

Case Studies of Organizational Mindfulness and Shared Governance

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

Organizational mindfulness is a construct drawn from the literature on high reliability organizations (HRO), such as nuclear power plants and aircraft carriers. These are organizations where the slightest instability can lead to disaster. However, the principles of organizational mindfulness are suitable for any organization that seeks stability.

In this study, organizational mindfulness is applied to higher education institutions; specifically, it is applied in shared governance contexts at colleges and universities. Disputes involving shared governance, especially between faculty members and administrators, often create serious instabilities on campuses. This study provides new insights on how organizational mindfulness may address this particular problem in higher education. In particular, two research questions were posed. First, is there a relationship between institutional type and one's role within an institution with perceptions of organizational mindfulness? Second, how do faculty members and administrators perceive organizational mindfulness in shared governance at their institutions?

A sequential two-stage, mixed-methods research designed was employed. Faculty members and administrators at a liberal arts college and a research university were surveyed to answer the research questions. Then, a document analysis of governance-related materials from each institution was conducted. Finally, interviews of twelve faculty members and administrators were conducted.

Generally, the type of institution or one's role within it did not influence perceptions of organizational mindfulness. Faculty members and administrators shared mostly positive comments about shared governance and organizational mindfulness at their institutions.

This was a mixed-methods study with a small sample. Hence, more robust quantitative and qualitative research on organizational mindfulness in higher education is proposed. Additional research on institutional type and role, as well as other organizational characteristics, is also proposed. Colleges and universities are also encouraged to assess organizational mindfulness, relative to shared governance, at their institutions.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Problem Statement

All organizations encounter instabilities. Such instabilities range from the trivial to the catastrophic. How an organization responds to these instabilities is indicative of its mindfulness. Further, mindfulness can prevent or treat instability, thereby enhancing organizational performance (Langer, 1989; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).

In recent years, mindfulness—applied to organizations as well as individuals—has become quite prominent in scholarship and in practice. For example, mindful practices and therapies have helped college students increase test scores, attorneys improve their effectiveness and job satisfaction, and mental health patients combat various illnesses (Bishop et al., 2004; Halpern, 2010; Hollon, Thase, & Markowitz, 2002; Mrazek, Franklin, Tarchin Phillips, Baird, & Schooler, 2013).

Likewise, organizations such as Google, Ford Motors, General Mills, and Harvard Law School have embraced mindfulness in various aspects of their operations. Greater mindfulness yields improved processes in organizations. It helps reduce the likelihood of serious crises and also provides a framework for responding to them should they arise (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).

How does organizational mindfulness work, then? To discern how mindfulness manifests itself at the organizational level, Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) studied high reliability organizations (HROs), such as aircraft carriers, nuclear power plants, and

firefighting units, to learn how mindful practices in these organizations—where the slightest indiscretion can lead to disaster—can be applied to other organizations, even those that are not HROs.

Their study, which drew partly from Langer's (1989) seminal analysis of individual mindfulness, produced five principles of mindfulness applicable to organizations: 1) preoccupation with failure, 2) reluctance to simplify, 3) sensitivity to operations, 4) commitment to resilience, and 5) deference to expertise. These principles are "tied together by their joint capability to induce a rich awareness of discriminatory detail and a capability for action" (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 1999, p. 37).

In essence, these five principles help organizations either prevent instabilities or respond swiftly and effectively should one arise. Furthermore, such instabilities need not be catastrophic, such as a power plant meltdown or a wildfire. Consider, for instance, some of the instabilities affecting higher education institutions. Though they are not necessarily disastrous, they still harm organizational performance. This study explores how organizational mindfulness might address such instabilities.

High tuition costs, student aid reduction, demands for institutional accountability, reduced state spending, and pressure to improve completion rates are just a few examples of instabilities affecting colleges and universities throughout the United States (McLendon, Deaton, & Hearn, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Indeed, in American higher education, there is an oft-heard saying that academic politics are the worst kind of politics because the stakes are so low; however, these recent economic and political difficulties have made the stakes as significant as ever. With these

considerations in mind, academic politics have become increasingly, and even painfully, relevant.

Consequently, the actors involved in academic politics are equally significant. Students, parents, trustees, and policymakers all have a major stake in the vitality of the educational enterprise. Yet the relationship between college administrators and their faculty colleagues—perhaps two of the most prominent political actors in higher education—is especially important and likewise problematic (Del Favero, 2002; Holton, 1995). Both parties have an obviously crucial role in sustaining institutional prosperity, but when their relationship collapses, the repercussions are severe and often lead to instability on campus. Organizational mindfulness can solve this problem.

Serious disagreements that extend beyond constructive debate can and usually will lead to resentment and paralysis on college campuses, especially between faculty and college presidents (Tierney, 2007). Of course, poor relationships between college presidents and faculty members are not new. Paxton and Thomas (1977) and Kerr (2001), for instance, have illustrated the antagonistic relations between these two parties at various times in the past. In the last decade, too, president-faculty disputes have been featured prominently in popular media, such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *The New York Times*. Lawrence Summers of Harvard University, Bob Kerrey of the New School, and John Sexton of New York University are just a few of many college presidents whose disagreements with faculty have been showcased in national publications. My previous research found that at least 75 presidents and faculty had serious clashes, as measured by faculty votes of no confidence against the president, since 1989 (McKinniss, 2008). These disputes, many of which were well publicized,

occurred at well-known institutions like those referenced above, as well as at small Bible colleges, community colleges, schools of art and design, and regional campuses of larger universities.

Yet presidents are not the only figures susceptible to poor relations with faculty. Fellow administrators, such as provosts and deans, have also encountered challenges with their faculty colleagues (Gallos, 2002). In fact, some faculties have even delivered debilitating no-confidence votes against senior administrators (Zweifler, 2013).

Various factors contribute to these breakdowns. One of the most salient among them is that administrators, in the view of the faculty, disregard the principles of shared governance (Del Favero, 2002; Eckel, 2000; Pierce, 2014). For example, administrators might hire or terminate personnel arbitrarily, alter annual budgets, or add or remove programs, all without faculty input. This leads faculty members to believe that administrators have violated a sacred academic tradition. Meanwhile, administrators may find faculty “disinterested, uninvolved, and recalcitrant when it comes to collaborative institutional activity” (Del Favero, 2002, p. 1). Instability often ensues. Such discordance in an organization suggests a serious lack of mindfulness. As Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (1999) noted, a lack of mindfulness is “characterized by a reliance on past categories, acting on ‘automatic pilot,’ and fixation on a single perspective without awareness that things could be otherwise” (p. 38).

Significance of the Study

Higher education institutions have a rich tradition of autonomy. For nearly a millennium, institutions have enjoyed the freedom to teach, to learn, and to govern themselves (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching [CFAT], 1982).

As colleges and universities have evolved, so have their governance structures (Crowley, 1994). Most higher education institutions today in the United States manage their affairs through the process of shared governance (Burgan, 2004; Duderstadt, 2001; Morpew, 1999).

Indeed, shared governance has become a critical component of the American academy. Tierney and Lechuga (2004) stated that shared governance is a “hallmark of higher education in the United States” (p. 1). Tierney (2004) added that it is to higher education what “mom and apple pie are to American culture” (p. 202). Gerber (2002) even stated that shared governance is one of the reasons that American colleges and universities are “the envy of the world” (p. 16).

Shared governance is a particularly important aspect of higher education because it is the means by which presidents and their administrations, faculty, and governing boards manage their institutions. If problems emerge within that locus, serious organizational challenges can—and often do—emerge, which in turn brings paralysis to the institution (Tierney, 2007). Usually, such challenges emerge between the president, his or her administration, and faculty members. Indeed, their relationship is often strenuous: presidents find faculty difficult to work with and faculty are commonly reluctant to support presidents (American Council on Education, 2007; Birnbaum, 1992a; Carbone, 1981). This acrimony has implications for shared governance.

Organizational mindfulness is an especially useful construct for analyzing higher education organizations, given that colleges and universities are currently replete with a host of challenges, including those concerning shared governance. The principles of organizational mindfulness can help administrators avoid these fallings-out with their

faculty colleagues and vice versa. For both individuals and organizations, mindfulness serves simultaneously as a useful lens for understanding problems and as a prescription for correcting them. Thus, how might organizational mindfulness serve as a prescription for understanding and solving problems in governance matters?

Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) argue that organizational mindfulness is both proactive and reactive and that more mindful organizations can address instability effectively. As noted earlier, colleges and universities are constantly facing turbulence—especially in matters of shared governance between faculty and administrators. By linking the mindfulness and governance literatures together, I intend to create a new framework for examining instability in their relationship.

The purpose of this research is to gauge to what extent organizational mindfulness manifests itself in shared governance at colleges and universities. To conduct this study, I seek evidence of relationships between perceptions of organizational mindfulness in shared governance and one's role and institutional type. This is an especially important consideration because shared governance practices and traditions at a large public research university might differ greatly from those at a small private liberal arts college—or even another large research institution. Tierney (2004) noted that even though shared governance is considered a “central totem” (p. 202) of higher education, its meaning varies across institutions and within them. Secondly, I seek perspectives from faculty and administrators to expand upon these findings.

This study therefore generates new knowledge on university governance in particular and organizational conflict in general. That higher education institutions are

non-HROs is equally important, for this study could assist additional organizations that are also non-HROs. My specific research questions are:

- 1) Is there a relationship between institutional type and one's role within an institution with perceptions of organizational mindfulness?
- 2) How do faculty members and administrators perceive organizational mindfulness in shared governance at their institutions?

I used a case study method to answer these questions. In particular, I used a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design. This design uses a quantitative analysis first and a qualitative analysis second. The purpose of this approach is to use to qualitative methods to elaborate on quantitative findings, thereby enabling a more comprehensive investigation of the research questions (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006).

I surveyed faculty members and administrators at eight institutions in the Midwest. Four were liberal arts colleges and the other four were research universities. Only two institutions provided enough responses for analysis. Thus, I collected 82 completed surveys that gauged perceptions of organizational mindfulness of shared governance. In addition, I supplemented these data with an analysis of pertinent documents and interviews of twelve personnel from those two institutions.

Dissertation Overview

To answer these questions, I first review the construct of organizational mindfulness. I begin with Weick and Sutcliffe's (2007) research on organizational mindfulness. Next, I review organizational mindfulness' theoretical origins, which includes Langer's (1989) seminal analysis on individual mindfulness. Then, I survey the

literature on higher education from an organizational perspective. I review shared governance, especially its valued role in American higher education. I discuss the roles of faculty and administrators in the confines of shared governance. Finally, I fuse these literatures together and consider organizational mindfulness in higher education institutions and in shared governance contexts.

Thereafter, I discuss the methodology for this study. With the exception of Ray and colleagues' (2011) study of organizational mindfulness in business schools, no other study of organizational mindfulness in higher education has been found.

As noted earlier, this is a case study that uses a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design. This design first uses a quantitative analysis and then incorporates a qualitative supplement. In the quantitative stage, I drew from Hoy, Gage, and Tarter's (2006), Ray and colleagues' (2011), and Weick and Sutcliffe's (2007) organizational mindfulness instruments, with some modifications, at different institutions in the Midwest. I surveyed administrators and faculty members to gauge perceptions of the construct based upon one's role and each institution's type. The survey yielded usable data for two institutions only—a liberal arts college and a research university.

In the qualitative stage, I employed a document analysis of various governance-related records from these two institutions. These records supplement the survey findings and enable a richer analysis of my second research question in particular. I also interviewed faculty members and administrators to gain additional data. Ideally, the findings will offer insights to improve faculty-administrator relations relative to shared governance.

Next, I present an analysis of my survey, document, and interview data. I first provide an overview of various descriptive statistics. I conduct a series independent-samples *t*-tests to investigate my research questions about organizational mindfulness and institutional type and respondents' roles. Then, I present my case studies, which include an analysis of the documents and interviews from the two institutions.

I close this study with a review of my limitations. Then, I discuss key findings. I conclude with theoretical and practical recommendations, which yield additional research questions and considerations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To use organizational mindfulness to understand instabilities in shared governance, I link their literatures together and create a conceptual framework. In this chapter, I first provide a comprehensive overview of the construct of organizational mindfulness. Then, I explore the role of shared governance in higher education. I conclude by applying organizational mindfulness to higher education organizations in general and to shared governance contexts in particular.

Organizational Mindfulness

Weick and Sutcliffe (2007), as noted earlier, presented a construct of organizational mindfulness based upon research of high reliability organizations. HROs are entities that require reliability “in settings where the potential for error and disaster is overwhelming” (p. ix). These are organizations that “engage in *trials without errors* [emphasis in the original], lest the next error be the last trial” (LaPorte & Consolini, 1991, p. 20).

However, the concepts drawn from these high reliability organizations are applicable to all types of organizations. As Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) noted, high reliability organizations share two common enemies with other organizations:

“complacency and hubris” (p. xi). Furthermore, they add:

In all organizations, people do things that they expect to continue doing reliably and for which unexpected interruptions can eventually turn disastrous if they

manage the unexpected poorly . . . it is a possibility that haunts all organizations.
(Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 21)

In essence, all organizations encounter comparable problems in their daily operations. How those organizations prevent or respond to such challenges demonstrates their level of organizational mindfulness. Hence, these principles are useful for any organization that seeks stability and perseverance.

Below, I explore the theoretical origins of organizational mindfulness. Then, I review the five principles of organizational mindfulness in depth. Finally, I compare and contrast individual and organizational mindfulness.

Theoretical background of organizational mindfulness. Organizational mindfulness has several theoretical antecedents. Langer's (1989) notion of individual mindfulness, Eastern philosophies, and Weick and Roberts' (1993) study of collective mind have informed Weick and Sutcliffe's (2007) work on the construct. These antecedents should not be viewed as specific components of organizational mindfulness; rather, they serve as foundations for it.

Individual mindfulness. Born from Langer's (1989) extensive psychological research, individual mindfulness is a construct best defined as a "process of drawing novel distinctions" (Langer & Moldveanu, 2000, p. 1); that is, it is a process that imparts a "flexible state of mind in which we are actively engaged in the present, noticing new things, and sensitive to context" (Langer, 2000, p. 220). Langer (1989) specifically noted that mindful individuals create new categories to structure perception, receive new information willingly, and are aware of multiple perspectives. Hoy and colleagues (2006) added that individual mindfulness is "a habit of the mind that continuously seeks

disconfirming evidence to test assumptions” (p. 239). Essentially, individual mindfulness is a process by which people change not only what they think but also how they think (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). The benefit of mindfulness, Langer (1989) stated, is that it enables people to think differently and lead stronger personal and professional lives.

Langer (1989) suggested people are mindless for a number of reasons. Repetition, for instance, is one reason. If we do something often enough, it becomes ingrained in us so strongly that we cannot understand how or why we are doing it. Likewise, premature cognitive commitments are another explanation of mindlessness. Individuals are “committed to one predetermined use of the information, and other possible uses or applications are not explored” (Langer, 1989, p. 22). Such commitments restrict outlook. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, context contributes to mindlessness; in particular, “context confusion,” as Langer (1989, p. 40) described it, distorts judgments and confines us to one perspective.

Yet mindful people are more receptive to and aware of different ideas, contexts, and views. When people are mindful and make new categories, for instance, they “pay attention to the situation and context” (Langer, 1989, p. 65). In turn, they create and enhance categories that facilitate better thinking. With respect to openness to new information, mindful people look for discrepancies and receive those anomalies willingly. Langer (1989) found that such behavior creates a “continuous feedback loop” (p. 68) that enhances relationships and our thinking. Finally, mindful people see multiple perspectives and realize that there are multiple meanings to each perspective. Langer (1989) stated that recognizing such diverse perspectives gives us “more choice in how to

respond” and “when applied to our own behavior, change becomes more possible” (p. 71).

Collectively, these three components of individual mindfulness—creating new categories, willingly receiving new information, and being aware of multiple perspectives—enable people to have what Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (1999) called “rich awareness” of their environment; that is, at the organizational level, they “assume that awareness is expressed in at least these same three ways as byproducts of the five cognitive processes” (p. 37). Simply put, Langer’s (1989) three components of individual mindfulness manifest themselves in organizations through Weick and Sutcliffe’s (2007) five principles.

Mindfulness compels us to embrace the world in different, creative, and attentive ways. These various approaches help individuals “avoid the danger not yet risen” and give them greater control over their lives. In turn, mindfulness “engages us in a continuing momentum” (Langer, 1989, p. 202). We become better attuned to discrepancies and we seek and appreciate multiple perspectives. We also, as Langer (1989) noted, embrace process, not outcomes, which means, “there are no failures, only ineffective solutions” (p. 34).

Eastern philosophies and collective mind. Organizational mindfulness is also buttressed by Eastern philosophies as well as the construct known as collective mind (Weick & Roberts, 1993). Weick and Sutcliffe (2006) and Dane (2011) stated that, from an Eastern perspective, mindfulness is essentially the ability for one to make multiple distinctions consciously. The Eastern view suggests that mindfulness is “reducing distraction and holding an intended object in mind” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006, p. 518).

Dane (2011) noted that although this philosophical notion may appear “mystical or ‘Zen-like’” (p. 998), its implications for practice are concrete and empirically sound.

Additionally, the Eastern perspective on mindfulness can work in tandem with Western views of the construct. Weick and Putnam (2006) noted that both the Eastern and Western perspectives on mindfulness could collectively help actors in organizations improve their concentration and attention, primarily through mental exercises. These perspectives stress that merely being mindful about content is not sufficient; instead, organizations must be mindful about how such content is conceptualized (Weick & Putnam, 2006).

Likewise, the notion of collective mind suggests cooperation is essential for organizational success. As Weick and Roberts (1993) noted, collective mind is a process born from heedful interrelating. It is a process by which actors engage think and act simultaneously. In HROs, this process creates a collective mind that is stronger and more discriminating than any one individual’s (McPhee, Meyers, & Trethewey, 2006). Or, to use Hoy’s (as cited in Hoy et al., 2006, p. 239) summary, “A mindful organization is more than the sum of mindful individuals.”

Individuals can act and think heedfully; however, when they do, they also create a collective mind that “is distinct from an individual mind because it inheres in the pattern of interrelated activities among many people” (Weick & Roberts, 1993, p. 360). In HROs, these patterns are developed in a variety of ways. Tasks are openly communicated, action is coordinated, and trust is given; new organizational members are socialized into the HRO’s culture and operations; narratives about the organization are

shared; and, perhaps most importantly, all of these processes are repeated (Weick & Roberts, 1993).

The theoretical background of organizational mindfulness indicates how collective thinking can be fostered and ultimately mastered. Weick and Sutcliffe's (2007) principles of organizational mindfulness are further refinements of those theories, and they are articulated below.

Five principles of organizational mindfulness. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) identified five principles to define organizational mindfulness: 1) preoccupation with failure, 2) reluctance to simplify, 3) sensitivity to operations, 4) commitment to resilience, and 5) deference to expertise. Collectively, they combat complacency and hubris in organizations.

Preoccupation with failure includes two key aspects. First, if an organization is preoccupied with failure, it is attuned to little nuances and anomalies that could indicate a larger problem in the organization's operations. The organization tries to avoid death by a thousand cuts. Second, organizations understand the problems that they want to avoid; that is, they articulate the various negative possibilities that could emerge in the organization. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) noted that HROs promote a climate of candor and encouragement that enables organizational members to speak openly and honestly about problematic issues in the organization. By accentuating failures over successes, these organizations seek continual improvement.

While many organizations are content with operating as simply as possible, HROs are reluctant to simplify. They welcome various perspectives and ideas that may complicate their usual routines but could in turn improve them. More specifically, such

differentiation yields “a richer and more varied picture of potential consequences, which in turn suggests a richer and more varied set of precautions and early warning signs” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 53). Complexity compels organizational members to always ask questions and be watchful, whereas simplicity encourages uniformity and the status quo.

Sensitivity to operations is perhaps the most straightforward of the principles of organizational mindfulness. Organizations that are sensitive to operations are concerned about the actual work undertaken in the organization. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) noted that the “actual work” in organizations has contexts, and organizations must therefore seek problems or deviations in daily work. To do otherwise invites automated responses.

