Campuses across the country are being asked to respond to a host of challenges: technology, diverse and changing populations, competition, financial stress, and globalization to name a few. Yet, in most instances, campus decision-making mechanisms are not prepared to handle these increasingly complex issues. In addition, traditional conceptions of governance have come under scrutiny for being slow, inefficient, and unresponsive to the environment.\(^1\) A national study in the 1990s found that no groups on campus believed that decision-making processes were working effectively and noted that new processes needed to be put in place (Dimond, 1991). One well publicized study by Benjamin and Carroll (1996) of the Rand Corporation suggested that campus governance was wholly ineffective and inefficient because of its structure and processes. Further, Benjamin and Carroll noted that the long discussion about whether higher education academic governance should be modified is largely moot; the question is how it will be modified to adapt to current challenges.

Benjamin and Carroll claimed that changes are not minor in scope; the report said that campuses need to completely alter their structures and processes. The Rand report repeated Keller’s (1983) call for total restructuring and redesign of campus governance into Joint Big Decision Committees (JBDCs), claiming that governance processes were incapable of making strategic decisions. These are not lone voices. Policy-makers, trustees, and academic administrators have all expressed deep
concern with governance structures and processes (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 1996). Although there are calls for radical change, there is no agreement on the direction such change should take. Some call for the reinstallation of bureaucracy (Benjamin & Carroll, 1996) while others call for campus governance to be more like corporate entities (Keller, 1983), and a small minority call for greater decentralization with feminist and participatory models (Astin & Leland, 1991; Kellogg Foundation, 2000). The proposals for change vary from universal models for each campus, such as the creation of the JBDC, to individualized approaches by proponents of business process reengineering who want to dismantle systems completely and allow individual campuses to build them based on their campus needs and culture. The one common denominator of proposals to change governance is that the proponents believe that radical change is necessary and desirable for creating a more functional and successful process of campus governance. An example of radical change might be a transition from a participatory, decentralized approach to a centralized, authoritative approach to governance.

Even though there has been widespread concern about governance, there has been minimal scholarship on the topic. Notable exceptions include studies by Birnbaum (1988) and by Schuster, Smith, Corak, and Yamada (1994). These studies provided evidence that campus governance is most effective if it is responsive and if it reflects campus culture, debunking the utility of universal-type governance for all campuses such as that provided by JBDCs. Yet the calls for radical change did not go away; instead, individualized models such as business process reengineering emerged (Carr, 1995). As the calls for radical change in governance continue, we need information on the effects of changing a governance system, especially on the radical change processes that are commonly proposed. One of the major questions that emerge from these many calls to action is what would be the consequences of engaging in such a radical change process as is proposed by some scholars and critics of higher education. There is virtually no literature to help a campus understand whether it should engage in such a process and what some of the possible consequences might be for doing so.

The purpose of this study is to provide evidence about the consequences of engaging in radical alteration of a campus’s governance system. This article is organized as follows: First, I review four frameworks related to the radical change process and the scant literature on consequences of radical change. Second, I describe the combined case study and grounded theory methodology. Third, I present the results of the grounded theory case study, organized around two theoretical
propositions, and conclude with the implications of these propositions for policymakers and institutional leaders involved in governance.

Radical Change in Governance

In this section, I review four theories of radical change and the research on consequences of radical change to provide context for the study. In grounded theory, the researcher becomes familiar with the literature on a phenomenon in order to assist in interpretation of the data and to enhance validity or trustworthiness of the findings. In a meta-analysis of the change literature across the multidisciplinary field, I previously noted (Kezar, 2001) that the literature has been categorized into a taxonomy of six areas: evolutionary, teleological (scientific management), life cycle, dialectical/political, social cognition (includes institutional theory), and cultural. Of these six main theories, four specifically address or describe radical change processes. I first review theories of change (teleological and political) that suggest radical change is likely to occur, even if only rarely, and describe some the characteristics of that process. I also examine two sets of theories (culture and institutionalism) that provide evidence for why radical change within organizations is unlikely to occur and to be successful. I review these theories because they all describe three important conditions critical to this study: consequences, process of change, and precipitating conditions. Consequences are the focus of this article, and process and precipitating conditions have a direct effect and explain the consequences. Lastly, I describe the few studies related to consequences or outcomes of radical change processes within organizations. Most of the literature on consequences is hypothetical rather than empirical.

First, it is important to define radical change. Radical change involves busting loose from an existing orientation and the entire transformation of organizing principles and structures (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Nadler (1998) noted that radical change is complex and wide-ranging, requiring “dramatic changes in strategy and abrupt departures from traditional work, structures, job requirements, and cultures, which in turn necessitate a complete overhaul of the way things are organized” (p. 51). Central within most definitions is that radical change cuts across all dimensions of how we conceptualize organizations—structures, people, strategy, and culture. Nadler (1998) suggested that radical change is characterized by one-time or discontinuous alterations (rather than continuous change or improvement) and is often initiated by external forces. Radical change can be both evolutionary and revolutionary. Evolutionary radical change occurs slowly while revolutionary happens swiftly.
and affects all parts of the organization simultaneously. Greenwood and Hinings (1996) hypothesize that loosely coupled organizations are more likely to be able to adopt radical change, but that it will be evolutionary in process. Since higher education organizations are loosely coupled, they would appear to be organizations with the potential for radical, yet evolutionary change.

Next, it is important to define consequences. A consequence refers to both the long-term and short-term results from an action. In the literature, results vary from altered views, quality work, to new values, depending on the theory. In the various theories of radical change, consequences are directly affected by the precipitating conditions and process. In addition, consequences assume a cause and effect relationship between an activity and outcomes, although this relationship can be complex and nonlinear. For example, there can be indirect consequences that result from the interaction of activities. Another characteristic that is often examined is whether a consequence was intended or unintended. When people initiate an activity they may aim for certain results and measure or examine those outcomes, but other outcomes may emerge as well. In research, consequences tend to be narrowly conceived, focusing mostly on direct and intentional outcomes but not on indirect or unintentional ones. In this study, I examined both intended and unintended consequences and mostly direct outcomes; however, indirect outcomes were explored if they emerged.

Radical Change Theories: Teleological and Political

There are two main theoretical perspectives that suggest radical change occurs within organizations: teleological/business process reengineering and political theories. I begin by discussing teleological models, because this set of theories most strongly advocates that radical change is common within organizations. Teleological models also indicate potential benefits/consequences of engaging in radical change.

Teleological theories encompass a broad set of concepts and models including business process reengineering, strategic choice, and total quality management. Within teleological theories, there are several models of radical change such as restructuring, paradigm shifting (both prominent on the 1980s), and business process reengineering; each of these models advocates for radical change as the way to alter underlying structures and processes that shape people’s attitudes and concomitant behavior (Carnall, 1995; Carr, Hard, & Trahant, 1996). In this article, I focus on the most recent version of radical change within teleological models, business process reengineering (BPR; Brill & Worth, 1997;
Carnall, 1995). I focus on this concept because it is currently the most widely used approach among leaders and policymakers. It is also the approach most often advocated for in the literature over the last decade. Within business process reengineering, radical change is seen as a positive and necessary approach that challenges the status quo. Hammer and Champy provided the following definition of BPR: It is “the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical contemporary measures of performance such as cost, quality, service and speed” (Birnbaum, 2000, p. 32). New roles, jobs, departments, and divisions are necessary for organizations to be effective, and technology can be used to dismantle and obliterate well embedded processes. Change occurs because leaders, change agents, and others see the necessity of change. The process for change is rational and linear, using systems thinking (problems are not seen in isolation but in relation to others), rewarding experimentation, seeing organizational boundaries as permeable, using on-going assessment, and fostering knowledge sharing (Carnall, 1995; Carr, Hard, & Trahant, 1996; Tierney, 1999).

