5-2023

The Cost of Organizational Change for Rural Community Colleges

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The Cost of Organizational Change for Rural Community Colleges

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Adult and Lifelong Learning

by

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May 2023
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Abstract

This qualitative study will investigate the unintended consequences of implementing structural change in a rural community college in the mid-South region of the United States. Specifically, this study will examine the unanticipated outcomes of merging student affairs and academic affairs into one division. Scant empirical evidence exists about the benefits of this structural change or literature reviewing assessments of the unanticipated financial and nonfinancial costs to the institution. This critical case study is situated in a rural community college that recently changed its organizational structure by combining the academic and student affairs divisions. A purposeful sample, from different levels of the organization, who were stakeholders in the change, will be interviewed and asked to describe the unintended positive and negative outcomes of the change, how they managed those consequences, identify the costs to the institution, identify the value to the institution, and share what was learned from the change initiative. The study uses Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames model as a framework to explore the phenomenon and interpret participant data. This study will provide empirical literature about structural change and unintended consequences to replace the anecdotal knowledge currently used for organizational decision making. The study will inform organizational leaders of the tangible and intangible costs associated with change. Information from this qualitative study could be useful for trustees, chief executive officers, divisional heads, mid-level administrators, and frontline personnel to identify the potential emotional, financial, temporal, and relational costs associated with making a significant organizational change in a small, rural community college.

Acknowledgments

I wish that I was able to acknowledge everyone who has contributed to my growth and development as a person, but that would require a book. There are distinguished individuals who were especially impactful during various stages of my life. Dr. Jim Kerr and David Dickson were two men who took me under their wings and poured into me as mentors. I'm so grateful to them both for their lessons. Dr. Jesse Thomas, during my undergraduate studies, and Dr. Susan Underwood, during my Master's degree studies, went out of their way to shape me as a scholar and person.

My gratefulness extends to Dr. Sara Kathleen Henry and her staff at Heartful Editor. As they have coached me on sentence and paragraph structure, identified gaps in my writing, and corrected my formatting, it has been nothing but a pleasure to work with them. Their heart for education comes through in every aspect of their dealings. I want to especially express my appreciation for Dr. Ashley Staples and Dr. Emily Guetzoian for their kindness, professionalism, and truly caring for me and this project. Their response is timely, their suggestions are insightful, and their encouragement is motivating. My experience with them has shaped my thinking, writing, and character.

I would not have made it through the doctoral program without the encouragement and support of my cohort. Dr. Robbie Cornelius, Dr. Collin Calloway, Dr. Ashley Aylett, Dr. Chris Lorch, Carol Birth, Chris Dickie, and Brandon Wooden have become some of my closest friends and greatest supporters. I also want to thank Ms. Sandra Ward in the Graduate School and Laura Cameron in the university library for their faithful assistance time and again during this journey. Additionally, Dr. Kenda Grover was a professor that pushed my thinking and use of technology. She encouraged me with compliments and challenged me when needed. She was painfully

honest when I chose a research subject that would have been very difficult to conduct. For avoiding a catastrophe, I will forever be obligated to her!

Dr. Kit Kacirek is my hero. She is a visionary who has established the community college leadership program for the Adult and Lifelong Learning department at the University of Arkansas Graduate School. She is a talented professor, leader, and life coach. She connects with people and makes a difference in their lives. Dr. Kit has poured herself into me. My success is her success. She has patiently and steadfastly stood with me through the doctoral process. Always with the right words, she knew what I needed to hear. I have learned so much from her and I owe so much to her. Dr. Kit Kacirek has become a pillar in my life who will always be an inspiration and example to emulate. It is such a rare occasion when someone touches you so profoundly, it is difficult to articulate. She will always be a part of who I become. I would not have obtained this milestone without her. Dr. Kacirek is my chair and I proudly share this accomplishment with her.

Dedication

I dedicate this achievement, first of all, to my wife, Krista Jackson Scaggs. She is nearly as invested in this goal as I am and has sacrificed much to make it a reality. Her very stressful occupation requires times of rejuvenation, and I promise to make up, many times over, the lost family time, days on the lake, floating on the river, travels, and sunny-day activities. I look forward to addressing, without the weight of this work, the list of needed projects that she has so patiently guarded. Most importantly, I am grateful for her belief in me and confidence that I could complete this task—her support means the world to me.

I also dedicate this milestone to my family. I hope Kinsey and Michael Vogt, Samuel Scaggs, Jacob Scaggs, Kody Scaggs, Olivia Scaggs, Natasha and Joshua Lowe, and Michaela Smith will see this completion and be motivated to achieve their own personal goals. May this personal triumph become a standard by raising the expectation and lowering the threshold for my grandchildren (i.e., Anna Hicks, Leah Redfearn, Xander Vogt, Kamryn Vogt, and those to come) and my niece and nephews (i.e., Jade, Christopher and Megan; Andrew, Matthew and Ansley; Jacob, Anthony, and Garrison) to seek higher education and prepare themselves for a life of purpose. I am indebted to my parents, Dan and Joyce Scaggs, my siblings, Linnette Mullins, Jason and Delora Scaggs, and my Aunt Linda and Uncle Frank Nunnery, for your constant support and encouragement.

This work is also dedicated to those first-generation college students who never would have dreamed that college could be within their reach. Whether you are in a poor, rural area or the inner city, never give up. My attainment of a doctorate is your proof of possibility. I encourage you to take ahold of lifelong learning and never let go.

Most of all, through the attainment of this goal, I dedicate myself to accomplish good. I want to honor God, who is my source for goodness, who never gives up on my development.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Organizations are complex and unpredictable. Some aspects of an organization's complexity are related to the psychological, social, historical, experiential, economic, spiritual, and educational perspectives and backgrounds of employees. Therefore, the study of organizations is rooted in psychology, sociology, and political science. According to Bolman and Deal (2021), "Only in the past 100 years or so have social scientists devoted much time or attention to developing ideas about how organizations work, how they should work, or why they often fail" (p. 15). In that time period, researchers have developed many different theories in the social sciences in an attempt to control the social complexities that human beings convey to organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2021).

March and Simon (1958) established a social–psychological view of organizational behavior. They suggested organizational thinking, information processing, and decision making are based on human aspirations (e.g., maximize their best option). Bolman and Deal (2021) shared, "Navigating organizational change is challenging because human behavior in an organization is complex, surprising, deceptive, and ambiguous" (pp. 33–34). They went on to describe the reality of managers and administrators as a "world of messes" (Bolman & Deal, 2021, p. 42) produced through the convergence of complexity, ambiguity, value dilemmas, political pressures, and multiple constituencies.

Higher education organizations are not exempt from this reality. They have many political pressures from government oversite, donors, public opinion, faculty, staff, and students. Institutions are made up of socioeconomic diverse employees that hold many levels of education, different values, and agendas. These complexities make navigating change difficult. Smith (2016) suggested many higher education administrators use intuition when making changes in the organization. Similarly, Lee (2017) found higher education institutions make organizational change with "little empirical validation" (p. 4). Clearly, empirical research is needed to identify the fiscal and nonmonetary costs associated with making far-reaching changes in organizational structure. These costs are often obscured by the need to cut budgets, eliminate positions, create a more fluid working relationship between departments, influence retention, or better serve students.

Changes often require an obligatory study and proof is needed to obtain approval (e.g., adding a position, replacing a website, building a structure). However, some decisionmakers do not consider the unanticipated costs the change will incur. These costs can be monetary but may also have costly effects upon things like organization function, employee morale, or customer service. This qualitative study will investigate the unforeseen effects of implementing structural change in a rural community college. Specifically, this study will examine the unintended outcomes of merging the divisions of student affairs and academic affairs to form a single division. The data from the research may help academic leaders identify issues related to structural change they might not otherwise consider. The findings will contribute to the literature about organizational change and illuminate unintended consequences or benefits, filling a gap in higher education literature and offering specific information about the community college context.

Background

The organizational structure represents the ways internal relationships, formal communication, reporting, delegation, and decision making take place in an institution (Ahmady et al., 2016). Raziq et al. (2020) identified the three most common elements of organizational structure: integration, formalization, and centralization. Integration is how individuals cooperate with each other, and whether their relationship is vertical or horizontal in the organizational structure. Formalization describes the level of standardization in the organization codified by policies and procedures. Centralization refers to how decisions are made in the organization. The organizational structure will dictate the culture, innovation, and effectiveness of the organization. Arokodare (2021) contended an agile organization will have a flexible structure and operations and will survive when faced with difficulties.

Organization Structure

Foster (2016) categorized theories related to organizational structure into three distinct periods (see Figure 1), which reflect how the field of organizational behavior evolved over time. The first period was informed by the great man theory, which mirrored societal norms that valued decisive, noncollaborative personality to "command and control" (Foster, 2016, p. 8) people and employees. The second stage, developed during the industrial revolution, embraced the classic theory of organizational structure. During this era, organizations distributed authority and leadership vertically, and hierarchy is considered a hallmark of the classic theory. More recently, organizational structures have flattened and become less bureaucratic to increase flexibility in the third stage. This more flexible organizational structure is based on open systems theory, which was shaped by the information age and globalization, and supports global connectedness and data sharing.

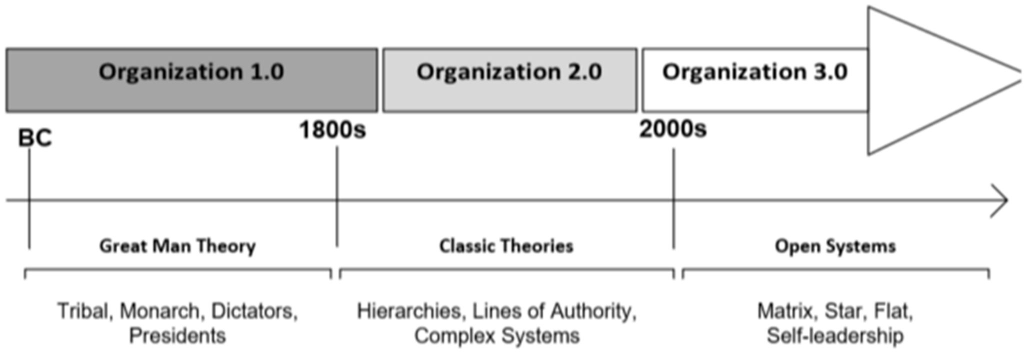

Figure 1. Historical View of Organizational Structure
Note. From "The Open Organization: A New Era of Leadership and Organizational Development," by P. Foster, 2016, p. 4. Copyright 2016 by Taylor & Francis Group.

Mintzberg (1979) stated, "Organizational structure is the framework of the relations for jobs, systems, operating process, people and groups making efforts to achieve goals. It is a set of methods dividing tasks to determine duties and coordinate them" (p. 456). An organization's structure is often depicted in a chart illustrating the formal chain of command, reporting pathways, levels of hierarchy, and the span of control in the organization. The chart also delineates the working groups and business units in the organization (Ahmady et al., 2016). The formal structure of a higher education institution was primarily established using classic theory and the organization is depicted vertically in a chart.

There are also unseen, informal structures that significantly influence an organization (Ahmady et al., 2016). In contrast to the formal structure, these hidden social structures run laterally across the organization and cross over the formal divisions. For example, individuals who hold equivalent positions of authority—such as deans to deans, directors to directors, or administrative assistants to administrative assistants—have common experiences that bring them together socially even if they belong to separate divisions with distinct purposes or missions. These individuals report to different units in the organization, but their influence in the organization comes from the unique perspectives of their shared levels of involvement or authority. The similarity of their perspectives and experiences bonds these individuals across formal boundaries; as a result, the dynamics of the informal structure can strongly influence the success of the formal structure (Ahmady et al., 2016).