Mindful organizations are also committed to resilience. Failure is possible, if not inevitable, but how the organization responds to failure is the hallmark of this principle. HROs know they will be surprised, but they are prepared for the various responses they may need to implement (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). This is quite different from merely anticipating problems; anticipation is only one aspect of dealing with the unexpected. An organization’s tenacity is another aspect, and it is just as critical.

Finally, mindful organizations defer to expertise. In such organizations, people who are qualified are entitled and encouraged to make decisions. These people may not be formal leaders, and they are usually frontline workers, but they are engaged with specific elements of the organization so often that, should problems arise, they are sought for their knowledge. They are also free to use their judgment and implement their expertise. Thus, deference to expertise means rank should be meaningless and decision-making should be flexible (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).

These five principles illustrate how mindful organizations anticipate and then contain unexpected events skillfully. As Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) explain:

To manage the unexpected, organizations need to assess candidly the expectations that hold them together, the grounds on which they believe these expectations, the things these expectations keep them from seeing, and their capability for mindful engagement with these expectations. (p. 42)

A preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise all work in tandem. Collectively, they challenge assumptions, discriminate, exercise caution, and take nothing for granted (Hoy et al., 2006).

Comparing and contrasting individual and organizational mindfulness. As noted earlier, Weick and Sutcliffe's formulation of organizational mindfulness emerged in part from Langer's (1989) conceptualization of individual mindfulness. There are striking features in both, just as there are curious differences as well. Both notions of individual and organizational mindfulness share a common theme of "avoid[ing] the danger not yet risen" (Langer, 1989, p. 202). In essence, mindfulness is a process of discernment, wherein individuals are constantly seeking new information while remaining "situated in the present" (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000, p. 2). The same notion is pertinent to organizations (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Overall, individual mindfulness provides therapeutic benefits to people as organizational mindfulness does to organizations.

Both individual and organizational mindfulness emphasize the importance of multiple perspectives. Langer (1989) noted that multiple perspectives enable people to

have choices and make changes. If people have and embrace many viewpoints, they are not restricted in how they make or understand decisions. Single perspectives present that risk. Likewise, Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) most notably underscored the importance of multiple perspectives in their final principle: deference to expertise. Without multiple perspectives, organizations risk considerable mindlessness. Employees are afraid to speak up if they notice a problem, or they defer to formal leaders who are probably not experts. Or, employees are afraid to ask for help. Sharing many viewpoints, even if they are unpopular, enable organizational members to at least discuss issues of concern, issues that may in fact be serious.

Each construct also stresses the importance of process. Langer (1989) stated that focusing on processes improves judgment and creativity. A process-oriented mindset also makes people feel better about their decision-making; people feel less upset because they employed a process in their thinking. Concentrating merely on outcomes invites feelings of incomplete decision-making, which keeps additional, and perhaps superior, ideas from one's consideration. Similarly, Weick and Sutcliffe (2007), in their principle of sensitivity to operations, argued that a mindful organization, like a mindful person, is highly appreciative of process. What is important is "what we are *actually* [emphasis in the original] doing regardless of what we were supposed to do based on intentions, designs, and plans" (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 59). In essence, a mindful organization cares deeply about the various processes associated with its operations. Outcomes are only as meaningful as the processes by which they were achieved (Hoy et al., 2006).

Conceptually, Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) placed a greater emphasis on culture and mindfulness in the organization than Langer (1989) did on an individual's culture

and mindfulness. Culture certainly affects mindfulness. In an organization, “change toward greater mindfulness often involves movement toward a more informed culture that is focused on reporting, justice, flexibility, and learning” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 138). Organizational leaders must integrate the various principles of mindfulness into the organization’s culture. A top-down approach, through leaders’ symbols and actions, helps create a culture of mindfulness within an organization (Ray et al., 2011; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). In turn, top-down mindful approaches encourage frontline and mid-level organizational members to be more mindful themselves, through a practice called mindful organizing—the actual process of being mindful, not just the characteristic of it (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). Such processes then embed, albeit slowly, mindfulness into the organization’s culture. Accordingly, senior leadership and frontline personnel develop a two-way loop in which mindful actions and thoughts are constantly interchanging.

Langer (1989), however, did not fully account for how an individual’s culture may impact mindfulness. An American may have a different approach to becoming mindful than a Chinese person, most likely due to cultural differences. In other words, Langer’s conceptualization of individual mindfulness is a “one size fits all” approach that does not embrace a person’s culture. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) however considered culture in their framework and provided useful practices for fusing culture and mindfulness.

Understanding Higher Education Organizations

The definitions, theory, and principles of organizational mindfulness have applicability in higher education. Before exploring how organizational mindfulness can

serve as a conceptual framework for understanding higher education institutions and governance matters, it is critical to distinguish certain organizational characteristics—especially shared governance—of colleges and universities. Thus, understanding the organizational nature of colleges and universities is important because it provides context for the discussion of mindfulness.

Below, I review the general organizational characteristics of higher education institutions. Then, I explore shared governance, including its definitions, its history, and the role of administrators and faculty in it.

Colleges and universities as organizations. Colleges and universities are multifaceted, if not labyrinthine, organizations. As Clark (2000) noted, the “campus tends toward composite structure, toward a multiplicity of subcultures, toward intense professionalism, and toward some bureaucratic coordination” (pp. 122-123). Consider that many institutions are what Clark Kerr (2001) called “multiversities,” which are sprawling organizations that fulfill a multitude of missions, many of which extend beyond the classroom or laboratory, for a variety of people. For instance, colleges and universities may operate hospitals, art museums, state-of-the-art recreational facilities, or satellite campuses in foreign countries. Additionally, institutions are situated in a competitive and turbulent environment. They encounter pressures from a host of sources, such as governments and the national and global economies (Manning, 2013). Their governance structures, too, are complicated, because decision-making is shared among a variety of constituents and it has different meanings to different participants (Tierney, 2004).

Higher education institutions are therefore usually “seen as preeminent examples of loosely coupled organized systems in which ambiguity results from soft technologies, fragmented work, and participants who wander in and out, as well as from vague goals” (Clark, 1986, p. 23). Weick (1976) elaborated on loosely coupled systems:

Two units or people may be somehow attached, but each retains some identity and separateness; their attachment may be circumscribed, infrequent, weak in its mutual effects, unimportant, and/or slow to respond. Loose coupling also carries connotations of impermanence, dissolvability, and tacitness, all of which are potentially crucial properties of the “glue” that holds organizations together. (p. 544)

These systems often have considerable slack and means to complete activities or processes (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). Indeed, higher education institutions are not tightly coupled systems like high reliability organizations. Yet, an organization need not be an HRO in order to be mindful (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007; Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld, 1999). Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) noted that although organizational mindfulness was not originally conceptualized to examine loosely coupled organizations, now it might be useful for learning about interdependence in such systems.

How, then, can organizational mindfulness serve as a framework for understanding colleges and universities? As noted earlier, colleges and universities are not HROs; however, the “magnitude of consequences” (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999, p. 51) between HROs and non-HROs is immaterial because all organizations encounter problems. Given that organizational mindfulness can be used to prevent and

respond to challenges, and given that the academy is currently facing a considerable amount of problems, this construct is quite useful.

There is an important caveat to consider in this analysis. Recall that mindful organizations are more likely to achieve their goals (Ray et al., 2011). Higher education organizations, however, usually have ambiguous goals (Clark, 1986). How can organizational mindfulness be useful if there are vague or disparate goals scattered across the academy?

There are two points to address those concerns. First, achieving goals, positive outcomes, or improved performance are welcome results of organizational mindfulness; however, just as important in organizational mindfulness are the processes used to achieve those results (Hoy et al., 2006). Second, although goals may be poorly defined across higher education organizations, that does not mean they do not exist. Increasing enrollment figures, broadening shared governance opportunities, growing an endowment, or winning more faculty fellowships are specific goals one may find in any college or university. There are abstract goals, too, such as “eminence” or “relevance.” In framing this discussion about colleges and universities, it is important to ask, “About what are higher education organizations being mindful?”

University governance. In this instance, higher education organizations are being mindful about shared governance at their institutions. What does shared governance mean, however? How do faculty in particular define shared governance? How do administrators? What are the features of it? To answer these questions, I first review the general meanings of university governance. Then, I review the definitions of shared governance. Next, I examine differences in the definitions of shared governance

across different sectors of higher education. Finally, I review its history and participants, chiefly faculty members and administrators, to establish context. I am especially attentive to how faculty members define it, because they are usually the party that expresses concerns about shared governance violations.

In order to understand shared governance, it is first important to explore the many definitions of university governance. Tierney and Lechuga (2004) noted that governance is commonly “the means to implementing ideas that either respond to problems or provide new strategies” (p. 1). Benjamin and colleagues (1993) offered a detailed definition, noting that governance “refer[s] to the constellation of policies, procedures (written and unwritten) that control resource allocation within and among higher education institutions at all levels” (p. 23). Lee (1991), too, provided a comprehensive definition:

Governance [is] defined as the way issues affecting the entire institution, or components thereof, are decided. It include[s] the structure, both informal and formal, of decision-making groups and the relationship between and among those groups and individuals. It include[s] the process used to reach those decisions and the outcome of recommendations from governance groups to higher-level individuals and groups. (p. 42)

Similarly, Hirsch and Weber (2001) stated that “governance in a university [is] the formal and informal exercise of authority under laws, policies, and rules that articulate the various rights and responsibilities of various actors, including rules by which they interact, so as to help the institution’s academic objectives” (p. viii).

Collectively, these definitions suggest that university governance is a process involving many people, policies, procedures, decisions, and outcomes. Kaplan (2004a) summarized higher education governance aptly: it is “the means and actions by which a collective entity decides matters of policy and strategy” (p. 23). Though there may be an assortment of “means and actions” pertaining to university governance, at its core, it exists to support the academic purpose of institutions (CFAT, 1982). As noted above, the most traditional form of governance in American colleges and universities is shared governance.

Defining shared governance. The meanings and practices of shared governance differ among people and among institutions, even those of comparable type, and even within institutions (Duderstadt, 2004; Mortimer & Sathre, 2007; Tierney, 2004). Broadly, Tierney (2001) stated that the assumption of shared governance is “that a mix of people will participate in structures that encourage joint decision making” (p. 26). Duderstadt (2004) suggested that “in theory, shared governance delegates academic decisions to the faculty and administrative decisions to the administration, leaving the governing board to focus on public policy and accountability” (p. 140). Specifically, then, shared governance is considered a tripartite division of authority and responsibility among the governing board, faculty members, and the president and his or her administration (Birnbaum, 2004). Furthermore, Duderstadt (2001) noted, those divisions consist of “public oversight and trusteeship, collegial faculty governance, and experienced but generally short-term administrative and usually amateur leadership” (p. 26), respectively.

Hirsch (2001) offered a similar view, noting that “ideally, shared governance in universities assigns specific rights and responsibilities to its three stakeholders i.e., provides for a separation of powers, and establishes a structure and process for stakeholders to interact in specific undertakings” (p. 147). The *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities* (also called the “Joint Statement”), a framework for shared governance drafted in 1966, clearly demarcates the responsibilities of presidents, faculties, and governing boards. In fact, it reveals two important themes:

(1) important areas of action involve at one time or another the initiating capacity and decision-making participation of all the institutional components, and (2) differences in the weight of each voice, from one point to the next, should be determined by reference to the responsibility of each component for the particular matter at hand, as developed hereinafter (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2013, para. 7).

All of these definitions provide a broad description of shared governance. Collectively, they portray shared governance as a process of collaborative decision-making within higher education. The problem, however, is that these definitions of shared governance are somewhat vague and theoretical. What operationally constitutes shared governance?

The literature suggests that shared governance is mainly a cultural construct and that the dimensions of it primarily include communication, consultation, symbolism, and structures (Mortimer & Sathre, 2007; Tierney, 2004). That is, shared governance is a combination of institutions’ formal procedures and structures, as well as informal or latent functions.

Consider that Birnbaum (1992b) noted that governance systems are about “manifestations of culture” (p. 178). Kuh and Whitt’s (2000) comprehensive definition of culture in higher education stated it is

the collective, mutually shaping patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behavior of individuals and groups in an institute of higher education and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off campus. (p. 162)

That definition helps create a holistic description of shared governance as a cultural element. Tierney and Minor (2003) offer additional support for that notion. They found that the vast majority of faculty members at baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral institutions viewed shared governance as an “important part of the institution’s values and identity” (Tierney & Minor, 2003, p. 9). Furthermore, Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum (1989) noted that faculty and presidents have “establish[ed] expected norms” (p. 74) from the principles of shared governance. Sustained support for shared governance from presidents, faculty members, and governing boards has also added to its cultural value over time (Mortimer & Sathre, 2007).

Tierney (2004), an expert on shared governance, offers a model of shared governance that incorporates institutional culture and serves as a useful framework for examining and defining it. His conceptualization categorizes the various interpretations of shared governance into four dimensions: a legislative model, a symbolic model, a consultative model, and a communicative model. This is a cultural framework that is “interpretive and dynamic” (Tierney, 2004, p. 203). Tierney and Minor (2003) obtained

qualitative and quantitative data from faculty members and senior administrators, which contributed to the development of this framework.

The legislative model is perhaps the most prevalent dimension of shared governance, as the previous sections in this essay indicate. In the legislative model, Tierney (2004) stated that shared governance is “formalized structures of decision making” (p. 204). These are the university senates (cf. Lee, 1991) and committees; or, they may be the “written” policies and procedures, as Benjamin and colleagues (1993, p. 23) called them. In essence, the legislative model highlights the actual elements and mechanisms used that complement shared governance.

The symbolic model proposes that shared governance consists of interpretations, ceremonies, or rituals, for example. Tierney and Minor (2004) noted, “Manifest messages of governance and the latent and symbolic cultural meanings of an institution also merit attention” (p. 90). That is, even though structures for shared governance often exist in higher education, what does or does not occur within them can have meaning (Birnbaum, 1992b). For instance, a president who never attends senate or university committee meetings can send different messages to different people about shared governance (Tierney & Minor, 2004).

A consultative model is straightforward. In this model, faculty members are consulted on institutional matters. Such consultation may be “information sharing and discussion rather than joint decision” (Mortimer & Sathre, 2007, p. 25), wherein each party may be consulted on a matter but may not necessarily decide it. Or, as the “Joint Statement” implies, consultation could lead to joint decision-making (AAUP, 2013). In other instances, law or institutional policy may mandate consultation (Franke, 1995).

What is important, though, is that constituents, especially administrators and faculty members, at least confer with each other.

Finally, the communicative model suggests there is “broad agreement on the strategic direction on the institution” (Tierney, 2004, p. 206). This does not mean that there is mere communication among colleagues as in consultation; rather, it means that there is a mutual understanding about the institution’s identity and goals.

Structures, symbols, consultation, and communication are all dimensions of shared governance that, when fused together, create a dynamic and complex definition of the construct. This approach to defining shared governance highlights the importance of an organization’s culture in governance and decision-making. According to Tierney (2004), working with an organization’s culture, more than modifying its structures, allows colleges and universities to improve its shared governance practices.

Organizational mindfulness relates to Tierney’s (2004) framework. When organizational actors in colleges and universities properly use their governance structures, are attentive to symbolism, consult with each other frequently and openly, and communicate clearly and effectively, they exhibit mindfulness.

A brief history of shared governance. Understanding the history of shared governance and the functions of its participants helps create context for its various definitions. Moreover, the history and democratic traditions of shared governance have shaped its cultural importance within higher education. Here, I review its history and then outline faculty members’ and administrators’ typical roles and reasons for involvement in shared governance systems. A pattern reveals that as universities grew in

quantity and complexity, there were greater demands for shared governance, especially from the faculty.

Prior to the Civil War, presidents actively led most colleges and universities. Strong governing boards, which were typically composed of religious and civic leaders, often supported the president. The president was usually the sole administrator and faculties—and the institutions themselves—were very small (McCormick & Meiners, 1988; Shapiro, 1998). As higher education flourished following the Civil War, presidents became more powerful, mainly as a result of tensions between governing boards and an expanding and increasingly agitated faculty (Crowley, 1994). This was the period in the history of higher education when institutional presidents were practically mythological and regarded as “giants on earth” (Shapiro, 1998, p. 75).

However, there is some evidence of benevolent presidents including faculty in institutional decision-making during this period. For example, William Rainey Harper of the University of Chicago and Charles Eliot of Harvard University frequently included faculty in governance matters (Gray, 1998). Birnbaum (2004) and Crowley (1994) also indicated that some institutions proposed or implemented crude arrangements for shared governance even earlier in the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, faculty involvement in governance remained relatively minimal at most institutions.

However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, this trend began to change. Faculty started to view presidents, and the higher education enterprise on the whole, with concern and skepticism (Crowley, 1994; Shapiro, 1998). In fact,

Faculty attention in the early twentieth century was more and more focused on the need for involvement and protection. The threatening and potentially alienating

presence of presidential and trustee authority, a perceived business orientation, and growing bureaucratic control produced the inevitable response. (Crowley, 1994, p. 61)

Many presidents were harshly criticized for their authoritarian—either perceived or real—leadership (Crowley, 1994). Furthermore, attacks on academic freedom increased, and these incidents emboldened faculty to have even greater involvement in institutional affairs. After the Ross case at Stanford University in 1900, in which a professor was dismissed for his political views, the “rights and responsibilities” (Tierney, 1997, p. 18) of faculty became especially prominent.

College and university presidents therefore began to democratize their governance structures relative to faculty (Crowley, 1994). Likewise, with the rise of progressivism and populism in American society, colleges and universities embraced egalitarian ideals in their governance structures (Kezar, Hartley, & Maxey, 2012). Shared governance remained a fledging endeavor. With the increasing professionalism of the professoriate, however, and the phenomenal growth in higher education following World War II, faculty gained greater involvement in curricular and non-curricular matters (Birnbaum, 2004).

The Red Scare of the 1950s and campus unrest of the 1960s especially solidified faculty involvement in institutional governance. During this era, for instance, the Supreme Court of the United States recognized in a landmark ruling four freedoms that had implications for academic freedom and also governance. In *Sweezy v. New Hampshire* (1957), the Court held that faculty members were free to decide who may teach, what may be taught, how it may be taught, and who may be admitted to study.

In 1966, the landmark *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities* (also known as the “Joint Statement”)—a joint creation of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB)—formalized shared governance. This critical, if not “canonical” (Birnbaum, 2004, p. 5), document delineated each party’s respective responsibilities. In essence, faculty members govern the curriculum and other matters relevant to it; presidents and their administrator colleagues manage the enterprise; and governing boards ensure that the institution operates effectively, responsibly, and lawfully (AAUP, 2013). Though each party’s responsibilities are clearly outlined, the “Joint Statement” expressly notes that the faculty, president, and governing board should and must work collaboratively across these jurisdictions (AAUP, 2013; Burgan, 2004).

As these ideals became entrenched within the academy, the scope of shared governance expanded too. For instance, non-academic staff members and students became involved in institutional governance, while faculty participation in governance extended into areas such as budgeting and finance (Dimond, 1991; Duderstadt, 2004; Lyall, 2001). Thus, the roles of participants, especially faculty and administrators, provide additional insight into shared governance.

Shared governance in different sectors of higher education. The previous sections offer a general overview of shared governance. However, as Kezar (2001) noted, shared governance often varies by institutional type. Unfortunately, the literature largely ignores what shared governance means in most of those sectors. A few discussions about shared governance by institutional type exist, and they provide some

intriguing insights, too. Below, I briefly review analyses of shared governance at liberal arts colleges, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Christian institutions, and research universities.

Shared governance at liberal arts colleges, according to Shinn (2004), is considerably inclusive due to the nature of the institution. Liberal arts colleges are small and intimate. Faculty members often teach beyond the confines of their own departments, and they interact with colleagues from a variety of disciplines. Faculty and administrators often spend their entire careers in one institution, too. As Kaplan (2004b) noted, faculty at liberal arts colleges are smaller and governance is collegial.

Perhaps given all of these factors, all of the dimensions of shared governance are in liberal arts colleges; that is, there are probably structures, symbols, consultation, and communication. But, as Shinn (2004) suggested, those factors could lead to a faculty-centric view of shared governance—or too much governance, in essence—on campus, which can impair effective governance. Thus, the mission and nature of liberal arts colleges may be conducive to those dimensions of shared governance, but they may also impact its actual practices.