Advocates of BPR acknowledge that the process may be difficult but focus on the many positive outcomes/consequences that result from radical change. BPR suggests that efficiency and effectiveness are the major outcomes of a radical change process (Burke & Peppard, 1995). Within the governance literature, effectiveness has been defined as the value of achieving a quality decision and is based on competence. It results in good organization (Birnbaum, 1988). Efficiency is the value, “all the more compelling under conditions of financial constraint, of obtaining greater outputs (results) with fewer inputs (resources) and doing so with dispatch, avoiding the delays and quagmire of endless committees and meetings that are often viewed as the curse of traditional academic governance” (Schuster et al., 1994, p. 195). Yet, other outcomes or “outputs” of radical change, such as improved quality, customer focus, and cost reduction, are also commonly mentioned. But these have less resonance for the governance process in higher education. Most of the advocates of radical change to governance in the past two decades were or are adherents of BPR or of its close relation, restructuring.

In contrast to teleological models such as BPR that see radical change as commonplace and necessary for all organizations to be successful, political models conceptualize radical change as mostly rare. Researchers using political models view organizations as passing through long periods of evolutionary change and short periods of second-order or revolutionary change, when there is an impasse between two perspectives or ideologies (Baldridge, 1971, 1983; Morgan, 1986). The
organization’s polar opposite belief systems eventually clash, resulting in radical change. Conflict is seen as an inherent attribute of human interaction (Baldrige, 1971). The political model could be used to conceptualize and understand the radical change in governance documented in the 1960s. During this period, massive changes in governance occurred, with the addition of faculty senates, collective bargaining, and students serving on governing boards (Lucas, 1994; Mortimer & McConnell, 1979). In no other time in history has the overall governance of colleges and universities in this country gone through such a systemic change process related to governance. There were two opposing views of faculty and student participation in governance—one group believed more participation was needed while another opposed this alteration of traditional authority (Lucas, 1994). These opposing views came into conflict and created revolutionary change in the short run (faculty and students became much more systematically involved in governance through faculty senates and student governments), and then the system moved back into evolutionary (but nonradical) change.

Within political models, there are three main consequences of radical change: a new ideology develops, a particular group’s interests are better served, and power relationships change (Morgan, 1986). An ideology is the belief system that supports institutional operations. Because ideology, the assumptions that guide behavior, is so foundational, radical change is usually required to alter this aspect of the organization. The second consequence—a particular group’s interests being better served—may or may not be a positive outcome depending on of which interest group you are a member. Another major consequence noted within political theories is a shift in power relationships, which is one of the most commonly noted consequences.

Theories Refuting Radical Change: Cultural Models and Institutionalism

Two theories of change suggest that radical change is both unlikely and often problematic for organizations: cultural models and institutionalism. These perspectives helped provide other perspectives on the radical change process and a different set of potential consequences. These two models provide compelling evidence for the difficulty of creating radical change as well as reveal some of the potential problems. Cultural models conceptualize radical change as rare and mostly dysfunctional. Change within an organization entails alteration of values, beliefs, habits, myths, and rituals, which are rarely abandoned wholesale (Schein, 1985). History and traditions bind an institution, and they are difficult to alter; radical change will only occur if traditions or values are
no longer serving individuals. Within cultural theories, change within organizations and to major processes such as governance is slow and long-term, and it can be equated to that of social movements (Morgan, 1986). One reason that radical change may occur is that the values of the organization become unaligned with institutional structures and processes. The consequences of cultural change are altered values and symbols that once again are aligned with structures and processes. Yet, if radical change was not needed, this model predicts many negative outcomes, such as lowered morale, lack of commitment, and so on. Typically, this change process to align values is slow and adaptive rather than radical.

Institutionalism and new institutionalism also suggest that radical change is rare, since institutions are bound by templates (interpretive schema, underlying values and assumptions) for organizing that are implicitly understood, deeply ingrained, and translated to new employees (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Scott, 1995; Scott, 1987). Templates of institutional behavior create strong resistance to change. Radical change can occur rarely through the process of re-institutionalization; it is a result of the organization becoming out of alignment with its mission or the environment. Re-institutionalization occurs by establishing new normative templates; this process has been hypothesized to be a long-term process varying in length of time based on several factors—for example, degree of normative embeddedness, degree of loose or tight coupling, permeability of organization, institutional commitment, competitive or reform environment, degree of enabling pattern, and capacity for action (Greenwood & Hinings, 2000). Since higher education institutions are loosely coupled, and since they have normative embeddedness, high institutional commitment, and general lack of environmental vulnerability, radical change is very unlikely. Institutionalism also reinforces that radical change is usually not healthy for organizations: It can result in many negative consequences, since institutions, by their very nature, are supposed to fulfill long-term sustained missions.

I kept these opposing models in mind as I conducted the study and interpreted the findings. The theories related to radical change are summarized below in Table 1.

**Empirical Research on Consequences of Radical Change**

Over the past two decades, studies of the consequences of changes in governance have examined the effect of becoming more corporatized (Currie & Newson, 1998; Slaughter, 1998). For example, these studies
demonstrated how corporate approaches to decision-making have lowered morale, created divisiveness, and led to the decline of academic programs that are not profitable, among many other mostly negative consequences (Currie & Newson, 1998; Slaughter, 1998). These studies help us to understand the problems of corporate models of governance. This study is similar in approach, but it examines the consequences of the radical change process that has been advocated over the past several decades rather than examining the consequences of a particular governance model, since a radical change process can be used with many different models of governance. Because radical change has traditionally been conceived as atypical, it has received scant attention within the literature on change. When studies of radical change have been conducted, the conditions that make this type of change possible and their antecedents (Burke & Peppard, 1995; Carr, 1995; Nadler, 1998) or the process of change (Braganza, 2001; Burke & Peppard, 1995; Chaffee, 1984; Knight & Willmott, 2000; Nadler, 1998) have been the focus, not the consequences or outcomes of radical change. In fact, there are virtually no empirical studies of the consequences of radical change processes within organizations. I reviewed proposed consequences of BPR and political models of change in the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory of radical change</th>
<th>Precipitating conditions</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teleological/Business Process Re-engineering</td>
<td>Necessary for adapting to external challenges</td>
<td>Leaders organize, linear and rational, and on-going and constant</td>
<td>Efficiency, effectiveness, and quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political model</td>
<td>Differing interests, opposing views, and power differences</td>
<td>Conflict, non-linear and irrational, and rarely happens</td>
<td>New ideology, reconciliation of views or interests, change in power; and particular groups interests are better served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Models</td>
<td>Values are significantly out of alignment with structures and processes</td>
<td>Re-examination of values and traditions; Unlikely and dysfunctional in most cases</td>
<td>Values and symbols once again are aligned with structures and processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalism</td>
<td>Templates for organizing are out of alignment with mission or environment</td>
<td>Re-institutionalization through new normative structures; rare</td>
<td>New interpretive schema, underlying values, and assumptions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
previous section of this article, but even these consequences were narrowly conceived, focusing mostly on direct and intentional outcomes and not on indirect or unintentional ones. This dearth of information reinforces the need for the study presented in this article.

Carr and Johansson (1995), advocates of BPR, conducted one of the first surveys to examine the consequences of BPR, only to find that most organizations had failed to implement the process. Of those that had implemented the process, over half were dissatisfied with the outcomes. Lastly, the structures and processes of the organization were generally no better off (many survey respondents did not answer the question about impacts, limiting their ability to understand outcomes). For the majority of organizations, effectiveness, quality, and efficiency did not emerge. However, since the survey was not open-ended, Carr and Johansson have no idea what other consequences emerged.