Community College Structure

Kinney (2008) described the traditional operation of community colleges as “an organizational structural model in which three or four chief-executive level officers report to the Chief Executive Officer” (p. 10), otherwise titled as president or chancellor. This administrative structure has changed little since Knapp (1988) found it the predominant model in a study 20 years prior to Kinney’s study. The traditional model (see Figure 2) is a hierarchy with a president or chancellor serving as the chief executive officer. The functioning units or divisions are normally categorized into academic affairs, student affairs, and administrative or financial affairs. Many times, there is a fourth division for institutional advancement, which houses the fundraising and alumni services units for the organization. The head of each of these divisions will typically carry the title of vice president or vice chancellor.

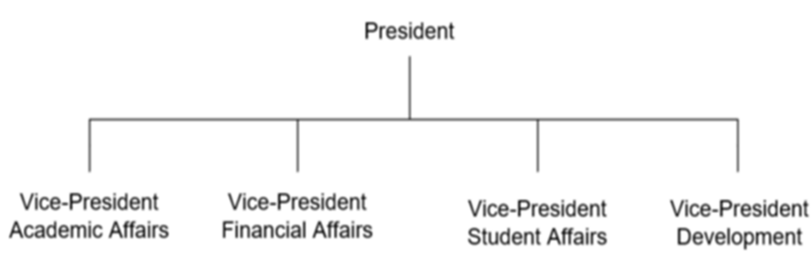

Figure 2. Traditional Community College Administrative Structure

Community Colleges and Organizational Change

In the United States, community colleges face challenges requiring adjustments to their structure and behavior. Some of the common challenges identified by community college leadership are “financial stability/security, declining enrollments, working with elected boards, working with unions, and dealing with an increasing number of regulatory/legislative mandates” (Artis & Bartel, 2021, p. 678), and a call of accountability through performance-based funding (Thornton & Friedel, 2016). Foote (1998) observed community colleges are predisposed to transformation, saying, “They constantly make and remake themselves in response to social, economic, and governmental transformations” (p. 99). In the seminal work of resource dependent theory, Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) perceived that public institutions will adapt their organizational structure and behavior when it is tied to funding structure changes from the state government. Lee (2017) acknowledged these pressures resulted in “the most notable alteration to community college organizational structure in the 21st century” (p. 3), which was bringing student affairs under the umbrella of academic affairs (see Figure 3).

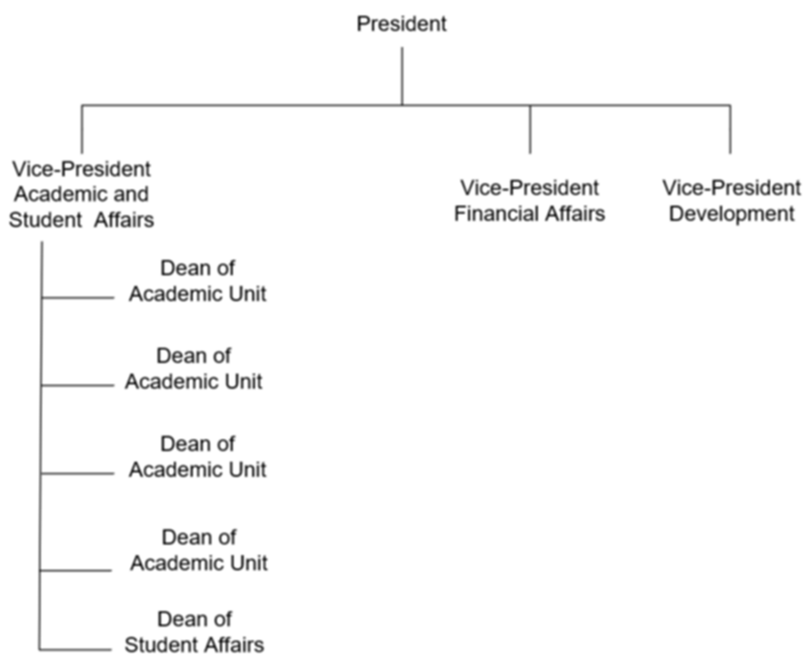

Figure 3. Merged Administrative Structure

Community colleges face mounting internal and external pressures to become less bureaucratic, more responsive, and more effective in their operations (Hayes, 2015). This pressure, according to Kuk and Banning (2009), has been the catalyst for the current trend among research institutions and community colleges to have “student affairs leadership increasingly report to the president through other senior administrators” (p. 107). This departure from the traditional organizational structure means the chief student affairs officer (CSAO), usually the vice president or vice chancellor of student affairs, has no direct reporting line to the president. In the new configuration, the CSAOs are assigned a lesser title and report to a vice president overseeing both academics and student affairs. The effort to “orchestrate an organizational restructuring . . . results in the consolidation of responsibility for both academic and student affairs” (McClellan, 2004, p. 4) and is intended to streamline the organization.

Flattening the organizational chart is a product of the many financial, social, and political stresses upon the community college to produce change (Price, 1999).

Kuk and Banning (2009) stated, “Most information that is known about community college administrative structures is either anecdotal or inferred from business organization models” (p. 96). The literature about the organizational structures in use at community colleges is not current (e.g., Smith, 2016) and is based on the hierarchical formalization, centralization, and standardization research completed before the 1980s (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006; Kuk & Banning, 2009). Additionally, Underwood and Hammons (1999) found evidence of the benefits of combining organizational structures are not based on research but are generally either assumed or intuited (Kennedy, 2004; McClellan, 2004; Smith, 2016). This study will bring currency to the literature by examining the unintended organizational consequences of merging the student affairs and academic affairs divisions in a rural community college. This study will investigate the expected and unexpected benefits and challenges of the structural change to the entire organization.

Problem Statement

Literature associated with organizational change in business and industry is abundant (Hughes, 2022). However, few studies have explored the unintended outcomes of organizational change specific to community colleges. The trend of flattening organizations by combining functional units is growing. However, it is vital to obtain empirical evidence through current research about the benefits of combining the units (Gulley, 2016) and assessing the unanticipated financial and nonfinancial costs of changing the administrative structure.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study will examine the unintended products of implementing structural change in a rural community college. Specifically, this study will explore the unanticipated financial and nonfinancial outcomes (e.g., communication, culture, processes, solidarity) of merging the student affairs and the academic affairs divisions. Using critical case study methodology (Yin, 2009) and Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames model, I will explore the changes in the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic components of a rural community college organization. Through interviews, I will gather the perspectives of individuals who participated in the change process to gather data about their experiences.

Research Questions

The central questions guiding this study are:

- How do participants describe the unintended consequences of the change initiative?
    - What were the structural implications of the merger?
    - How did the merger impact human resources in the organization?
    - What were the political implications of the merger?
    - What were the symbolic implications of the merger?
- How did participants manage unintended consequences?
    - What were the costs of structural change?
    - What was the value of structural change?
- What did participants learn from the structural change initiative?
- What role did the unintended consequences play in reverting to the former administrative structure?

Overview of Research Design

This study focuses on a phenomenon taking place at individual institutions of higher education, specifically community colleges. The goal of the study is to determine the holistic impact on the institution from merging the administrative units of academic affairs and student affairs. Thoroughly understanding the far-reaching effects upon the culture, camaraderie, morale, and stability of the institution will require a postpositivist research design. According to Gall et al. (2003), "Postpositivist researchers develop knowledge by collecting primarily verbal data through the intensive study of cases and then subjecting these data to analytic induction" (p. 24). A postpositivist design for this qualitative inquiry is best suited to collect evidence of employee's thoughts, concerns, disappointments, anxieties, approvals, and emotions.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) ascribed the following definition to qualitative research:

> Qualitative research is multimethod in its focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. (p. 2)

To fully understand the unintended benefits and costs of making the structural change, I will observe and interview personnel in their work settings on the campus of the institution. In-person interviews will allow me to interpret body language, tone of voice, and other nonverbal behaviors of individuals in the institution as they are in their natural setting and have frank discussions. Creswell (2013) agreed qualitative research is needed when there is a "problem or issue that needs to be explored" (p. 47).

The qualitative method chosen for this inquiry is a single critical case study. I selected a case study method because it meets Creswell's (2013) description of being a specific case, with a goal to understand in depth a specific issue, using different forms of collecting data, and seeking a data analysis from multiple units of the single case. It will have a holistic design, capturing the entire case. Yin (2009) agreed a single case study is best for a critical case inquiry.

The case is a small, rural community college set in the mid-South region of the United States. The college initially operated under the traditional model of administrative structure. In 2014, the president merged the two units of academic affairs and student affairs under a single vice president who controlled both areas. After operating under the merged structure for a few years, in 2019, the divisions were once again separated and reverted back to the traditional administrative model. The conversion to the blended model and back to the traditional model created a critical case situation that may be insightful for other leaders of community colleges. Therefore, there is a need to investigate this critical case to discover the intended and unintended consequences to the institution.

I will use purposeful maximal sampling (Creswell, 2012) to gain different perspectives on the issue. I will interview personnel from both the academic affairs and student affairs units. Each area will be divided into three groups: (a) the upper management or cabinet level, (b) middle management, and (c) frontline administrative personnel. In total, I will explore the perspectives of employees from each of these six groups. I will create an interview protocol based on the four frames model to serve as a guide in interviewing employees of the institution. I will interview individuals from the six designated groups independent of each other to create a safe environment to seek honesty in the answers.

I will use a multiple source strategy (Bloomberg, 2016) to gain a holistic view of the issue. I will reference the presidential cabinet and trustee meeting minutes to obtain a historical perspective of the case. I will research documents from the faculty senate and other campus employee groups for information relevant to the research study. I will also use observations to document interactions, attitudes, and compatibility among the stakeholders as they conduct business with each other. I will also observe meetings that contain members of the same divisions to note their demeanor, camaraderie, and respectfulness with each other. I will make the same observations in group meetings that contain members of both the academic and student affairs divisions.

I will use categorical aggregation (Creswell, 2013) to establish themes for each of the six employee types. I will establish categories in each employee type in each of the four frames. I will analyze and cross analyze the themes to identify any hidden costs to the organization. I will use triangulation to confirm the findings through focus groups. There will be five focus groups. The first set of focus groups will be the three levels of employees and will be cross divisional. Attendees will consist of administrators, middle management, and frontline personnel from both divisions. The second set of focus groups will include all personnel from each of the two divisions. I will record and analyze observations of these five focus groups to confirm or reject the conclusions of the single critical case qualitative study. I will sift all data from the documentation, observations, interviews, and focus groups using the conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames model provides the conceptual structure of this study. The model can be used to evaluate the impact of the organizational initiative holistically. The purpose of this study is to determine the unintended institutional outcomes of implementing structural change in a rural community college. By using the four frames model, I will examine the merger of the student affairs and academic affairs divisions from the perspective of its impact on the participating institutions' human resources, structural, political, and symbolic contexts.

Bolman and Deal (2013) "sifted through the voices of social scientists from the last 100 years . . . [and] given themselves to developing ideas of how organizations work, how they should work, and why they fail" (p. 14). Their goal for producing the four frames model was to provide "usable knowledge" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 14) for organization practitioners. Through research and practice, their insights have identified four frameworks, or contexts, that make up an organization. These contexts include the human resource frame, the structural frame, the symbolic frame, and the political frame (Bolman & Deal, 1984).

Using a factory metaphor to describe the structural frame, Bolman and Deal (2013) illustrated how an institution is organized, administered, and measured. The structural frame helps to determine the organizational chart, design the strategic plan, articulate the organization's goals and purposes, and identify the processes for measuring organizational success. The structural frame emphasizes the organization above the individual. Organizational leaders use the sciences of "sociology, economics, and management" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 15) to establish clear thinking and rational decision making in the structural frame.

The human resource frame is "rooted in psychology" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 16). The metaphor illuminating this perspective is of a family that focuses on the "needs, feelings, prejudices, skills, and limitations" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 16) of employees. The emphasis is on an individual and how they can accomplish their work and "feel good about themselves" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 16) and what they do. The goal of an institution, from the perspective of this frame, is to gain the trust of their employees by providing "adequate wages, benefits, training, and the resources to do their job" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 16). An organization with an unhealthy human resource frame creates an environment of distrust, and the employees may "withdraw, join unions, go on strike, sabotage, and quit" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 16).

