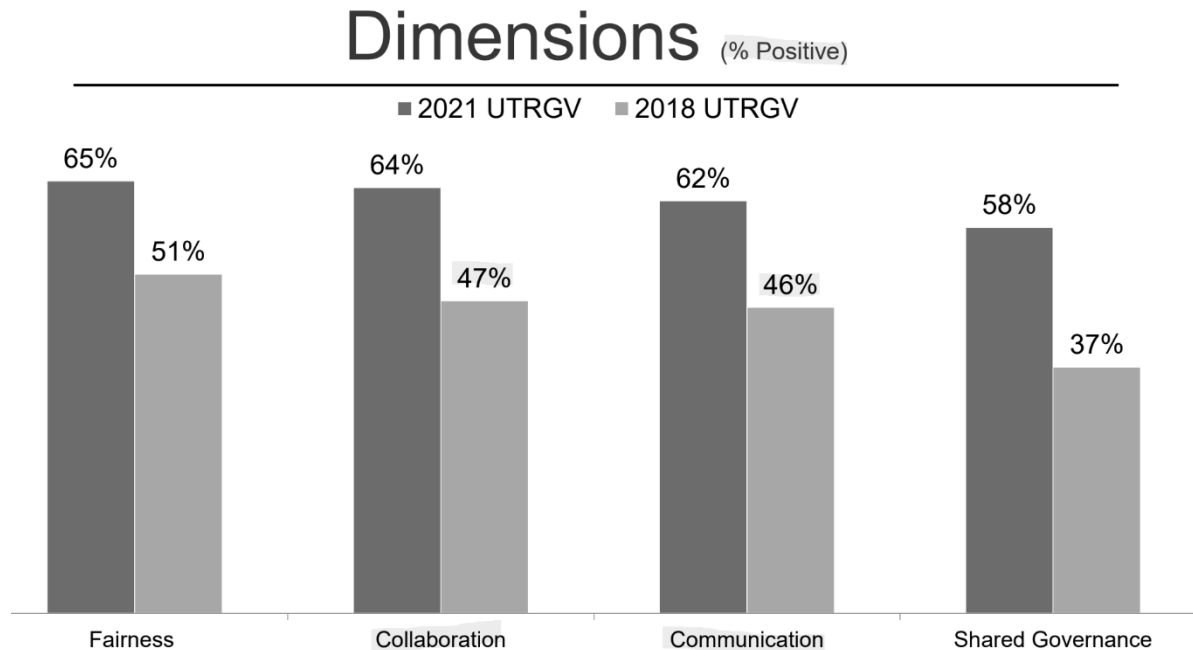> Negative results from the merger were revealed on the campus climate survey, the first campus climate survey. And some, I think a number of those issues have been addressed. I think we are in a better place now, a much better place than we were in 2017-2018. (P17).
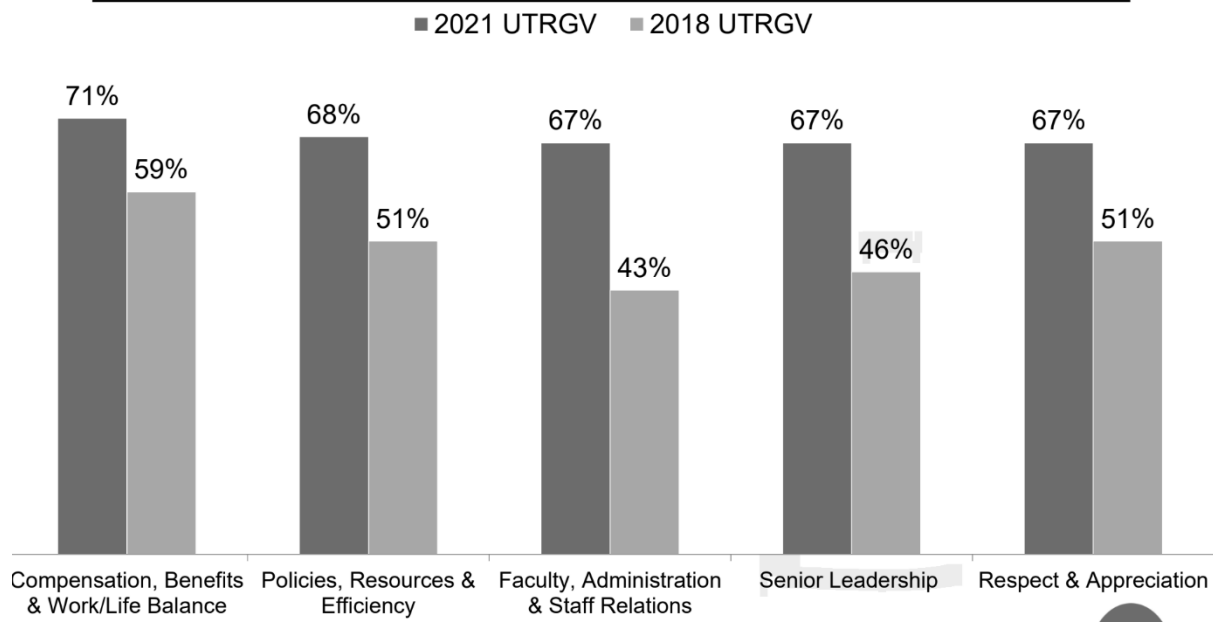
Figure 4

The climate survey and rating from faculty and staff participants at the new HSI on senior

leadership in 2018 and 2021.