Knight and Willmott (2000) attempted to understand why BPR has failed in so many cases. They suggest that the proposed outcomes of BPR—overhaul of institutional operations that increases quality, effectiveness, and efficiency—will never be reached and that mostly negative outcomes will ensue. Instead, they demonstrate that organizational habits are too difficult to forget—BPR tries to force amnesia, which they see as impossible and counter to human nature. Rather than a complete departure from the past, some form of continuity will almost always happen. The artificial process of forcing people to forget their daily ways of doing things only disrupts processes rather than enhances them. As an alternative to BPR, Knight and Willmott advocate slow-paced transformation processes focused on learning.

A few studies that specifically examined radical change in governance demonstrated that it resulted in shifts in power relationships (Baldridge, 1971, 1983). Birnbaum (1991) noted that one of the major functions of faculty senates is to reinforce existing authority relationships between faculty and administration. These studies support the political change model; yet, with so few studies conducted, conclusions can only be tentative. Part of the problem has been that radical change is usually only conceptualized within one theory, which is why I examined several theories and used a broader perspective in reviewing the data.

In summary, two models are helpful for conceptualizing the purpose, antecedents, process, possibility, and outcomes of radical change: political models and teleological/business process reengineering. These models outline a limited set of consequences of radical change globally—either effectiveness or efficiency (BPR) and a new ideology and changed power relationships (political model). The cultural models and institutionalism theories were outlined in order to provide an alternative
set of consequences to the radical change process—confusion, dysfunctional operations, and disruption of daily work life. The minimal empirical evidence on consequences suggests that the beneficial intended consequences are not achieved. However, no study has examined unintended consequences, which was a focus of the current study.

**Methodology**

This study utilized a combined case study and grounded theory approach. These methodologies were chosen and combined and were appropriate to this study for several reasons: (a) there is minimal research on the topic; (b) this project was studying a process and people’s reaction to it; (c) this study focuses on elements such as context, strategies, and consequences; and, (d) the context-based nature of the process. Because there is virtually no research on radically altering governance systems, a grounded theory approach allowed the researcher to study a phenomenon without a set framework and instead to let the issues emerge. Second, both case study and grounded theory are applied to the study of a phenomenon when it is important for the researcher to study people’s interactions, actions, and engagement in a process (Creswell, 1998). Third, certain aspects of processes are best studied through case study and grounded theory—and consequences of a phenomenon, the focus of this study, are a particular focus in both these methodologies (Creswell, 1998). Fourth, case study assumes that the context is important for understanding a phenomenon. Since context has already been established as being related to the functioning of governance (Birnbaum, 1988; Lee, 1991; Schuster et al., 1994), this approach was aligned with and builds on the previous research on governance. The main reason for combining the methodologies was that grounded theory allowed for a more detailed analysis of the data and an inductive approach, while the case study approach allowed for a focus on context and a bounded system. As noted earlier, the two main research questions guiding the study were: What are the consequences of radical change process to a governance system? What lessons can be learned for other campuses considering a radical change in their approach to governance?

**Site Selection**

My site selection criteria were as follows: I selected the site from campuses that (a) had radically altered their governance process which would entail modification of their whole system; (b) were well into the process so that I could examine consequences; and (c) would be willing
to allow me to talk to participants throughout the campus, not limited to individuals identified by institutional agents. The criterion related to time into the process was based on my review of the change literature and on previous studies I have conducted on change (Kezar, 2001; Kezar & Eckel, 2002a, 2002b). The literature and studies suggest that 5 years is a minimum amount of time for beginning to see transformational or radical changes and that 5 to 7 years is the most appropriate period to examine consequences. The third criterion was based on previous research by authors such as Bensimon and Neumann (1993) that considers how an authentic interpretation of campus life is difficult to obtain without input from multiple voices. An in-depth case study at a single campus was conducted since context was important and because of the need for hearing from multiple constituents and for understanding a process that took place over a long period of time. The site selected was a liberal arts women’s college outside an urban area. The campus has approximately 3,500 students and caters both to adult and traditional aged students. The campus had initiated the change in governance 7 years prior to my visit (the new system has been in place for 5 years). This was a post-hoc examination of the change. This case was conceptually representative in that it engaged in a radical change process focused on alteration of structures and processes as advocated in BPR. The move toward a more inclusive governance approach is one of the two major trends in radical alteration of governance; campuses are moving toward either greater decentralization or greater centralization.

**Data Collection**

Two key campus informants were identified to assist with selection of key documents, ideas for observation, and suggestions for interviewees. Prior to the campus visits, documents such as planning documents for the change in governance, evaluation of the governance system, faculty senate reports, institutional planning documents, task force and committee reports, and accreditation reports were reviewed. In addition, I observed academic governance processes (senate meetings, committees, task forces) in action for 1 year and reviewed key documents related to academic governance identified through interviews.

The main source of data was 25 interviews. The first 10 interviewees were identified through two key informants. The following 10 were identified through the first interviews and were based on my analysis of the initial interviews. Through the first 10 interviews, I realized that many individuals had experienced negative consequences with the radical change process, and they suggested other individuals who could
highlight different aspects of these consequences. In grounded theory methodology, it is typical for the researcher to conduct a series of interviews and then return to the site for more interviews after an initial review of the data. I moved to more theoretical sampling techniques where individuals were chosen because they might help understand an emerging concept. The last five interviewees were randomly selected from a list of faculty, administrators, and staff in order to see if there were voices not represented through the purposefully identified interviewees. I obtained a diversity of voices with a mix of gender, disciplinary backgrounds, administrative posts, and race/ethnicity (although the campus is mostly White faculty and staff). I interviewed senior (or long-time) faculty and administrators first because most were intimately involved with the transition process and because many had the most time to reflect on the consequences. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Following grounded theory methodology, the interview protocol was loosely structured with only a few direct questions. Instead, I attempted to hear their reflections on the process of radical change of a governance system. I went into the study with as few preconceived notions as possible, and I tried to reflect on my own preconceptions using a journal (Please see Appendix A for a more detailed description of this process).

Data Analysis

I used the constant comparative method as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and advocated within grounded theory (Creswell, 1998). This approach allowed me to read the transcripts, documents, and field note observations for detailed themes. A list of 40 initial themes was developed during open coding, and I examined the properties of these codes. These codes related to aspects beyond the consequences of radical change, as the study also examined how the process occurred, the role of leadership, and other themes that are beyond the scope of this article. The transcripts and data tables were reviewed nine times to ensure that themes or ideas had not been missed. I then coded the data and collapsed related themes during axial coding in order to arrive at a final list of 18 themes. Data tables were developed, and quotations and field notes that related to themes were moved into the relevant theme tables, with a designation indicating where the quote was from in the original interviews. Sixteen of these themes remained by the end of selective coding as the codes were integrated into a story line. The results of the analysis were several theoretical propositions, two of which are relevant for this article and that will be described in the results section. Using case study
analysis, I conducted a detailed analysis of the campus context based on all three sources of data. I focused more on analytic techniques from grounded theory because they are more detailed. The results presented are based on a combination of field notes and interview data. The propositions (and their components) and quotations chosen to represent theoretical propositions reflected patterns in the field notes as well.

Trustworthiness and Limitations

In grounded theory, the main ways for obtaining verification of the study results are embedded in the data analysis process: Close attention to following the analysis process ensures trustworthiness. After writing the theoretical propositions, literature is used as a supplemental verification; I followed this process in this study as well. In order to keep any biases in check, I conducted a reflection before the study and kept a journal (see Appendix A). I watched for these biases as I conducted interviews and as I interpreted the data. Within case study methodology, triangulation of different sources of data is used to verify results. I supplemented interviews with document analysis, observation, and discussions with key informants. In addition, careful site selection is also critical in case study research. I was able to find a campus that met all my criteria for case selection.

Two limitations to this study should be noted. The campus context has some elements that make it unique and that could affect the development of theoretical propositions related to consequences of a radical change process. For example, the religious tradition of the campus and institutional type as a women’s college were distinctive. Although the case has some unique qualities, the principles that emerge did not seem related to the specific context, and they may therefore be transferable to other settings. Second, it is hard to decipher the effects of the type of change (the consensus model) from the effects of the radical change process itself. In other words, do some of the consequences result from the consensus change model, not the radical change process? I examined both model and process in the analysis, and I present both in the results in an attempt to illustrate this dynamism. This also allows the reader to determine or interpret the effects of the model on the consequences and outcomes.