In the political frame, organizations are considered arenas in which competitions take place for power and resources (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Bolman and Deal used a jungle metaphor to define this context. To survive the political frame, skills of "bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 16) are needed. These views of competition for advancement, influence, and budget are rooted in the research of political scientists. Because individuals, departments, and divisions have "differing needs, perspectives, and lifestyles" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 16), there is potential for constant conflict.

The imagery of a tribe is used to describe the symbolic frame. The examples of "temples, tribes, theaters, or carnivals" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 16) are rooted in social and cultural anthropology. This frame accentuates the spiritual side of the organization and the meaning gained by associating with the institution's traditions, historic personalities, and culture. According to Bolman and Deal (2013), the organization experiences problems when the "actors blow their parts, symbols lose their meaning, or ceremonies and rituals lose their potency" (p. 17). An institution that has lost its culture and traditions that made it a special place to belong is revived when "symbol, myth, and magic" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 17) are restored. Tradition and culture are the symbols that produce camaraderie, prestige, identity, and workplace pride.

These metaphors will provide insight and understanding of the financial and nonfinancial costs to the organization from the institutional dynamics initialized by the administrative change. The four frames model (Bolman & Deal, 2013) will provide a framework to evaluate the positive and negative impacts from the change of organizational structure. I will use the framework to evaluate the combination of the student affairs division and academic affairs division under one vice president at a small, rural, community college, and identify any unintended outcomes through qualitative methods.

Significance of the Study

This study will expand the literature concerning the results of organizational change in higher education institutions because few studies (e.g., Price, 1999; Smith, 2016; Underwood & Hammons, 1999) have examined structural change from a holistic perspective. I will use Bolman and Deal’s (2013) four frames model to guide the inquiry to examine the organization from the structural, political, human resource, and symbolic perspectives.

Structural change requires implementation costs (Bolman & Deal, 2013). For most organizations, restructuring is typically expected to produce a positive return on investment. Consideration should be given to investing in other ways than financial. Important concerns for employees are professional and personal development, being equipped, camaraderie, having purpose, and significance. Financial allocations are one type of investment but there are other areas to consider. This study will examine the tangible and intangible costs associated with change. These costs (Bolman & Deal, 2021; Kim, 2018; McClellan, 2004; Oliver et al., 2020) are defined as emotional, financial, temporal, and relational. Information discovered from this qualitative study will be useful to trustees, chief executive officers, divisional heads, mid-level administrators, and frontline personnel in higher education, informing them of the potential costs of organizational change.

Institutions are under significant pressure to produce graduates and provide high-capacity services to students; however, due to competing state agencies, colleges and universities receive less public funding each year (Pinkard et al., 2022; Taylor et al., 2022). Community colleges, with less bureaucracy than research universities, are uniquely primed to respond to the “social, economic, and governmental” (Foote, 1998, p. 99) changes they encounter. Outside pressures (e.g., government accountability, rising costs, competition for students, public opinion concerning tuition) force organizational leaders to become creative and think outside of their normal operational processes. This idea affirms Salancik and Pfeffer's (1978) resource dependency theory, which predicts organizations will transform themselves when their funding is in jeopardy. Stress can be an effective tool to leverage resourcefulness and to promote growth. Kennett et al. (2021) found students need resourcefulness skills to manage academic stress. Likewise, a study of psychiatric nurses showed their stress levels would lead to depression without resourcefulness skills (Wang et al., 2015). Academic leaders who have developed resourcefulness skills through education and career advancement can use the challenges their institutions face to create a new path forward.

According to Burke (2002), performance-based funding models "increase the efficiency and productivity of the institution and thereby influencing organizational change" (p. 9). However, if care is not taken, performance-based funding models may also force decisions that produce costly outcomes. The institution not only has a fiduciary responsibility to protect its financial assets, but it also has a duty to its human resources, culture, cohesiveness, service to its constituents, and purpose. This study aims to contribute valuable insights for institutions considering structural changes, especially about the nonfinancial costs an institution is likely to incur. Community colleges, which have limited resources in terms of staff, budget, donors, and technology, need to control unexpected costs of all types, and the context of this single case study will be particularly useful for leaders of these organizations.

Role of the Researcher

At the time of the study, I have over 20 years of experience in higher education. The majority of my experience is in the division of student affairs in the community college context. I have served as the director of admissions, the director of enrollment management, and an academic advisor, and have also served as the special assistant to the chancellor (i.e., chief of staff). Furthermore, I have faculty experience as an adjunct instructor for both college credit and workforce training courses. My early ambition was to become a vice president for student affairs (VPSA). Therefore, I pursued and obtained a master's degree in college student personnel.

It was the desire to become a VPSA that brought to my attention the trend of merging the academic affairs and student affairs divisions together. As I watched for position openings, I began to see a trend of VPSA positions that were being abolished and merged with academic affairs. This trend of merging the two areas became very frustrating for my career. Then, I began to search for literature to validate my suspicion, which was confirmed. My initial response was self-preserving, and I quickly identified reasons why community colleges should not combine these two distinct disciplines of educational services. However, as I read the literature and researched the issue, I developed a curiosity about the trend and began transforming my thinking. I considered how it might be beneficial to combine the two units under one chief executive officer, and I wondered about the possible benefits and the potential unintended consequences. In this study, I will use Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames model to sift the answers to these questions and holistically categorize them.

As both researcher and student affairs practitioner, I will identify with participants who are student affairs personnel as I seek their perspectives and insights about their experiences. Additionally, my experience with teaching will enable me to relate with the academic affairs personnel. These experiences position me well to research organizational change across these two divisions, and will allow me to be discerning and ask follow-up questions to more deeply understand the phenomenon. As researcher, I will be open minded and curious about participants' perceptions as I seek to determine a profound understanding of the issues encountered during the organizational change.

In line with qualitative inquiry traits, my actions as the researcher will be active, flexible, and reflective. The interviews will be in person when possible or via video conference when face-to-face meetings are not feasible. I will use active listening skills, record the conversations, and note observations. As Creswell (2012) suggested, I will also be empathetic and inquisitive. It is important for participants to feel they are being heard. When I am unsure what they mean, I will repeat or rephrase their answers for clarity. I will make eye contact and maintain an open posture to indicate my interest in their perspectives.

I will share my experiences and motives with participants to gain their confidence and trust. I will pilot the interview protocol among my peers to check the validity and quality of the questions guiding data collection. The case study approach is relevant to collect the knowledge and personal experience of each individual to gain a holistic view of the costs incurred by the organizational change.

Researcher Assumptions

To frame the research with my own experiences, I identified the following ideas I believe to be true and have the potential to impact the validity of the inquiry. First, I believe the methodology of the research will allow participants to engage with the study and be open to share their personal experience and insight. I believe the keys to identifying the positive or negative effects of the organizational change are kept in the minds and hearts of the study's participants and are ready to be unlocked. Engaging participants with the study is the best way to gain their insights. Therefore, I have embraced the case study approach to acquire qualitative data to provide evidence about the cost of organizational change.

I also believe there are unforeseen benefits and consequences to enacting organizational changes. A given change is made with a return or a benefit in mind. However, it is often not possible to understand how a structural change will affect all of the pieces to the organizational puzzle. Furthermore, when the structural change is made, there are many ways to measure the success or costs associated with the change. Therefore, my assumption is there are unforeseen benefits and consequences to the organizational change as part of the process.

This study will be conducted under the assumption that participants of the study will be completely honest with themselves and with me as the researcher. This assumption means subjects have trust and confidence in me, they agree the study is important, and are willing to make a contribution to higher education, including to community colleges in particular. They will need to feel safe and have the assurance that they can speak freely and openly in confidence and anonymity. Therefore, I will secure a location that provides privacy and will detail how their answers will be password protected and unidentifiable to them.

I am also working under the assumption that institutional leaders had goals in mind when the change was initiated. This assumption is necessary to measure the success of the change and to determine if the intended goals were achieved. Understanding the intended goals will help me identify the unforeseen benefits and consequences of the change.

Operational Definitions

The following terms have been identified as language used by higher education professionals. Definitions are provided to describe how they are intended to be used for this qualitative inquiry.

An *academic affairs* division is responsible for supporting student learning and experiences, program initiatives, and faculty (Top Hat, n.d.). The division revises and implements policies and procedures, and supports curriculum initiatives, faculty hiring, faculty research and teaching, and all academic departments and programs.

Community colleges are 2-year, government-supported colleges offering associate's degrees, 1-year technical certificates, and 1-semester certificates (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). These institutions focus on providing the basic education students need to bridge from an associate's degree to a 4-year institution to pursue a bachelor's degree, workforce education, or skill building.

One description of *organizational change* is:

> The movement of an organization from one state of affairs to another. It may involve a change in a company's structure, strategy, policies, procedures, technology, or culture. The change may be planned years in advance or may be forced on an organization because of a shift in the environment. (Lumen, n.d., paras. 1–2)

According to Kenton (2022), an *organizational structure* is a system that outlines how certain activities are directed to achieve the goals of the organization. The activities can include rules, roles, and responsibilities. The organizational structure also determines how information flows between levels in the company.

In higher education, the field of *student affairs* is:

> Made up of professionals dedicated to supporting the academic and personal development of individuals attending college or university. Other common names for this sector include student services, student success, or student personnel. Those who work in the field specialize in assisting students with a wide array of aspects related to the pursuit of a postsecondary education. There are positions in the discipline that focus on administrative tasks and those that are more geared toward hands on assistance. (Best College Reviews, 2022, para. 1)

Merton (1936)—who was an American sociologist and a major contributor to the study of unintended consequences or unforeseen consequences—identified *unintended consequences* as outcomes of a purposeful action that are not intended or foreseen. Merton indicated there are three potential outcomes for an intended action: (a) an *unexpected benefit*, or a positive unexpected outcome; (b) an *unexpected drawback*, or an undesirable outcome that occurs alongside the desired effect; or (c) a *perverse result*, which happens when the outcome is opposing the original intent.

Organization of the Dissertation and Summary

In Chapter 1, I provided information concerning organizational change, unintended outcomes, higher education, and community colleges. Chapter 2 builds upon these themes by examining available literature to provide a broader perspective. The intent of this research is to identify the associated unintended costs to a community college adopting an organizational change. Chapter 3 delineates the steps that will be taken to perform a qualitative inquiry at a rural community college that has experienced a change to their administrative structure. I will analyze the technical and adaptive challenges (Northouse, 2015) of combining two key divisions through multiple forms of data collection (Creswell, 2013). Primarily, I will conduct interviews with strategic personnel, defined by Marshall and Rossman (2016) as the *important actors* in the setting.

This critical case study will provide information in which a similar institution can logically generalize and make applicable to their unique case (Creswell, 2013). The findings will contribute to the leadership and change literature associated with higher education and may help inform other institutions as they consider the costs associated with an administrative structure change that impacts the entire organization.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this critical case study, I will examine the unintended consequences of executing an organizational change affecting the fundamental operation and administrative reporting lines of a rural community college in the mid-South region of the United States. This qualitative inquiry will add empirical evidence to the organizational change literature, which is currently deficient in research at the intersection of change management, unintended consequences, higher education, and community colleges. Through this study, I will identify the unanticipated costs to an institution, both financial and nonfinancial, associated with merging the academic and student affairs divisions. Further, examining the institution through the lens of Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames model will provide insight to the unintended outcomes from the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic perspectives.

In this chapter, I outline the evidence from historical and current literature to illustrate the need for this inquiry by looking into the background of higher education and outlining the development of two distinct divisions: academic affairs and student affairs. I also review current trends of organizational change and their relevant effects on community colleges. Next, I examine the theory of unintended consequences and its impact upon the knowledge base. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the conceptual framework that will provide a holistic view of the institution.