Dimensions (% Positive)

■ 2021 UTRGV ■ 2018 UTRGV

	Fairness	Collaboration	Communication	Shared Governance
2021 UTRGV	65%	64%	62%	58%
2018 UTRGV	51%	47%	46%	37%

Figure 5

The climate survey and rating from faculty and staff participants at the new HSI on

collaboration and communication in 2018 and 2021.

Henceforward from the results in research question one, which involved the merger

strategy through document review and answers from participants in the focus group interviews,

research question two was closely related to the same findings. As stated by participants, the

collaborations were horizontal among departments within and across the two campuses. Since

participation from the administration and the working groups was not vertical, with the

administration or leadership team at the new HSI, participants stated that their expectations

involved collaboration in the endeavor. Focus group participants directed the anticipation of the

partnership as to how these activities would have validity and continuation.

This study provided opportunities to expand the literature in higher education scholarly references with institutional culture at a Hispanic serving institution and how leadership placed human capital utilization towards the merger's success. Furthermore, from the findings, the researcher provided a rationale that collaboration was expected in such merger activities across the institution to include the leadership team. Without that collaboration, participants felt segregated in the new HSI. "We felt like we weren't being listened to…we felt like things were being imposed on us, and that a lot of the things that were being imposed on us reflected steps backward." (P17 The literature review from the discussions of "Cultural Theory" (Garcia, 2019, p. 2defined institutional culture as part of the administrative, leadership, and institutional identity. The repercussions of managing and administering problems at the university level, according to Garcia (2019), had a significant impact on the formation of an HSI. In this study, the findings expand the concept of leadership participation in forming the new HSI as a collaborative effort across campuses with the need for better involvement at the leadership level. It is unknown if the lack of engagement and collaboration affected the new HSI in the first three to five years after the merger. The findings in this study addressed a lack of collaboration from the administration with staff and faculty in the initial years after the merger. Participants shared that collaboration happened after the merger and that it took time. In 2018, three years after the merger, the administration established the "campus connect," which was recognized by participants as 'the first kind of productive collaborative information sharing effort.' (P18). According to the strategic initiatives' website from the new HSI, the campus connect was established to address one objective:

An essential element in the development of XX was the consideration of and attention to how to merge our campuses best and develop a collective identity. Recognizing that there

is still much work in this area, we are launching a new Campus Connect initiative, which picks up on two separate initiatives started informally last year. Campus Connect will promote greater consistency in programs and services of all types for students, faculty, and staff across XX's multiple campuses. To do this, the committee will examine academic programs, recruitment, retention, and completion; campus life; and administrative services. Recognizing that operational efficiency and effectiveness can best be promoted by balancing centralization with autonomy, Campus Connect will work to ensure that XX's needs as a whole and the distinct needs of each campus community are equitably addressed.

As shared by Nuñez et al. (2015), existing research on Hispanic serving institutions drives the idea that managing and shaping the organizational identity is performed through an intensive process to outline the organization's culture. People's values and beliefs are involved in that process of significant cultural foundation. As HSIs have faculty and staff that have been with the institution and its legacy components for years, Nuñez et al. (2015) defined their involvement and collaboration in drawing the institution's identity as extra participatory efforts for the organization's leadership.

Faculty and staff perceptions on unity, collaboration, and institutional identity reflect directly on students' work on how they perceive the HSI and its success towards serving them as minority groups. Garcia et al. (2015) traced a significant approach to organizational culture from the views and perspectives of faculty and staff. Hereafter, the findings in the case study point to the discovery of the "campus connect" initiative as one that will help the campuses' leadership, staff, and faculty collaborate vertically and horizontally.

Organizational culture changes and themes identified in the study after the merger acted as the internal driver of the process. As Teasley (2016) defined, changes of positive or negative sentiments affect the organizational culture outlined in this research study. The school culture, as also described by Teasley (2016), was formed by the teachers and the staff's "healthy behaviors" (p. 3). The behaviors of how the administration directed the merger process had immense positive and negative implications from the participants' perceptions on the leadership's "satisfaction, effectiveness, morale… inefficiency, low trust, and lack of transparency." (p.3). Teasley (2016) also addressed that identifying the negative pointers early in any re-organization process could assist in shifting the organizational culture of schools for the institution's success. This study's findings argue that participants, staff and faculty, did not trust the administration. The administration's lack of trust and personal "agenda" during the merger process (P. 18) made it stressful for employees.