Results

Below I describe the campus history and culture in order to place the findings about radical changes in a governance system within context. I describe the old governance system and the motivations for undergoing
radical change to a new governance system. The next part of this section explores the consequences of radically altering a governance system. It is organized around two theoretical propositions: (a) the radical change process is likely to have more negative consequences than the positive consequences of the new system put into place; (b) no governance system or model is ideal; each has problems that need to be examined and altered on an ongoing basis. Grounded theory research typically results in one of two data representations: a model to describe a phenomenon or a set of theoretical propositions, depending on the nature of the data. The data fit better into a set of theoretical propositions since consequences—not antecedents, strategies, and other items typically used to develop a model—were the focus of the study. Theoretical propositions are tentative understandings about phenomena. They are described based on existing data and should be tested over time though more empirical evidence and study. The themes that are related to and provide evidence for these propositions are summarized in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Functionality of old governance as examined through “outcomes”</td>
<td>Functionality of new governance as examined through “outcomes”</td>
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<td><strong>1) Cons:</strong> a) inefficient with heavy faculty workload; b) concentration of power among administration; and, c) lack of inclusiveness.</td>
<td><strong>1) Cons:</strong> a) lack of direction and leadership; b) lack of ownership and participation; c) marginalizing of certain voices; d) lack of accountability; and, e) unresponsiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2) Implementation problems</strong></td>
<td><strong>2) Pros:</strong> a) bureaucratic clarity in formal procedures; b) participation based on an accountability and incentive system; and, c) leadership/direction</td>
<td><strong>2) Pros:</strong> a) some meaningful and effective forums have been created; b) ownership; c) more effective decision-making; d) input being valued; and, e) alignment of institutional values related to collegiality and collaboration into governance</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3) Lack of participation while people learn to trust the new system</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3) Remaining Problems from old system:</strong> a) inefficiency and overburdening faculty workload; b) ineffectiveness; and, c) concentration of power</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>4) Confusion over the nature of the new system</strong></td>
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Table 2
Summary of Themes from the Grounded Theory Analysis

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Campus Context

The campus is a religiously based, women’s liberal arts college in an urban area. It was founded in the late 1800s. It now offers master’s degrees and serves both traditional aged as well as a growing number of adult returning students. In addition to traditional liberal arts programs, the school now offers criminology, radiological sciences, and teaching certification to attract local professionals. The campus culture is very collegial, consensus and community oriented. Everyone knows each other on campus, and most have been there for many years; people eat meals together and interact on a regular basis. There is a strong commitment to the work of the college, whether it is teaching or service. A faculty member summarized the collegial culture in this fashion: “we have incredible respect for each other, love for community, and believe in compromise.” The school has been lead by nuns (administrators) for years, but that has changed in the last decade or so.

About 30 years ago, a president came into office that had a very authoritative and top-down approach to leadership. Although this was not unusual for this time, social contexts were changing and people’s notions about leadership were being reconceptualized. The faculty and administration were quite separate in function and governance; faculty had no involvement or knowledge about the budget or planning process. This had contributed to a lack of trust between the two groups. After 20 years in office, the president was asked to leave by the Board of Trustees. Their request was based on faculty raising concerns as well as on the experience of several administrators who had worked with the president. A 5-year period of turnover began as various administrators left and several new hires stayed for short period.

The old governance system consisted of three major committees (curriculum, general education, and academic standards), which were all standing committees elected by the faculty. For faculty matters, there was a senate, which had a rank, tenure, and salary committee; a grievance committee; and a council for faculty research and development. Official documents discuss the problem with the old system as duplication and longevity. Various committees did identical work, and the same faculty served for many years on the same committee, limiting participation. One faculty member commented on the problem of longevity: “It seemed, in the past, you know when you were elected to a committee, you got reelected and it was like you accepted a position for life!” Although not in formal documents, people discussed the problem of power being concentrated in the academic deans and provost, limiting faculty power.
Around the same time as the president left, a subcommittee of the senate—the committee on committees (with 10 volunteers)—was commissioned to rethink the governance system. The planning group was charged to completely alter governance, to start over. They did not have to incorporate any existing systems, processes, relationships, or structures. After a year of deliberation, the committee developed a set of recommendations that became known as the Canary papers, which “were ambiguous about details with clarity about principles and has proven advantageous to making on-going adjustments.” What was proposed was a faculty senate of the whole, three major committees (curriculum, faculty issues, and graduate education) that filtered issues to the coordinating committee that planned the faculty senate meetings. Committees would form task forces for non-ongoing work. The main principles were collective or distributed leadership, ownership, consensus, coordination, and meaningful dialogue. Previously, individual leadership and coordination were not values, consensus was not a goal, and dialogue was discouraged. In order to move to this system with a completely different structure and a new underlying set of values, leaders, and strategy to governance, they decided they would have to shut down the old system and begin from scratch. The set of changes were too massive to alter existing structures, reposition some people, modify job descriptions, or even train people on a new set of values. The process followed what Greenwood and Hinings (1996) described as an entire transformation from an existing orientation and the entire transformation of organizing principles and structures. It also reflected what Nadler (1998) noted—that change is wide-ranging, requiring abrupt departures from traditional work, structures, job requirements, and cultures.7

The plans were presented to the full faculty, and focus groups were held to obtain input. The final document was presented for vote and was passed by a very small margin. Many people were nervous about whether the new system would work or whether it was worth overhauling the system so radically. A transition team was put into place to oversee the move from the old system to the new. It was acknowledged that adjustments would need to be made along the way; several of such adjustments have happened over the years, including the revision of the criteria for serving on committees and the development of the graduate education committee. As the evaluation document notes: “faculty governance has shifted from what might have become a kingdom of committees to what is becoming a community of committees.”

The implementation of the new approach to governance was handled very well. The Canary papers served as a vision for implementation. The transition team communicated actively with all the groups charged
with creating the new structures and attempted to ensure that the new values were understood and followed. Venues for communication, such as listservs and regular meetings, were developed. In addition to active and widespread communication, the transition team held regular planning meetings to check in about problems and to troubleshoot. They also developed a narrative about why the change was needed to help people buy in to the new model, a strategy typically forgotten in change processes. They were thoughtful in their approach and planning. Yet, as you will see in the results below, careful execution and implementation cannot ensure that radical change will be smooth or that negative consequences will not occur. Planning and careful implementation may never account for the psychic disequilibrium that occurs because old structures, processes, people, and values are not in place. Radical change requires a great deal of individual and organizational learning and adjustment, more than many people might be able to handle. Lastly, it demands what might be thought of as “prophesizing” future problems. Few, if any, people can foresee the types of issues that will emerge within a radical change process. Additionally, many issues that surface are particular to specific features or aspects within the institutional contexts.

Theoretical Proposition 1: The radical change process is likely to have more negative consequences than the positive features of the new system put into place and should be engaged cautiously, if at all. (This hypothesis is tied to Theoretical Proposition 2, in which outcomes of the new system are described.)

It still seems so new, there’s so much to do, there’s so few people doing it, no one knows what the criteria are for approving anything. I don’t know what the process is right now, how well it’s working. We’re all paddling as fast as we can to keep our heads above water, still. And I think that’s okay for a while, but it has been years now.

In the quotation above, one faculty member summarized some of the great costs of overhauling an institution’s governance system: It is difficult to ensure that the system is working; many people resist involvement until they see if it works; and procedures are changed, resulting in people not knowing how to get decisions or processes approved. The data suggest that there are many negative consequences to a radical change process. Those negative consequences include years where decisions cannot be made, implementation problems, lack of participation while people learn to trust the new system, and confusion over the nature of the new system. These themes will be reviewed in more detail next.
The consequences of a radical change process provide a cautionary tale for others considering this approach.