I used University of Arkansas library databases (e.g., ERIC, EBSCO, OneSearch, ProQuest Central, JSTOR) to find relevant books, dissertations, and journal articles to support the inquiry of this case study. Research guides for the education and adult learning graduate cohorts were a beneficial resource in the exploration process. Additionally, I used Google Scholar, SAGE, ScienceDirect, and Wiley Online Library to widen the pool of literature. I used the following keywords and phrases, including derivatives, to explore the literature: organizational change, organizational structure, community college administrative structure, higher education organizational structure, unintended consequences, academic affairs, student affairs, academic attitudes, merging organizational structure, Bolman and Deal, and higher education.

Dynamics of Community College Administrative Structures

The process of reviewing the literature provided understanding and insights about the current climate in higher education, the historical development of the postsecondary institution, and what things influence organizational change. The search also revealed there is limited evidence of the unintended outcomes from organizational structure modification. This study will bring currency to the literature by examining the holistic costs of merging the student affairs and academic affairs divisions.

The Traditional Community College Administrative Structure

Kopecek and Clarke (1980) conducted a national study of community colleges and reported a pattern of organization in which administrative units were generally divided into three major functional areas that included academic services, student services, and business services. Underwood (1991) performed a study of administrative structures in community colleges. They identified 530 public, 2-year, single-campus community colleges in the United States from the 1991 American Association of Community Colleges directory (Underwood & Hammons, 1999). They used a random sample of these institutions and selected 135 institutions to represent the population. Underwood and Hammons (1999) concluded:

> The traditional model with a president and three to four vice presidents or deans was the most common structure used five years ago; is the most common structure in use at the present; and it is the structure most preferred for the future. (p. 57)

Kinney (2008) researched the "most prevalent forms of organizational structure used in community colleges . . . to ascertain changes in organizational structure anticipated by presidents for the future" (p. 4). Expanding on Underwood's (1991) work examining the administrative organization of community colleges, both studies surveyed presidents of community colleges across the United States. Kinney (2008) mailed a qualitative survey to a sample of 161 institutions from the 2007 membership directory of the American Association of Community Colleges, targeting 2-year, public, single-campus community colleges in the United States, and received 72 valid responses. The presidents provided information about each of their institutions in three areas: (a) the administrative structure their institutions operated under during the prior 5 years, (b) the current organizational chart of their institutions and operations, and (c) a visualization of the organizational design they would choose for the future.

Kinney's (2008) study results mirrored Underwood's (1991) study findings from 17 years prior. The traditional model—with the vice presidents of student affairs, academic affairs, and administrative affairs reporting to a president—remained the dominant model of organizational structure for community colleges. The results of both studies demonstrated agreement in every category, regardless of the institution's size. The categories of 5 years prior to the study, contemporary to the study, and the desired structure for the future all indicated the traditional model was the standard.

The Journey of Distinctive Divisions

In the United States, during higher education's infancy, faculty were responsible for both the learning enterprise (i.e., academic affairs) and cocurricular development (i.e., student affairs) of the student body (Colwell, 2006). According to O'Banion (1971), during the colonial period, one of the first duties assigned to a faculty member as a student service agent was a "regulator"

(p. 8) who helped the president to manage student behavior. By the turn of the 20th century, faculty members became involved with the student services of admissions, registration, student guidance, student activities, student government, and record keeping (Cohen, 2014).

Student services were removed from faculty and assigned to nonfaculty professionals (Collins, 1967) by the mid-20th century. This transition engendered the establishment of student affairs divisions and the "student affairs profession developed, expanded, and specialized" (Frost et al., 2010, p. 37) by the end of the 20th century. Cohen (2014) shared, "Student services grew to emphasize developmental elements considerably more than the regulatory" (p. 210). The community college movement coincided with the emergence of the student affairs profession, and these recently formalized student affairs administrators became a driving force for community colleges to become student-centered institutions (Collins, 1967).

Student affairs divisions (see Figure 4) have evolved to include recruitment and retention; counseling; orientation; student activities; student health; financial aid; academic support; career centers; transfer centers; and supplemental services such as transportation, child care, food insecurity provisions, and services tailored for specific populations of students (Cohen, 2014). Furthermore, most student affairs divisions oversee student government and student engagement activities, which include student organizations and intramural sports. Higher education accrediting bodies identify such programs as cocurricular activities and require their inclusion in institutional assessments to evaluate their influence upon student success. The evolution of student affairs has created a distinctive divisional identity and culture that centers students at the core of the mission. Kezar (2003) observed student affairs divisions largely work in a silo, which produces a disconnection from the academic unit.

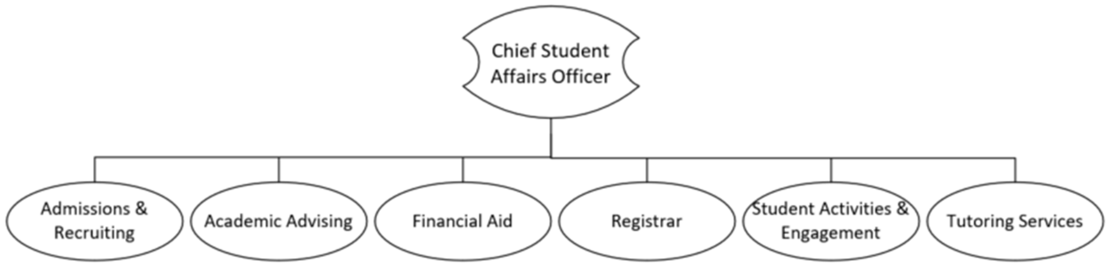

Figure 4. Example of a Typical Student Affairs Division Organizational Chart

Academic affairs divisions are more narrowly focused than student affairs divisions and concentrate on teaching, learning, and research (Outcalt, 2002). These divisions have oversight for academic disciplines, curriculum, degree programs, faculty members, academic departments, and educational programs. Typically, academic affairs divisions are organized using departments grouped by academic subject matter (see Figure 5). Bray (n.d.) contended these divisions are responsible for self-assessment to ensure regional- and program-related accreditation, professional development, and research.

Figure 5. Example of a Typical Academic Affairs Division Organizational Chart

As these two divisions developed in the higher education enterprise, they developed distinctive operational cultures. Dissimilarities emerged because their primary activities encouraged different focal points (Frost et al., 2010). Each division specialized and largely worked in silos. Specifically, academic affairs units became responsible for managing the processes associated with curriculum and instruction of the enterprise and student affairs units governed cocurricular education and the holistic development of the student outside of the classroom (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001).

In conducting this study, it will be important to have awareness of the cultural differences between the two divisions. According to Sandeen (1991), some faculty and administrators in the college culture view student affairs as a peripheral or adjunct service. Bourassa and Kruger (2001) also observed administration and faculty perceived student affairs personnel as holding a second-class status in relation to the academic mission. According to Kuh (1995), many faculty do not recognize the importance of learning and development that takes place outside of the classroom. Peltier (2014) observed, “There has been little empirical research done that explores faculty perceptions of student affairs personnel” (p. 8), nor how the institutional voice, influence, staffing, and budget of student affairs may be affected by their perceptions.

Academic Affairs and Student Affairs Partnership

Student success is a common measurement used by higher education institutions to determine their effectiveness (Cohen, 2014). Measures of student success include retaining a student from one semester to the next, students’ persistence through an academic program, and students’ completion of their degree (i.e., graduation). There is a growing body of evidence linking student success to the level of engagement they experience with the institution (Lemonedes, 2018).

A student’s engagement with the institution is much more likely when student affairs and academic affairs divisions work harmoniously toward the same goal, even though they are working toward that goal from different perspectives (Smith, 2016). Peltier (2014) commented, “Much attention has been given to the relationship between academic and student affairs, the role of each, and the potential that collaboration between the two offers in the achievement of developmental goals and student learning outcomes” (p. 7). Although there is general agreement that student engagement and student success are influenced by the collaboration of student affairs and academic affairs, there is little research providing best practices for structuring the partnership between the two divisions (Armstrong, 2014). Gulley and Mullendore (2014) contended even less scholarship has focused on the partnership structures in community colleges.

Armstrong (2014) suggested “separation of location and in reporting structures” (p. 3) may be an issue limiting collaborative efforts between the two divisions. One trend in the solutions that has emerged from institutions attempting to bridge the academic–social divide is the orchestration of “an organizational restructuring, which results in the consolidation of responsibility for both academic and student affairs” (McClellan, 2004, p. 4). Institutional administrators might assume a consolidated organizational structure will facilitate student learning (McClellan, 2004); however, as Price (1999) noted, a merger is “only an opportunity for effective partnerships, not a guarantee of them” (p. 76).

Community colleges face many challenges, including unstable “enrollment, declining resources, increased accountability, the cost of emerging technologies, new methods of communication, and greater connection to external constituencies” (Hayes, 2015, p. 2). Organizational structural change is one response to meeting these challenges. Some administrators assume combining the two divisions will increase an institution’s completion rate (McClellan, 2004). However, the literature does not provide empirical evidence that linking student services and instructional divisions through a consolidated administrative structure improves collaboration or partnerships between the two units (Smith, 2016).

Counting the Cost of Change

Kuk and Banning (2009) found many chief student services officers and academic officers recognized the need for structural change in their units. There were several motivations to make these changes, such as "(1) to address financial concerns, (2) to meet strategic priorities, (3) to enhance efficiencies and effectiveness, (4) to promote teamwork and collaboration, and (5) to reduce hierarchical approached to decision-making" (p. 106). However, when Kuk and Banning (2009) asked senior student affairs leadership why changes had not been initiated, they responded, "The political consequences were too great, or they needed to wait for some of their staff to retire before they could make the desired changes" (p. 106).

This internal political pressure illustrates the reality of potential hidden costs to an organization associated with making changes to its organizational structure (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Therefore, there is need for formal research to identify the financial and nonfinancial costs associated with making such drastic organizational structure changes. This study seeks to fill this gap in the literature by exploring how structural organizational change affects (a) personnel, motivation, ownership, influence, and symbolism; (b) interactions between departments; and (c) student learning and development.

Organizational Change Overview

Change in an organization can be initiated from several sources, such as in the organization or as a response to an outside influence. Examples of such forces stimulating change are the advancement of technology, workforce trends, keeping up with competition, and globalization (Burnes, 2004; By, 2005; Kotter, 1996). Organizations are constantly morphing to meet the complexities and dynamics of societal movements and business environments (Errida &

Lotfi, 2021). Responding to such pressures with deliberate activities intended to alter the state of the organization is the characterization of planned organizational change (Harigopal, 2016).

The glossary of the American Society for Quality (ASQ, n.d.-b) defined *change* as "the process, tools and techniques used to manage change, including planning, validating and implanting change, and verifying effectiveness of change" (para. 92). Changes in an organization can include its operational methods, technologies, organizational structure, whole structure, strategies, policies, and even its culture (Market Business News, n.d.). The ASQ (n.d.-a) contended *change management* is the "methods and manners in which a company describes and implements change within both its internal and external processes" (para. 1).

Change is vital if an organization is going to stay relevant in an ever-changing society, economy, and technological environment. However, Stouten (2018) opined "meaningful, sustainable changes can be difficult" (p. 752). Bucy et al. (2021) and Jarrel (2017) reported only one third of planned change interventions are successful. Furthermore, Dahl (2011) showed organizational changes are stressful for workers and indicated a rise in intake of stress-related medication among the employee sample. These examples underscore the motivations for this study, which seeks to expose the unintended consequence of structural change in a rural community college.

Organizational Change Models

To aid organizations in making meaningful and sustainable organizational changes, Stouten (2018) reviewed the literature for (a) the most widely used change models, founded on scientific research; and (b) the most popular models, which relied on expert opinions. The review revealed the literature on change management was fragmented and separating the scientific data from the popular writers' opinions was difficult. Importantly, Stouten reported managers had difficulty learning from experience due to the nature of large, structural changes being not conducive to making improvements by repetition because they are infrequent and noncyclical. Stouten (2018) identified seven "canonical" (p. 753) prescriptive change models, which are described in the following sections.