As defined by MacNeil e,t al (as cited in Teasley al.016), organizational culture is the quality environment in an organization. Administrators and leadership must understand the role that culture plays in their organization's success. From the findings in this study, participants recognized the success and implications of the merger years after the changes were set in place. It took them a long time to realize that the changes were all for the advancement of the organization. Yet, immediately after the merger, participants felt that the level of expectations, the amount of work, and the traveling involved between the 'LV' and the 'UV' campuses were not ideal. Participants criticized the process by stating that the order of things from the working groups to the strategic plan was upside down, and the organization suffered consequently. (P17 & P18).

The organizational culture evolved from organizational climate (Efeoğlu & Ulum, 2017), where individuals are set in an environment and share doctrine, beliefs, principles, symbols, and rituals. As it was later defined, the concept of the organizational environment contributes to the culture. This case study established the mixture of organizational structure and culture forms as the hierarchical form. As it was linked to the organizational leadership of a pyramid style with the top-down management approach, the hierarchical structure was observed from the document review and the focus groups' comments. The process of the strategic planning committee, where decisions were made at the top and filtered down to the departments and colleges, became apparent as a vertical decision and hierarchical organizational structure process.

Henceforward, "not a great deal of attention was given to the products of those working groups" (P17), as one participant from the focus group stated. One participant noted that it was an integral part of both the working groups and the strategic planning committee and that the participant spoke from experience. Furthermore, the structure of the merger process defined the organizational culture with working groups and was established as an inclusive distributed organizational style. The working groups' merger approach emulated the humanistic organizational structure. According to participants, decisions were made in the working groups considering employees' feedback and direction (Owens & Valesky, 2015). As researchers defined, the humanistic approach included "gathering ideas, beliefs, values, behaviors, criterion, and measures which may be both explicit and implicit." (Efeoğlu & Ulum, 2017, p. 1). These concepts were observed from the focus group discussions and provided internal and external responses to challenges and successes in the merger process. Unfortunately, the use of the working groups' products did not pan out as it was expected from staff and faculty, affecting morale and trust in the new HSI's culture.

Other research refers to organizational culture drivers from market aligning and research-driven expectations in higher education (McNay, cited in Lacatus, 2013). In this case study, the researcher corroborated that participants' perceptions towards market gain, research emerging goals, and HSI nationwide recognition after the merger were changes identified as "aggressive" (P9). Participants described it as not holding back and going "fast and furious" (P9) as the new strategy for success after the merger. Cameron and Freeman (as cited in Lacatus, 2013) argued that these approaches with external positioning, mechanical processes, and hierarchical and market-driven cultures effectively promote competing values. The quadrants described by the authors represent organizational culture through vertical or horizontal positioning. In this research, participants presented detailed references to a corporate culture predominant with change driven by political influence, focused on market positioning and student success for the advancement of the community. All these themes and subthemes, which were identified and described in the previous chapter, point to the existing literature (Cameron & Freeman, as cited in Lacatus, 2013, p. 423):

> The model of the hierarchy organizational culture refers to a firmly structured and formalized organization, with precise and reinforced procedures, rules, policies. The strategy meant to secure organization efficiency relies on maintaining stability and smooth running.

> The model of the market organizational culture refers to a market-like organization, which is focused on its environment and sets transactions that provide competitive advantage and market leadership. The governing rules are the market rules, while the main values are competitiveness and productivity.

Figure 6 shows the mechanical processes with external positioning in the hierarchical and market-driven cultures similar to those described by participants in this case study.

Organic Processes

Clan culture DOMINANT ATTRIBUTES: Cohesiveness, Participation, Teamwork, Sense of Family LEADER STYLE: Mentor, Facilitator, Parent-figure BONDING: Loyalty, Tradition, Interpersonal Cohesion STRATEGIC EMPHASES: Toward Developing Human Resources	**Adhocracy culture** DOMINANT ATTRIBUTES: Creativity, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability, Dynamism LEADER STYLE: Entrepreneur, Innovator, Risk Taker BONDING: Entrepreneurship, Flexibility, Risk STRATEGIC EMPHASES: Toward Innovation, Growth, New Resources
Hierarchy culture DOMINANT ATTRIBUTES: Order, Rules and Regulations, Uniformity, Efficiency LEADER STYLE: Coordinator, Organizer, Administrator BONDING: Rules, Policies and Procedures, Clear Expectations STRATEGIC EMPHASES: Toward Stability, Predictability, Smooth Operations	**Market culture** DOMINANT ATTRIBUTES: Competitiveness, Goal Achievement, Environment Exchange LEADER STYLE: Decisive, Production- and Achievement-oriented BONDING: Goal Orientation, Production, Competition STRATEGIC EMPHASES: Toward Competitive Advantage and Market Superiority

Internal Maintenance (left axis) — External Positioning (right axis)

Mechanistic Processes

Figure 6

Organizational culture types – Cameron Matrix (as cited in Lacatus, 2013)

The challenges and success in research question four exemplify factors that varied from opposing viewpoints regarding leadership changes, lack of leadership, distance from campus to campus, and positive post-merger outcomes. The latter creates the new institution by providing added services to students and helping the community.