1) Years Where Decisions Cannot Be Made: “So you’re spending all this time on process and nothing is happening.”

One of the major dilemmas of re-creating a governance system is that it is almost impossible to change a system radically and continue to make ongoing decisions. One faculty member summarized the concern of people across campus at having no way to make the day-to-day decisions:

I think one of the hardest things was getting a process for ongoing activities. Some things just have to happen all the time. You’ve got to get courses approved. You have to get programs approved. You have to have some mechanism that’s standing so that people know where to go. The first 2 years were almost totally process, drove everybody crazy, me included. What are you going to do to replace the old structures? We had a plan, but making it come alive is not automatic. You have to have a way to vote. You have to have a way to make decisions. Those things had to be there and they weren’t. So that took a long time and it was exhausting and grinding and not fun, not interesting kind of work. And I think we have suffered from that, morale lowered, people were frustrated, and there were important decisions that were not made.

There were two major subthemes within the category of years without being able to make decisions—missed opportunities and lowered morale. People described missed opportunities for new programs to serve the community and ways the institution suffered as a result of not having an operable system in place. Faculty and administrators were hopeful that the radical change would have long-term positive consequences, but almost all felt negative consequences in the short term. The quotation above also illuminates the notion of lowered morale, as people become frustrated in being unable to make decisions and thus miss opportunities. Many people became demoralized and discouraged because they missed opportunities when decisions were unable to be made.

2) Implementation Problems

The first few years were spent deciphering what the new processes would really look like as they were implemented. No matter how clear a planning group is in developing a new process, there will be issues that were not considered that can only be understood as the system is implemented. This is especially so in the case of radical change. Because it is radically different, a great deal of learning has to occur. As noted earlier,
this resulted in the campus focusing completely on setting up a process rather than on making decisions. One faculty member commented on this beginning phase:

It was pretty chaotic. We had the Canary papers. So we sat down and read these things and thought, How do we do this? Who does this? How does it get done? And how about all these other things that aren’t listed on here? So we spent a good bit of the first part of the year just sort of figuring how who does what and how and it wasn’t a lot of substantive work involved.

Some found the process organic, allowing for the right adjustments to emerge. Others found the process frustrating:

I found it a frustrating time. We were just—I’m trying to think of the right word—stumbling, floundering. What are we going to do? What is the top priority? How would we relate with the Academic Dean? How’s academic planning going to get done? So there was a lot of conceptual discussion and philosophical meanderings.

During the 5 years of implementation, series of changes and adjustments were initiated to make the new system work. Items that had not been considered during the planning or that had emerged in the implementation and had caused major problems were addressed. Many different people described these adjustments as a natural outgrowth of implementation of making ideas real:

One of the adjustments—and that was a major one, as far as I was concerned—is, originally the graduate programs were going to come under Academic Issues. But, as I said to you, we were implementing this new structure plus we were implementing the new general education requirements. We realized it was too much work, so we formed the graduate program committee.

Other individuals felt that radical change resulted in more problems than the old governance system had created: “I was going to say that they’re not adjustments. There are holes, there are faults, if you will.” Many feel they are undergoing two series of changes: The first one was to “a new faulty system,” and the second was a series of major changes since the implementation of the new system (as well as the system itself) was dysfunctional.

Despite the varying impressions of the process as organic or frustrating, all felt that when you have a radical change process, it is hard to anticipate the many cracks and problems. Most voiced this as an inevitable part of a radical change process:

I don’t know if you could have learned about it first. You can’t anticipate. It’s sort of like, it’s like learning software that you don’t have any use for: what’s the point of this. You start with some enthusiasm and then decide to come back to it. I think we did have a bit of a transition period. But then, at some
point, you have to say, All right, we’re going to try this. Let’s jump in any-
way. And you flounder for a while and you sort of work it out.

Any change process would create problems of implementation, but people
expressed that the radical change process compounds those implementa-
tion problems, making them quite severe and crippling daily operations.

3) Lack of Participation while People Learn to Trust the New System

Because governance matters to a few dedicated members of the fac-
ulty at this institution and others, there is limited involvement in gover-
nance (Dimond, 1991). Although I knew this was a national trend, I was
particularly surprised to observe this trend at this campus because it had
such a dedicated group of faculty. Many faculty with whom I talked
were cynical about whether there would ever be widespread involvement
in governance (as envisioned by the new system), since people perceive
the system as a time burden, as ineffective and not focused on priority is-
sues, and as something for which they are not rewarded.

In addition to faculty voicing concern about whether participation is
likely in any circumstances, they noted how radical change creates a lack
of trust that further reduces the possibility of participation among most fac-
culty and administrators. One faculty member described the hesitation of
people to engage in the new governance system based on this lack of trust:

People were extremely hesitant to put the process in place and after imple-
mented have not come forward to be involved. The risk was that there were
too many unknowns. People were asking these questions, How’s this going
to work? So it took a lot of faith for the faculty to believe that this is vague,
unclear, undefined system might work and many were unwilling. It’s as de-
fined as we can make it, but it’s still pretty undefined. Any major change is
going to seem undefined and confusing.

Most faculty and administrators expressed a “wait and see” attitude to-
ward participation. One faculty member described a story that I heard
repeatedly:

When we had nominations for elections this year, there were not enough peo-
ple who accepted nomination for the Faculty Issues Committee. There were
only two people that accepted the nominations. We asked X to make a plea
from the floor of the Faculty Senate meeting one day, “This is your gover-
nance, you need to be involved.” So then we had a couple other people come
forward, but they came forward with trepidation and it was fewer than needed.

Five years into the change there is still limited involvement and trust. So
time alone does not ensure trust and involvement will develop, espe-
cially if the implementation was seen as flawed.
4) Confusion over the Nature of the New System—Even after 5 Years

Even after 5 years, with a plethora of discussion and a new handbook in place, there is still deep confusion among almost all faculty and administrators about how the new system works. There were several sub-themes that emerged within this category: (a) various groups that remain unclear over the system—administrators, faculty, and even leaders within the governance system; (b) areas of confusion within the new system, such as roles, structures, leadership, representation, input, and participation; and (c) dysfunction and confusion created for the campus.

The only people with whom I spoke that appeared to understand the system were the faculty who created it. Even those in leadership positions were confused about how the system should operate. Administrators noted frustration over the lack of clarity about the system:

One of the other things that can be a problem is you don’t always know who’s leading what or what group is supposed to be working on an issue. Even when I talk to faculty about which groups are supposed to do what. So I’ll say to people, “I need a rep from this group. Who do I talk to?” “Well, uh, I’m not sure.” The faculty themselves are saying, “We’re not exactly sure how this whole thing works.”

One of the faculty on a committee described how even the leadership was confused about the level of input that is ideal within the process:

X was operating under a much more broadly defined idea of what consensus meant than the people who were on the Coordinating Committee at the time. So, the President of the Coordinating Committee would ask for reports and whether we have anything to bring forward for the agenda at the next Faculty meeting? And X would say, “We have this issue and we want to talk, and we want to see where the faculty are on this.” But the president of the Coordinating Committee would say, “this isn’t in its finished form. Don’t give us anything until you have a proposal that you want the faculty to consider. Don’t give us something for them to think about.” And X kept trying to say, “We really want to take direction from the faculty,” but nobody heard her.

In terms of areas of confusion, one administrator expressed concerns that roles, structures, and responsibilities remain unclear: “I think that greater definition of roles still needs to occur. I think we’re still a little fuzzy about what the Coordinating Committee is supposed to do.” Since the committee’s role and interaction are the major components of the process and they remain unclear and convoluted to most members of the community, the radical change process appears to have created a level of chaos that is unhealthy for the institution. Many people commented about this confusion leading to dysfunctionality:

We are at an unhealthy level of confusion. How can any institution operate 5 years without a clear decision-making process in place? I guess we have, but
how long can you remain viable. Perhaps things will become clearer soon, but I cannot imagine this was the best approach.