Lewin's Three-Phase Process

Lewin (1948, as cited in Stouten, 2018) established three stages an organization should practice when going through a change process: (a) unfreezing, (b) transitioning to a new stage, and (c) refreezing. During the unfreezing stage, organizational leaders cast a vision and develop a plan. Taking action on the plan is the transition period, in which the organization makes changes and modifies the existing systems. Refreezing is merging the change in the existing systems so it is embedded in the organization (Errida & Lotfi, 2021).

Beer's Six-Step Change Management Model

Beer (1980, as cited in Stouten, 2018), a Harvard faculty member, focused on a systems approach to organizational change. About 10 years later, Eisenstat et al. (1990) detailed a six-step change management model. First, organizational leaders work to identify the problem and build a consensus of commitment to address it. Second, stakeholders are involved in developing a change vision and to specify the focus and define the new roles for employees in the change process. Third, communication with all stakeholders occurs to build a consensus in support of the vision. Fourth, stakeholders implement the change and spread it throughout the organization. Fifth, the change is institutionalized by integrating it with formal structures and systems. Sixth, a system to monitor and adjust as needed is established and enacted to make the change successful over time.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry addresses organizational change from a positive viewpoint (Stouten, 2018). Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987, as cited in Stouten, 2018) recognized the stages of appreciative inquiry as: (a) the discovery stage, where organizations determine what is going well and what contributes to success; (b) the dream stage, during which organizations explore things that would be ideal and make the organization even better; (c) the design stage; and (d) the destiny stage, during which plans to enable the dreams and execute them are created. Appreciative inquiry "gives considerably more attention to change recipient participation than other models and [frames] the change as an opportunity or positive event for improvement" (Stouten, 2018, p. 754).

Judson's Five Steps

Judson (1991), "a strategic management consultant, distinguished five steps to the change process" (as cited in Stouten, 2018, p. 754): (a) analyze and plan the stage, (b) communicate the change, (c) gain acceptance of the change, (d) transition from current status to new, and (e) consolidate new conditions and institutionalize the change through continued follow up. Further, organizations and circumstances are always changing so there is no specific approach that will fit every situation.

Kanter, Stein, and Jick's Ten Commandments

In 1992, three Harvard colleagues (Kanter et al.,1992, as cited in Stouten, 2018) suggested a 10-step process for organizational change. The steps include: (a) analyze the need, (b) create a shared vision, (c) separate from the past, (d) create a sense of needed change management, (e) legitimize the change by the support of a strong leader role, (f) seek political sponsorship to create a base of support through the change, (g) develop a plan to implement change, (h) implement the change through enabling structures (i.e., pilot tests and training), (i) have open and honest communication involving all stakeholders, and (j) reinforce and institutionalize the change. Each change model has similarities that can be applied in various situations (Errida & Lotfi, 2021).

Kotter's Eight-Step Model

Harvard leadership professor, Kotter (1996, as cited in Stouten, 2018) taught a change model with eight steps. The steps were: (a) create a sense of urgency, (b) form a coalition, (c) develop a vision, (d) communicate the vision, (e) involve the coalition in developing change plans, (f) reinforce the change implementation, (g) adjust the implementation as needed, and (h) institutionalize the changes through integrating it with existing structures and systems (Errida & Lotfi, 2021; Kotter, 1996). Change in an organization is difficult, and understanding the different models of successful change management will enable the institution to avoid unwanted consequences.

Hiatt's ADKAR Model

The ADKAR model, which is an acronym for awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement, focuses on employees and their needs (Hiatt, 2006, as cited in Stouten, 2018). Hiatt was a management consultant, and the model considers the consequences an employee may experience through an organizational change. The first stage is about creating and communicating a change vision. The second stage focuses on empowering employees to be involved with the change. The third stage is being supportive of employees by developing them to participate in the change. Lastly, the changes become a part of an organization's make up. This model will help understand the change from an employee's point of view.

Integrating Prescriptions of Change With Scientific Evidence

Stouten (2018) synthesized data through the prescriptive change models and found many steps overlapped with other models. Likewise, steps in some models did not align with other models or were ignored. Importantly, scientific data did not support some steps but were included based purely on the opinions of the authors. Stouten fused the various prescriptive change models with disaggregated data and identified 10 common steps of successful organizational change. For each step, Stouten compared the arguments and differences among the previous models and discussed the scientific evidence that supports them. The 10 steps are: (a) assess the opportunity; (b) select and support a coalition; (c) formulate a clear and compelling vision; (d) communicate the vision; (e) mobilize energy for change; (f) empower others to act; (g) develop and promote knowledge and ability; (h) identify short-term wins and use reinforcement of progress; (i) monitor and strengthen the change process over time; and (j) institutionalize change in company culture, practices, and management succession.

Being familiar with these change models and research concerning them will better enable the reader to identify outcomes that are affected by the change implementation. The purpose of this study is to identify the unintended consequences from implementing the change. Therefore, it is important to understand the distinctive differences of the outcomes from an unsuccessful change and the consequences of the change itself.

What Can Affect Organizational Change

The fragmentation of the literature for organizational change reveals there are many facets and perspectives on the subject (Jacobs et al., 2013). The field of psychology tends to take a micro view and concentrate on how an individual as a human being is affected in an organizational change. The meso perspective sheds light on how the organization's identification, processes, values, culture, and roles are affected by change. Organizations may also be studied from the macro standpoint (i.e., looking at change from the sociological lens), and this perspective can be used to determine how an institution's inertia and competitiveness compare to other organizations. Organizational change can be affected by events, attitudes, or ideology when examined using any of these perspectives.

An individual employee can affect organizational change in a positive or negative manner (Errida & Lotfi, 2021; Kim, 2018; Stouten, 2018). An employee's disposition toward change may be positive and create positive emotions and excitement or it can undercut the change movement if it is negative. Some employees may be motivated by change if it is favorable but it can also cause a morale issue if the employee's attitude is negative. The commitment of the employee toward change or against change will depend on their perception of how fair the change is to themselves or to their colleagues (Stouten, 2018). Employees often tie their self-identification to their place of employment. If they perceive the change as favorable, it will make them feel good about where they work; if they perceive the change as unfavorable, they may take the change personally. Individual employees are one key to the success or failure of an organization's change initiative.

Meso-level relationships can also account for the success or destruction of a change initiative (Stouten, 2018). The quality of relationships from department to department, division to division, in the top-down hierarchy, or even at the bottom of the administrative structure, affects the success of change. No matter the scale of change, flexibility of an organization is dependent upon how internal entities accept, believe, and respect each other (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). The culture will rely upon a system of shared beliefs and shared goals; therefore, relationships across the organization play a role in affecting change (Baran, 2019).

The success of organizational change also relies on the ability of the leadership team to navigate change (Baran, 2019). Their skillset must consist of the ability to be social, communicate effectively, be organized, distribute tasks, and motivate employees across the entire organization. Additionally, organizational leaders must be perceived as trustworthy to be effective (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). These leadership qualities will need to be on a macro level in the institution throughout the organizational chart at each level of authority (Stouten, 2018). Orginizational readiness for change will be dependent on the preparation of the organization by its overal leadership to respond to both internal and external pressures.

Implications of Organizational Change

Change is inevitable if an organization expects to remain relevant (Errida & Lotfi, 2021). Government oversight, society, the economy, and technology are always evolving, and an organization will either be reactive or proactive. How an organization responds will determine its effectiveness or inefficiency. Organizational change literature provides theories and ideas as guidelines for practitioner leaders to determine the best pathway for their organization (Baran, 2019). Organizations do have similarities; however, each has its own unique composition, culture, strengths, ideals, guiding principles, weaknesses, knowledge base, experience, securities, and insecurities. Therefore, there are no solutions that will fit every organization.

Small, rural community colleges encounter pressure from many sources, forcing them to be agile organizations (Liguori et al., 2021). For example, Liguori et al. (2021) described how community colleges in the United States responded to the COVID-19 global pandemic and were nimble enough to move to online delivery immediately. Community colleges are constantly changing to meet industries' training needs and adapt to political pressure, changing funding sources, and public opinion. This study will serve as a reference for rural community college leaders considering a large organizational change in their administrative structure, specifically the change of merging academic affairs and student affairs into one division. As these leaders plan or navigate their own organizational change, they may benefit from understanding the holistic costs of unintended consequences outlined by this study of one such merger.

Unintended Consequences

Merton (1936) said, “The problem of the unanticipated consequences of purposive action has been treated by virtually every substantial contributor to the long history of social thought” (p. 894). There has been little advancement on the theory of unintended consequences since Merton’s work in the 1930s. Even though a scientific analysis has not been attributed to understanding unintended consequences, it remains a very real truth to every scientist.

Jian (2007) stated, “In planned organizational change, consequences that escape the intention of the change planner are considered unintended” (p. 1). Giddens (1979) defined *unintended consequences* as consequences that would not have taken place if a social actor had acted differently and the outcome was different than what the actor intended to happen. For example, a local community college may provide a discount for a high school student taking concurrent credit classes (i.e., receiving high school and college credit) to entice them to attend their college after high school graduation. Instead, it could have the opposite effect and encourage the students to attend the university directly from high school because the experience gave them confidence. McKinley and Scherer (2000) explained unintended consequences as tension. When executives plan organizational change, they are attempting to make a change that will provide more order or other benefits to the organization, from their point of view. However, the change may produce chaos in many individuals’ work lives. Large-scale structural changes often require disruptions to policy, processes, procedures, and personnel. There is tension created between the administrative viewpoint and the disorder in the daily routines of people affected by the change. In many cases, employees are left to interpret the new change and put meaning and practice to it. When this situation happens, the change will often cause an outcome that was not the original intention of the administration (Jian, 2007).

One European phenomenon in higher education provides a good example of unintended consequences. Leading into the 21st century, there were international movements to make overarching changes to European institutions (Krücken, 2014). The Bologna Declaration of 1999 and the Libson Strategy of 2000 established the agenda to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010 in an effort to make the "European Union the most competitive and dynamic economic region of the world" (Krücken, 2014, p. 1440). However, due to the unintended outcomes of the reform, the next 2 decades were busy with "reforming the reforms, reregulating or recalibrating the significant changes brought about" (Krücken, 2014, p. 1440). Research, teaching, learning, economic impact, governance, and organization of individual institutions are topics of research for unintended consequences in European institutions.

Kelchen (2018) identified higher education institutions as having internal accountability and being accountable to the federal government, state government, accreditation bodies, and the private sector. Each of these entities affects the institution and its performance. They apply pressures through funding, policy, or reputation. However, there are also unintended consequences for each of their actions. For example, a community college may be held accountable by the state government and tie their funding to the institutions' graduation rate. Considering the community college mission to serve first-generation and low-income students, colleges must make choices about how to balance these priorities. Family income is a well-known predictor of student success. This factor creates a moral dilemma for community college leaders. They would have to forsake their mission to serve lower socioeconomic students that have no support for higher education nor financial ability and seek out the student that statistically will provide the institution with a better graduation rate. Therefore, the state's initiative intent is unknowingly undermined by taking away funding to the community college that is doing precisely what they want to accomplish (i.e., serve underprivileged students), unless the community college adapts to their funding model and recruits higher-income students to raise their graduation rates (Kelchen, 2018).

The organizational structure of an institution can directly affect the unintended consequences for institutions. Iglesias-Pradas et al. (2021) studied the impacts of the emergency transition of higher education from face-to-face learning to remote learning during the beginning of the COVID-19 global pandemic. They determined there is a difference between (a) a planned change from face-to-face to hybrid or online learning, and (b) an emergency response in making that transition. A planned change will take place over a period of time where research, technology, and methods can be formulated. However, during the pandemic, there was no planning or preparation; the changes constituted an emergency response, with decisions made as the situation developed. The unintended consequences of that change were largely determined by the organizational structure that each institution had in place. The quickness, decisiveness, and effectiveness of each response depended upon the efficiency of the organization readiness. The success of each organization during the pandemic was largely attributed by the most inconsequential unintended consequences faced by the institution. Identifying unintended consequences when making a structural change in organization administration will be beneficial to leaders and decisionmakers with community colleges going forward.