Nunez et al. (2015) explained that the management and shaping of the organizational identity were done through a demanding proces,s the profileorganizationsculturee. From defining the organization's culture, the institution and its leadership team were responsible for focusing

the ideas of staff and faculty in support of Hispanic and minority students. Nu, et al. (2015)

outlined a method to define organizational culture from the perceptions of faculty and staff. In

this study, the representation of employees' views and collaborations towards creating a new

culture and identifying the challenges and success factors of the new organization were

investigated and served to expand Nuñez et al., (2015) work.

As participants outlined, much of their satisfaction came after facing the leadership

challenges they experienced while preparing for the merger. Staff and faculty felt rewarded from

the expansion of some programs and the reorganization of colleges and departments to serve

better the needs of students in the community (P1 & P19). Some described that the new HSI was

able to:

Serve many more students now than the 'UV' and the 'LV' ever did on their own.

Therefore, the new HSI is more recognized. We have a Medical School aimed at serving

the community and improving health. (P4).

Others defined that significant progress has been made from aligning the "previous values

(legacy institution) that focus on student success, diversity, development of B3 (bilingual,

bicultural & biliterate) initiatives, and community engagement." (P3), One of the biggest

challenges at the merged institution, according to participants, was the population that the

institution serves, a "large percentage of students are first-generation and came from working-

class families," (P3) and needed support at other levels. These students need more help finding

jobs at their new educational level, transitioning from part-time jobs that support their families.

At the same time, they attended college to fit into an organization that serves Hispanics, such as

at the new HSI. Thus far, even when recognized as a challenge, participants identified other

significant success factors. For example, along recognition lines, participants stated that the institution has become "a national leader in graduating Latinx students with affordable and accessible education." (P3).

Consequently, Freeman (2015) studied the gap between Hispanic serving faculty and staff and Hispanic students. The investigation found that HSIs did not have a straightforward training program to prepare leaders, faculty, and staff in serving Hispanic students in the HSIs. As for this study's findings, participants referenced the gap of faculty and leadership serving Hispanic students as disproportionate to the over 90% students from the minority group. As the vision and strategy of the new HSI relied on B3 and Hispanic serving, the expectation from participants was that the institution hired more Hispanics to serve the students they represented. As P16 described:

> Given that this is a Hispanic serving institution, you would expect more Hispanics serving the students. But the percentage of Hispanic faculty is actually quite small. And I suspect that the Hispanics in upper administration are even smaller. It seems to me that in this day and age, that isn't right… and I think that is something that needs to be addressed, and some people may be noticing. (P16).
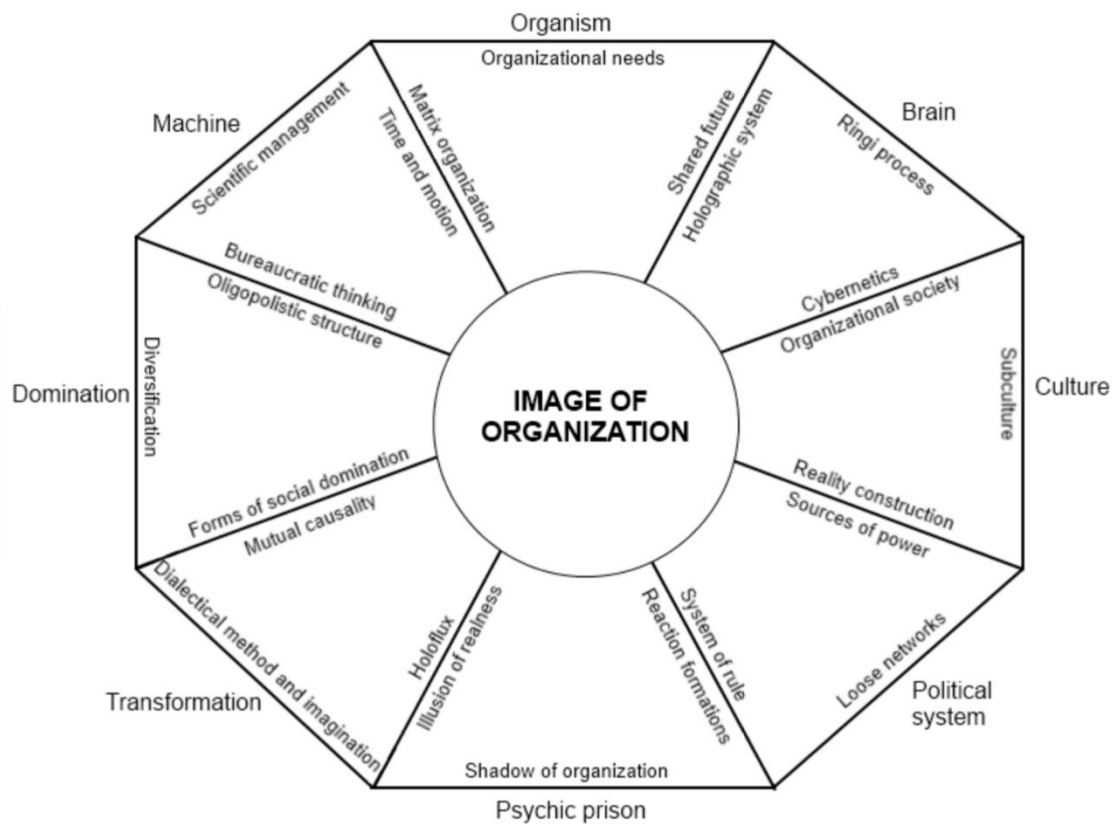
Another success factor identified by participants in the study is that the new HSI has continued its focus after the merger on B3 and community support initiatives to graduate Hispanics, as presented by P3. Furthermore, the challenge also identified by P3 was related to the disparity in the diversity of faculty and leadership serving the Hispanic student body. As a Hispanic serving institution, the participants expected to work in a diverse environment that represented Hispanics performing at the leadership and faculty level (P14).