**Theoretical Proposition 2:**

_No governance system or model is ideal. Each has problems that need to be examined and altered on an ongoing basis, especially since people view the governance system uniquely. Radical change does not address these ongoing needs and can mask the long-term, continuous work needed to make any governance system work._

Not only are there negative consequences as a result of a radical change process, but also it appears difficult to create a governance system without ongoing problems that will need to be solved. In this section, I will review the outcomes of the new governance process, comparing it to the old system to demonstrate how difficult it can be to create an ideal approach for all constituents.

What are the outcomes of governance for which a system is striving? Ultimately, the desired outcome of governance is good decisions, but four secondary outcomes have also been described: efficiency, leadership, participation, responsiveness to stakeholders (Schuster et al., 1994). Birnbaum (1988) has noted how outcomes have been defined narrowly in functionalist terms and has suggested important governance outcomes such as ownership, feeling valued, and affirming commitment. In this paper, I have examined both the traditional as well as some of the newer, emergent outcomes mentioned by Birnbaum. Many of the goals of the new system have not been achieved, and many negative outcomes have emerged—such as lack of participation, lack of formality and procedures, and no accountability. Furthermore, most of the problems with the old system—such as inefficiency, lack of responsiveness and timeliness, ineffective decisions, concentration of power within a certain group of people, and overburdening of faculty workload—remain. Radical change simply compounded many of the problems that already existed, adding additional concerns.

In order to demonstrate this proposition with the data, I review the themes related to outcomes (both positive and negative) of the old governance system and then compare these outcomes to those of the new governance system. This comparison of outcomes from both systems through the perspective of different constituents on campus demonstrates two major aspects of this proposition: (a) the inherent nature of problematic outcomes and (b) the distinct ways in which people view the outcomes so it is difficult to please everyone, even a majority, with any system.
Old Governance System

The theme analysis from interviews derived the following problems/outcomes related to the old system: (a) inefficient with heavy faculty workload; (b) concentration of power among administrators; and, (c) lack of inclusiveness (see Table 2). Faculty comments and written reports reflected the following problems:

There were so many committees—a multiplicity of committees. People were stretched very thinly and there was a sense that we weren’t working efficiently . . . that the right hand didn’t know what the left hand was doing. So there was overlap. Things would happen in one place and they would be in direct contradiction to something that was going on somewhere else and you didn’t know about it.

The proliferation of uncoordinated committees led by powerful administrators was a source of frustration. As one faculty member put it:

Molasses might be a good metaphor for how things worked. I can remember, when I was on the Curriculum Committee. I decided I would never be on it again after a few terms because it was just so frustrating, and most of the things I accomplished I went around the committee because it was just so cumbersome and slow. Also, one or two people could stop the world by just appealing and challenging decisions.

There were many faculty who agreed with these problems but who also described some positive outcomes of the past system. These faculty cited (a) bureaucratic clarity in formal procedures, (b) participation based on an accountability and incentive system, and (c) leadership/direction (see Table 2). Even though these faculty realized the problem of concentrating power among the deans, they felt there were some strong aspects to the past system. First, there was a well established system that everyone on campus understood and that was in a written book of procedures. One faculty member described the clarity as follows:

I would fill out a form, it would go to the Dean, and it would get put on the agenda. We would get this form, [with] what you want to do, and why and all that sort of thing. Then I would appear at the Committee at the time and then I would be questioned and then, if it was relatively straightforward, they would vote right there. If not, they wouldn’t. This is a very routine thing.

In addition, faculty were actively involved in governance because it was clearly established as part of promotion and tenure requirements. Lastly, the administrators who developed the agendas and priorities for faculty governance established a sense of priorities for the campus. Faculty did not always follow the administrators’ direction, but then it gave them a direction to move against:
The Dean always set the direction. Sometimes the Dean would say, go this way, and we’d want to go that way but, at least, it created a tension. She’d say, go this way and everybody had a better idea so we went that way. That’s really missing that, when we removed that role for the administration we also removed some of our direction. And also, some of the participation.

**New Governance System**

“We destroyed the incentive system, the direction, the clarity, the sense of priorities and everything when we seized control. So it’s like the inmates are running the asylum”

“what I have come to feel as an administrator is: if I take them my idea it will be better when it comes out of that process. And often as an administrator you feel that it starts out great and it gets weakened, it gets diluted, it gets impoverished through too much compromise. So I don’t feel the fear or hesitation to throw something out that is unfinished or a start because I know that people think very wisely here and will make it better.”

“I think the system has its frustrations but at least we’re adults now, compared to well-kept children”

These three quotations illustrate the range of perceptions toward the new governance system—from deep concern, to excitement about its possibilities, to a sense that it has had a mostly benign impact. In this section, I begin by describing the positive outcomes that only a small minority described. I then detail the many negative consequences expressed by most individuals on campus.

Most of the individuals who saw positive outcomes or consequences from the new governance process tended to be those who were part of the campus committee that developed the new governance process or those who served in leadership roles on the main committees. Few individuals outside this group cited many positive results. The most commonly cited outcomes were: (a) the creation of some meaningful and effective forums; (b) ownership; (c) more effective decision-making; (d) input being valued; and (e) alignment of institutional values related to collegiality and collaboration into governance (see Table 2). The meaningful forums also translated into some people believing there was increased participation by a larger, more diverse group of people than had participated in the past. Faculty spoke enthusiastically about faculty senate meetings as productive, meaningful, and well attended. Task forces provided opportunity for new individuals (often junior and less well known faculty) to be involved and to contribute to campus decision-making. Therefore, task forces and the senate allow for greater participation and ownership. As one faculty member commented, “I think that people are taking ownership of the new system more. I think that they really feel responsible for
the decisions that are being made.” The hope is that better decisions are
being made, but most people agreed that they did not have evidence that
that was occurring. As one faculty member commented, “I’m not sure
any of the programs or decisions look particularly different by virtue of
this process. I think maybe that people are more aware of certain things.”

Creative thinking and resultant better decisions was another outcome:

I think the principle of inclusion has generated more creative thinking and
has allowed younger members to have a voice. So I think there’s been more
creative thinking because of the new governance which makes available task
forces to people who willing to give short-term commitments that can volun-
teer and not have to be elected.

Another group noted that while governance might not be creating better
decisions, that was not as important as a process that respects people and
makes them feel valuable. One faculty member noted that, “In my mind
it has improved decision-making and decisions, but the effect of the
process is another and more important thing. Concrete decisions are not
as important as the principle of ownership, of being valued for your
input.” These individuals focused on the importance of aligning the val-
ues of individuals within the institution with institutional processes.

This group felt that the old authoritative governance system did not re-
flect the consensus-based and collaborative values of the campus.

Even though there was a generally acknowledged feeling that a
process was needed to align values and equalize power, many individu-
als were unhappy with the current system and the approach taken to get
there. Even those who were very supportive of the current system (the
committee who created it and the leadership within the new system) still
had many concerns. When I asked faculty and administrators to reflect
on the overall result of this 5-year experiment, most concluded that no
governance system is perfect, all have problems, and caution should be
taken when engaging in a radical change process. There are two sets of
problems: one set emerged as a result of the new governance process and
others remained from the old system. It is hard to talk about these dis-
cretely, as many overlapped with or related to one another, but for the
purposes of making them clear to the reader, they are described dis-
cretely. For example, the ineffectiveness of the new system, resulting in
poor decisions, was connected to lack of leadership, lack of structure
and formality, lack of connection to the budget (split with the adminis-
tration), and lack of expertise on committees.