Conceptual Framework

I will use the Bolman and Deal (2013) four frames model as a framework to evaluate any unintended consequences experienced due to an administrative structural change in a small, rural community college. The traditional administrative structure for community colleges is to have a president with the vice presidents of various divisions reporting to them. Two of the traditional vice president roles are the chief academic affairs officer and chief student affairs leader. Merging these two positions into one vice president serving over the two distinctive divisions would be a disruption of this traditional structure. Knowing organizational change comes with risks, it is important to identify intended outcomes and recognize unintended consequences. Bolman and Deal's model will constitute a multiview tool to see the organization through different perspectives and capture a holistic picture of the organization.

I will use the four frames model as an approach to examine a qualitative case study. I will use the four frames of structure, human resources, politics, and symbolism to study a rural community college in the mid-South area of the United States. Through institutional literature, such as meeting minutes, interaction observations, and individual and group interviews, I will collect and categorize data. The purpose of this qualitative inquiry is to identify any unintended consequences of a structural organization change and to detail what the holistic costs to the institution might be by making an organizational change to its administrative structure.

The structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) will provide a guide to determine how the change affected the institution's functions. I will examine: (a) if the change impacted the organization's ability to reach its goals; (b) how divisional tasks were affected; (c) what fundamental contexts were changed for divisions, departments, and individuals; (d) how the change influenced the overall performance of groups and individuals; and (e) the cost of both positive and negative outcomes. Categorizing and viewing results through the structural frame will provide insight on the institution's ability to perform.

The human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) will reveal how relationships are affected by the change of the organizational chart. Relationships of administration to staff, department to department, and from individual to individual can be influenced by change. The motivation and morale of the institution is a part of the human resource frame. In turn, the internal interactions reflect the ingenuity, creativity, engagement, and development of the organization. The perception of change can undermine relationships and affect trust in the institution. These changes will be identified through the human resource perspective.

The political frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) will help me to identify the synergy of the organization to accomplish its mission and identify the perspective of competition in the organization. I will examine: (a) if there are competing values between individuals, departments, or divisions; (b) if there is a fight for funding, influence, and recognition; (c) how much negotiation takes place for agendas, networking, and decision making; and (d) if the change has affected ethics in the institution. I will view all of these factors for consequences that may have come as a result of making this change in the organizational structure.

I will use the symbolic frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) to dissect the culture of the institution. I will examine: (a) how the loyalty of the workforce has been affected, (b) if individuals still feel part of the organization, (c) if individuals feel elevated or demoted, (d) if long-standing practices have been affected, (e) if there has been any kind of a shift in how employees feel about being part of the organization, (f) if employees feel more important or less important, and (g) how decision making has been affected. These factors are things to be considered through the symbolic frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

I will use the four frames model (Bolman & Deal, 2013) as a guide to determine the holistic implications in making structural change to a small, rural community college. The goals will be to determine any unintended consequences to provide help to decisionmakers and enhance the organizational change literature for community colleges and higher education.

Summary and Conclusions

The roles of educators have revolved around curricular and cocurricular aspects as higher education institutions have developed in the United States. The individualization of student affairs and academic affairs, with their distinct and unique missions, are an important influence on students' personal growth and education. Leaders do not have literature available that addresses the risk that comes with organizational change and outcomes that potentially could harm the mission to affect a student's development and training. It is hazardous for administrators to make overarching decisions without empirical evidence that such change will accomplish the intended goals. Therefore, it is important the unintended consequences be considered through a holistic view of the organization and recognize the potential costs to the organization. Examining a specific example of structural organizational change through the four frames model (Bolman & Deal, 2013) will enhance the change literature for community colleges available to inform academic leaders.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this critical case study is to explore unanticipated financial and nonfinancial outcomes of implementing structural change in a small, rural community college in the mid-South area of the United States. I will use a qualitative approach to guide interviews designed to gain the perspectives of individuals who were participants in the organizational change experience of merging the academic affairs and student affairs divisions.

This study will inform future leaders considering an organizational change by obtaining a holistic view through the perspectives of Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames model. The data will reveal how participants described unintended consequences, structural implications, impact on human resources, political repercussions, how participants handled unintended consequences, costs of structural change, value of structural change, and the lessons learned from the structural change initiative. These insights will be useful for decisionmakers as they consider the relevant information in their own organizational contexts.

In this chapter, I describe the methodology I will use, including: (a) rationale for methodology, (b) critical case study, (c) the research sample, (d) overview of information needed, and (e) overview of the research design. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a summary.

Rationale for Methodology

Changing the administrative structure of a college is a high-impact phenomenon for institutions that needs further exploration, which Creswell (2013) indicated is best accomplished using a qualitative research method. This method allows the researcher to obtain a "complex detailed understanding of the issue" (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). Using a social constructivism research method (Gall et al., 2003), I will talk directly with people in their work setting and empower them to tell their story, encouraging them to use their own words and without having an expectation of what they will say (Creswell, 2013). This orientation will allow me to better understand the context (Bloomberg, 2016) surrounding the issue and the employees' responses to the change, including insights into any displayed behaviors, actions, and privately held thoughts that may influence the institutional climate (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, a qualitative research approach will capture how individuals may have influenced the phenomenon.

Critical Case Study

I am using qualitative inquiry to "gain an in depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). I have identified a phenomenon, defined as the "processes, events, persons, or things of interest to the researcher" (Gall et al., 2003, p. 436), where a rural community college undertook a fundamental organizational change by altering its administrative structure. This change happened in a real-life, contemporary context (Yin, 2009); therefore, the change process at this college will be the case study. Creswell (2013) described a case study as a "qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (p. 97). The focus of this study is to gain a holistic view of the organization through the four frames model (Bolman & Deal, 2013) and identify any unintended consequences or nonfinancial costs to the organization. Therefore, this study will be a critical case study because the focus is on the case itself (Stake, 1995). The setting of this case is unique because this case study is set to determine the unintended consequences of a change in organizational structure that was already made. However, after a period of time, the institution reverted back to its original organizational structure. This situation is within a bounded system because it is "bound by time and place" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). The bounded time will be from the point the institution began to consider making the structural change to the time it chose to revert back to the traditional structure. This case is unique from similar cases because the institution made an organizational change and then returned to its previous administrative structure. This study is rich in information available and will be treated as a critical case to understand if there were unintended consequences that led to its regression in the organizational change. When such a distinctive case presents itself, Yin (2009) suggested a single case study is best for a critical case examination.

The Research Sample

Purposeful sampling is typically used to ensure a deeper understanding of the phenomenon a researcher is investigating (Creswell, 2012). The purposeful sample will be selected from the academic and student affairs divisions of a rural community college in the mid-South area of the United States that merged these two divisions through an organizational change. A maximal variation sample will be identified in these two divisions. Participants will include three different groups from each division (see Figure 6). In the student affairs division, I will select the chief student affairs position, three directors, and five frontline personnel as groups. In the academic affairs division, I will recruit the chief academic affairs position, three department heads, and five key instructors to participate. The human resource office will provide information about individuals who held these identified positions during the bounded case. These six groups will be the focus of individual interviews for this critical case study.

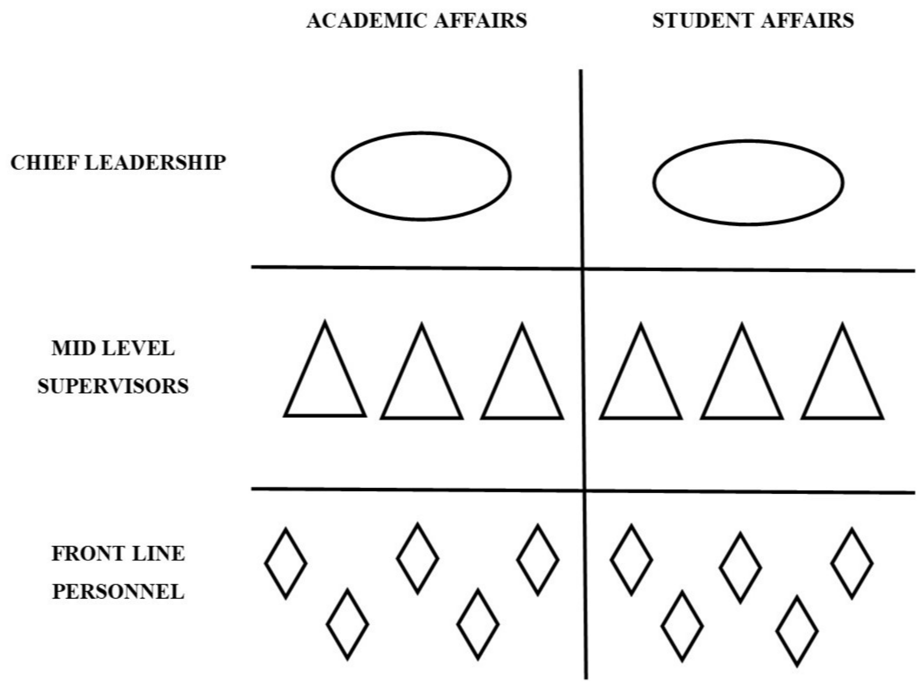

Figure 6. Illustration of Purposeful Sampling Strategy

Overview of Information Needed

This critical case study will focus on six groups of employees identified through maximal variation sampling from a rural community college in the mid-South area of the United States. This study will seek to understand the dynamics of the organization as it implemented an administrative structural change. The four frames model (Bolman & Deal, 2013) will provide the framework for the interview questions that will be used to probe each group of individuals to gain their perspectives in each area of the model. The perceptions of cabinet-level administration, mid-level supervisors, and frontline personnel in each of the two divisions will provide a holistic view toward the political, structural, human resources, and symbolic frames. The purpose is to uncover any unintended consequences in the organization from making this change and identifying financial and nonfinancial costs to the institution.

Additional information is needed to encase the data retrieved from the research questions guiding the study. First, it will be important to understand the context of each individual and the position they hold. I will examine what their position looked like before the change was made and what it looked like after the change was made. Second, I will examine the perceptions of the employee before and after the change, considering if they were positive or negative or if employees were for the change or against it. Third, I will examine the demographics of each individual, group, and division, including their ages, years of experience, gender, and ethnicity. Fourth, an ongoing review of the literature is needed to ground the study. The demographic information will be provided by human resources and will be part of the sample selection process as detailed in the next section. The attitudes, context, and culture will be determined through the interview process. The data will be integrated in the six identified groups and synthesized with the research question responses. This process will provide the prevailing influences and ideas for each group and through each of the four frames (Bolman & Deal, 2013) perspectives.

Overview of Research Design

The research steps are illustrated in Figure 7. Each level of the table represents different stages of the research project in consecutive order. The table should be read from left to right and from top to bottom. The research steps are:

- Conduct a literature review in the areas of organizational structure, higher education administrative structure, community college administrative structure, organizational change, and unintended consequences.
- Identify a critical case in the mid-South region of the United States and defend a research proposal to obtain study approval.

- Submit the documentation for the institutional review board approval to ensure the standards for human subjects' studies are maintained with all integrity and protection of confidentiality. Informed consent forms will be obtained from each participant.
- Obtain research site approval from the rural community college president to be the subject of this study. The president will also be interviewed to provide a clear understanding of the intended outcomes for making the administrative structure change and verify the dates of the bounded system for this critical case.
- Obtain profile information from the human resources office of the institution to identify employees who worked during the identified bounded system using a start date and an end date. Human resources will provide the identified employees' positions held during that time period, overall tenure with the institution, tenure in higher education, age, race, and gender. A purposeful sample will be identified with this group using a maximum variation sampling technique. The subjects will be contacted to obtain their compliance and schedule an interview using information provided by human resources.
- Recruit the maximum variation sample for interviews, which will include the chief officers of each division, three prominent directors from student affairs, three department heads from academic affairs, five key frontline personnel from student services, and five key student-facing employees from academic affairs.
- Gather documentation to capture the intended purpose of the organizational change along with an interview with the institution's president. The documentation will include minutes of the administrative cabinet and minutes of various employee associations such as administrative staff, faculty, and classified staff. Minutes of the

board of trustees meeting will also be obtained to track any decision making, rationale, or discussion concerning the phenomenon.