Barnett et al. (2016) studied the student development programs that prepared higher education and minority-serving institutions. The research provided the tools to become leaders of those institutions. The same study referenced Freeman's (2015) work on higher education that offered an HSI leadership graduate program for students wanting to work at minority-serving institutions. Barnett et al. (2016) studied student success and educational programs, but their findings did not explore the involvement of faculty and staff in those programs. This case study attempted to cover those aspects and the impact of the challenges and success factors at the new HSI. Since participants referred to student access and community service as two essential themes in this study, the findings complement Barnett et al.'s (2006) work. The success factors of the new HSI following B3 initiatives and the availability of new programs from the establishment of the School of Medicine helped improve the community's health through enhanced wellness services (P19).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework from Gareth Morgan (2006) and the use of metaphors aid the researcher in explaining how the new HSI's culture moved across management styles and organizational directions. From the machine type of organization to the culture-driven organization, and later the political system approach, figure 7 shows the images of the organization by Morgan (2006). The elements involved in each metaphor were observed from the participants' discussions in the focus groups.

Organism
Organizational needs

Machine

Brain

Scientific management
Time and motion
Matrix organization

Shared future
Holographic system

Ringi process

Bureaucratic thinking
Oligopolistic structure

Cybernetics
Organizational society

Domination

Diversification

IMAGE OF
ORGANIZATION

Subculture

Culture

Forms of social domination
Mutual causality

Reality construction
Sources of power

Dialectical method and imagination

Holoflux
Illusion of realness

System of rule
Reaction formations

Loose networks

Transformation

Political
system

Shadow of organization

Psychic prison

Figure 7

Important elements of Gareth Morgan's metaphors (Duque Estrada, 2021)

There are three of Morgan's (2006) organizational change metaphors that inform the findings in this research: organization as a machine, organization as culture, and organization as a political system. From the observations and inclinations of participants, the researcher found that perceptions of faculty and staff after the merger were strongly related to change and culture. Individuals first portrayed the new HSI as highly hierarchical, with commanding forces making all decisions at the administrative and executive levels. Participants stated that they felt isolated from the decision-making process where programs were taken or stripped from the 'LV' to transfer it to the 'UV.' (P15). Others added that they did not have "a voice in deciding which

programs should be actually in the College." (P2). Even though these individuals had already been hired and assigned at the leadership level within the college, in some cases, they observed a generalized lack of involvement from the administration, and the decisions were allegedly made without their input or that of the working groups.

Hereafter, the theoretical framework explained the usefulness and the limitation of the organizational image's adds the application in the two merged institutions, which had their employees and their own cultural identity. The machine-driven concept of the organizational theory emerged from Max Weber (as cited in Morgan, 2006):

> Observed the parallels between the mechanization of industry and the proliferation of bureaucratic forms of organization. He noted that the bureaucratic form routinizes the administration process precisely as the machine routinizes production. In his work, we find the first comprehensive definition of bureaucracy as a form of organization that emphasizes precision, speed, clarity, regularity, reliability, and efficiency achieved by creating a fixed division of tasks, hierarchical supervision, and detailed rules and regulations.

Even when the participants from the merger's working groups shared that their contribution lacked collaborations from the administration, the actual implementation after the launch of the new HSI was hierarchical and driven by top-level decision-making. No further involvement from the participants in the working groups was considered in the merger activities. Employees felt unprepared for the many changes they had to face and believed that their participation and direct contribution to the merger initiatives were left in the past. (P20).