At HBCUs, Minor (2004) found that shared governance is important to faculty members; however, HBCUs' traditional emphasis on teaching, their commitment to their historic mission, and a racialized climate were impediments to greater faculty involvement. Phillips (2002) also noted that the institutional history of HBCUs—which includes strong governing boards and presidents—also inhibits greater participation in shared governance. Shared governance exists at HBCUs—and it may mean structures,

symbols, communication, and consultation—but that definition may not be as strong as it at other types of institutions.

McKnight, McIntire, and Stude (2007) surveyed over 100 evangelical Christian colleges and universities to learn about their shared governance policies and procedures. They found that institutions had diverse shared governance arrangements in terms of membership, size, and policy. At most institutions, however, administrators often make decisions and solve problems with at least some faculty input.

Lyall (2001) explored shared governance in research universities, where she stated that faculty members are too often consumed in governance matters. Consequently, their chief duties to teach and research are negatively impacted. Miller (1999) has offered a similar assessment. Furthermore, Lyall (2001) suggested that too many participants, such as students, are involved in shared governance, and that graduate student unionization has created an adversarial environment for shared governance.

Shared governance in community colleges has changed dramatically in recent decades. From their inception as extensions to K-12 education, these institutions were often governed similarly to high schools, and this arrangement was common even after the postwar growth of community colleges across the country (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). In the last thirty years, however, community colleges have grown in size, scope, and complexity (Townsend & Twombly, 2001). This evolution has also created major changes in community college governance—resulting in shared governance policies and procedures akin to those of four-year institutions (Miller & Miles, 2008).

These brief examples demonstrate that the dimensions of shared governance may be common across all kinds of institutions, but certain features of each sector may have

an impact on them. Institutional mission, size, and history can each have a profound effect on the meaning and the practice of shared governance.

The roles of faculty and administrators in shared governance. The history of shared governance reveals a long, gradual shift to bureaucratic decision-making in colleges and universities. Administrators and faculty members have been at the forefront of that shift. It is important to consider that although nearly all presidents and some administrators, by virtue of their positions, are involved in shared governance, not all faculty members are (CFAT, 1982; Duderstadt, 2004).

The role of faculty in shared governance. Practically all faculty members' roles in shared governance involve curricular matters, as the "Joint Statement" delineates (AAUP, 2013). In fact, that is the predominant rationale for faculty members' involvement in shared governance (Mortimer & Sathre, 2007). If, as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1982) has suggested, the purpose of governance is to "sustain and strengthen the essential academic core" (p. 7), then faculty primacy in this area is understandable, if not essential.

Consider that in a comprehensive survey of faculty members and administrators, Kaplan (2004b) confirmed that most faculty control decisions related to academics, such as reviewing the curriculum or setting teaching loads. In addition, he noted that faculty members also have considerable control over personnel decisions and governance matters. Tierney and Minor (2003) surveyed faculty members and administrators as well and had comparable findings. Faculty members' main roles in shared governance are to support the academic mission of their institutions. Or, put differently, faculty are primarily involved in shared governance to ensure "academic freedom and educational

quality” (Heaney, 2010, p. 69). Indeed, Hamilton (2004) stated that the modern foundation for faculty involvement—and authority—in shared governance rests upon the traditions of academic freedom, as well as knowledge creation and peer review. Although faculty may have primacy in curricular matters, that does not preclude presidents or governing boards from sharing in the governance of those matters.

Academic issues are not the only areas over which faculty members share oversight. Studies from Kaplan (2004b) and Tierney and Minor (2003), and additional research from Dimond (1991) and Kissler (1997), also indicated that faculty have roles in institutional budgeting and finance, though to a lesser extent than academic affairs. Additionally, faculty members may have roles in the governance of student athletics; again, however, this is not widespread (Newman & Bartee, 1999). Duderstadt (2001) suggested that increasing complexity and time sensitivity in non-academic matters are some of the reasons faculty members are not as involved in those areas.

Finally, faculty members have a role in shared governance to scrutinize governance itself, especially the leadership of their presidents and the administration. They serve as a type of monitor over their presidents’ actions, akin to a legislative “checks and balances” approach (Miller, 1999). Or, said differently, they engage in a form of peer review of governance. For instance, Birnbaum (1992b) argued,

Faculty are obligated to judge whether the missions of creating and disseminating knowledge are being honored, whether a president is appropriately concerned with curriculum and student development, whether sufficient conditions for academic work are maintained, and whether the president operates in a manner consistent with a collegial community. (p. 58)

In sum, faculty members function in shared governance systems in two key ways: they almost always oversee curricular affairs and other matters that emanate from them. They also help manage non-academic matters, though to a far lesser extent. Faculty members therefore have a prominent position in shared governance.

The role of administrators in shared governance. The role of the college president and his or her administration is equally important. The college president's—or, broadly, his or her “administration's”—relationship with faculty vis-à-vis shared governance is often hostile (Del Favero, 2002). This antagonism has existed for a long time (Holton, 1995). To understand this relationship better, the role of administrators—chiefly the president—in shared governance is explored below.

The “Joint Statement” provides some specific responsibilities to presidents and their administrations; mainly, they should set goals, deliver leadership, and provide communication (AAUP, 2013). Additionally, Birnbaum (1992b) stated that presidents must be responsive to staff, faculty, and trustees more than any other constituency. These colleagues' support is vital for successful leadership in shared governance. Hirsch (2001), though, contended that presidents must “facilitate productive work by faculty and make sure that students are given a quality education” (p. 148). Kerr and Glade (1986) stated that presidents have a host of roles within shared governance systems; chief among them is to persuade others and to build consensus. Essentially, college presidents' involvement in shared governance is often fraught with contradictions and complexities.

The role of the president in shared governance is also complex when it is analyzed in relation to the faculty. Joyal (1956), then the president of Fresno State University, wrote that in the context of shared governance,

It is generally considered that the primary function of college administration is to provide the best possible physical setting and to promote the most favorable conditions so that teaching may be done with maximum efficiency. In other words, administration is merely an adjunct to teaching and learning, and the job of the administrator is to help to develop and maintain a good learning situation . . . everyone recognizes that the faculty is the most important single factor involved, and one in which the administration is vitally concerned (p. 10).

Joyal is largely describing views about the “administration” and not the president. His assessment of the “administration,” though, is equally applicable to the role of college presidents in shared governance; specifically, in relation to the faculty, the president is often—or should be—subordinate to the faculty. That notion has been expressed since at least the time of Veblen (2013), who practically argued for the abolishment of the college presidency in 1918. Meanwhile, Kerr and Glade (1986) noted that the president still leads but as a “first among equals” with faculty colleagues. Even the “Joint Statement” alluded to faculty prominence (AAUP, 2013). From the president’s perspective, what may seem shared may not be entirely, further complicating his or her role.

Interestingly, before the rise of shared governance, college presidents had a much different role on their campuses and in their communities. As noted earlier, they were extremely powerful and considered practically heroic (Crowley, 1994). Yet, as higher education transformed into a sprawling enterprise, the presidency did as well (Kerr, 2001). The heroic, scholar-leader of the past is gone. Today, the president is comparable

to a chief executive officer, who oversees a variety of educational, commercial, artistic, athletic, political, and financial enterprises (Duderstadt, 2001).

Lyall (2001) and Mortimer and Sathre (2007) suggested such overextension has weakened the presidency and therefore strained the president's role in shared governance. How can a president effectively engage in shared governance procedures if he or she must always address these various demands? Hirsch (2001) offered a comparable assessment: he suggested that presidents could participate properly in shared governance if they focus on matters related to their institutions' academic functions.

The president's role in shared governance is complex for a variety of reasons. The nature of the presidency, its juxtaposition with faculty, and its contemporary problems impose stringent demands on those who hold the office. Consequently, presidents encounter significant challenges as they govern alongside faculty members.

The literature on shared governance also discusses, though very minimally, the roles of other administrators, such as provosts and deans. Miller and Pope (2002), for instance, reviewed the roles of provosts in governance and argued that because modern presidents have an abundance of external responsibilities, provosts are analogous to legislative whips or state governors. Like whips (who liaise between party members and party leadership) and governors (who must meet both state and federal demands), the provost is situated in a precarious position between the faculty and the administration. The provost must introduce ideas, generate support for them, and implement them (Miller & Pope, 2002). Gallos (2002) noted that deans face comparable challenges and often serve merely as "facilitators" (p. 178) of governance.

The complexity of shared governance. Shared governance remains “the normative means of governing a college” (Morphew, 1999, p. 73) in the United States. Its rich traditions of consultation and deliberation still endure in the academy, notwithstanding modern pressures for faster decision-making and greater accountability. Faculty members have a central, if not *the* central, location in the shared governance system. Therefore, they are quite important for successful governance. Presidents and their administrations have a critical but complex role, and a productive relationship among these parties is essential for institutional prosperity.

Unfortunately, few studies exist about shared governance at different types of institutions. The examples discussed earlier suggest size and mission affect shared governance meanings and practices to some extent. Additional research on this subject could provide useful insights into what shared governance truly means and how it works.

Finally, the literature offers several important insights into the complexity of shared governance and its assorted meanings. Shared governance is multifaceted and has different meanings and interpretations. However, most definitions treat the construct as if its participants—mainly faculty and administrators—all view it the same way. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain how one party particularly defines shared governance.

Under the broader aegis of shared governance, common dimensions emerge: using proper structures and policies, being attentive to symbolism, consulting appropriately, and communicating clearly and effectively all serve as important components of shared governance and present a more nuanced definition of the construct. Moreover, these dimensions instruct faculty members, presidents, governing boards, and

other university constituents how to practice shared governance successfully—and organizational mindfulness can ensure that these actors do.

Organizational Mindfulness and Higher Education

For higher education institutions, Weick and Sutcliffe's (2007) principles underscore the importance and power of organizational mindfulness. The construct can be used to anticipate and contain serious problems that may affect colleges and universities. Shared governance is used in this instance, but other potential contexts of concern—such as university athletics or campus safety—could also be explored. Regardless of the context, however, mindfulness can help organizations improve their overall performance.

Thus, I return to Weick and Sutcliffe's (2007) five principles to explore how organizational mindfulness can be useful to the study of higher education institutions. I first consider examples and scenarios from various higher education contexts. Then, I apply the five principles of organizational mindfulness to matters of shared governance. These approaches form a conceptual framework for applying organizational mindfulness in higher education.

Applying organizational mindfulness in higher education contexts. The first principle is preoccupation with failure. Organizational members actively look for small signs of failure, and when mistakes are made, they look for larger, systemic issues that could produce crises. They encourage the reporting of errors, and they understand what they seek to avoid. Consider if a college started to receive fewer applications from cities or states where, in previous years, it traditionally received many. Conceivably, there is a problem, but it may be unknown to administrators. Perhaps prospective students see the

institution's facilities as outdated, its reputation as weaker, or the campus climate as unwelcoming. A mindful organization would encourage its admissions counselors and management to work together to analyze the problem. In turn, they may identify reasons for the decline and can suggest improvements. By focusing on this particular failure, they may be able to thwart the decline in applications.

The reluctance to simplify is the second principle. Complexity is welcomed because simplicity encourages blind spots. Consider this example from Ray and colleagues (2011): if a donor to a business school cancels his or her gift, mindful administrators would not treat the cancelation as a "function of a bad economy" (p. 192); rather, they would explore all possible reasons, stated or unstated, for the cancelation in order to prevent that from happening again. Multiple, even opposing, views are encouraged.

Thirdly, sensitivity to operations is, as noted earlier, a straightforward principle. This principle means that organizational members are "attentive to the front line" (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 12). They are focused on the actual operations of the organization. For example, Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) suggested that budgets are insensitive to operations. That notion is relevant to higher education (cf. Waggaman, 1991). For example, a college's accounting office may distribute funds to various offices or departments without any ground-level knowledge of what they actually need. A deprivation of funds to some areas could have serious repercussions for the institution. Imagine if a residence hall director requested funds for safety improvements, but budget officials did not allocate the money because they misunderstood the nature of the request, and a student was consequently injured. In this instance, there are disconnections—or

insensitivities—in operations. A mindful institution would have, perhaps, continually reviewed its budgeting practices to ensure that funds for high-priority needs were available, and finance personnel understood when to use them.

Commitment to resilience is the fourth principle. Resilient organizations can handle adversity, respond punctually to problems should one arise, and learn from them. Most importantly, “errors don’t disable” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 17) resilient organizations; instead, they serve as opportunities to learn and to act. For example, universities know that they and their programs will be ranked against other institutions and their programs annually in various publications. Suppose a university’s ranking plummets several places. A mindful organization will show resilience if it handles adversity, rebounds, and learns from the problem (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). In this example, a university that suffers in rankings could embrace mindfulness as a means for improvement by learning from the drop in the rankings and quickly acting to correct it.

The final principle is deference to expertise. In mindful organizations, competent organizational actors are consulted for their expertise and are encouraged to apply it. Rigid hierarchies can be burdensome; therefore, authority is diffused to the most knowledgeable members within the system (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007). This principle is perhaps the most practiced in universities. An inherent component of the academy is that faculty members operate as experts in their departments and disciplines (Clark, 1986). This subject expertise translates into broad discretion over institutional, and especially academic, operations. That is, because faculty members have expertise in specific areas, they have a greater role in managing the academic aspects of the university (AAUP, 2013). Mindful universities encourage their faculty members to use their expertise to

improve the enterprise.

Applying organizational mindfulness in shared governance contexts. A mindful university administrator or faculty member will scan for problems to find potential failures. He or she is attuned to discrepancies because “believing is seeing” (Hoy et al., 2006). For example, if a president’s proposals are routinely rejected by faculty colleagues—or vice versa—perhaps that is indicative of their feelings toward each other’s overall agenda. Mindful administrators and faculty members recognize these setbacks as symptoms of larger problem.

Also, administrators and faculty will embrace complexity to avoid the perils of simplicity. As Ray and associates (2011) noted, “Administrators of a mindful college seek out disconfirming information and continually evaluate the sources of information on which it relies, including how that information is gathered, integrated, and conveyed to decision makers” (p. 192). That is, to be reluctant to simplify is to welcome diverse perspectives and rival explanations (Hoy et al., 2006). Mindful administrators and faculty members would most certainly seek various opinions from their colleagues. Indeed, from a president’s perspective, inviting multiple views from faculty colleagues is essential to successful shared governance.

A mindful administrator or faculty member is also sensitive to specific shared governance procedures. He or she most certainly participates in the *de jure* aspects of shared governance. More importantly, though, a mindful administrator or faculty member shows sensitivity to the latent shared governance operations as well. These are the symbolic, consultative, and communicative dimensions of shared governance—dimensions that concern culture, outreach, and building consensus (Tierney, 2004).

Mindful administrators and faculty recognize that *de jure* shared governance, such as university senate meetings, have deeper meanings; they are “symbols of cooperation between faculty and administration” (Birnbaum, 1991, p. 13). An especially mindful administrator or faculty member is attuned to these underlying aspects of shared governance. They are just as critical to the operations of the enterprise than mere monthly meetings.

When problems do arise, mindful administrators and faculty members know how to address them. They are resilient in the face of difficulty. A college president in New York, for example, had significant difficulty working with her faculty colleagues in the college’s shared governance structures. After months of tension, the president and faculty leadership worked through their difficulties by using a third-party mediator. Considerable progress was made; however, the true outcome will never be known because the president was promoted to another institution in the state (Petrick, 2007). Regardless, the president and faculty showed considerable resilience by recognizing a challenge and working together to overcome it.

Deference to expertise means mindful administrators and faculty will engage each other in governance. This is a critical notion because Lee (1991), for example, noted that effective shared governance is often related to a president’s deference to faculty expertise. Mindful administrators and faculty members will not only engage those with expertise, but they will also cultivate relationships. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) stated that conversations, interrelating, and networking are the most crucial approaches to deferring to expertise.

Chapter Summary

Mindfulness is applicable to all organizations, including colleges and universities. Mindful organizations can increase attentiveness, reduce mistakes, and foster a culture of learning, candor, and trust. These ideas are particularly critical in the context of shared governance, a revered and vital aspect of higher education institutions.

The five principles of organizational mindfulness demonstrate how mindfulness can help administrators and faculty members govern a college or university effectively. They underscore the importance of attention, discrimination, communication, and honesty. Contrast those positive attributes with those of mindless administrators or faculty members, who may lead or make decisions based upon routine processes, automated behaviors, and myopic views. They may, for instance, act as they did at a different university or fail to understand their institution's culture. They may be so boldly committed to certain ideas that opposing views become unwelcome. For presidents especially, these are serious problems that can jeopardize relationships and even careers. Mindfulness helps avoid such pitfalls in which many higher education institutions often find themselves.

In the following chapters, I explore how organizational mindfulness manifests itself in shared governance contexts at two institutions. I begin that discussion in the next chapter by reviewing the specific methods I used to answer my research questions.

Chapter 3: Methods

This chapter explores the methodology used for this study. I used a case study method, with a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design. Quantitative methods were used first, and qualitative methods were used second. I used non-probability-based sampling and inferential statistical techniques in the first stage. In the second stage, I analyzed documents and conducted interviews of faculty members and administrators. Below, I detail my step-by-step, replicable process for exploring my research questions. I first review my overall research design, including a discussion of the case study and mixed-methods approaches. Then, I discuss my instruments, including issues of reliability and validity. Next, I review my sampling approaches. I conclude with a report of sampling sites, data collection, measurements, and privacy and ethical considerations.

Research Design

In their study of organizational mindfulness in colleges of business, Ray and colleagues (2011) examined perceptions of the construct based on one's role in the college. I offer similar purposes for my research. I ask if there are differences in perception based upon institutional type and one's role. I use interviews to explore how faculty and administrators perceive the construct, too.

To answer my research questions, I used a case study approach. Case studies are best used when researchers ask "how" or "why" questions about certain phenomena (Yin, 2003). In this study, I explore how organizational mindfulness manifests itself in shared governance contexts. Furthermore, two cases are used in this study. Multiple case

studies enrich the analysis and lead to stronger generalizations (Merriam, 2001; Stake, 2000).

I used a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design, with a primary emphasis on quantitative research and a supplementary emphasis on qualitative research. The quantitative stage involves the survey and the statistical analysis of its findings. The purpose of the qualitative stage is to clarify and expand upon the results from the quantitative component (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Ivankova et al., 2006). In the latter stage, I analyzed governance-related documents from the liberal arts college and research university to explicate my survey results, and I also conducted interviews with faculty and administrators. I combine these qualitative techniques to form vignettes about each institution.

Mixed-methods designs are legitimate and useful approaches for analyzing research questions (Ivankova et al., 2006; Wheeldon, 2010). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) noted that these designs “draw on the strengths and minimize the weaknesses” (p. 15) of quantitative and qualitative research, and that “many research questions and combinations of questions are best and most fully answered through mixed research solutions” (p. 18). Indeed, these designs are rooted in a pragmatist paradigm that rejects binary methods—adhering to either quantitative or qualitative approaches—and instead emphasizes how to use both to best answer one’s research question(s) (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

In this study, a mixed-methods approach is helpful for several reasons. First, the quantitative stage of this study is modeled on previous research, which provides a clear rationale for this stage. Second, a supplementary qualitative analysis clarifies the data. It

contextualizes the findings beyond the scope of survey results. My two specific qualitative methods—document analysis and interviews—create a rich portrait of the phenomenon. Document analysis provides, according to Whitt (2001), a “fruitful source of primary and secondary data” (p. 453) because documents are easily accessible, unobtrusive, and, obviously, highly contextual. Most importantly, documents are useful because they are artifacts; that is, they are material objects that reflect an organization’s culture (Kuh & Whitt, 2000). Interviews generate considerable data, for they “allow the subjects to convey to others their situation from their own perspective and in their own words” (Kvale, 2007, p. 11). These individual perspectives provide information, for instance, not necessarily discernable in surveys or in documents.

The qualitative analysis also alleviates the problems associated with a low survey response rate. In a strictly quantitative design, this response rate weakens the study. In a mixed-methods design, however, a supplemental qualitative analysis mitigates—but does not correct—that concern by enriching what findings were actually obtained.