- Conduct semistructured interviews with the identified sample of leaders, mid-level leaders, and frontline personnel to discover the unintended outcomes of the organizational change.
- Analyze participant responses using coding and categorization. Observations will be made of the interactions between student affairs and academic affairs personnel. Interactions in each division will also be observed and documented for analysis.
- Triangulate the synthesized information by conducting focus groups. There will be five focus groups formed in such a way that ideas can be cross checked. Three focus groups will include similar levels of employees in the organization but work across divisional lines of authority (i.e., frontline personnel from both divisions, mid-level supervisors from both divisions, and the chief officers of each division). Two focus groups will by comprised of participants of each division. The purpose of the focus groups is to (a) verify conclusions drawn from synthesized data from the interview stage; (b) provide deeper insight as observations are made concerning the dynamics of the different groups (i.e., culture, camaraderie, politics); and (c) watch for additional insights through observing the groups dynamics, attitudes, and discussion.

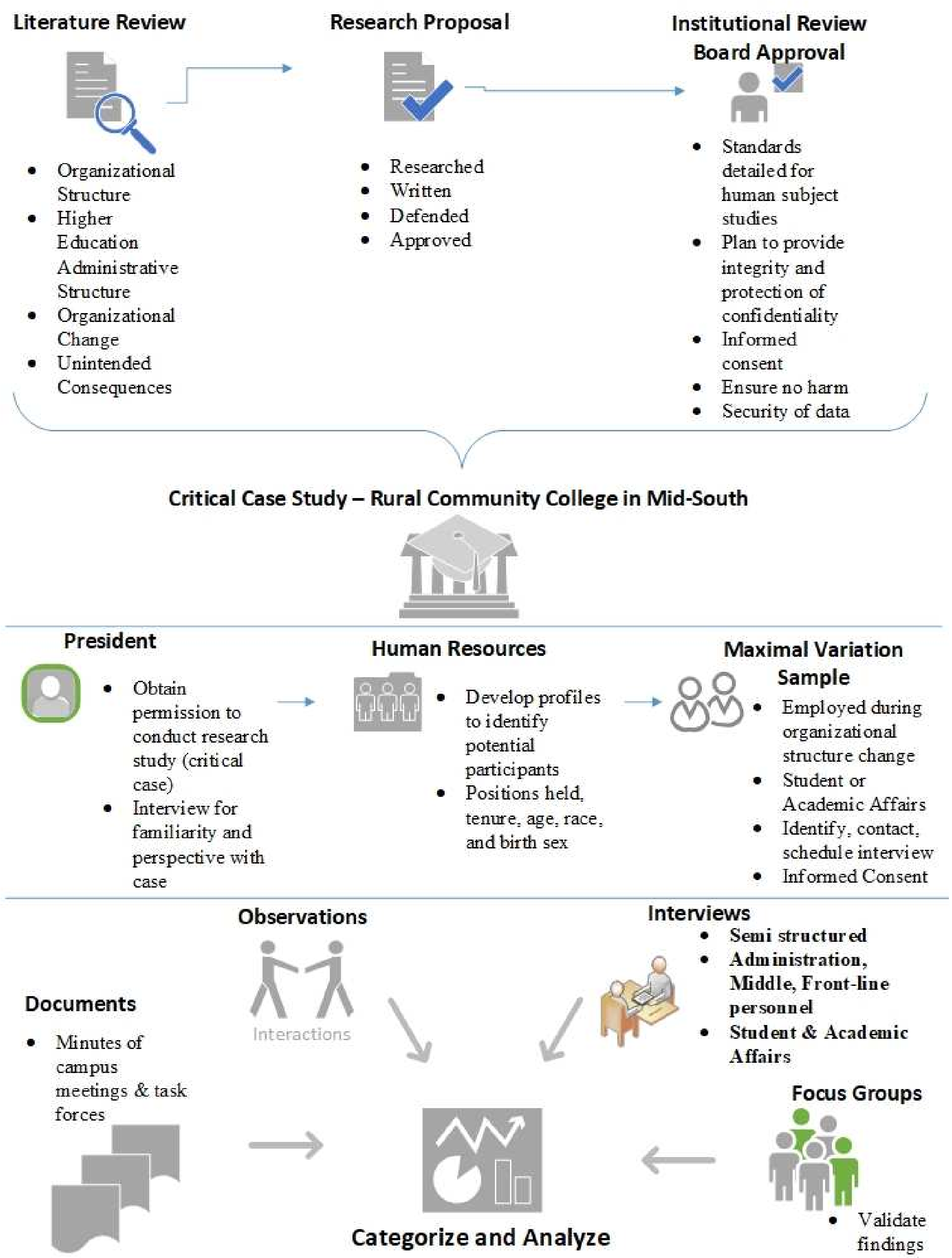

Figure 7. Research Steps Illustrated

Literature Review

I conducted a literature review to inform this study and will review literature on an ongoing basis throughout the study. I used the selected literature to better understand the history of organizational structure and its influence upon the development of organizational structure in higher education. The readings also revealed how current-day pressures continue to shape how institutions of higher education, specifically community colleges, operate and respond. This avenue of thought led me to the literature concerning organizational change. Organizational change literature informed me about the stresses an organization experiences with a structural change. These collected works enlightened me and will inform how I approach participants for insights about the stresses, tension, comradery, or other factions that could be outcomes of the organizational change. In addition, the unintended consequences literature assisted me in understanding how one decision may have reactions in other areas. This insight created an awareness that I should identify connections or outcomes for decision making. An ongoing review of the literature will keep me current on any findings that may influence this study.

Data Collection Methods

Multiple methods of data collection will be used to enhance the validity of the study. Gall et al. (2003) stated, "With respect to qualitative data, case study researchers typically triangulate their data from one method of observation by seeking corroboration from other types of data they have collected" (p. 464). I will begin the triangulation process by collecting documents from various on-campus meetings. I will collect the minutes from the president's council for the time period in which the organizational change was discussed, planned, and implemented. In addition, I will collect minutes from other campus organizations for the same time period. This data collection process will include minutes from associations for administrative personnel, classified status employees, or faculty. I will also seek the notes from any special committees or taskforces involved with the transition of the organizational change. As part of the process to gain perspective of the intended out comes of the change, I will interview the president to provide the setting and boundaries of the intent of the organizational change.

The primary data collection method in this research will be interviews with the maximum variation sample. The aforementioned research questions that will guide this process are: (a) How do the participants describe the unintended consequences of the change initiative? (b) What are the structural implications of the merger? (c) How did the merger impact human resources in the organization? (d) What were the political implications of the merger? (e) What were the symbolic implications of the merger? (f) How did the participants manage unintended consequences? (g) What were the costs of structural change? (h) What was the value of structural change? (i) What was learned from the structural change initiative? and (j) What role did the unintended consequences play in reverting to the former administrative structure? Interview questions will be “open ended, general, and focused on the understanding of the central phenomenon of the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 163).

Purposeful sampling will entail the academic and student affairs divisions. A maximum variation sampling strategy will identify participants who were employed during the organizational change. I will seek participants from the administrative level, mid-supervisor level, and frontline level in each division. The interviews will be face-to-face when possible and done remotely through Zoom when needed. These methods will allow me to observe the participant and build rapport during the interview. I will use a protocol (see Appendix A) to guide the conversation for the sake of consistency but the questions will be open ended with the intended purpose to prod the interviewee to open up and share their unheard voice. The protocol will be peer tested with colleagues who are doctoral candidates. I will conduct these interviews on the campus of the research case to provide familiarity for the interviewee. Being in the participants' workplace will also provide them context and perception for their memories of events, emotions, and thoughts (Creswell, 2013). I will record, transcribe, analyze, and synthesize the interviews.

To complete the triangulation (Creswell, 2012; Gall et al., 2003) of the data and provide validation of the results of the interview synthetization, I will conduct five focus groups. Each level of employees (i.e., administration, mid-level supervisors, and frontline personnel) will make up the first three focus groups. The purpose of these focus groups is to observe the discussion in each group from their unique perspectives of their shared experiences, which will help gain the insight from the chief administrator's level, the mid-level administrators, and the opinions from the frontline employees. The information collected from the individual interviews will be organized by group level and will provide the lead-in questions to guide the individual focus group discussions.

Likewise, the data will be aggregated for each division as well. The other two focus groups will divide the employees into their own division of academic affairs or student affairs. This division will provide cross-over verification to ensure all perspectives are being heard. Ideas shared at each level may be expressed one way when supervisors or subordinates are not present and another way when employees are in their own community of purpose. Each group may have their own dynamic and viewpoint even though membership will be from the same individuals. Keen observations will identify the political, human resource, symbolism, and structural influences. The purpose of the focus groups is to observe, hear, and let their perspectives validate the conclusions discovered through the interview process. With all five focus groups, I will make observations of participation, body language, tone of voice, and content and will record and transcribe the discussion.

Methods for Analysis and Synthesis

I will use an interpretational analysis method to examine the data for this study. An interpretational analysis is used "to find constructs, themes, and patterns to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied" (Gall et al., 2003, p. 453). I will use the ATLAS.ti software (https://atlasti.com) to "organize the text, graphic, audio, and visual data files, along with coding memos and findings" (Creswell, 2013, p. 203). Using the software to analyze the data will facilitate the discovery of insights from the vast amount of information obtained through the institutional meeting documents, interviews, and focus groups.

Once the transcripts, notes, and documents are put into the computer, I will number each line. Using the ATLAS.ti software, I will segment meaningful units of information, which could be a word, phrase, section, or pages of text. From the segmented material, I will then use a coding system to evaluate the segments and place them into groups. The groups will develop categories grounded in the data that are keys to understanding or making sense of the data. Then, I can draw conclusions by identifying themes and patterns as the groups of categorized segments are cross analyzed (Gall et al., 2003).

Ethical Considerations

Research with human subjects is a sensitive endeavor and ethical principles should be maintained at all times to protect participants. Arifin (2018) opined, "In a qualitative study, ethical considerations have a particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process" (p. 30). Before the study begins, participants will be informed of the purpose of the study and how they can be involved. Once they have a complete understanding of their participation in the research process and the security measures that will be taken to protect them, they will sign an informed consent document and complete a biographical data form approved by the University of Arkansas institutional review board (see Appendices B and C). Potential participants will have the option to decline or accept the invitation to participate and will be able to ask questions, express concerns, or withdraw from the study at any time, without any ramifications.

Care will be taken to protect the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of participant's interview data. The interview data will be coded and categorized and the names will not be identifiable through the reporting process. Individuals' involvement with the research will be public knowledge, but interviews will be conducted in privacy. The interactions with myself as the researcher will be in a quiet room, out of visual sight, and in a location that provides a sense of safety and protection for their discretion. Any sensitive information shared by participants will be synthesized with departmental reporting in a way that protects them from identification. If the context of the data were tied to a particular position or person, I will group it to protect their anonymity or will disregard it for their protection. Furthermore, the data will be protected by password or placed in a locked box. I will digitally record the interviews and focus group sessions and use a laptop computer for taking notes and observations. I will also keep committee minutes in electronic files.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Qualitative investigators are often scrutinized by positivist researchers because their concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same manner as naturalistic studies (Shenton, 2004). Guba (1981) suggested four constructs for qualitative researchers to equate to the criteria used by quantitative researchers but designed for research being conducted in a natural setting, or real-world situation. Although still evolving, most social scientists have adopted Guba's ideas (Shenton, 2004). Guba (1981) proposed credibility is preferred to validity, dependability is preferred to reliability, confirmability is preferred to objectivity, and transferability is preferred to generalization, for qualitative inquiries.