Moreover, much of the employees' cultural identity was taken away by continuing certain customs, traditions, and artifacts. The findings informed that employees missed certain activities

such as the "gifting of the stole," an identifier and tradition at the 'UV,' and the garden setting commencement ceremonies at the 'LV.' Or the extensive "charreada" events with the decorated golf carts and parades were consistently celebrated before the merger at the 'LV' in honor of the border towns at the US-Mexico border where the campus is located. These representations of the campus identity and culture were closely related to Morgan's (2006) organizations as cultures concept (p. 128):

> It created and sustained by social processes, images, symbols, and rituals. Rituals are often embedded in the organization's formal structure, as in the case of the president's weekly staff meeting, the real function of which was to affirm that senior members of the organization were at some form of peace with each other.

Participants in the focus groups identified their legacy institution's Presidents as cultural figures who inculcated traditions, rituals, and legends. As P13 mentioned, "we had a President who led this institution with his heart; he loved the students he loved the faculty." Participant P7, equally, recognized the legacy 'LV' President as someone who was loved by the students and the community in general for being their leader for over 25 years as Morgan (2006) referred to, the "stories, legends, and myths about corporate heroes circulated through the organization and did much to communicate and sustain the cultural values" of the organization (p. 129).

Contrary to the organization as culture approach, Morgan's (2006) organization as a political system involves the interests, conflicts, and power of the institution as a whole and as a subpart of its leadership and teams (p. 150):

> By recognizing that organization is intrinsically political, in the sense that ways must be found to create order and direction among people with potentially diverse and conflicting

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interests… The political metaphor can also be used to unravel the politics of day-to-day organizational life. Most people working in an organization readily admit in private that they are surrounded by forms of "wheeling and dealing" through which different people attempt to advance specific interests. However, this kind of activity is rarely discussed in public. The idea that organizations are supposed to be rational enterprises where their members seek common goals discourages discussion of political motives. Politics, in short, is seen as a dirty word.

Throughout the findings of this study, participants identified their need to be politically correct (P20) as a precautionary measurement for keeping their jobs while the merger took place. Others, such as P5, referred to be more emphasized on the administration rather than serving the students based on political motives to keep their jobs. Employees across both institutions had to reapply to their careers through a formal recruitment process involving an online application and an interview at the new HSI. Participants felt that this process was highly political and managed employees who had duplicate roles at both locations (P2). As part of these concerns and political culture approach at the merged institution, participants also shared, "you know, we felt like we weren't being listened to. We felt like things were being imposed on us and that a lot of the things that were being imposed on us reflected steps backward." (P17).

Participants also expressed that the political culture "got in the way of progress" at first "because folks were distracted a little bit with their agendas." (P4). Additionally, participants recognized that the political implications of the merger and the creation of a culture driven by power and influence favored the largest campus, 'UV.' More research was going on at that campus since it had most graduate students who could help the faculty with the investigations (P15). Yet, recognizing the political system and culture with external power sources, such as the
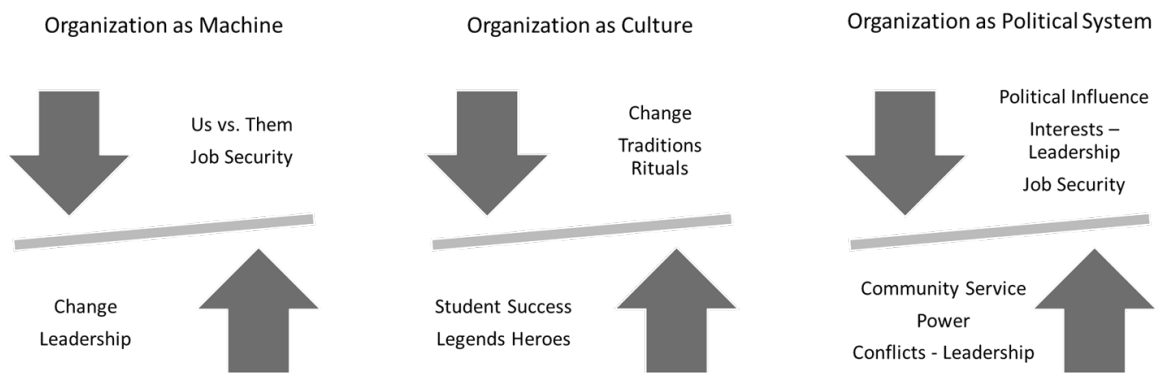
Figure 8

Morgan's metaphors in comparison to themes and subthemes as identified in this research

Summary

This study focused on a Hispanic serving institution, its strategic human capital utilization, and the shift in institutional culture after the merger. Findings of the study documented that the merger methodology and process initially involved staff and faculty participation from the working groups. Working groups' members were responsible for drafting proposals and the

vision for the new HSI. After that, essential changes in culture took place after the merger, which possibly drove the leadership team to move away from the working groups' recommendations. The second and final stage in the merger process involved the strategic planning committee. Participants in this study referred to the order in which the merger strategy was performed as an inverted model since the working groups were launched before having a defined organizational strategy for the new HSI.