I will describe some of the problematic outcomes developed from the
new governance system: (a) lack of direction and leadership; (b) lack of
ownership and participation; (c) marginalizing of certain voices; (d) lack
of accountability; and (e) unresponsiveness (see Table 2). With some outcomes, it is difficult to distinguish whether these problems are the result of the consensus-based model itself or of poor execution of the model. In terms of leadership problems and lack of direction, in the move to a distributed leadership model, many people were nervous about asserting leadership or in training leaders. Instead, it was assumed people had a natural talent or gift to lead. However, many faculty’s experience was that people were not natural leaders, which resulted in many stories about the problems of individuals lacking needed leadership. The following story illustrated this dilemma felt by individuals across campus:

I think, as time goes on and especially with Faculty Issues, there was some perception there that it wasn’t working well, and so people didn’t want to serve. The chair just could not move things, was disorganized, and there were a lot of problems. They felt like they weren’t getting things done. They were going over the same thing a lot. So the attrition rate there was much greater than it was in Academic Issues where there was leadership.

In addition to a fear of overt leadership, since leadership had become connected with authoritarianism in people’s minds, there was a belief that the governance system lacked a sense of direction and lacked priorities because no individual was willing to assert a direction for the campus. Instead, direction was supposed to emerge from the faculty senate itself. However, after many years, people did not see this type of direction emerging: “There’s no vision. That doesn’t exist at all in this new governance structure and that’s a bit dangerous too. It’s sort of like we built this ship and we never thought about where do we want to go.” As noted previously, lack of trust with the new system has led to minimal participation. Participation was also affected by the next theme, the marginalizing of certain voices.

Several faculty noted that voices were marginalized and that the governance system reflected the interests of the senior, long-term faculty. One woman recounted the difficulty of faculty in the graduate programs (generally new faculty) to have input into governance:

Then when we were asked for input on the Mission Statement. We gave input on email, but then it never came back where we could discuss that Mission Statement and it came out, in my opinion, in a way that wasn’t real inclusive of the graduate mission. So, you get the feeling that the input is asked for but I don’t know that it really changes anything.

Ironically, the consensus system was attempting to make sure that all voices were included, but it has ended up leading to marginalization instead. Since there is no voting, you have to voice your concerns, and many people feel intimidated to do so. For example, one person related this story:
And there would be disagreement throughout the meeting about what to do and then, at the end of the meeting, the person leading the meeting would say, “Well, I think we have consensus.” And we’d all leave the meeting not knowing whether we did or not. It really worries me.

Many people noted how students, staff, and even administration were marginalized and excluded from the system. In the desire to reclaim faculty power, many groups were left out of the process, and the problems of power within a consensus-based model were not anticipated.

There was a major concern that issues get lost in the faculty governance system and that the new system lacked accountability. Faculty members and administrators told stories of how not having procedures in writing has led to major omissions of process, such as decisions never being communicated to the president. One interviewee, for example, told the following story:

The Chair of the Coordinating Committee took items passed by the Faculty Senate and gave a presentation to the President. I think when she stopped being Chair that kind of got lost a little bit because I realized all of a sudden in May, when I was doing the changes for the catalog, it dawned on me it hadn’t been sent to the President for approval. Things like this have happened a lot.

A part of accountability that was strong in the old system was a culture that service on committees is part of promotion and tenure. It is what faculty were accountable for. Many faculty members commented that this culture of accountability was lost in the move to the new system. Lastly, faculty and administrators described their concern about a lack of responsiveness. One faculty member noted that:

We had a new program that needed to be reviewed and approved. We had external deadlines to meet and there was some tension between our internal deadlines and these external deadlines that can just hamstring. Academic Issues was feeling, sort of, a little bit pushed to make decisions and saying that, “Well, we’re being asked to approve and yet, you haven’t done this and you haven’t done that.” Responsiveness is still an issue because you need to move at a certain rate to get things on the table for the state.

In addition to introducing new problems into the system, the new governance system did not address most of the problems that existed within the old governance system. Problems that remained from the old system included inefficiency and an overburdening faculty workload, ineffectiveness, and a concentration of power. Some of these resulted from components of the new system, while others reflected how the new system did not alleviate old problems. The problem of overburdening of faculty seemed to get worse. As one interviewee explained, this problem is now more widespread:
I mean we get this proliferation of these goofiest task forces. People are putting time into things that really . . . I mean, is this important to us? Where do we really want to put our time and energy? We should be focusing on strategic initiatives. We spent months of time talking about how to divide up a thousand dollar fund. I realize everybody cares, but our sense of proportion is off.

Perhaps one of the most disturbing items was the continued ineffectiveness of the system. Stories about the way the system seemed to lack any sense of priority or focus reinforced this view. For example, these two stories by different administrators reflected the continued ineffectiveness:

A lot of it’s wasted time. At least from what I can see from agendas and things that I look at. Most of their meeting items seem like an FYI. But constantly meeting and rehashing. I mean, we just went through this huge storm about getting rid of supplying blue books to students. They’re little things, but they’re examples of ineffectiveness, “Why do we give students blue books? Why don’t we get them to buy it at the bookstore?” So I talked to Y and she said, “Do it.” You wouldn’t believe the emails in terms of Why? Why weren’t faculty consulted? Why didn’t this go through the faculty governance process? And you think, “God. Why do people care about this?” It’s kind of a shame.

Yes, there have been issues, important decisions that I cannot get the senate to focus on. One had to do with our transfer policies. It wasn’t something that academic issues subcommittee could get to right away; no groups had been willing to set up small task forces to handle the issue. Ultimately, I had to set up a separate committee on my own. But they say they want input; these are the problems

Although many believed that the new consensus-based model distributed power, other people told stories that reflected ways that power was still concentrated with the coordinating committee. Rather than being in the hands of a few administrators, now that power was in the hands of six to eight faculty members.

Even though faculty and administrators described these multiple problems with governance, they continued to stay the course of implementing the consensus model without adjusting the model itself. They did make alterations to enhance consensus procedures, but they shied away from examining leadership training and direction or they were blinded to other problems they did not think would emerge, such as marginalization of voices, concentration of power, or accountability.

**Conclusions and Implications**

This section will first examine how the propositions from the study relate to the broader literature on governance. This analysis will be followed by some implications for both theory and practice related to
radical change in governance. The main conclusion from this study is that radical change has many negative consequences; gradual change and innovation appears to be a more promising route to enhancing governance in higher education.

The first theoretical proposition—that the radical change process is likely to have more negative consequences than the positive consequences of the new system put into place—is counter to the literature on BPR, but it is aligned with the literature from political, cultural, and institutional theories of radical change. Political models suggest that power relationships and the organizational ideology will be altered, but they do not suggest that these changes will necessarily be positive for the organization (Baldridge, 1971). The one positive outcome described by almost everyone at the case site was that power conditions had been altered on this campus and faculty had realized more influence on institutional decision-making. Further, there was a new ideology in place that reinforced the new power dynamics—consensus and participatory governance. People in power within the new governance system were most likely to identify the positive outcomes, also reinforcing political theories. Broadly speaking, faculty and administrators did not share the interpretation that more effective decisions or ownership was occurring.

Cultural models go further and suggest that radical change can be dysfunctional by dismantling a symbolic system that people understand and with which they have an affinity (Morgan, 1986; Schein, 1985). The underlying assumptions and values of an organization help people to make sense and are critical for day-to-day functioning (Morgan, 1986; Schein, 1985). And within institutionalism, stripping organization templates that help provide understanding for day-to-day activities can paralyze an organization (Knight & Willmott, 2000). Thus, dismantling organizational systems completely will have a disorienting effect that can imperil individuals and the organization. The findings within this grounded theory study suggest that that the frustration, lowered morale, distrust, and confusion that emerged as a result of the radical change process can be crippling to an organization. In addition to the emotional toll on individuals, there were severe consequences for the organization—missed opportunities as a result of being unable to make decisions, time for development and implementation of the system that took time away from other priorities, employee apathy, and confusion over the governance process. Many times an organization must go through short-term negative consequences in order to achieve long-term health and functionality. This may occur at this campus, but after 7 years, the likelihood of that is not strong. In Robert Birnbaum’s (2000) recent book entitled Management Fads in Higher Education, he questions
whether institutions should engage in radical restructuring and business process reengineering. Advocates herald these approaches for achieving many positive consequences, such as effectiveness and quality, but few if any negative consequences are ever described. This study provides empirical evidence that there are many negative consequences to radical change. A counterargument is that people at the institution were already crippled, given that the old system was so problematic.