Credibility

The intent of this research is not to verify my own ideas or beliefs; rather, the intent of this study is to make valid conclusions from the data collected during the study. Bloomberg (2016) suggested the measure of the credibility of the findings will be the accuracy and believability of the deductions by the researcher, participants, and reader. Credibility of the research hinges on the research and analysis methods used for data interpretation.

I will use triangulation of research methods to ensure credibility in this study. Documentation from meetings, observations of interactions, interviews, and focus groups will provide a deep and rich understanding of the phenomenon. I will record and transcribe interview data; phrases and ideas from the data will be segmented, coded, categorized, and analyzed. I will identify themes and patterns then cross analyze them through focus groups. I will have conclusions be peer reviewed. Doctoral candidate colleagues will review the data and findings, providing their independent conclusions. The group will then gather to discuss, argue, and validate the findings, eventually coming to conclusive results.

Dependability

Qualitative research is dedicated to understanding a real-life phenomenon during a specific moment in time. Therefore, there is difficulty in repeating a study with the same context, methods, and participants to obtain the same results (Shenton, 2004). Reliability for a quantitative researcher is about consistency and the ability to get the same results if other researchers were to duplicate a study. Dependability for qualitative researchers does not rely on the results obtained in a study; rather, it features the process taken to get a result. If the same process is taken in a future study, then the result would be dependable if researchers could determine the same result of the phenomenon at that current place in time. Conclusions of each study could then be cross referenced to identify changes or trends.

As the researcher, I will take care to increase dependability by being consistent in coding the transcripts. The elimination of inconsistencies (Bloomberg, 2016) will be addressed by having a second and third opinion through peer review to verify the interpretations and any discrepancies will be discussed until there is an agreement of meaning. I will take detailed notes in a journal during each step outlined in the research design. The audit trail, which describes what was planned and executed on a strategic level (Shenton, 2004), will include field notes describing any event or change that led the investigation in a different direction than planned, maintaining transparency (Merriam, 1998).

Confirmability

Objectivity is difficult to achieve because researchers are human and have human experiences, ideas, emotions, and influences, which makes it impossible to be devoid of biases. Confirmability is the qualitative equivalent to the quantitative researcher's objectivity (Bloomberg, 2016). However, the focus of credibility is not on the researcher; rather, the focus is on truthful representation of participants' experiences and perceptions. The public, or the reader, must make the judgment as to the credibility of the researcher's conclusions. Triangulation of the data used as the basis for the conclusions will strengthen the data pool and provide depth to the understanding of the phenomenon (Shenton, 2004). It is also important for the researcher to be honest in their notation by being forthright with their biases, weaknesses, or inadequacies. The audit trail will allow the reader to understand how the conclusions were made and they can determine if they are in agreement (Bloomberg, 2016). Figure 8 illustrates how the data process will work with the audit trail.

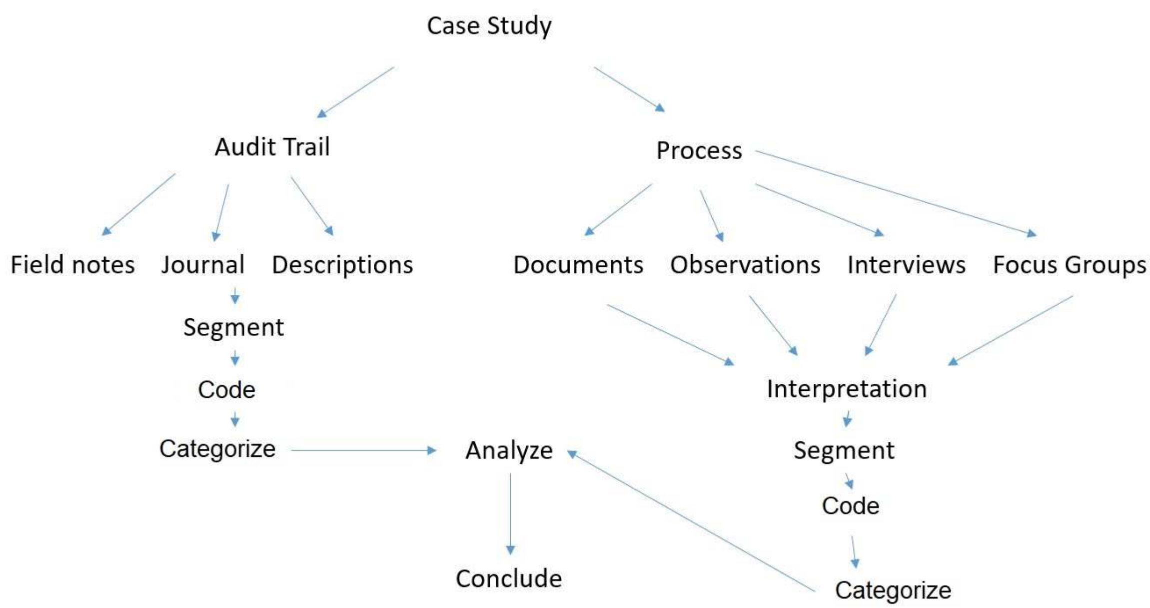

Figure 8. Confirmability Process Chart

Transferability

There is much debate, even among social scientists, on the subject of transferability (Shenton, 2004). For example, positivist researchers have held to the idea that qualitative research cannot be generalized because the same results are not repeatable. Qualitative research depends on participants' feelings, ideas, experiences, and perceptions at a given time. Although this method provides a deeper understanding to a phenomenon, it does not provide a conclusive outcome that can be applied broadly to other cases. However, many social scientists believe findings may be transferable to similar situations. To increase the transferability of the study, I will provide detailed description of the context, culture, background, influences, and perceptions of the study. My researcher's journal and notations will be transparent and honest about my thoughts, opinions, and bias. I will also explain the location, environment, and political pressures.

Limitations and Delimitations

A limiting factor to this study is that some researchers view a case study as a less rigorous form of research (Hyett et al., 2014). In response, a researcher must be very descriptive about each step of the research to provide information for the reader. Good documentation practices are vital to support the validity of the findings and conclusions. Collecting data in real time will be difficult during observations and interview responses; therefore, I will record them digitally and transcribe them later, along with memos and notations. Confidence and trust must be established so participants feel comfortable to be open and honest in their discussions. I will implement time limitations for the interviews to respect the employer.

I, as a novice researcher and research instrument, will be fallible due to my inexperience conducting interviews. My challenge will be staying consistent from the first interview through the last interview. Furthermore, the innate limitations for the focus groups will be to stay on topic and engage all participants to get all points of view and not just a select few individuals. I have worked in a student affairs division for 20 years with aspirations to gain more responsibility and will have to be aware of my bias as I select segments and code, categorize, and analyze the data.

In terms of delimitations, the study will be restricted to one case in a particular geographic area of the mid-South region of the United States at a small (i.e., less than 5,000 student head count) community college. This institution has experienced the specific phenomenon of having an organization change of combining the academic affairs and student affairs units into one division. I will interview the president to define the intended purpose of the administrative change. This study will only include employees from the academic affairs and student affairs divisions. To discover any unintended outcomes, the participants will be identified in three categories from each division: administration, mid-management, and frontline personnel. The number of participants will be limited to the following: two chief administrators (i.e., one for each division); six mid-level managers, including three directors from student affairs and three chairs from academic affairs; and 10 frontline personnel, including five from each division.

The study will not include faculty member's attitudes toward student affairs functions, but according to research literature, it is possible their perspective may be captured through the interview process. Additionally, I will not fully explore the reasons organizational leaders decided to make the change because the intent of this study is to explore the unintended consequences and any financial or nonfinancial costs to the institution due to the change.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a detailed description of how I will use single case study methodology to examine the phenomenon of structural organizational change at a small, rural community college in the mid-South area of the United States. The qualitative inquiry will identify the unintended consequences of an organizational change of combining two divisions (i.e., academic affairs and student affairs) and merging them under one vice president. I will seek a maximal purposeful sample of employees from the student affairs and academic affairs divisions. The sample will include the chief of each division, mid-level manager representatives, and frontline personnel. I will triangulate individual interviews with documents, observations, and focus groups. The conceptual framework of the Bolman and Deal (2013) four frames model will guide the research. The motivation of this study is to identify holistic costs to a rural community college, both financial and nonfinancial, when they made a structural organizational change. The purpose of this study is to provide empirical data that will inform leaders by providing tangible and transferable knowledge to their contexts when considering organizational change.

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Appendix A: Semistructured Interview Protocol

Protocol Questions

When you reflect on the administrative change initiative, do any unintended consequences come to your mind and how would you describe them?

What were the **structural** implications of the merger? *Word bank to draw upon for follow-ups Goals, rules, roles, policies, strategy, clear, logical thinking, accountability, detail, clear structure, chain of command, analytical, technical, clear decisions	How did the merger impact **human resources** within the organization? *Word bank to draw upon for follow-ups Relationships, needs, empowerment support, sensitive, concerns, trust, open, collaboration participation, helpful, responsive, receptive, ideas and input, recognition, listen, coach, development, caring
What were the **political** implications of the merger? *Word bank to draw upon for follow-ups Power struggle, conflict, influence, manipulation, mobilize people, mobilize resources, negotiation, persuasive, power balance, imbalance, support, alliance, toughness, aggressive,	What were the **symbolic** implications of the merger? *Word bank to draw upon for follow-ups Culture, rituals, ceremonies, symbols, story-telling, celebrations, excitement, motivation, inspiration, energy, inspire, charisma, imagination, creative, sense of mission, enthusiasm, loyalty

How did you and your colleagues manage unintended consequences?

What were the financial costs of the structural change? Non-financial costs?

What was the value of the structural change?

What was learned from the structural change initiative?

Was there an unintended consequence that influenced the institution to revert back to the original administrative structure?

Protocol Answer Sheet

STRUCTURAL FRAME	HUMAN RESOURCE FRAME
POLITICAL FRAME	SYMBOLIC FRAME

Appendix B: Required Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Researcher: Randy Scaggs

Institutional affiliation: University of Arkansas, Graduate Student

Contact information: Randy Scaggs
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXXX

Compliance officer: Dr. Kit Kacirek
Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXXX
Email: XXX@uark.edu

Purpose: To identify potential unintended consequences for making an organizational change.

Participation time requirements: Twenty-minute individual interview and participation in two focus group meetings that will last 45 minutes.

Procedures: The first meeting will be an interview. There will be open ended questions that are designed to provide you an opportunity to tell your story of the subject matter. The focus groups will provide you opportunity to verify that your story was recorded accurately and the deductions taken from your story are true to your intent.

Risks and Benefits: The personal risks are minimal. They are no more risky than a casual conversation that you may have at any time. The only benefit will be the opportunity to advance the study of organizational change and its outcomes in community colleges.

Confidentiality: Your name will not be used. All information collected during the interview will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. The interview will be audio recorded on a password protected device. All notations, research, transcripts of the interview, and final document with conclusions will be stored on a password protected computer. The consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office for the minimum three year period required by law. All other materials will be destroyed.

It is noted that your participation in this research is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question at any time. You may conclude the interview at any time. At any time you decided to conclude the interview or not answer a question you may do so without any harm, loss of benefit or penalty.

I understand the information provided in this document. If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a research participant, or complaints that I wish to discuss

with someone other than the researcher, I may contact the research Compliance office of the University at (479) 575-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

I provide my consent to participate in research being conducted by Randy Scaggs at rural community college as a graduate student of the University of Arkansas.

____ ______________________

Signature **Date**

Appendix C: Demographic Data Form

Demographic Data

Name: ____

Birth date: ____________________ Gender: ____________________

Tenure at Community College: __________________________________

Tenure working in higher education: ____________________________________

Current position held: ____

Position held before administrative merge of divisions: __________________________

Other previous positions: ____

Signature: ____ Date: ______________