Similarly, participants acknowledged that collaboration from the administration was lacking during the transition process. This is one of the most challenging matters identified by participants in the research. The themes and subthemes recognized in the study helped explain the happenings of the merger strategy before and after the implementation. Change, political influence, us vs. them, and job security were branded as themes where a combination of positive and negative sentiments demonstrated interesting times. These sentiments were explained by participants from their involvement and the level of engagement and responsibility that they had in the working groups or hierarchically. The last two themes, community service, and student success were identified as positive outcomes from the merger. As defined by participants, these themes encouraged them to work in unity with their peers from the legacy institutions to help the new HSI succeed and get national recognition.

Implications drawn from the case concluded that a straightforward strategic approach was needed during the merger process. The university's leadership attended team meetings and helped address conflict early in the merger. Furthermore, conflict resolution strategies could have been applied to avoid the struggle that can immobilize the organization's ability to produce positive change and map a creative new organizational culture. Leadership efforts towards conflict resolution could have helped to clear rivalries and differences. Conflict resolution could

have encouraged objective decision-making and avoided unproductive behaviors that created hostility and negative conflict (Morgan, 2006). This type of collaborative conflict resolution with the administration could have helped support the merger methodology and kept harmony and unity among staff and faculty from the legacy campuses. All team members could have maintained power sources, political influence, and authority. Perhaps a clear direction with the mission, vision, and values could have been established essentially to the merger strategy before forming the working groups.

Educational leaders who anticipate a merger between two HSIs, or perhaps even more campuses, should consider examining the existing culture of the organizations involved in the merger. Future leaders should consider and understand the tasks to distribute the merger workload equitably and remain involved in the merger methodology and process. The organizational structure and hierarchies could also be contemplated to design the new structure and share it with all stakeholders to avoid negative feedback or pushback from staff and faculty. As Morgan (2006) explained, organizational metaphors or models could aid leaders in understanding their current organizational structure. The structure could be reshaped into a combination of metaphors or organizational models to encourage staff and faculty participation and collaboration with leadership. Leadership could play a participatory role with open and honest expectations and desired outcomes from the merger process. Henceforward, the participatory leadership concept could also include the use of a clear human capital and human resources merger strategy (Ulrich, 1997) to facilitate engagement from staff and faculty.

Although much remains to be learned about HSIs mergers and the human capital utilization towards creating a new organizational culture, empirical research such as Harman and Meek (2002), Pinheiro et al. (2013), Puusa and Kekäle (2015 & 2013) suggest that mergers in higher

education drive organizational change and are demanding for employees to be involved in the process. The research acknowledged that the expectations from management were high during the merger process, but the time invested by leadership in discussing expectations with employees was limited. Investigations from the human capital's role as the main element in organizational performance (Zlate & Enache, 2015) did not include research on mergers in higher education. Hence this study provided the merger strategy from an HSI in Texas.

Recommendations for Further Study

Mergers in higher education in the United States have not received much attention from scholars and researchers as other investigations have been done in Europe in this field. Further study of mergers, strategies, and methodologies used to bring together two or more campuses could be replicated by studying other participants from the demographic sample and focusing on leadership abilities and agendas during the merger process. A different research methodology could be used to evaluate the results from a quantitative perspective since there are over 1500 employees who are still working for the new HSI who worked for the legacy campuses before the merger.

Another study recommendation could be spread by visiting with the same group of participants to identify the relationships in job role, categories, and performance related to their perceptions of the merger outcomes and institutional success factors.

Finally, another reference for further research could consider other higher education mergers with early investigations from the involvement and collaborations among faculty, staff, and the administration. Mergers that are in the works this year include Mills College with Northeastern

University (Whitford, 2021, September 16) and Pennsylvania State System, which will combine six system universities into two (Whitford, 2021, July 15, para. 2):

> The California University of Pennsylvania, Clarion University, and Edinboro University into a single institution in the western part of the state, and Bloomsburg University, Lock Haven University, and Mansfield University into a single institution in the northeastern part of the state.

Also, the study focused on identifying the merger methodology, process, and effectiveness of the merger activities performed by the HSIs and the leadership team. Participants in the focus groups contributed to thick descriptions and observations, and they assisted in understanding the challenges and success factors of the merger. The effects of the merger were also evaluated as they related to institutional performance and the change in organizational culture after the merger. In closing, the researcher covered in this chapter the interpretations and implications from the findings in the research questions as they relate to the literature review.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. A1: How did you participate in the merger process of the two legacy institutions: UTB
    and UTPA? For example, the working groups that were established to come up with
    common processes and degree plans, or the faculty senate, or staff senate, policy review
    committee, etc.

2. A2: Were you or your direct reports, coworkers, or others in your division/college
    affected (positively or negatively) by the merger process and how? For example,
    changes in your job, department, organization, culture, or economic impact.

3. B1: What collaborative efforts were used during the merger process by staff or faculty
    in working with the administration, please be as specific as possible with your
    examples?

4. B2: How do you think your participation in the collaborative efforts with administration
    affected what happened?

5. C1: In one minute on the chat comments please write down your perceptions about the
    organizational culture after the merger? Once you all have written down their brief
    comments, we will discuss as a group.