Survey Instrument

In this study, I created a survey instrument that incorporated Hoy and colleagues’ (2006) and Ray and colleagues’ (2011) cross-sectional, Likert-type assessments of organizational mindfulness. A Likert-type survey is valuable because such surveys provide a continuum that yields more reliable and analyzable data (Fowler, 2009). This survey, in the format of a simple web-based instrument, was employed at eight institutions throughout the Midwest. In particular, I asked faculty members and administrators to respond to questions that gauge the five principles of organizational

mindfulness. As noted earlier, the findings from this study may help alleviate or prevent problems in shared governance.

I first asked participants to give their consent to participate in my study. Then, I asked respondents to select their institution and the one role (i.e., faculty or administrator) that best described their current responsibilities. Next, I asked if the respondent had ever participated in shared governance at their institution. If they had, they could proceed; if they had not, the survey ended. Then, I used a 15-item, Likert-type scale with six responses: strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, agree, and strongly agree. I asked participants to rate their level of agreement with each statement. Three statements addressed each principle of organizational mindfulness for a total of fifteen statements.

Instrument validity and reliability. DeVellis (2012) offers several guidelines that researchers can use to increase their instruments' validity and reliability. Chiefly, though not exclusively, he suggests using experts to review content and format, incorporating validation items if appropriate, and pretesting the survey with a small development sample. Fowler (2009), too, reaffirms the importance of the latter.

Expert review. I engaged in a subject-matter expert review, which is a critical aspect of instrument construction. In this study, subject-matter experts are faculty members and administrators. I e-mailed the draft survey to each expert and then followed-up via email to ensure they would take the survey (and if they would not, learn why). My expert reviewers were two faculty members and an administrator.

DeVellis (2012) offers several suggestions for expert reviews. He suggests that researchers ask experts to evaluate if items actually measured the corresponding

constructs; if research questions/phenomena could benefit from additional (or fewer) constructs or items; and, if constructs and items were concise and understandable. Item-by-item evaluation plus feedback on all of the above points were highly useful and important to the instrument's reliability and validity. Each of DeVellis' (2012) suggestions address interconnected survey issues, such as clarity, reliability, and the measurements themselves.

DeVellis (2012) states that the researcher has ultimate authority on whether or not to include the revisions. My experts' critiques were very useful and I adhered to nearly all of their suggested revisions. I reviewed carefully their suggestions on the subject matter; in particular, I added a basic definition of shared governance to provide some clarification for participants. I also considered my experts' suggestions regarding layout and scales, for instance, even though survey design and construction were not necessarily among my experts' competencies. In fact, the lone criticism I rejected was the suggestion to include a "no opinion" or "n/a" choice in my instrument. I rejected this suggestion because other organizational mindfulness assessments do not use that choice.

I was especially attuned to their criticism regarding the quantity of statements that measures each principle of organizational mindfulness. Asking multiple questions to gauge reactions on a select few topics is a major process to increase reliability (Fowler, 2009). This arrangement allows researchers to look for consistency within the instrument. In my survey, I asked about the same variables but in different ways. Simply put, Fowler's (2009) ideas underscore the importance of having good, thoughtful, and clear questions. My experts found the quantity and quality of statements to be very acceptable.

Validation. Both Fowler (2009) and Phillips and Clancy (1972) note social desirability bias—when respondents answer questions to appear favorable—is a threat to validity. Of course, this threat is usually confined to in-person interviews and involves embarrassing or awkward responses. This survey has neither. The instrument itself is a threat to internal validity, as Fowler (2009) adds. However, he offers prescriptions to address this: ask reliable questions; have several categories on the survey’s scale; and, ask multiple questions.

Pretest. The most salient reliability procedure is a pretest. Because I created my instrument, I pretested it with my experts. Fowler (2009) noted that pretests are useful means of improving survey questions and clarifying directions. Where the expert review concerned subject matter and formatting critique, the pretest adds the actual process of taking the survey.

I pretested my survey with my experts via email. Because these faculty were scattered across the state, I could not visit them individually, but I availed myself while they pretested the survey. My experts took the survey successfully and reported a positive experience.

Furthermore, this approach allows the investigator to conduct cognitive interviews, which Collins (2003) described as additional “tools” for refining one’s survey. The cognitive interview process is designed to understand comprehension of survey questions and the confidence of responses (Fowler, 2009). These two probes are especially salient because shared governance can mean different things to different people. In subsequent correspondence with my development sample, we discussed and rectified issues of comprehension and confidence.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol consisted of five questions. These questions explored one's role at his or her institution and one's definition of shared governance at his or her institution. They also probed one's understanding of organizational mindfulness at his or her institution, and how the construct might relate to shared governance there. The final question asked for recommendations for additional interviewees.

These questions were created after the survey's conclusion. They sought to expand upon the survey findings by asking general questions about shared governance and organizational mindfulness, with a definition provided for the latter. Such approaches adhered to Kvale's (2007) recommendations for "introducing" and "probing" questions. If insightful or unclear answers were provided, I asked follow-up questions. All questions were designed to learn about "the roles of the 'why,' 'what,' and 'how'" (Kvale, 2007, p. 58) of the phenomenon under study. This is the protocol:

- Can you tell me about your position at this institution?
- Can you describe shared governance at your institution?
- Organizational mindfulness is the extent to which an organization effectively prevents instabilities or responds to them should they arise. Mindful organizations are preoccupied with failure, sensitive to operations, reluctant to simplify, committed to resilience, and deferential to experts in the organization. Given this definition, can you talk about organizational mindfulness at your institution? When and how does it work? Who practices it more frequently?
- What is the relationship between organizational mindfulness and shared governance at your institution?
- Could you please recommend others with whom I might speak about this topic?

My advisor, a seasoned qualitative researcher, vetted the protocol; however, it was not evaluated by other qualitative research experts or pretested with pilot interviewees. These limitations were due to time restrictions. Nonetheless, all participants expressed satisfaction with its brevity and straightforwardness.

Sample

The units of analysis in this study are faculty and administrators from different types of higher education institutions. Thus, this study required two types of sampling for the survey portion: one to select the institutions and one to select the people within them. I used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling to achieve that. I selected certain colleges and universities in the Midwest purposely to showcase an array of institutions by type. Then, to find administrative and faculty respondents within those colleges and universities, I employed snowball sampling. These are non-probability-based sampling techniques; hence, such samples are subjective and are not suitable for generalization to a population (Ross, 2005).

For instance, using these approaches, researchers do not know the probability of an institution or person being selected, or if an institution or person had a known chance of being selected at all. Variance and confidence intervals, for example, are not considered because the assumptions of probability are not used (Wretman, 2010). Though non-probability sampling may be a cheaper or more convenient option for researchers (Fowler, 2009), it will lead to survey samples and outcomes that are considerably different than those from probability-based approaches. Of course, one can still gain useful insights from non-probability approaches; however, caution should be used when considering such studies.

Sample types, advantages, and disadvantages. Below, I review the two types of sampling I used. Then, I consider the advantages and disadvantages of both. Finally, I discuss the specific sample sites from which I solicited survey responses.

In a purposive sample, a researcher selects “elements which represent a ‘typical sample’ from the appropriate target population” (Ross, 2005, p. 7). That is, a researcher tries to replicate a population using his or her judgment. In this study, I tried to replicate the population of liberal arts colleges and research universities throughout the United States.

In a snowball sample, an initial group of people are contacted and then asked to identify comparable people in the same population (Wretman, 2010). This process continues until the researcher gathers the number of participants he or she would like. This “snowball” process yields the sample. With a snowball sample, the researcher could start with a small number of faculty members and administrators, ask them to circulate information about the survey to their colleagues, and have those participants engage more of their colleagues across campus until the researcher is satisfied.

There are several benefits to these approaches. Chiefly, in a purposive sample, the researcher has more control and can gather a sample that reflects the diversity of the population (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). At a large university, snowball sampling could be quite practical and could alleviate the researcher from the rather arduous task of identifying individual respondents. Snowball sampling also has a significant advantage relative to nonresponse. Nonresponse is an important determinant of sample quality (Fowler, 2009). In the context of the survey, and using a snowball approach, a researcher can address nonresponse simply by asking additional administrators or faculty members to complete surveys until the researcher is satisfied. Or, depending on the size of the sample, a researcher can follow up with non-responders—mainly the first people

contacted at each selected site. Following-up via email, telephone, and/or in person is an appropriate technique to use for those selected through a snowball sample.

There are limitations with both approaches, though. A purposive sample often invites criticism; however, a sound theoretical argument can be enough justification to overcome concerns (Patton, 1990). Also, in a snowball sample for respondents, there could be a considerable amount of bias in the researcher's approach. For example, the researcher could ask just faculty members or administrators he or she knows at each selected institution, or ask just department chairs or senior faculty leaders, or faculty from only one department. Or he or she may fail to ask faculty members who may be on sabbatical. Furthermore, the first few faculty members or administrators selected may engage only other colleagues from their own departments or units. In essence, the sample the researcher obtains may not be representative of the population of faculty and administrators. And, as noted earlier, researchers lose the ability to make inferences generalizable to the population because these are non-probability approaches.

Sample sites. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's (2010) classification report underscores the diversity of higher education institutions in the United States. There are over 4,600 public and private colleges and universities, which include, for instance, research universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and for-profit institutions. For this study, a variety of colleges and universities were essential because shared governance, as Kezar (2001) and Tierney (2004) noted, often differs by the type of institution. However, instead of selecting one institution of each type in the Midwest, I selected several institutions of two types. This arrangement enabled a richer analysis.

Moreover, I analyzed liberal arts colleges and research institutions because, according to Toma (2010), faculty members have a predominant role in governance in both types of institutions.

Site information. The four liberal arts colleges (LA) and four research institutions (RU) are located throughout the Midwest and were chosen to ensure diverse geographic representation. The liberal arts colleges were selected from a pool of 45 baccalaureate and master's colleges in the Midwest. Because there is no specific classification for "liberal arts" college, I used "bachelor" and "masters" to define a liberal arts college. The research universities were selected from a pool of 12 high or very high research activity institutions in the Midwest.

Table 3.1 offers a brief details about each institution from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) (2014). The institutions have been renamed and other data have been rounded or simplified to ensure anonymity. Some research universities contain regional campuses. "LA" and "RU" means liberal arts college and research university, respectively, and the letter following those abbreviations denotes a specific institution.

Table 3.1

Sample Site Information

Institution	Location(s)	Funding	Full-time Students	Faculty
LA A	Rural	Private	1,300	150
LA B	Rural	Private	1,700	180
LA C	Rural	Private	3,000	390
LA D	Suburban	Private	2,300	310
RU A	Urban	Private	10,000	1,600
RU B	Urban, suburban	Public	42,000	3,800
RU C	Suburban, rural	Public	41,000	2,700
RU D	Urban, small town	Public	64,000	5,200

Note. Full-time students include undergraduate students as well as graduate and professional students, if applicable. Faculty figures are what IPEDS (2014) calls “instructional staff.” These figures include regional campus data.

Data Collection

I gathered data for this project from three key sources: a survey, documents, and interviews. These three sources provided a rich description of shared governance and organizational mindfulness at each institution. Below, I explain how I gathered data from each source.

Survey. For the quantitative stage, I sent the survey, which was hosted on a secured website, in a link to administrators and faculty members via email. Fowler (2009) noted that Internet surveys are an effective means of surveying. Moreover, because nearly all administrators and faculty members have easy access to email now, they are more likely to access and take the survey. To get the survey to participants, I developed a contact list containing faculty and administrator leaders at each institution. I

either visited each institution's website or phoned the institutions to collect this data. Then, I emailed potential respondents a recruitment message that included my survey link. This message also encouraged the participants to share the survey with their colleagues. This helped me follow up with initial participants later, adhering to one of Fowler's (2009) suggestions for improving one's response rate. I also phoned several people on this list to remind them of my survey. These two techniques indeed helped my response rate improve modestly.

I sent three recruitment messages to thirty-three contacts on this list. These messages were sent over the span of sixty days. I also phoned various faculty and administrator leaders at all eight institutions to encourage them and their colleagues to participate. All emails were delivered successfully and most phone calls were taken or returned.

In total, 138 respondents visited the survey page. Unfortunately, when the survey closed, response rates from six institutions were too low to keep for analysis, despite repeated outreach and engagement. Table 3.1 displays the frequencies of respondents by institution; however, that does not mean there were 138 completed and usable surveys.

Table 3.2

Frequency of Respondents by Institution

	Institution	Frequency	Percent
Valid	RU A	1	.7
	LC A	8	5.8
	RU C	4	2.9
	LC B	70	50.7
	RU D	48	34.8
	LC D	2	1.4
	RU B	3	2.2
	Total	136	98.6
Missing	System	2	1.4
Total		138	100.0

All but one institution was represented in the responses. 136 people answered the first question concerning their institution. 127 people answered the second question concerning their role. The third question gauged respondents' involvement in shared governance, and four people indicated they had not participated in shared governance, thereby removing them from participation. Finally, 97 people from seven institutions completed the entire survey, resulting in a response rate of 70%. Eleven surveys were incomplete and not counted in the final total.

Of the 97 usable cases, 56 respondents were faculty members and 41 were administrators. However, as noted earlier, the vast majority of these responses (82 out of 97) came from two institutions. As a result, I removed the remaining fifteen surveys and five institutions from the study.

This left one liberal arts college and one research university for analysis. The liberal arts college was Liberal Arts College B, and it had 56 completed surveys, of whom 29 respondents were faculty members and 27 were administrators. The research

university was Research University D, and it had 26 completed surveys, of whom 19 respondents were faculty members and 7 respondents were administrators. Thus, 82 surveys were used in the final analysis.

Document collection. To gather documents, I visited each institution's website and used their internal search engines. There, I used the search terms of "governance" and "shared governance" to find appropriate records. I also used other off-site search engines and included those terms and each institution's name to broaden my search. I found nine relevant documents from the liberal arts college and twelve relevant documents from the research university.

I sought documents that pertained to institutional type and one's role in shared governance. All documents contained helpful details about those criteria. These documents were mission statements, presidential search prospectuses, governance bylaws, internal reports, and descriptions from websites.

Interviews. I found potential participants' names and roles on each institution's website. Particularly, I visited websites concerning shared governance at each institution. Via phone and email, I contacted approximately thirty people—both administrators and faculty members—to solicit their participation. Twelve people agreed to participate.

I conducted six interviews at the liberal arts college and six interviews at the research university. At the liberal arts college, all interviews were conducted by phone and recorded. At the research university, I held four in-person interviews, with all but one of those interviews recorded. The remaining two interviews were conducted via phone and recorded. Eleven interviews were approximately thirty minutes in length. One interview lasted 90 minutes.

At both institutions, I interviewed two senior faculty members (i.e., those with tenure), two senior administrators, and two mid-level administrators. At the liberal arts college, one senior administrator and one mid-level administrator had faculty experience. At the research university, both senior administrators had faculty experience.

I attempted to interview two tenure-track faculty members at both institutions. According to websites, these faculty participated in some aspect of shared governance at their institutions. I contacted or attempted to contact three tenure-track faculty members at both institutions; however, I only corresponded with one tenure-track faculty member from each institution. Both tenure-track faculty members said they felt ill prepared and unqualified to speak about shared governance and organizational mindfulness. Each thought their fellow tenure-track colleagues would feel similarly. Consequently, no tenure-track faculty views are represented in the interview data.

Measures

For the quantitative stage, recall that this survey was a 15-item, Likert-type questionnaire derived from Hoy and colleagues' (2006), Weick and Sutcliffe's (2007), and Ray and associates' (2011) organizational mindfulness instruments. Three items addressed each principle of organizational mindfulness for a total of fifteen items. The subscales are below:

Preoccupation with Failure (PWF)

- People at this institution care about problems in shared governance.
- At this institution, colleagues are encouraged to share bad news or mistakes.
- People at this institution focus more on negative experiences than positive experiences (reverse scored).

Reluctance to Simplify (RS)

- Diverse opinions about shared governance are welcomed and encouraged to be shared.
- People at this institution question faculty and/or administrative colleagues freely.
- People at this institution deliberate different viewpoints even if they are uncomfortable.

Sensitivity to Operations (SO)

- People at this institution recognize that shared governance means more than senate or committee meetings.
- People at this institution are familiar with the policies and processes of shared governance here.
- People at this institution welcome feedback about ways to improve shared governance policies and processes.

Commitment to Resilience (CR)

- This institution recovers quickly when there is a problem in shared governance.
- People at this institution learn from their governance mistakes.
- Shared governance problems often bring this institution to a halt (reverse scored).

Deference to Expertise (DE)

- People most qualified to make decisions make them.

- People at this institution know who has the expertise to respond to a problem when there is one.
- People at this institution cultivate relationships with their colleagues in shared governance.

Respondents were asked to rate each statement either as “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “somewhat disagree,” “somewhat agree,” “agree,” and “strongly agree.” I assigned a numeric value to each rating (1 = “strongly disagree” to 6 = “strongly agree”) and computed an average perception of organizational mindfulness score for each respondent.

Though my final analysis is of 82 completed surveys, I assessed the reliabilities of the instrument and subscales using all 97 completed surveys. All items collectively had a high reliability ($\alpha = .925$) from these 97 surveys. However, the subscales on all usable surveys had low to moderate reliabilities (Table 3.2).

Table 3.3

Subscale Reliabilities

Variable	α
Preoccupation with failure	.568
Reluctance to simplify	.766
Sensitivity to operations	.814
Commitment to resilience	.658
Deference to expertise	.724

Privacy and Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted ethically and with maximum consideration for respondents’ privacy. All documents were obtained from public websites. Initial contacts at each institution were contacted using publically available information.

Relative to the survey, potential respondents were told—and reminded while taking the survey—that their responses would be anonymous, and that their institutions would be renamed in this dissertation and any potential future publications. No names or email addresses were collected in the survey. Furthermore, participants were free to skip questions or terminate the survey at any time. All data are currently stored on a secured website. My contact information, as well as my advisor's and the university's Office of Responsible Research Practices, was listed in my recruitment message and in the survey.

Several privacy safeguards are in place for the interviews. Before each interview, participants could choose whether or not to be recorded. If they did not choose to be recorded, I took notes. Recordings are kept safely and securely with the researcher and will be disposed of according to Institutional Review Board guidelines. Also, interview participants were informed that, in this paper, their names would be changed. Their roles are also described in generic terms (e.g., tenure-track professor or mid-level administrator). Finally, a third-party transcription service—an office of this university—was used but kept no recordings or transcripts.

Chapter Summary

This case study employs a mixed-methods approach to answer the research questions. Previous literature and instruments, as well as expert opinions, undergird the survey. Care was taken to create a valid, reliable, and private survey instrument. Care was also taken to encourage participation, particularly by using non-probability-based sampling techniques and frequent communications. However, these approaches did not generate a robust sample. Hence, I analyzed data from faculty members and administrators at two institutions only. I supplemented these results with a document

analysis and interviews at each institution. The findings from this study are presented in the next three chapters.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation

Below I share the data from my survey, documents, and interviews. The survey results include descriptive and inferential statistics. The document and interview data contain brief summaries of major themes. Collectively, the findings from all three data sources will be discussed thoroughly in the case studies in the next chapter. Recall that these findings are drawn from the liberal arts college and research university only.

Further recall that the two research questions are:

- 1) Is there a relationship between institutional type and one's role within an institution with perceptions of organizational mindfulness?
- 2) How do faculty members and administrators perceive organizational mindfulness in shared governance at their institutions?

Survey Findings

I first conducted quantitative analyses for my survey findings. I present descriptive information about the 82 responses I collected from the liberal arts college and research university. I conducted a series of independent-samples *t*-tests to explore any differences in perceptions of organizational mindfulness between and within the institutions, using respondents' roles in the analysis. In particular, I assessed perceptions of organizational mindfulness by examining each subscale—preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise—as well as respondents' overall perception of organizational mindfulness score.

These analyses should be interpreted cautiously. Neither institution was selected randomly. The research university sample is small—very small—compared to its population. Indeed, nonresponse bias is a major caveat in this study. Only the liberal arts college’s faculty and administrators provided enough responses to have statistical power. Sixteen percent of the population of faculty members and 6% of the population of administrators responded. Less than 1% of the research university’s faculty and administrator populations replied.