This first proposition is closely tied to the second proposition—no governance system or model is ideal; each has problems that need to be examined and altered on an ongoing basis. The new consensus-based model of governance—with its distributed leadership, increased opportunities for participation, and streamlined organization with less faculty burden—sounded like a positive model to move toward, one which would surely have more positive consequences than the many systems of governance being proposing nationally. Even if the radical change process had many negative consequences, I expected to find that it would be worth the effort to have a new model in place that was aligned with faculty values and that seemed to include the major features of a “functional” model of governance. However, this grounded theory study shows that the new model was unable to realize some of its features and reveals that unanticipated problems emerged. As noted in the beginning of this article, no universal model of governance that can be used effectively at all campuses has been found. Certain key features of governance have been identified—such as effectiveness, leadership, participation, responsiveness, and efficiency—yet even these have been found to vary by institutional culture and climate (Birnbaum, 1988; Schuster et al., 1994). Because institutional climates change, as new people are hired, as new programs are added, and as conditions in the context or environment change, it appears that governance systems need to change on an ongoing basis. One-time radical alterations will most likely not keep pace with ongoing changes. At this campus, new faculty were particularly uncomfortable with the new system or neutral to it since they were not part of the religious tradition in which it is based. Most new faculty and administrators are not part of the religious order. Therefore, justifying radical change because an ideal model can be put into place seems naïve given what we know from previous studies of governance (that governance models should fit their institutional climate/culture) and from the evidence in this grounded theory study. As Tierney (1999) notes in his research in organizational change, “there is no one best way to do something in an innovative organization. Risk assumes processes will not be perfect” (p. 45). This campus would be better served if it adopted a system of ongoing changes or continuous improvement that
could adapt to new people on campus and to changes in the environment. As problems of marginalization of voices, or with understanding consensus, or with direction and priorities emerged, such changes could be addressed more readily. Instead, campus leaders committed to keeping the integrity of the consensus governance model. In some ways, this campus is currently engaged in an ongoing system of making adjustments; however, they believe it will stop and they will reach an ideal. It is this mindset (that change is temporary) that may prove problematic to developing a functional governance process. Yet, continuous improvement can also be a destabilizing concept.

The main lessons from this grounded theory study and the theoretical propositions that emerged are that the radical change process may have many negative consequences and that overhauling a system is not the panacea for problems. Considering this campus believed its change process and governance system to be a success, this finding is even more disconcerting. Other campuses I contacted to be involved in the study had found their radical change process highly problematic, and they were unwilling to have the process examined and be part of this study. This campus was a success story, not a failure. Future studies on campuses that designated their processes a failure would likely find even more negative consequences than those outlined within this article. However, it should be noted that these findings cannot be generalized; that is not the purpose of grounded theory research. More research and empirical evidence must be collected. This study provides evidence for an area of future research—negative consequences of radical change—that was not a major direction in the literature since BPR presents radical change as having positive consequences.

Some might see these findings about the prospect of creating radical change and innovation on campuses disappointing. Radical change is often associated with the disenfranchised within organizations and society. Much of the sociological research on radical change examines social movements and political upheavals (Morgan, 1986). Clearly, these findings must be examined with a critical eye as well. For example, whose interests are protected or privileged because radical change is unlikely to occur? Why is it that radical change has so many negative consequences, and for whom are those consequences negative? Although this case suggests that radical change has many negative consequences (for all members of campus, including the disenfranchised), it might be worth engaging all these negative results to obtain greater power or to alter relationships. Many individuals on this campus believe that all the negative consequences were worthwhile in order to align the values of the culture (collaboration) with institutional processes. The old authoritative
governance system did not reflect the consensus-based and collaborative values of the campus. More harm than help? This is the question posed in the title of this paper. This grounded theory study begins to challenge the positive picture of radical organizational change painted through BPR, the approach advocated by many for changing governance, by providing some initial evidence of a picture of more harm than help.

APPENDIX A

In a grounded theory study, the researcher attempts to be as open as possible to the way that the phenomenon emerges within the context and tries to be aware of their own biases and preconceptions so that they do not affect the ability to see new themes and ideas (Creswell, 1998). In order to be as open as possible to the data form the research site, I wrote down my theoretical assumptions before conducting the study and kept a journal through the process. From the reflection and journal that I developed, the following are key ideas that informed my thinking. I believe there has been an overemphasis in the literature on structural theories for understanding governance. A study of senates from the 1970s sums up my perspective best: the structure was as good as the people on them each year (Riley & Baldridge, 1977). Therefore, business process re-engineering seemed to have faulty logic and as Birnbaum noted, the leaders of business process re-engineering realized it was a problem that they had forgot about the human element in organizations. Later studies from political and cultural perspectives, debunked the myth that colleges and universities are primarily rational decision-making bodies and that a formal process or structure determines how decisions are made. This made me somewhat suspicious of whether the formal governance structure and processes play a meaningful role in decision-making. Further, it made me concerned with the emphasis in the popular literature for focusing on changing formal governance structures or processes as a way to achieve outcomes that are more positive. I firmly believe as Birnbaum articulated in How Colleges Work (1991) that good governance varies by institution and campus context. On a small campus, a collegium might be the best way to reach decisions effectively, whereas on a larger campus a more political approach might be more effective. I believe that local context, history, and values override generalized strategies for improving governance. I am hesitant to make sweeping generalizations about radical change since it will likely vary in consequences based on context. The consequences identified in the research are perceptions of the campus participants or identified by the researcher through observation and document analysis.

Notes

1Academic governance is defined as the way that issues affecting the entire institution or one or more components thereof are decided. It includes the structure, both formal and informal, of decision-making groups and the relationships among these groups and individuals (Lee, 1991). This study focused on the internal governance system, not the board of trustees and other external bodies.

2Punctuated equilibrium is a concept within evolutionary models of change, but it is very similar to political theories of change; thus, it was not included. Life cycle theories of change note that radical change is more likely in the early part of an organization’s life span and as it moves into decline, but radical change is also not a major emphasis within this approach.

3These three consequences are interrelated.

4New institutionalism focuses more on interpretation, adoption, and rejection by the individual organization of change ideas, whereas old institutionalism focuses more on
external factors of legitimacy and less on the internal negotiation process (Greenwood & Hinings, 2000).

5In grounded theory, research questions are more open-ended than in other methodologies, as they are examining emerging patterns and conditions rather than testing patterns of cause/effect relationships.

6Interviews were the major source of data, as the researcher assumes that consequences are experienced by people; there is no objective reality beyond human interpretation to check the validity of consequences.

7Some might not consider the new governance system radical change because they can still see that it resonates with governance approaches that exist within other institutions. Radical change is context based and socially constructed (Nadler, 1998). Radical change is relative to the context, to what the participants in that context define as the status quo, and to how much of a departure the change is from their previous system. This paper could also be an interesting commentary on how radical change within the academy might appear less radical than in other settings and contexts. Many organizational theorists have written about the difficulty of creating change in higher education (Birnbaum, 1991, Kezar, 2001; Weick, 1979), but this is a topic for another paper.

8It is tempting to try to examine the results as poor implementation rather than as the negative consequences of radical change. Due to space limitation, I cannot describe all the details of the implementation process, but it was thorough and thoughtful as alluded to in this paragraph.

References


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