6. C2: How did the organizational culture help the institution's performance, or has it
    affected it in any way, and why?

7. C3: In what way have you contributed to the organizational culture of the new institution?

8. C4: Describe an important event, tradition, artifact, or custom from your legacy institution that remained after the merger and-is applied currently.

9. C5: Now, describe an important event, tradition, artifact, or a custom from your legacy institution that is no longer in place that you would consider important to bring back for the betterment of the organizational culture.

10. C6: Do you believe that the new organization merged along with the culture of the two legacy institutions, and in what way?

11. D1: Please take a minute to describe in writing on the chat a couple of success factors and a couple of challenges that identify the new Hispanic-Serving institution. Once you all have written down your brief comments, we will discuss as a group.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

SIMPLIFIED CONSENT FORM

The University of Texas
Rio Grande Valley

A Hispanic-Serving Institution its Strategic Human Capital Utilization and the Shift in Institutional Culture after the Merger"

This research study is being conducted by Trini Yunes, Doctoral Student, Ed. D. in Educational Leadership, at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

The purpose of this study is to present the findings of a case study of the merger of two Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) in Texas and how leadership used both legacy cultures to create a new organizational culture. The main focus of this study is to compare the relationships, as viewed by staff and faculty, between institutional performance and organizational culture. It will also determine how human capital (HC) utilization is related to institutional performance, and it will establish the human capital factors used towards creating a new institutional culture after the merger. A qualitative method research design is used to analyze the variables and findings. The study seeks to present the findings to consider future opportunities for research and help other HSI embark on the merger process and consolidating and institutionalizing one culture.

Participation in the focus group interview should take about 45-60 minutes to complete.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. If there are any questions or parts of this study which you are uncomfortable completing, feel free to terminate your participation at any time without question or comment.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate. If you are not 18 or older, please do not participate. Also, you must have been employed at UTRGV since 2015 and have transitioned from one of our legacy institutions: UT Brownsville and UT Pan American.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protection (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not adequately met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) 665-3598 or irb@utrgv.edu.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

The University of Texas
RioGrandeValley™

Institutional Review Board

September 13, 2021

Trini Yunes, Principal Investigator
Department: College of Education and P-16 Integration
Via Electronic Routing System

Dear Principal Investigator:

RE: EXEMPT DETRMINATION FOR IRB IRB 21-0347, *"A Hispanic-Serving Institution its Strategic Human Capital Utilization and the Shift in Institutional Culture after the Merger"*

The study in reference has been determined 'Exempt' under the Basic HHS Policy for Protection of Human Research Subjects, 45 CFR 46.104(d). The determination is effective as of the date of this letter within the exempt category of:

> *"(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) and*
>
> *(i)   The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;*
> *(ii)   Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; "*

Research that is determined to be 'Exempt' under the Basic HHS Policy for Protection of Human Research Subjects is not exempt from ensuring protection of human subjects. The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for the following through the conduct of the research study:

1. Assuring that all investigators and co-principal investigators are trained in the ethical principles, relevant federal regulations, and institutional policies governing human subjects' research.
2. Disclosing to the subjects that the activities involve research, and that participation is voluntary during the informed consent process.
3. Providing subjects with pertinent information (e.g., risks and benefits, contact information for investigators, and IRB/ORC) and ensuring that human subjects will voluntarily consent to participate in the research when appropriate (e.g., surveys, interviews).
4. Assuring the subjects will be selected equitably, so that the risks and benefits of the research are justly distributed.
5. Assuring that the privacy of subjects and confidentiality of the research data will be maintained appropriately to ensure minimal risk to subjects.

Exempt research is subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) Website:
www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.html

Unanticipated Problems: Any unanticipated problems or complaints must be reported to the IRB promptly. Further information concerning unanticipated problems can be found in the IRB procedures manual.

Continuing Review: research deemed 'Exempt' is not subject to annual review by the IRB.

Modifications: Any change to your protocol requires a Modification Request (Amendment) for review and approval prior to implementation. The IRB may review the 'Exempt' status at that time and request an application for approval as non-Exempt research.

Closure: Please notify the IRB when your study is complete through submission of a final report. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

If you have any questions, please contact the Human Subjects Protection Program/IRB by phone at (956) 665-3598 or via email at irb@utrgv.edu.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
for the Protection of Human Subjects
in Research
orc/cr

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Trini Yunes received her Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in December 2021. Additional degrees she holds include a Master of Human Resources Management from the Universidad Autonoma de Tamaulipas in 1998, and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Texas Pan American in 1994. Trini works as the Director of Human Resources and Project Manager for the Human Capital Management System at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. She has over 25 years of experience in human resources, project management, strategic planning, training and development, recruitment, compensation, HRIS, immigration, facilities management, risk management, and environmental, health, and safety. Trini used her experience and skills to lead the organizational culture changes and human capital efforts throughout multiple mergers and acquisitions. She can be reached at trini.yunes@hotmail.com