Further, the samples are also disproportionate to each other; for instance, the research university administrator sample is nearly four times smaller than the liberal arts college administrator sample. Though the findings may not be statistically acceptable, they may inspire new possibilities for research.

Descriptive statistics. Recall that the liberal arts college (LA) had 56 completed surveys, of which 29 respondents were faculty members and 27 were administrators. The research university (RU) had 26 completed surveys, of which 19 respondents were faculty members and 7 respondents were administrators.

Table 4.1 indicates the various ways each institution’s respondents participate in shared governance. These frequencies are totals of both faculty members’ and administrators’ responses. Also note that respondents could make multiple selections or none at all.

Table 4.1

Respondents' Participation in Shared Governance

	LA Respondents	RU Respondents
Campus senate	7	25
Academic committees	26	23
Non-academic committees	33	15
Search committees	39	15
Periodic campus-wide meetings	36	13
Other	18	7

Note. Four faculty members from LA indicated they had not participated in shared governance. They were removed before data analysis.

Table 4.2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations for each subscale and the total scale of organizational mindfulness. Recall that the subscales are preoccupation with failure (PWF), reluctance to simplify (RS), sensitivity to operations (SO), commitment to resilience (CR), and deference to expertise (DE). The total mindfulness score (OM) is the final variable. The numeric values for scores ranged from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 6 = “strongly agree.”

Table 4.2

Organizational Mindfulness Means and Standard Deviations

	LA		RU		Both
	<u>Administrator</u>	<u>Faculty</u>	<u>Administrator</u>	<u>Faculty</u>	<u>Total</u>
PWF	3.56 (.84)	4.30 (.67)	4.38 (.65)	4.07 (.857)	4.01 (.83)
RS	4.09 (.93)	4.47 (.53)	4.57 (1.08)	4.00 (1.45)	4.24 (.99)
SO	3.68 (1.12)	4.40 (.73)	4.62 (.80)	3.90 (1.18)	4.07 (1.03)
CR	3.77 (.93)	4.29 (.71)	4.81 (.50)	4.23 (1.15)	4.14 (.88)
DE	4.07 (.81)	4.31 (.84)	4.81 (.74)	4.07 (1.15)	4.21 (.91)
OM	3.83 (.83)	4.35 (.57)	4.64 (.64)	4.05 (1.05)	4.14 (.83)

Note. Standard deviations are in parentheses. PWF = preoccupation with failure; RS = reluctance to simplify; SO = sensitivity to operations; CR = commitment to resilience; DE = deference to expertise; OM = overall organizational mindfulness.

This table indicates that administrators at the research university had the highest perceptions of overall organizational mindfulness. The liberal arts college's faculty members had the second-highest scores, while their counterparts at the research university had the third-highest scores. The liberal arts college's administrators scored lowest.

Independent-samples *t*-tests. Below, I pose a series of sub-questions to examine the various configurations of variables that explore the relationship between type and role and perceptions of organizational mindfulness.

Sub-question 1. Do perceptions of organizational mindfulness differ between all faculty and administrators at LA and all faculty and administrators at RU?

Sub-question 2. Do perceptions of organizational mindfulness differ between faculty at LA and faculty at RU?

Sub-question 3. Do perceptions of organizational mindfulness differ between administrators at LA and administrators at RU?

Sub-question 4. Do perceptions of organizational mindfulness differ between LA's faculty and administrators?

Sub-question 5. Do perceptions of organizational mindfulness differ between RU's faculty and administrators?

Sub-question 6. Do perceptions of organizational mindfulness differ between faculty from LA and RU and administrators from LA and RU?

I use a series of independent-samples *t*-tests to explore each question's potential significance. Because multiple hypotheses are being tested on one set of data, I use a Bonferroni correction to reduce the chances of type I error (Ott & Longnecker, 2010). The Bonferroni correction is α/n where n is the number of hypotheses. In this study, I have six hypotheses. Thus, the adjusted p value is $.05/6 = .0083$.

Sub-question 1 results. Do perceptions of organizational mindfulness differ between all faculty members and administrators at LA and all faculty members and administrators at RU? Table 4.3 indicates that all RU respondents scored higher on nearly all subscale variables and the overall mindfulness score. LA respondents only scored higher on reluctance to simplify. However, an independent-samples *t*-test indicates there is no evidence of statistically significant differences.

Table 4.3

t-test Results for All Respondents at LA and RU

Variable	Institution	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
PWF	LA	56	3.94	.84	1.03	46	.308
	RU	26	4.15	.80			
RS	LA	56	4.28	.77	.46	32	.649
	RU	26	4.15	1.36			
SO	LA	56	4.05	.99	-.15	80	.884
	RU	26	4.08	1.12			
CR	LA	56	4.03	.85	-1.68	80	.095
	RU	26	4.38	.90			
DE	LA	56	4.19	.82	-.334	80	.739
	RU	26	4.26	1.09			
OM	LA	56	4.10	.75	-.548	80	.585
	RU	26	4.21	.97			

Note. PWF = preoccupation with failure; RS = reluctance to simplify; SO = sensitivity to operations; CR = commitment to resilience; DE = deference to expertise; OM = overall organizational mindfulness.

Sub-question 2 results. Do perceptions of organizational mindfulness differ between faculty at LA and faculty at RU? Table 4.4 indicates that LA faculty scored higher than their faculty colleagues at RU in all variables. Once again, however, there is no evidence of statistically significant differences in the scores in this sample.

Table 4.4

t-test Results for Faculty Respondents at LA and RU

Variable	Role	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
PWF	LA Faculty	29	4.29	.67	-1.08	80	.282
	RU Faculty	19	4.07	.85			
RS	LA Faculty	29	4.47	.55	1.35	21	.190
	RU Faculty	19	4.00	1.44			
SO	LA Faculty	29	4.40	.72	1.68	27	.104
	RU Faculty	19	3.89	1.17			
CR	LA Faculty	29	4.28	.71	.228	30	.821
	RU Faculty	19	4.22	.97			
DE	LA Faculty	29	4.31	.83	.839	46	.406
	RU Faculty	19	4.07	1.14			
OM	LA Faculty	29	4.35	.57	1.147	25	.262
	RU Faculty	19	4.05	1.04			

Note. PWF = preoccupation with failure; RS = reluctance to simplify; SO = sensitivity to operations; CR = commitment to resilience; DE = deference to expertise; OM = overall organizational mindfulness.

Sub-question 3 results. Do perceptions of organizational mindfulness differ between administrators at LA and administrators at RU? Table 4.5 reveals that administrators at RU scored higher than their counterparts at LA for all variables. However, there is only one statistically significant difference. Research university administrators appear to be more committed to resilience than administrators at the liberal arts college.

Table 4.5

t-test Results for Administrator Respondents at LA and RU

Variable	Role	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>
PWF	LA Admin.	27	3.56	.84	-2.40	32	.022
	RU Admin.	7	4.38	.65			
RS	LA Admin.	27	4.08	.92	-1.19	32	.242
	RU Admin.	7	4.57	1.08			
SO	LA Admin.	27	3.67	1.11	-2.07	32	.046
	RU Admin.	7	4.61	.80			
CR	LA Admin.	27	3.76	.93	-2.85	32	.008*
	RU Admin.	7	4.80	.50			
DE	LA Admin.	27	4.07	.81	-2.16	32	.038
	RU Admin.	7	4.80	.74			
OM	LA Admin.	27	3.83	.83	-2.36	32	.024
	RU Admin.	7	4.63	.64			

Note. PWF = preoccupation with failure; RS = reluctance to simplify; SO = sensitivity to operations; CR = commitment to resilience; DE = deference to expertise; OM = overall organizational mindfulness.

* $p < .0083$, indicating significance.

Sub-question 4 results. Do perceptions of organizational mindfulness differ between LA's faculty and administrators? Table 4.6 indicates that at the liberal arts college, faculty members scored higher than their administrative colleagues on all variables. These differences are statistically significant for preoccupation with failure and sensitivity to operations. Thus, there are only two divergent perceptions of organizational mindfulness of shared governance within the institution between the faculty and administrators.

Table 4.6

t-test Results for All LA Respondents

Variable	Role	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
PWF	Faculty	29	4.29	.67	3.66	54	.001*
	Administrator	27	3.55	.84			
RS	Faculty	29	4.47	.55	1.87	41	.069
	Administrator	27	4.08	.92			
SO	Faculty	29	4.40	.72	2.84	44	.007*
	Administrator	27	3.60	1.11			
CR	Faculty	29	4.28	.71	2.37	54	.021
	Administrator	27	3.76	.92			
DE	Faculty	29	4.31	.83	1.07	54	.289
	Administrator	27	4.07	.81			
OM	Faculty	29	4.35	.57	2.714	45	.009
	Administrator	27	3.83	.83			

Note. PWF = preoccupation with failure; RS = reluctance to simplify; SO = sensitivity to operations; CR = commitment to resilience; DE = deference to expertise; OM = overall organizational mindfulness.

* $p < .0083$, indicating significance.

Sub-question 5 results. Do perceptions of organizational mindfulness differ between RU's faculty and administrators? Table 4.7 reveals that RU's administrators scored higher than their faculty colleagues on all variables. However, there is no evidence of statistical significance for these scores.

Table 4.7

t-test Results for All RU Respondents

Variable	Role	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>
PWF	Faculty	19	4.07	.85	-.867	24	.395
	Administrator	7	4.38	.65			
RS	Faculty	19	4.00	1.44	-.946	24	.354
	Administrator	7	4.57	1.08			
SO	Faculty	19	3.89	1.17	-1.50	24	.148
	Administrator	7	4.61	.80			
CR	Faculty	19	4.22	.97	-1.98	20	.061
	Administrator	7	4.80	.50			
DE	Faculty	19	4.07	1.15	-1.57	24	.128
	Administrator	7	4.80	.74			
OM	Faculty	19	4.05	1.04	-1.37	24	.181
	Administrator	7	4.63	.64			

Note. PWF = preoccupation with failure; RS = reluctance to simplify; SO = sensitivity to operations; CR = commitment to resilience; DE = deference to expertise; OM = overall organizational mindfulness.

Sub-question 6 results. Do perceptions of organizational mindfulness differ between faculty from LA and RU and administrators from LA and RU? Table 4.8 indicates that all faculty members scored higher than all administrators on all variables except deference to expertise. However, none of the relationships have evidence of statistical significance.

Table 4.8

t-test Results for Combined Faculty and Combined Administrators

Variable	Role	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
PWF	Faculty	48	4.20	.75	2.68	80	.009
	Administrator	34	3.72	.86			
RS	Faculty	48	4.28	1.01	.440	80	.661
	Administrator	34	4.18	.96			
SO	Faculty	48	4.20	.95	1.43	80	.156
	Administrator	34	3.87	1.11			
CR	Faculty	48	4.26	.81	1.45	80	.152
	Administrator	34	3.98	.95			
DE	Faculty	48	4.21	.96	-.05	80	.961
	Administrator	34	4.22	.84			
OM	Faculty	48	4.23	.79	1.28	80	.203
	Administrator	34	3.99	.85			

Note. PWF = preoccupation with failure; RS = reluctance to simplify; SO = sensitivity to operations; CR = commitment to resilience; DE = deference to expertise; OM = overall organizational mindfulness.

Survey summary. There are three noteworthy findings from the quantitative analysis.

First, administrators at the research university perceived a greater commitment to resilience than their counterparts at the liberal arts college. Second, faculty at the liberal arts college had greater perceptions of preoccupation with failure than their administrator colleagues. Third, faculty at the liberal arts college had greater perceptions of sensitivity to operations than administrators at the institution. All other relationships, including perceptions of overall organizational mindfulness, lacked evidence of statistical significance. Note that because there is no evidence of statistical significance for these findings, this does not mean one group perceived shared governance at their institutions as more or less mindful.

Document Findings

Documents help enrich the quantitative findings by portraying what shared governance means at each institution. Twenty-one documents were obtained and categorized according to what aspect of the first research question they best clarified (i.e., type-related or role-related). Type-related documents contain information about the institution, whereas role-related documents delineate faculty or administrators' duties (or non-duties) in shared governance. Both sets of documents are inextricably linked and may be considered artifacts of each institution's culture—and thus may overlap categories.

Table 4.9 lists the documents used for this stage. They are organized according to their emphasis on either institutional type or role.

Table 4.9

Documents by Category

Institution	Type-related	Role-related
Liberal Arts College	Presidential Prospectus Mission of the College Goals of the College	Faculty Organization Faculty Executive Committee Faculty Meeting Standing Committees of the Faculty Faculty Membership on College Committees Subcommittee Membership
Research University	Presidential Profile Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals Senate Meeting Report (2011) Proposal Pathway About the Senate Report on Governance (2000)	New Faculty Orientation Faculty Rules Board of Trustees Bylaws Faculty Council Bylaws Steering Committee Rules Staff Council website

Note: Some documents may overlap categories.

More type-related documents from the research university were found than from the liberal arts college. However, there were enough of these documents from both institutions to indicate how institutional type and governance relate to each other. Both institutions provided mission and goal statements. They also provided presidential search prospectuses, for each institution has recently hired a new president.

The liberal arts college and research university both provide several documents that illuminate the roles of faculty and administrators in shared governance. Primarily, these documents are bylaws adopted by each institution's governing board. There are some supplemental websites and reports from the research university as well.

Collectively, these documents provide insight into shared governance structures and the scope of shared governance at each institution. The documents indicate the specific bodies, committees, and processes used for governance. They explain who participates in those shared governance arrangements and how they participate in them. These documents also underscore what is being governed (e.g., the curriculum, budgets, promotion and tenure, etc.). In the case of the research university, some documents reveal concerns about participation in shared governance. These documents will be explored in greater detail in the case studies in the next chapter.

Interview Findings

The twelve interviews provided rich details about shared governance and organizational mindfulness at each institution. These interviews corroborated or uncorroborated findings from the survey and documents. They also provided insights about the latent, informal arrangements of shared governance, which are indiscernible from mere documents. Similarly, the interviews yielded considerable data about

perceptions of organizational mindfulness in each institution. Table 4.10 displays the pseudonymous interviewees by their roles and institutions.

Table 4.10

Interviewees by Role and Institution

Institution	Senior Faculty	Senior Administrator	Mid-level Administrator
Liberal Arts College	David Douglas	Gary* Bill*	Mary* Patty
Research University	Frank George	Connie* Peter*	Amy Linda

Note. An * denotes administrators with faculty experience.

The interviews suggested that shared governance is inclusive and collegial at both institutions. They also suggested that shared governance allows for a broad understanding of institutional issues. These themes were prevalent at both institutions and between faculty and administrators. Table 4.11 displays the combined frequencies of these themes.

Table 4.11

Combined Frequencies of Shared Governance Themes by Institution

Institution	Inclusive	Collegial	Broad Understanding
Liberal Arts College	11	16	12
Research University	12	10	9
Total	23	26	21

Indeed, all twelve interviewees spoke—often more than once—about the inclusive nature of shared governance at their institutions. Inclusive in this sense means multiple constituents are involved or given the opportunity to be involved in some aspect of shared governance. It also means various opinions are often sought. All but two interviewees spoke of the collegial nature of shared governance at their institution,

meaning that governance was constructive and deliberative, and that constituents were respectful towards each other. Finally, all interviewees indicated that shared governance at their institutions enabled constituents to have a vast understanding of institutional issues, which ensures faculty and administrators—as well as the governing board, students, or other parties—are aware of critical challenges and opportunities facing the institution, not just individual departments or offices.

Most faculty members and administrators at both institutions perceived a considerable level of organizational mindfulness in shared governance. Occasionally, some interviewees expressed concern over the negative implications of the construct, and in one case went so far to suggest his institution's shared governance arrangements were not mindful. However, their other comments about shared governance often suggested considerable mindfulness. The definition of organizational mindfulness or the interviewees' understanding of the term was problematic at times.

Regardless, all interviews yielded considerable data that suggested a relationship between shared governance and organizational mindfulness. When the construct and its five principles were defined, many interviewees linked those principles to the importance of communication, consultation, leadership, appreciation for differing views, and continual improvement in shared governance. Most interviewees, however, discussed organizational mindfulness broadly.

Chapter Summary

Only three relationships from the survey had statistical significance. These findings provide some insights about the relationship among one's role, institutional type, and perceptions of organizational mindfulness. Overall, however, there is minimal

quantitative evidence to validate this relationship. Documents and interviews from the liberal arts college and research university can help clarify these quantitative findings. In the next chapter, I present these qualitative data for discussion and analysis in the form of case studies.

Chapter 5: Case Analyses

The survey data yielded intriguing findings about the relationship between perceptions of organizational mindfulness and one's role and institutional type. To better understand these relationships, I further examine these two institutions to explore how faculty and administrators perceive organizational mindfulness in shared governance. I use documents and interviews to investigate this question. These techniques contextualize and enrich the survey findings. They clarify institutional type and faculty and administrators' roles, and together they help create a comprehensive portrait of shared governance and organizational mindfulness at each institution.

Below, I present these data in the form of case studies; in particular, I explore the data using vignettes about each institution. I first present a vignette of the liberal arts college, which includes an overview of the institution, a discussion of its shared governance system, and an examination of organizational mindfulness there. Documents and interviews, including the interview themes mentioned earlier, from faculty and administrators are woven throughout those sections. Then, I repeat this process for the research university. I conclude this chapter by reviewing all of the findings together, in the form of a cross-case discussion, to look for similarities and differences. I also incorporate the survey findings in that final section.

Recall that all interviewees were assigned pseudonyms. Some documents and aspects of shared governance (e.g., committees or meetings) have been renamed to ensure anonymity.

Liberal Arts College

This institution is a quintessential liberal arts college. The 1,200-acre residential campus is located in the countryside. The college sits atop a hill in a small village, and historic halls and modern buildings surround its main park. It is one of the smallest institutions in its state as measured by enrollment.

Recall that there are just fewer than 1,700 full-time undergraduate students there. The student body is comprised nearly evenly of men and women. One in five students are students of color. Students hail from all but one state or from four-dozen countries. Students enjoy a low faculty-to-student ratio and accessibility to those faculty members. These students can earn a bachelor's degree in nearly three dozens fields from the traditional liberal arts and sciences.

There are slightly more than 600 staff members, and approximately two-thirds of those staff members are full-time faculty members. Ninety-nine percent of faculty members hold a doctorate or terminal degree in their respective fields.

The liberal arts college is proud of its small size and communal nature. Its mission states that the institution purposely remains small to maintain "focus." The mission statement and college goals further emphasize the institution's belief in participating in campus life and building relationships within and beyond the classroom.

Shared governance profile. Though the mission statement and college goal documents chiefly relate to students, the college's recent presidential prospectus evokes similar language relative to the entire institution—including matters of governance. The prospectus especially celebrates the community's friendliness. Relative to governance, the prospectus boasts of collaboration. Presidents, administrators, and students are all

praised for their cooperative efforts. In this particular document, faculty members are not explicitly mentioned relative to governance; however, the bulk of the prospectus praises them as central to the institution's overall vitality.

Interviews with faculty and administrators at the liberal arts college do, however, commend the collegial nature of shared governance between faculty and administrators. Bill, a senior administrator, said that shared governance is “very collegial all the way around.” Speaking about his involvement in one significant shared governance structure, he added, “The relationship of the faculty to the administration has been a pretty collegial and respectful one.” David and Douglas, two senior faculty members, concurred. David noted that there is considerable concern that one party—either the faculty or administration—ensures that the other's interests are represented in governance matters. Mostly, he said, “The interactions within faculty governance are collegial, constructive, and positive.” Douglas added,

Generally speaking, people do not have that kind of frustration that you might find at some institutions—of thinking that their opinions don't count, their voice doesn't matter, they have no influence on anything that goes on outside their own classroom.

Gary, a senior administrator, spoke fondly of this collegiality. He said,

There are many things that we are able to accomplish here only because we hold hands. And when push comes to shove . . . that tendency to want to hold hands, to want to cooperate, to want to be helpful to the other guy down the street, even though he's not in your department or doesn't do what you do—he is part of the maintenance crew—I think that gets heightened.

Documents and interviews suggest the liberal arts college is an institution that values a close-knit, collaborative community. The college's role-related documents, explored below, evoke this collegial culture as they explain the roles of faculty and administrators in shared governance.

At the liberal arts college, documents suggest that faculty members have a preeminent role in shared governance. The college's bylaws clearly indicate that responsibility for the curriculum rests with the president and faculty. Faculty members meet as a body six times per year. Furthermore, all faculty members are expected to participate in governance. That expectation is even codified in the college's bylaws.

Douglas, a senior faculty member, noted that most faculty members do indeed participate in shared governance, even if reluctantly. He explained,

Virtually everybody, with very few exceptions, gets involved [in shared governance] . . . I do it really just simply out of sense that if I'm not involved then I don't really have much say in what goes on—and that's important. And it's important to have a voice. So it's kind of out of that sense rather than feeling that, 'Oh boy, I'd really like to do something like that' . . . I would say that that is a motivation for many of my colleagues. What percentage exactly, I'm not sure. Probably a majority because in my experience here the faculty are like me, not that many of them are extremely eager. A few of them are but they do have the sense that it is important. It's worth it.

When faculty members meet as an entire body, administrators join them. During this meeting, both parties address various aspects of the curriculum. Senior administrators—the president, provost, three vice presidents, three deans, two directors,

and the registrar—serve in this body alongside faculty. These administrators are expected to participate in governance. This formal body is one of the chief mechanisms of shared governance at the liberal arts college.

A collection of standing committees emanate from the faculty body. These committees help the overall faculty fulfill its duties. The Faculty Executive Committee is the leading committee, and it deliberates, consults, and advises on academic and budgetary policy. These are broad and critical responsibilities. This committee is comprised of eleven faculty members and four administrators. Similarly, other standing committees at the institution are comprised of either a majority or a plurality of faculty members. These other standing committees address the curriculum, resources, standards, and faculty needs. Administrators usually, but not always, serve in *ex officio* capacities on these committees with the faculty.

The college is very clear about the expectations of administrators and the relationship between them and faculty. The bylaws state that administrators and faculty members must work closely and cooperatively, even if they disagree. What is most important, the bylaws add, is that appropriate faculty members have suitable time to deliberate administrative actions or ideas.

The interviews yielded information about a structure of shared governance, and the roles within that structure, that the documents did not. This structure is the “Senior Meeting,” which is a committee of senior administrative leaders—from all facets of the college—and some faculty leaders. This committee meets weekly and discusses a range of key institutional issues, excluding the curriculum. These short-term and long-term

issues are then syndicated throughout the college for deliberation and discussion. As Douglas, a senior faculty member and former member of the committee, explained,

I was pretty impressed by the long-range thinking that governed that body. They weren't just simply talking about how are we going to make it through the next year. They were doing a lot of discussion of long-term budget issues and decisions regarding the physical plant or the campus and not so much the academic direction of the college because Senior Meeting, as you know, is a very important body with very senior administrators. But they do not consider that it is their responsibility to decide the curriculum or the academic direction of the college. That is really left to the faculty.

These documents and interviews reveal a rather inclusive system of shared governance. All interviewees spoke highly of the various structures for shared governance and the roles faculty and administrators have in them. For instance, Douglas said that there was a “big overlap” between faculty and administrative responsibilities. Many also spoke about the latent functions of governance—the informal conversations, for instance—that foster inclusiveness. Patty, a mid-level administrator, added, “We’re small enough that, if people are unhappy with things, there are a variety of mechanisms, formal and informal, to work things out . . . I think you always walk away feeling that you’ve been heard.” Gary also shared that the president has recently incorporated hourly employees (e.g., administrative assistants or technology professionals) into the college’s shared governance structures.

These interviews also clarified questions of primacy in governance. Several documents listed above, such as the bylaws and Faculty Organization overview, implied

that shared governance at the liberal arts college is somewhat faculty-centric. Yet the interviews of both faculty and administrators revealed a system of shared governance that is purposely structured to foster discussion and debate across roles. Using the collaborative Senior Meeting as an example, Gary said, “This is one small reflection of shared governance where college administration is rather intentionally pulling into that structure people who represent the faculty.” Douglas added, “Things do really need to happen by consensus.” This collaboration between faculty and administrators excludes the curriculum, which Bill, a senior administrator and former faculty member, said is rarely altered.

Thus, this system of shared governance appears to help faculty and administrators develop a broad understanding of institutional issues, such as budgets, enrollments, or student life. Interviews support that finding. For example, David cited the college’s arrangement for rotating leadership roles. This arrangement allows faculty to temporarily take on administrative positions at the department and college level. In these roles, they learn about larger issues—many of which they may not encounter on their own—and then return to the faculty. David added,

Because so many people have taken turns in administrative positions, it generates a kind of sympathy for the kind of thinking you need to do when you’re an administrator, and in a lot of ways I think that helps the college run better.

Bill, a senior administrator, cited the Senior Meeting model as a way for constituents to understand and debate broad issues. The model “works to insure people—at least the folks at the top-level of decision-making roles—in each part of the college are fully aware and participate in decisions about what folks in the other parts of the college

do.” As noted earlier, discussions from this body are then syndicated throughout the institution for deliberation.

Gary agreed that the college’s shared governance system encouraged a broad awareness of issues. In fact, he suggested that “when the circumstances are the most compelling” all constituents—not just faculty and administrators—enjoy a unified perspective. “I think it becomes truer and truer when the stakes are highest and when the principles are biggest,” he said.

Notably, the liberal arts college’s two mid-level administrator interviewees—Mary and Patty—had generally positive attitudes about shared governance, yet they did not agree entirely that the system encouraged a broad understanding of institutional issues. In particular, both lamented that faculty did not appreciate the demands of the external environment on the college, which can create tensions in shared governance. Mary, who is currently “rotated” as an administrator from the faculty, said,

The larger environment has changed. And that’s the piece that I think a lot of faculty aren’t aware of. They don’t really understand when a decision appears to be top-down here, it’s not often one. We may not even agree with it but we have to do it . . . and that’s because the lawyers say, ‘You have to do that,’ or the government says, ‘You have to do this.’ I mean, I think that’s what people react to if they would say we don’t have enough shared governance.

Similarly, Patty said,

I think our administrators tend to see the larger outside picture—what’s happening in the larger world. And faculty are not always—you’re looking at your division, department, discipline. So you may not be looking at the higher

trends. And you see it as we're gathering too many administrators. Well, yes, but new laws just went into effect in terms of Title IX and how colleges need to respond.

Mary and Patty's concern is notable, and so is their overall recognition about the imperfections of shared governance. Indeed, all but one interviewee at the college recognized some faults of shared governance there. Yet despite those flaws, shared governance at the college appears to be relatively positive and, as Douglas described it, "robust." As David said, "There are quirks of this model that sometimes make it a little tough, but I think in general it's a system that works pretty well for our situation." Gary added,

We end up having miscues or we allow side moaning to go on, but it tends to be in small stuff that doesn't matter—and it doesn't define an institution, and it tends not be in ways that set the tone for institutional context.

Shared governance at the liberal arts college is collegial, inclusive, and generally enabling for constituents to have a broad understanding of institutional issues. The documents and interviews portray a positive shared governance environment. Likewise, interviews at the college revealed generally positive perceptions of organizational mindfulness in shared governance. Some interviewees specifically addressed certain principles of organizational mindfulness, while others discussed the construct broadly. Douglas, a senior faculty member, offered a useful summary: "[Organizational mindfulness] is sort of what governance is about. It's about reacting to situations before they arise and anticipating situations before they arise."

Organizational mindfulness profile. When asked about their perceptions of

organizational mindfulness, interviewees at the liberal arts college mentioned how structures, reflection, roles, and instabilities relate to organizational mindfulness, particularly, though not exclusively, in shared governance. As noted earlier, in some instances, interviewees directly linked their perceptions to the definition of the construct. In other instances, they discussed their perceptions in their own terms.

Shared governance structures play an important role in cultivating organizational mindfulness. David, a senior faculty member, said just that about the institution's committee structure. He explained:

I see behavior that really maps onto [organizational mindfulness'] definition . . . people are typically bringing something to a committee because they want to be sure they have obtained the feedback from the various constituencies that make up that committee. I interpret that as a real mindfulness about ensuring that what is being done . . . I observe a real high level of carefulness about how people consult before putting anything into practice. People really feel like it's in their best interest to make sure that they have done due diligence, and I think the committee structure is a very effective way of making sure that kind of thing happens.

David also underscored how shared governance at the department level exhibits organizational mindfulness. As documents and interviews indicate, the college is built around its departments. He said

Department chairs speak directly to the provost's office . . . there's an opportunity here for close interactions between department chairs and the provost's office that can go along way to smoothing out situations. The way I see that as mindfulness is when chairs are thinking forward and making that kind of proactive

communication with the provost's office, things tend to work really well.

Bill, a senior administrator and former faculty member, spoke about another structure, the Senior Meeting, and its contribution to organizational mindfulness. In that body, he said,

There is a willingness on most of us to trust our colleagues, but I think that trust has a reason because it's been the norm to discuss problematic issues or challenging matters that might be mostly concentrated in one part or another part of the college with a broader college decision-making group before someone actually makes a decision. So, I think our knowledge of our colleagues' decision-making processes helps us to be willing to defer to them when they act in their area of expertise.

Bill discussed an example of a function of the Senior Meeting to demonstrate organizational mindfulness: budgeting. The budget is a very serious matter at the college, and requires administrators and some faculty leaders to deliberate and analyze it considerably. Bill said,

Everything that's in the budget is assumed to continue unless somebody argues for a change in it. I think that leads to a sort of caution, which has served the organization quite a lot, and I would say is a bit of organizational mindfulness at work. We are highly aware we are tuition dependent. We're about 80% tuition dependent . . . you've got to do the work well with a sort of mindset that if you fail, the consequences could be rather dire . . . it's a pretty high level of accountability because nobody can fail too much without the whole organization being affected.

Douglas and Mary also used the Senior Meeting as a model of organizational mindfulness in shared governance. The Senior Meeting “was definitely a forward-thinking, pro-active kind of approach to things,” Douglas said. Mary added, “In my observation, it seems to be keeping the college on a pretty good course. It brings voices in from all corners of the college . . . to hammer issues out, and that’s everything from budget, bullying, building problems, whatever,” she said. Most importantly, it is a space that allows “a little more reflection, discussion about sort of how we are doing, where we are going.”

Many interviewees discussed reflection and improvement when contemplating organizational mindfulness and shared governance. Gary, a senior administrator, said, “I think it’s a good thing to always ask yourself, ‘How can we do this better?’ I think we do that all the time. And I think it’s woven into the fabric of our administrative structures and our governance structures,” he said. He was skeptical of the reluctance to simplify, though. He said,

At the liberal arts college, maybe that’s a part of our DNA, just as academics, we want to see things in complexity. We want to appreciate complexity . . . On the other hand, I think sometimes we tie ourselves up in knots needlessly, and sometimes the best solution is the simple one.

Mary stressed the importance of communication in organizational mindfulness to make such reflections possible. She spoke about the regular meetings held with various constituents across campus. This “structured time” allows the college to “step back a little bit” and reflect. She also noted that she “spend[s] a lot of time putting out fires” and has limited time for reflection. But, she noted, “We do have these structured moments

that give us breathing room.”

Very few interviewees addressed how roles and organizational mindfulness in shared governance relate. David said that he thinks administrators and most faculty “practice the kind of behaviors” of organizational mindfulness. He added that administrators

Feel like it’s in their best interest and the best interest of the college to make sure when they’re changing or modifying policy or thinking of a new initiative, they make sure they’ve got widespread feedback and buy-in before they go forward with it.

Yet Patty questioned the extent to which faculty would embrace organizational mindfulness. She said she sees tension because

Faculty are fighting for all these different interests and their own interests and administrators are trying to keep some sort of standardization. I think that plays into organizational mindfulness because I think you would all have to be on the same page.

Patty also emphasized the importance of leadership to organizational mindfulness. She explained:

If the president isn’t invested in it and doesn’t practice it, then nobody else is going to practice it either . . . the whole organizational mindfulness isn’t up to one person, but just like everything else in an institution, if the leadership isn’t looking towards it, it’s really hard for the rest of the folks to follow suit.

Interviewees also discussed instabilities and how they affect the institution and its mindfulness. Patty believed the college is better at responding to instabilities rather than

preventing them. Generally, Gary noted, the college wants to prevent instabilities, but it depends on the type of instability. If “stability mean[s] not changing, then I think you’re probably not being very realistic.” Yet, he added, “Sometimes I think instability is a damn good thing because it allows you to look at things differently! And if that’s uncomfortable, difficult, and if you have to scramble in order to rebalance, sometimes that’s not a bad thing.”

Douglas, Mary, and Patty also discussed the nature of instabilities and how they constantly modify the “agenda” of the college. Douglas explained:

I would say mindfulness is a very important principle. But in the day-to-day, in my experience, and this is probably typical of a lot of places, the agenda is often modified, changed by circumstances that arise, emergencies, unpredictable things . . . it definitely changes directions in response to things people failed to predict.

Usually I think the failure to predict is because it’s impossible to know the future.

Douglas cited an example of failing to anticipate change. Several years ago, the college decided to build a modern—and expensive—athletic facility; however, the faculty and some administrators were never consulted about the costs and how those might affect the institution as a whole. There was considerable discontent on campus. “But,” Douglas said, “it was nevertheless a significant event that was somewhat controversial and that still today some people think we could have done it better.”

Douglas and Mary shared an additional example, which partially relates to shared governance, of the external environment forcing change upon the institution. They explained how the federal government is demanding changes to sexual assault policies on campus. The liberal arts college had normally handled those issues well, Douglas said,

but they “were maybe a tad complacent.” Now, the college is using noticeably more resources to combat this problem. As Mary noted earlier, these external demands can create tensions in shared governance because they require new resources and, often, new personnel.

Case summary. Documents and interviews from the liberal arts college reveal a generally mindful organization with a robust system of shared governance. Though interviewees may not speak about organizational mindfulness or its principles specifically, their comments reveal an appreciation for the main tenets of the construct—seeking multiple—and sometimes difficult—viewpoints, constantly communicating and consulting, and trying earnestly to learn from mistakes and continuously improve. As Gary said, “We feel reasonably comfortable asking ourselves difficult questions and not getting offended when the question is asked . . . I think we don’t want to gloss—we tend not to gloss over things.”

Research University

The research university is a vast public institution with a global reach. Its largest campus is in an urban setting. That campus, which sprawls outward from a large park, includes on-campus residential districts, scores of academic halls, a vast medical center, utility plants, athletic complexes, performing arts facilities, several research laboratories, and a host of other buildings that serve a variety of purposes.

The largest campus is a preeminent institution and has become increasingly selective in its admissions in recent years. Recall that nearly 50,000 undergraduates and nearly 14,000 graduate students attend the research university system-wide. The student body is comprised nearly evenly between men and women. Nearly one in five students

are students of color. Students come from every state and dozens of foreign countries. Students may earn associate's degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and professional and research doctorates in hundreds of fields.

The research university employs nearly 30,000 people. Slightly more than 5,000 of those people are considered faculty members. Faculty members work in numerous departments, which are housed within several colleges.

Shared governance profile. The research university values a global influence and serving its state's citizens and the world. Its recent presidential prospectus echoes these comprehensive values. The research university's prospectus celebrates the university's "tradition of shared governance," which values multiple stakeholders and "shared responsibilities."

Indeed, documents indicate that the university's Senate, the main governance body that oversees educational policy, champions collaboration. The body itself consists of a variety of faculty members, administrators, and students. The Senate also invites all campus stakeholders to attend its meetings and to create proposals on an assortment of issues. Its subcommittees have diverse representation and affect nearly all aspects of university life. Indeed, interviews validated how important the Senate is for addressing matters such as student life, finances, or intellectual property.

Thus, the research university appears to value broad participation in shared governance. Documents revealed a commitment to community-wide, collaborative decision-making. Interviews underscore these themes as well; in fact, the interviews at the research university yielded identical themes to the liberal arts college. Most interviewees here portray a system of shared governance that is collegial and inclusive.

They also suggest that shared governance enables a broad understanding of institutional issues. Furthermore, most interviewees discussed “macro-level” shared governance; that is, shared governance vis-à-vis the University Senate. Connie, a senior administrator, mostly spoke about shared governance within her particular college. All, though, championed the friendly nature of shared governance at the research university.

“If you look at the relationship there is between the administration and leaders and members of various committees and the University Senate, it’s a really collegial, non-confrontational type of relationship,” Peter, a senior administrator, said. “It’s one of the healthiest shared governance relationships I’ve seen in universities,” he added. George, a senior faculty member, said, “We have good people who get along and talk with each other . . . it’s very collegial with good relations between faculty and administrators.” Frank, another senior faculty member, said, “It’s empowering . . . it’s more of a collective process, which of course when you have buy-in by the ‘worker bees,’ you’re more likely to achieve a particular outcome.” Amy, a mid-level administrator, shared a similar perspective. “At the ground level, we are all happy to operate together and talk to each other and figure it out,” she said. George added, “You ought to hear the stuff you don’t like. Here, we like to hear the tough stuff and have good discussions.” These comments demonstrate a positive and constructive shared governance environment.

Documents and interviews at the research university reveal an inclusive shared governance system. Similar to the liberal arts college, documents suggest faculty members have a prominent role in governance, though interviews reveal a more inclusive

system. Some documents at the research university discuss a desire for more inclusiveness, too.

For example, faculty members are encouraged to participate in university governance as soon as their employment begins. Both the Board of Trustees Bylaws and Faculty Rules explicate the power and responsibilities of faculty in governance, which concern a range of academic and non-academic matters. As noted above, the university-wide apparatus for shared governance is the Senate.

Nearly 140 people serve in the Senate, of which the majority is, by statute, faculty members. The faculty also have either a majority or plurality of members on most subcommittees. These subcommittees address a variety of areas, such as the curriculum, research, intellectual property, finances, and student life.

Chief among these subcommittees is the Steering Committee, which oversees the Senate and its agenda and liaises between the president and governing board. There is also another important body, the Faculty Council, which consists exclusively of the Senate's faculty representatives. This body provides advice on academic and educational policy and monitors the Senate's actions on such policies. Faculty are at the core of these powerful committees.

Though they comprise of only 19% of the Senate, administrators have an active role in that body and its subcommittees. These participants are mostly senior administrators, such as deans or vice presidents. Some non-senior administrators participate in subcommittees or in advisory capacities. In fact, there is a 30-person staff council that advises the president and sends representatives to participate in Senate meetings and on its committees.

The research university has recognized the need for greater non-senior administrator participation in the Senate in particular and in shared governance in general. A governance report from 2000 noted a lack of administrator involvement in the Senate and suggested more engagement. Minutes from a 2011 Senate meeting noted administrators’—and faculty members’—concerns about weak shared governance in the university’s largest college and the desire to improve it there. Similarly, the institution’s recent presidential profile expressed a desire for greater staff involvement. The Staff Council website, though, indicates administrators have opportunities to participate in governance matters beyond the Senate.

All interviewees revealed to varying degrees a very inclusive system of shared governance. “Here, shared governance is truly making sure that all voices are at the table,” said Linda, a mid-level administrator. “Shared governance has truly been broadened to encompass all constituent groups on campus—not just faculty and administrators,” she added. Peter, a senior administrator, praised the inclusiveness of shared governance here. “I think our university may have a better model of shared governance than most places do . . . it’s a unique structure because there’s a very large participation of all the constituents in the university,” he said. Connie noted that her college made several structural changes primarily to enhance shared governance and enable greater participation in it.

Documents and interviews additionally suggest that shared governance at the research university enables faculty and administrators to have a broad understanding of institutional issues. Rules and bylaws, for instance, underscore the breadth of various

committees' and bodies' responsibilities. Those entities also have diverse members who bring multiple viewpoints to the shared governance system.

This broad awareness of institutional issues emerges in a variety of ways, according to interviews. Amy, a mid-level administrator, said that staff members join the influential Senate Steering Committee to “understand what’s going on with some of the broad-level issues on campus.” Peter, a senior administrator, praised the committee structure in particular for enabling awareness of institutional issues. He said

It’s interesting. These committees—everything from academic misconduct to academic freedom to intellectual property—I think they understand how the university operates. It’s part of their mandate as a committee. I think we do a really good job on that.

Moreover, Peter revealed how he and fellow senior administrators, including the president, and faculty leaders meet together frequently to discuss a range of issues.

We meet regularly, as does the president, with this group and it’s mainly an agenda of ‘here are the issues that coming up and that we’re dealing with’ and we have open discussions about these issues with these leaders . . . I think it works here because there is a true feeling of partnership that I know I have and I know most of my administrative colleagues have with the people in the faculty and university governance structure. And it is not an adversarial relationship.

George, a senior faculty member, said that the structure of shared governance—mainly the Senate—at the research university enables an understanding of various institution-wide issues because it “moves slowly, at a smart pace, to avoid rushing.” Connie, a senior administrator, said that in her college, shared governance and the

external environment are very intertwined; consequently, this relationship forces participants to have a broad understanding of institutional issues. She said

Shared governance is literally sharing with the faculty, sharing with central administration, sharing with our elected officials, sharing with government agencies . . . we have to tend to the interests of our own individual faculty, our departments, the college as a whole, the university as a whole, and all of these larger political interests.

Documents and interviews portray shared governance at the research university positively. Like the liberal arts college, it enjoys a system that is collegial, inclusive, and enabling for participants to have a broad understanding of institution-wide issues. There are somewhat mixed perceptions of organizational mindfulness in shared governance, though.

Organizational mindfulness profile. Interviewees discussed, to varying degrees, environmental influences, culture, and roles and their relationships to organizational mindfulness. Again, these interviewees occasionally discussed organizational mindfulness using its definition and principles. In most cases, though, interviewees discussed the construct in their own terms.

George, a senior faculty member, said that shared governance at the research university is “implicitly” mindful, but problems are “not seen as instabilities here.” He recited a list of internal and external factors that are challenging, such as adjunct governance, reduced state funding of higher education, and diminished federal research funding. “The environment is a big, complex factor,” he said. Generally, he added, the governance structures can help mitigate environmental changes.

Likewise, Connie, a senior administrator, noted how the external environment compels her college to have a high degree of organizational mindfulness. “We have so many things happen that are externally driven. So for us, this concept of failure, while being sensitive to operations or committed to resilience, is an everyday event,” she explained.

She cited two examples of organizational mindfulness in shared governance at her college, both of which were driven by external factors. There were recent debates about state legislation that would significantly impact the curriculum in her particular college. To respond to the proposed legislation, she constantly sought the expertise of colleagues in her department and held open forums. In another instance, the government changed certain rules—with little warning—that affected her college. She and her colleagues had to create quickly a certificate program and prove how they were teaching certain subjects. “You don’t get to fight some things. You just have to be resilient. You have to say, ‘Okay, that happened. Now how are we going to respond?’ And there’s a timeframe to do it in,” she added.

Frank, a senior faculty member, shared an additional example of organizational mindfulness in shared governance, one that many other interviewees did: the privatization of a major university asset. Frank explained that the governing board wanted the senior administration to generate new revenue. Selling a major university asset was one idea. However, this plan was thrust upon the faculty and other constituents—with no deference to expertise from the administration—and this led to serious conflict within the shared governance system. Frank said that the faculty felt they were not properly consulted and that this initiative was autocratic. In fact, George, a

fellow senior faculty member, said this debate was the “biggest thing [he] had ever seen” in governance at the university.

Many constituents were skeptical of the plan and the money it could generate. However, Frank said, the University Senate urged caution and deference to expertise in the faculty. The faculty experts returned with their data, which supported the privatization plan. “So at that point, it became an initiative, a shared benefit. Because our experts said, ‘Yeah, this makes sense if you do it this way.’ I thought that was a good example of organizational mindfulness,” Frank said. Additionally, he noted, there is a new plan to privatize additional university assets. The university learned from its previous mistakes and is now engaging more faculty members to study this new plan. He later added, “When people try to do things in an autocratic way, there’s strong enough organizational mindfulness built into the culture of the university that it’s a push back.”

Linda, a mid-level administrator, also discussed culture and organizational mindfulness, and not just in governance contexts. “Whether that’s at a department or division level, within an institution you can have a mindful culture in one college and a completely unmindful culture in another college,” she said. Consequently, she suggested, some colleges can be very risk aware and others can be risk averse. “It really depends on where you sit,” she said.

Amy, another mid-level administrator, offered her views on the university’s fast-paced culture. At the research university, she lamented a culture that emphasized quick changes, which “trickled down” the organization. “I don’t know if that was always mindful or reflective or resilient or looking to experts. I think it was ‘just get it done,’ whatever the priority was at the time,” she said. This fast-paced approach at the

university led to hasty decisions that were not necessarily addressed in a mindful manner. The university was “putting something in place because someone wants it and not because it was a need in that situation,” she added.

However, Amy praised shared governance as a mindful practice, especially faculty members’ role in it. She noted especially their level of deliberation and care. Amy was involved closely with faculty in shared governance, and what she saw with them “was sometimes more mindful and thoughtful and intentional” than what she saw in the administrative apparatus of the university.

Indeed, one of her chief criticisms was that the administrative structure at the university was not as mindful as its shared governance system. In the administrative structure, she said, administrators did not use experts or the appropriate scholarly literature when making decisions. Decision-making was what she called “cardiac assessments,” or just doing what “feels right and mov[ing] on.” Credit-seeking and power-plays often affect the administrative structure.

Linda also emphasized the importance of leadership in creating a mindful culture. Leaders can impart a mindful culture through their actions. This permeates throughout the institution eventually and can, Linda suggested, help encourage the reporting of problems—a tenet of preoccupation with failure. In some parts of the university, this is a serious problem. Linda said, “A lot of people have really great ideas about to fix that, but they’ll never come to the table for fear of ‘If I do, I won’t have a job anymore.’ It boils down to something that fundamentally simple. They won’t say anything.”

She sees this problem in governance contexts as well. “You have this group, which is a model of shared governance. All constituent groups are represented. But how

do you make that a warm, comfortable environment where people feel their voice is truly heard?” she asked. This is a barrier to organizational mindfulness. She proposed “meaningful and holistic” on-boarding of individuals into governance, instead of merely orienting them with governance. “Make that a continual process because you can bring a group together and tell them they’re mindful and safe. We’re here to really kind of do what’s in the best interest,” she said.

Peter, a senior administrator and former faculty member, said that organizational mindfulness connotes negativity, and he often disagreed with its tenets. For instance, he thought the university was not “preoccupied” with failure but instead “prepared” for it. The institution is focused on success. It is sensitive to operations, however, even though it is vast and complex. The governance system and its diverse participants enable an understanding of the university’s operations. The university is not reluctant to simplify, usually, because it values simplicity. Peter also believed that commitment to resilience means protecting the institution at all costs. He disagreed that the organization functioned that way because people in the shared governance system are always looking for ways to improve. Peter lamented that the university has not deferred to experts as often as it should.

He concluded that the university was not mindful as defined. He suggested that this framework be applied to “sick” institutions that have “severe and deep problems.” However, he mentioned other actions and behaviors that evoked organizational mindfulness. For instance, when discussing the privatization issue, Peter spoke about how the university rebounded and solved the problem—yet he was dismissive of the notion of commitment to resilience. He wished for more deference to expertise, yet he

assembled panels of experts to study additional privatization after learning from the previous mishap. Moreover, one of his closing comments exemplified organizational mindfulness: “We’re paying attention to what’s going on around us and thinking about how to improve because we’re in a good place.” Of course, it is highly probable that he may have misinterpreted the construct during our interview, or the negative connotations of the terms repelled him.

Case summary. Documents and interviews from the research university, like those from the liberal arts college, suggest a healthy system of shared governance. Interviewees, though, offered various perceptions of organizational mindfulness. George, Frank, and Connie spoke fondly of organizational mindfulness in shared governance. Amy and Linda had mixed views. Peter rejected the presence of organizational mindfulness as defined, but offered other examples and comments that suggested that organizational mindfulness actually was present.

Cross-Case Discussion

The twenty-one documents, twelve interviews, and one survey provide considerable insights about organizational mindfulness and shared governance at the liberal arts college and research university. These data sources help answer this study’s research questions. Recall that those questions concern the relationship between institutional type and one’s role with perceptions of organizational mindfulness, and how faculty members and administrators perceive organizational mindfulness in shared governance at their institutions.

The data suggest that, for these two organizations, the type of institution—liberal arts college or research university—does not influence perceptions of organizational

mindfulness. Nor does one's role in the institution—faculty or administrator. Most people in both organizations tend to have positive perceptions of organizational mindfulness in shared governance contexts, though there were some mixed opinions.

Below, I briefly review shared governance and organizational mindfulness at both institutions. Then, I discuss the survey findings and how they relate to the case study sites. I also discuss some interviewees' concerns about mindfulness and their implications. Throughout this section, I link these findings to the overall research questions.

Consider that the case sites in this study are two vastly different organizations. The liberal arts college is an archetypical institution; it is a small, quaint, and rural college with few students and fewer faculty members, linked together by a traditional liberal arts curriculum. Its mission is very limited. The research university, however, contains tens of thousands of students who may study practically anything under thousands of faculty members. It is its own city, replete with hospitals, museums, laboratories, and farms, all of which serve a mission to benefit the state, county, and world.

Despite their differences in size and scope, these institutions share a comparable system of shared governance. Both the liberal arts college and the research university have formal and informal shared governance arrangements, with similar bylaws, objectives, and responsibilities. Both have significant administrator involvement in shared governance as well. As the documents and interviews revealed, at the liberal arts college, the Senior Meeting and various committees are the chief mechanisms for shared governance. At the research university, the University Senate serves in that capacity. In

these structures, faculty and administrators work together to address and solve a variety of issues affecting their respective campuses.

Together, collegiality and inclusiveness characterize these systems. These institutions also have systems that allow participants, especially faculty and administrators, to have a considerable awareness of issues affecting the entire institution. Essentially, the shared governance policies, processes, and structures at both institutions are dissimilar only in name.

Most faculty and administrators at both institutions expressed positive views about organizational mindfulness in shared governance contexts. Thus, at these two institutions, the construct appears to transcend type and role. Furthermore, many interviewees made comments or revealed insights—either explicitly or implicitly—that displayed the five principles of organizational mindfulness in shared governance contexts.

For instance, when the liberal arts college deliberates critical details of its budget, or when the research university addresses demands from the federal government, preoccupation with failure is revealed. The multiple, sometimes critical, voices involved in governance exemplify reluctance to simplify. Similarly, nearly all interviewees revealed considerable knowledge of governance processes and “big picture” issues, which is a hallmark of sensitivity to operations. The successful handling of government regulations and, especially at the research university, a botched privatization plan, revealed a commitment to resilience. Further, at both institutions, faculty and administrators communicate and network frequently to solve problems in governance, exhibiting deference to expertise.

Interviews and documents demonstrate that institutional type and role do not generally influence perceptions of organizational mindfulness in shared governance. These data sources reveal comprehensive shared governance systems that foster organizational mindfulness. The three statistically significant survey findings, though, suggest type and role may influence perceptions of the construct to a small extent. Recall that thirty-six potential relationships were tested with the survey data, but only three relationships had statistical significance. Further, the low response rate and non-probability-based sampling techniques make generalizations inappropriate. However, these three findings may still be useful for analysis in only these specific institutions.

Reconciling discrepant quantitative and qualitative data can be challenging in mixed-methods research (Pluye, Grad, Levine, & Nicolau, 2009). In this study, the results from a quantitative survey inspired additional questions for which qualitative research was useful. The interviews portray organizational mindfulness slightly differently than does the survey. The survey implies administrators at the research university perceive a greater commitment to resilience than their colleagues at the liberal arts college. It also implies that faculty within the liberal arts college are more preoccupied with failure and sensitive to operations than administrators at the college. Yet, as Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala (2013) noted, contradictory findings in mixed methods research are still valuable because they can “lead to a reexamination of the conceptual framework and the assumptions underlying each of the two strands of mixed methods research” (p. 25). The survey findings are therefore presented for cautious discussion.

In the survey results, research university administrators perceived a greater commitment to resilience in shared governance than their liberal arts college counterparts. One explanation for this difference may involve the formalization of shared governance structures at each institution. Formalization is the “ extent to which an organization has written rules, regulations, procedures, and policies” (Hoy, 2003, p. 88). At first, this notion may seem counterintuitive because Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) suggested that rules, processes, and routines might actually inhibit mindfulness in an organization. However, as Hoy (2003) noted in his study of enabling school structures, formalization is on a continuum, and it need not be detrimental. “Enabling” formalization in organizations treats rules as guidelines, thereby giving organizational actors flexibility and rewarding their creativity. They “help rather than hinder” (Hoy, 2003, p. 91) actors and are complementary to mindful organizations; indeed, Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) noted that adaptability is a cornerstone of resilience. Perhaps, then, research university administrators perceive a greater commitment to resilience because their shared governance arrangements are more enabling for administrators. Given the size and resources of the research university compared to the liberal arts college, such adaptability seems plausible.

Another explanation—and one that is not divergent from the qualitative findings—may be the recent asset privatization at the research university. This was an event that disrupted shared governance greatly, as many interviewees noted, and caused serious turmoil on campus. However, during the heated debate, the university practically replicated Weick and Sutcliffe’s (2007) definition of commitment to resilience: it absorbed the problem and continued to function, recovered from it, and learned from the

mistake. The recovery from this serious event may have affected administrators' perceptions positively.

At the liberal arts college, faculty members' greater perceptions of preoccupation with failure and sensitivity to operations, compared with their administrative colleagues, are not surprising. First, recall some of the typical duties of faculty members and administrators in shared governance. Miller (1999) and Birnbaum (1992b) both noted that faculty members have a role to scrutinize and "check" shared governance at their institutions. Recall, too, that organizations that are preoccupied with failure pursue anomalies and understand the problems they want to avoid. That faculty members tend to have a more critical role in shared governance, which encourages preoccupation with failure, may explain in part why they had greater perceptions than administrators. Similarly, faculty members are likely more sensitive to operations because they are involved, often in bulk, in a variety of facets of shared governance. Indeed, both institutions' governance bylaws and other records, which reveal the comprehensive scope of faculty responsibilities and duties, provide some validation of this. Contrast faculty members with administrators, who are responsible for communicating, generating and implementing ideas, managing resources, and setting and achieving goals. These duties are more prestige-oriented, which can lead to mindless mentalities of "success, simplicities, strategy, planning, and superiors" (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 2).

Increasing threats against the professoriate—both within and beyond the confines of shared governance—may also influence the higher survey scores among faculty members at the liberal arts college. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) have suggested that how organizational actors respond to instabilities is indicative of their organization's

mindfulness. Bahls (2014) and Pierce (2014) have noted various threats, such as budget cuts, program elimination, and the surge of contingent faculty members. Perhaps faculty members, sensing constant turmoil, have predisposed themselves to these aspects of mindfulness.

Again, these findings do not resonate with the generally positive perceptions of organizational mindfulness shared by the interviewees at the liberal arts college, both faculty and administrators alike. There were also some slight deviations in the interviews. Mary, Amy, and Patty shared generally positive perceptions about organizational mindfulness in shared governance at their institutions, but they did at times express doubt about the construct. Also, Peter said the construct was for “sick” institutions. Yet when he described certain processes and situations in governance, he indicated some levels of organizational mindfulness.

That these four interviewees expressed mixed views is intriguing because they are all administrators. For example, Amy indicated that she sees mindlessness often in the administrative functions of the research university. Patty shared frustrations about faculty who did not appreciate the need for “practicality” beyond the liberal arts curriculum. Mary also expressed concerns that faculty were not appreciative of external demands. Perhaps these administrators have these misgivings because they are engaged in operations—as opposed to teaching and researching—and see mindlessness more frequently.

Chapter Summary

The documents, interviews, and survey present a rich description of shared governance and organizational mindfulness at the liberal arts college and the research

university. Collegiality, inclusiveness, and an awareness of broad institutional issues characterize these systems. These are positive and constructive shared governance environments. Likewise, faculty and administrators perceive these organizations to be generally mindful, especially in shared governance contexts. The type of institution and one's role within them does not appear to influence perceptions to a significant extent, notwithstanding minor survey findings and disagreements from some administrators. Two key questions emerge from these cases for further discussion.

First, whether each institution's shared governance arrangement encourages organizational mindfulness or vice versa is unclear. The answer may be that they both encourage each other simultaneously. This is the "feedback loop" (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012, p. 728) between mindful organizing and organizational mindfulness. Might shared governance—with its emphasis on, for example, communication, consultation, or symbolism—be synonymous with mindful organizing? Recall that mindful organizing involves the specific actions and behaviors undertaken to achieve organizational mindfulness.

Second, the purpose of this study was to determine how organizational mindfulness might address instabilities—in this instance, debilitating problems in shared governance—in higher education. In recent years, the liberal arts college and research university have both enjoyed shared governance that is devoid of serious conflicts. When problems of that magnitude occurred, faculty and administrators worked together to solve them. Thus, a key question emerges: if these organizations, and others like them, are already mindful, what is the utility of the construct in such organizations?

In the next chapter, I consider these questions as well as limitations, theoretical and practical recommendations, and concluding thoughts.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

This study assessed perceptions of organizational mindfulness in shared governance at a liberal arts college and a research university in the Midwest. I surveyed faculty members and administrators at each institution; analyzed pertinent documents regarding governance; and conducted interviews. To review, the study had two goals. First, it sought to understand perceptions of organizational mindfulness in shared governance based on institutional type and one's role in the institution. Second, it sought to learn how faculty and administrators perceived the construct.

In this chapter, I first review the study's limitations. Then, I consider the relationship between shared governance and mindful organizing. Next, I discuss the importance of sustaining mindfulness in organizations that already exhibit it. Finally, I offer theoretical and practical recommendations based on the results of this project. These recommendations are offered to improve faculty-administrator relations in shared governance.

Limitations

Though care was taken to create a meaningful and stimulating study, this project still has several limitations, chiefly in the research design, as noted in Chapter 3. For instance, this project used non-probability sampling techniques. These techniques are acceptable for research; however, interpretations of these findings are usually not

generalizable to the population under study. The findings from this study are applicable only to the liberal arts college and research university from the sample.

This survey also had a disproportionate response rate among institutions, faculty members, and administrators. Further, the sample sizes from each institution are skewed relative to their populations. I attribute these issues partly to the timing of the survey. It was sent in early summer, often when faculty members are away. Another possibility is that—as I discovered at one institution—people are hesitant to discuss internal governance matters with outsiders. Given that shared governance often incites emotion among university stakeholders, as discussed earlier in the literature review, I did not foresee such reluctance.

Though the documents provide useful information to contextualize the quantitative findings, it is possible that valuable internal documents—inaccessible to the public—may exist. Also, the documents I obtained pertain mostly to institution-wide shared governance, though some documents also discuss governance at lower levels (e.g., in colleges or departments). The quantitative stage assessed perceptions of organizational mindfulness of shared governance in general without regard to the “location” of shared governance.

I spoke with interviewees who all had significant involvement in shared governance at their institutions. Dissatisfied faculty members and administrators would have certainly provided more negative data; however, as several interviewees noted, many disgruntled people on campus are not actually involved in governance. Thus, the inherent self-selection bias involved in interviewing should be considered.

These interviews did not include perspectives from junior faculty members who are involved in governance. Porter (2007) found that junior faculty members were less likely to participate on committees, including those concerning governance, due to “institutional desires to keep service burdens low for junior faculty as well as institutional realities for committee participation” (p. 537). This may explain in part why I had difficulty identifying junior faculty to participate in the study. When I found two junior faculty members who actually are involved in their institutions’ governance systems, they said that they felt unqualified to discuss shared governance and organizational mindfulness. Junior faculty could provide helpful insights and fresh perspectives. Their absence from shared governance or their inability to discuss it suggests a problem for which organizational mindfulness could be helpful.

With these limitations in mind, I now discuss the findings from the case studies. Then, I offer recommendations for theory and practice.

Shared Governance and Mindful Organizing

The liberal arts college and research university studied in this paper exhibit organizational mindfulness in their shared governance systems. Both institutions reveal respectful, cooperative environments in which participants engage with each other frequently and professionally, including over difficult matters. This raises an intriguing question about the relationship between shared governance and organizational mindfulness. As mentioned earlier, might shared governance serve as an example of mindful organizing, which in turn encourages organizational mindfulness?

Mindful organizing is a “function of the behaviors carried out by organizational members, especially those on the front line” (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012, p. 725),

particularly through communication and interaction. In the context of shared governance, these “front-line” personnel are faculty and administrators engaged in various aspects of decision-making. At these institutions, these aspects may include debating curricular changes, drafting tenure policies, or analyzing budgets. Most documents and interviewees stated that there is consultation and communication, including constructive criticism, between and within faculty and administrators in shared governance.

Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) explain how, in business contexts, organizational mindfulness forms a “loop” with mindful organizing: leaders impart organizational mindfulness through their actions, which are syndicated down an organization. Front-line personnel there “translate” these top-down actions into mindful organizing. In turn, from the bottom, “higher levels of mindful organizing reinforce the structures and processes of organizational mindfulness” (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012, p. 728).

Shared governance contexts are quite different from corporate settings. Yet both environments contain leaders, even if their hierarchies and operational processes differ. In shared governance, leaders need not be at the level of president, provost, or dean. Leadership can come from a faculty chairperson of a subcommittee or a senior administrator in the president’s cabinet. At both institutions in this study, leaders involved in shared governance came from various ranks.

An additional question emerges: in shared governance contexts, particularly within the structures at each institution, how are leaders largely responsible for imparting organizational mindfulness? Further, are those faculty members and administrators engaged in governance on the “front line” mindfully organizing as a result? Some interviewees—themselves campus leaders—noted how complex higher education

leadership is, but only one interviewee explicitly linked leadership to organizational mindfulness.

The notion of mindful organizing remains intriguing, because it clarifies how specific actions, such as communication, reinforces mindfulness throughout the organization, which in turn enhances mindful organizing. Shared governance as a practice of mindful organizing seems reasonable, but more research on how leaders actually impart mindfulness would be beneficial.

The Importance of Organizational Mindfulness

Shared governance at both institutions can be characterized as generally healthy and constructive, as can their levels of organizational mindfulness. However, the liberal arts college and research university displayed the construct but never realized it.

Practically all interviewees were unfamiliar with organizational mindfulness and its benefits. This is not surprising given the relative novelty of the construct. Yet it is crucial for organizations to understand mindfulness and its implications. As Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) explain:

When it comes to mindfulness, it's good to feel bad and bad to feel good. This inverted logic derives from the many dangers of complacency that accompany success. To feel good may be to relax attentiveness and allow problems to accumulate undetected. (p. 94)

Both organizations appear successful—or “good”—in their shared governance arrangements. However, because they are mindful and not aware of it, is that problematic?

Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) do not address that question explicitly; however, they stress the importance of understanding the construct in general.

You need to be alert to the dimensions of mindfulness and mindlessness and how they permeate your work and your system. But you also need to be more attentive to situations where mindfulness can make a big difference. By that we mean situations where ‘ugly’ surprises are more likely to show up. (p. 90)

As George, a senior faculty member at the research university said, “There’s nothing worse than a surprise.” The potential for surprises in the context of shared governance is great. The federal government could issue a new mandate; a donor could retract a substantial gift; or, a scandal could envelop campus. The point of organizational mindfulness is to anticipate or contain those surprises. Awareness of the construct and its principles seems vital to ensure this.

This study has several implications for college and university presidents, their administrations, faculty members, governing boards, and scholars. In particular, this study highlights the utility of organizational mindfulness in shared governance contexts. Below, I discuss theoretical and practical recommendations drawn from this study’s findings. I discuss these recommendations in the broader context of organizational mindfulness or in perceptions of the construct.

Recommendations for Theory and Research

Findings from this study have inspired questions about organizational mindfulness and its relationship with institutional type and roles. They also generated questions about the cost of mindfulness and the relationship of the construct to non-high reliability organizations. I discuss these topics below.

First, I offer a recommendation concerning methodology. Surveying within institutions may not be as problematic as surveying among several institutions. As I learned in this study, obtaining responses from various people at various institutions is rather difficult. I even used non-probability-based techniques to mitigate this concern. I also used DeVellis' (2012) and Fowler's (2009) suggestions for improving responses, such as follow-up emails and phone calls. These procedures did not result in a desired response rate.

Thus, if a researcher is concerned with responses, particularly when studying colleges and universities, then the researcher might consider analyzing organizational mindfulness qualitatively. This approach was very useful for gathering data for this study. Moreover, this approach could help researchers engage presidents, senior administrators, or board members, all of whom are unlikely to take surveys. In fact, Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) suggested interviewing college deans to learn more about organizational mindfulness. Qualitative research also highlighted latent aspects of shared governance that survey research did not necessarily gauge. This is a reasonable suggestion given that many of organizational mindfulness' theoretical foundations emerged from case studies and interviews.

The two case sites are different types of organizations. Yet both exhibited organizational mindfulness in shared governance. This may be attributable in part to faculty's role in governance, which Toma (2010) stated is "richest" (p. 102) in research universities and liberal arts colleges. How might other types of institutions with dissimilar governance arrangements exhibit organizational mindfulness in shared governance? Or, how might institutions of similar type—but with different governance

arrangements—exhibit organizational mindfulness? Might factors such as formal structures or degree of centralization affect perceptions of organizational mindfulness? A typology of shared governance within and across different sectors would help answer these questions.

Similarly, organizational size did not necessarily influence perceptions of mindfulness in this study; however, the potential relationship could still be a factor in other institutions. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) provided examples of mindful organizations of varying size (e.g., firefighting units and aircraft carriers). Additionally, Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012) speculated that large or growing organizations might find decreased levels of mindfulness.

The type and size of institutions may not be as critical as an organization's mindful culture. This study initially assumed that both institutions in the sample had different institutional and governance cultures. Indeed, Birnbaum (1988) and Tierney (2004) noted how institutions in general and shared governance specifically have different cultures. Might mindful cultures transcend these other cultures? Additional research could assess organizational mindfulness and culture to better understand this relationship.

Moreover, Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) devote considerable attention to integrating organizational mindfulness into organizations' existing cultures. The challenge with their approach to “institutionalizing” a mindful culture is that their suggestions are directed toward corporate settings, with a particular emphasis on managers and top-down action and symbolism. The institutions in this study appear to have a mindful culture, but the data did not reveal specifically how this culture has emerged. Colleges and

universities—decidedly non-corporate entities—may ingrain organizational mindfulness into both the latent and visible aspects of shared governance using Weick and Sutcliffe’s (2007) audits, discussed later.

Another cultural aspect of organizational mindfulness relates to higher education’s expansion across the world. For instance, many colleges and universities have recruited students or built satellite campuses in dozens of countries, many of which are non-Western. How might colleges and universities employ organizational mindfulness in global contexts? Would the underlying tenets of organizational mindfulness need further refinement to address other cultures?

The relationship between one’s role in an organization and the level of an organization’s mindfulness remains intriguing. As noted earlier, participants in this study—who occupied positions of varying rank—generally described organizational mindfulness positively across roles. Yet Ray and colleagues (2011) noted that in business schools, roles among administrators appeared to influence perceptions of organizational mindfulness; in particular, those higher in the organization (e.g., deans) had greater perceptions of mindfulness than those lower in the organization (e.g., department chairs). Further research could clarify how specific roles and perceptions relate.

In fact, one’s role may not matter, but what may matter instead is the extent to which one is involved in governance. Several interviewees from both institutions said most problems in governance originate from those who are not in it. “Friction doesn’t come from those who actually participate in the university governance system; in my opinion, it comes from people that don’t participate,” Peter, a senior administrator at the

research university, said. Perhaps positive perceptions of organizational mindfulness were found because many interviewees are actively involved in governance. The lack of junior faculty involvement in this project is another reason to explore one's level of involvement in perceiving organizational mindfulness.

This study also revealed that the construct could be applied and measured among different levels within an organization. Vogus and Sutcliffe (2012), in their analysis of Ray and colleagues' (2011) study, indicated that organizational mindfulness could be studied "across hierarchical levels . . . which is critical for mindfulness to be a truly organizational phenomenon. Prior research focuse[d] on professionally homogenous groups at one hierarchical level . . ." (p. 722). Here, faculty and administrators—two distinct groups of organizational actors—provide meaningful data on organizational mindfulness.

The literature tends to assume that, through hard work and inspiring leadership, organizations can become more mindful. Yet the literature rarely considers if there are repercussions from pursuing or achieving organizational mindfulness. This is another theoretical area to explore. Dane (2011) suggested further research should be done to ascertain if there is a financial cost or risk of unethical behavior regarding mindfulness, especially as it relates to task performance. Ray and colleagues (2011) also noted that there might be a high financial cost associated with organizational mindfulness.

However, organizational mindfulness could also cost time or other resources.

Finally, this study indicates that organizational mindfulness has applicability in non-HROs. Hoy and colleagues (2006) and Ray and colleagues (2011), studying middle schools and colleges of business, respectively, have made similar contributions.

Additional research of non-HROs and organizational mindfulness could help validate the construct in those settings, because all organizations share “complacency and hubris” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. xi) as enemies.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Recall that this study sought to examine the usefulness of organizational mindfulness in shared governance contexts, with the ultimate goal to consider ways to improve faculty-administrator relations in those contexts. Practical recommendations to meet that objective have emerged from the literature on organizational mindfulness and shared governance, the methods used for this research, and the findings of this project.

Below, I offer several of those practical considerations. The chief practical recommendations are for organizations to assess their mindfulness and then implement mindful practices, which include ideas for “small wins,” forming a shared governance task force, and involving faculty in administrative roles.

Assessing organizational mindfulness. An assessment of organizational mindfulness would benefit colleges and universities greatly. Particularly, faculty and/or administrator leaders should assess areas at their institutions where there are problems, where there have been problems, or where they foresee problems. These may include, for example, faculty senates, athletic departments, fundraising units, or admissions offices. Of course, an institution-wide assessment could also identify areas of concern that no one has considered.

Justifying assessments. However, before conducting an assessment, leaders should convey to their colleagues why this research is necessary. If an organization wants to prevent problems or respond to them effectively, it must confront its

vulnerabilities first. Such a project would undoubtedly force respondents to think negatively about their organizations or their own roles. Yet a rigorous and critical assessment can help organizations first create awareness of its mindlessness and then explore ways to institutionalize mindfulness (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007).

Conducting assessments. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) proposed that organizations assess their mindfulness using a series of surveys, or “audits,” as they describe them. Organizational actors take these surveys, which assess the five principles of mindfulness, as well as the organization’s overall predisposition to mindfulness and mindlessness. These surveys formed the basis of Hoy and colleagues’ (2006) and Ray and colleagues’ (2011) instruments, as well as my own. As these studies have indicated, these instruments can be modified to address different organizations, which Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) encouraged.

This study assessed perceptions of organizational mindfulness. A more extensive study might assign an actual organizational mindfulness score for various organizations, based upon responses from multiple people in each of those organizations. For instance, concerning shared governance, one could survey faculty senates at dozens of colleges and universities, and from each of those senates receive numerous individual replies. If one used a faculty senate as a unit of analysis, one could compare other organizational traits with the faculty senate’s organizational mindfulness. This approach may give faculty members and administrators a more comprehensive portrait of their shared governance arrangements—and could signal any defects in them.

Implementing mindful practices. Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) also provided suggestions for transforming organizations into more mindful entities. They suggested a

“small wins” approach. Small wins are “opportunistic steps . . . [that] produce change without confronting the system directly or aggressively” (p. 139). This approach is especially vital for higher education institutions. Change—if executed improperly—can incite repercussions there (Pierce, 2014).

Small wins. Hoy and colleagues (2006) integrate Weick and Sutcliffe’s (2007) audits and offer a few suggestions for leaders to generate mindfulness. I share some of Hoy and colleagues’ (2006, p. 253) ideas, modified for the context of shared governance, below.

- 1) “Create an awareness of vulnerabilities” in the institution. Organizations cannot become more mindful if they do not confront their problems. This is especially applicable to presidents and senior administrators, who should share, for example, budgetary constraints or any other problem that could jeopardize the institution’s mission and/or shared governance arrangements. Faculty and fellow administrators must not be surprised by difficulties.
- 2) “Welcome the bad day.” Turn negative experiences into learning opportunities. Mindful organizations view problems as ways to improve their operations, not paralyze them. When faculty and administrators have governance setbacks, they should analyze what caused their disputes and work to prevent or overcome them in the future.
- 3) “Cultivate skepticism” in the institution. Skepticism promotes healthy debate and can help identify potential problems. Administrators in particular might be hesitant to encourage this, but criticism helps identify potential errors.

- 4) “Reinvent the wheel periodically.” Routines promote mindlessness.

Institutions should encourage faculty and administrators to invigorate the way they participate in shared governance. Such approaches prevent monotony in governance and might help participants identify problems. For example, faculty and administrators could rotate among committees for a short duration or speak to different campus constituencies about a certain issue.

- 5) “Embrace uncertainty.” Nothing is certain in the academy. For instance, state budget allocations, major donations, enrollment figures, and retention rates are not static. Faculty members and administrators who recognize this, and make preparations accordingly, are better prepared to handle challenges.

Shared governance task force. One way to execute these recommendations or generate new ones might be through a “shared governance task force.” Bahls (2014) has proposed such a task force, which could consist of equal numbers of faculty leaders, senior administrators, and governing board representatives. He encourages an institution’s provost to represent the president, because including the president on a task force could “chill candid discussion” (Bahls, 2014, p. 82). Many of Bahls’ (2014) charges to a shared governance task force evoke mindful practices. For example, he encourages task force members to scan for problems, assess structures and communication, and welcome competing views.

Faculty involvement in administration. As noted earlier, the liberal arts college studied in this paper rotates faculty members into senior administrative leadership roles for three years. Then, those faculty members who served as administrators return to their departments. Interviewees at the liberal arts college lauded this practice because it helps

faculty develop knowledge of various issues within and beyond the institution. This is a very mindful practice, particularly because it helps leaders gain a greater sensitivity to operations.

Other institutions may wish to incorporate their faculty into administrative roles on a temporary basis. These roles need not be senior. The department chair role, for instance, allows faculty members to learn administrative issues. Carroll and Wolverton (2004) noted that department chairs have many administrative responsibilities beyond their faculty duties, such as budgeting and policy-making; however, they add, chairs are often ill prepared for these duties. Thus, institutions should help acclimate chairs to their roles.

This study has offered a few theoretical and practical recommendations that might improve faculty-administrator relations in shared governance. There are undoubtedly many more. Yet improvement need not be the only reason to consider these recommendations. Mindful organizations understand that even if there is stability in their organizations now, instabilities—especially those that are unexpected—can occur at any time. Thus, they pursue prevention. Likewise, colleges and universities that have relatively peaceful or respectful faculty-administrator relations in shared governance will benefit by embracing these recommendations and exploring others.

Conclusion

As colleges and universities continue to grow in complexity and face numerous challenges, the need to understand and apply organizational mindfulness is strong. The relationship between faculty and administrators need not be the sole concern of organizational mindfulness, either. Consider, for example, an assortment of other

pressing matters currently affecting institutions: campus crime, student conduct, tuition prices, asset privatization, or the growth of online learning. These issues, among others, could negatively impact the operations of colleges and universities. Organizational mindfulness—with its emphasis on anticipation and reaction—can help institutions confront these challenges effectively.

In the liberal arts college and research university, organizational mindfulness is inherently present in shared governance contexts. Therefore, these two institutions may serve as models of good governance for other colleges and universities, such as those experiencing significant shared governance problems or those that simply want to improve their shared governance arrangements.

This study explored how organizational mindfulness manifested itself in shared governance at two higher education institutions. It suggested that there were positive perceptions of organizational mindfulness in shared governance, and that the type of institution and one's role in it was immaterial to those perceptions. Indeed, organizational mindfulness at these two institutions appears to bridge the chasm between faculty and administration.

Though this study was descriptive and not generalizable to the population of higher education institutions, there remain intriguing findings in this study that could inform future, more robust research. Institutional culture, formalization, leadership, and organizational actors' specific roles are some—and certainly not all—factors that may relate to perceptions of organizational mindfulness. An assessment of organizational mindfulness in shared governance is an important first step to understanding these potential relationships, as well as preventing or responding to problems.

Pierce (2014) noted that governance disputes have affected higher education institutions for nearly two centuries, and disputes between faculty and administrators have been especially prevalent since the 1960s. These tensions will likely never end, especially as threats against shared governance—budget cuts, new technologies, or political demands, for example—increase. Faculty and administrative leadership must understand “we are all firefighters putting out one fire after another” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2007, p. 160), meaning colleges and universities will always face instability. Organizational mindfulness can help institutions transform potentially incapacitating events into opportunities for constructive criticism and learning.

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Appendix A: Survey Instrument

- 1) Please select your institution: [Participants could select their institution here.]
- 2) Please select the one role that best describes your current role:
 - a. Faculty
 - b. Administrator
- 3) For the purpose of this survey, shared governance is defined as collaborative decision-making between faculty members and administrators at your institution.

Please select the ways you have participated in shared governance in the last year. These may apply to system-wide or institution-wide shared governance, or shared governance that is in your department and/or school/college. Select all that apply.

- a. Campus senate
- b. Periodic campus-wide meetings between faculty and administrators (with voice and vote)
- c. Academic committees (e.g., curriculum policy, tenure and promotion)
- d. Non-academic committees (e.g., budgeting, student conduct, athletics oversight)
- e. Search committees
- f. Other types of shared governance policies/processes not listed here
- g. I have not participated in shared governance.

- 4) For each item, select the one response that corresponds to your level of agreement with each statement. If you do not wish to respond to a statement, you may skip it. Your responses are anonymous.

Note: For each item, respondents could select one level of agreement: strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree.

- a. People at this institution care about problems in shared governance.
- b. Diverse opinions about shared governance are welcomed and encouraged to be shared.
- c. People at this institution recognize that shared governance means more than senate or committee meetings.
- d. This institution recovers quickly when there is a problem in shared governance.
- e. People most qualified to make decisions make them.
- f. People at this institution learn from their governance mistakes.
- g. People at this institution are familiar with the policies and processes of shared governance here.
- h. At this institution, colleagues are encouraged to share bad news or mistakes.
- i. People at this institution know who has the expertise to respond to a problem when there is one.
- j. Shared governance problems often bring this institution to a halt.

- k. People at this institution question faculty and/or administrative colleagues freely.
- l. People at this institution welcome feedback about ways to improve shared governance policies and processes.
- m. People at this institution cultivate relationships with their colleagues in shared governance.
- n. People at this institution focus more on negative experiences than positive experiences.
- o. People at this institution deliberate different viewpoints even if they are uncomfortable.

Appendix B: Recruitment Message

The following e-mail message was sent to initial contacts on May 15, 2014; Follow-up messages were sent June 5, 2014 and July 7, 2014. The survey closed on July 11, 2014.

The subject was “Shared governance survey.”

Greetings,

I am a third-year doctoral candidate in Higher Education and Student Affairs at The Ohio State University. I am conducting a survey of “organizational mindfulness” of shared governance at colleges and universities in [the Midwest]. I invite you to take my 15-item survey below. Your responses are anonymous—I only collect your role (faculty or administrator) and institution (which will be re-named). The survey should take no more than ten minutes.

Organizational mindfulness is a process organizations can embrace to prevent instabilities or respond to them should one arise. In higher education, shared governance disputes, especially between faculty and administrators, often create instabilities on campuses. Thus, the purpose of my research is to learn how organizational mindfulness may alleviate shared governance problems between faculty and administrators. The responses from this survey may yield new insights to improve shared governance policies and processes.

I also encourage you to forward my survey to your faculty and/or administrator colleagues.

Please click the link below to take the survey:

https://eheosu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5uPUHHDSDwv1qxD

Thank you for participating in this study and forwarding this message to your colleagues. If you have questions, please email me at mckinniss.14@osu.edu or my advisor, Dr. Tatiana Suspitsyna, at suspitsyna.1@osu.edu. For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Thank you,
Sean McKinniss