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The Journal of Higher Education, Volume 83, Number 5, September/October 2012, pp. 725-760 (Article)

Published by The Ohio State University Press

DOI: 10.1353/jhe.2012.0030



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Bottom-Up/Top-Down Leadership: Contradiction or Hidden Phenomenon

Mary, a faculty member, develops an idea for a wellness center on campus. In talking with other colleagues, she realizes that there is a need for the center and even some interest by others to help create it. She finds out, however, that the administration turned down a proposal for a center several years earlier. People say there is a chilly climate when it comes to wellness on campus. Mary decides to pursue the idea anyway and creates a proposal, develops an informal advisory board of colleagues, and looks into grant funding as seed money. Mary considers ways she might garner support from the administration for the wellness center. Mary faces a decision that many grassroots leaders encounter—whether, how and when to converge your change ideas with those who hold formal positions of power.

The literature in higher education does not document or help us to understand faculty members like Mary who want to create change and play a leadership role. Higher education research on leadership and change still focuses on leaders in positions of power such as presidents and provosts (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). In recent years, a few higher education scholars have examined leadership beyond presidents and provosts and focus on grassroots or bottom-up¹ leadership and how it contributes to institutional change and operations (for example, Astin & Leland, 1991; Hart, 2005; Safarik, 2003). Grassroots or bottom-

The author would like to acknowledge other members of the grassroots leadership research project including Rozana Carducci, Melissa Contreras-McGavin, Tricia Bertram Gallant, and Jaime Lester.

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up leaders are individuals without positions of authority who make change without formal power. Studies of grassroots leaders in higher education identify the contribution these leaders make to improving the institution through meaningful changes² (Astin & Leland, 1991; Hart, 2005; Safarik, 2003). In fact, recent leadership research demonstrates the importance of leadership throughout organizations (at all levels) for furthering goals, meeting the mission, and creating change (Astin & Leland, 1991; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006; Pearce & Conger, 2003).³ This article builds off this new line of research into grassroots leaders in higher education studying a larger and more diverse group of staff and faculty grassroots leaders in terms of change agendas than previous studies (previous studies focused almost exclusively on campus feminists). Change agendas ranged from environmentalism, student success, diversity, and pedagogical innovation.

As Mary's story suggests, an important part of the grassroots leadership process is deciding whether and how to converge with the efforts of individuals in positions of authority. Our research examined whether and how bottom-up leaders can converge with top-down leadership to broaden and potentially institutionalize their work—an unresearched area in the higher education literature. Convergence is the joining of efforts between grassroots leaders and those in positions of authority and can happen in both directions. Individuals in positions of authority can persuade grassroots leaders to join their efforts or grassroots leaders can attempt to garner support from those in positions of authority. A major line of research conducted on convergence that focus on top down efforts to gain support from the grassroots have been called distributed leadership.⁴ (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2003). Our focus was exclusively on grassroots leaders efforts to converge with top-down leaders since top-down leaders efforts to converge with bottom-up leaders has already been documented in distributed leadership models that we review in the literature review and did not represent a gap in the literature (See Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2003).

Convergence is important because numerous studies have identified the limitations of relying only on top-down leadership for creating change: lack of cognitive complexity in developing solutions, lack of buy-in, and risk of putting all authority in a small number of people—becoming leader dependent (see summary in Pearce & Conger, 2003). In contrast, broader leadership that involves grassroots leaders typically leads to more complex solutions and ideas, greater buy-in and consensus, increased expertise to draw on, and more energy and enthusiasm for change (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Also, studies from other fields have found that convergence between top-down and bottom leaders can have

important outcomes such as deeper and more transformational change within a shorter timeframe and can build the leadership capacity of the organization (Seymour, 1996; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2003). Convergence from the bottom-up is important because studies of grassroots leadership demonstrate that it can be extremely fragile and fail over time if broader support and some institutionalization does not occur (Bettencourt, 1996; Meyerson, 2003). Higher education faces a series of challenges such as globalization, new student demographics, and quality concerns and now is faced with a recession and needs all the leadership capacity possible to address what will be an extremely troubled time in the history of higher education. Therefore, convergence suggests the possibility of garnering leadership knowledge throughout the organization.

The following research questions frame this study of convergence focused on bottom-up leaders: What does the convergence of bottom-up and top-down leadership look like on college campuses? How do such efforts contribute to institutional change? What strategies do grassroots leaders use to connect to top-down leadership? What are the major challenges in the convergence of bottom-up and top-down leadership as they come together? It is important to note and clarify that the study did not examine top-down leaders and their efforts to converge with grassroots leaders, which has already been the subject of study. While this is an important topic and further research should also continue to examine this issue, the focus of this study is the previously under-examined grassroots leaders.

Tempered Radical and Distributed Leadership

There are two frameworks that are helpful for describing our current understanding of the convergence of bottom-up and top-down leadership: tempered radicals (Meyerson, 2003) and distributed or shared leadership (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2003). The tempered radicals framework examines how leaders from the bottom-up create change and can occasionally capitalize on top-down leaders by encouraging shared interest through interaction, information sharing, and group learning. The tempered radicals framework (a derivative of social movement theory and grassroots leadership) applies social movement theory to organizational settings. It suggests that strategies and approaches are slightly different when people attempt to make change as part of the organization and want to keep their job, rather than as activists working from outside the organization. Given that faculty and staff are institutionally based, this seemed the most apt framework (rather

than using the broader social movement literature). Scholars of distributed or shared leadership models focus on the convergence of top-down and bottom-up leadership and specifically review approaches or tactics for effectively coordinating efforts. However, distributed leadership examines convergence from the perspective of top-down leaders getting followers to work with them on a change initiative. A summary chart in Appendix A provides a comparison of the major assumptions of these two theories and the reader may want to glance at the chart before reviewing the next section. As this review will illustrate, these frameworks are unable to adequately describe the convergence of bottom-up leaders with those in positions of power, making the results of this study even more important.

A few terms should be defined before reviewing the literature. A key concept in the paper is the notion of convergence. Convergence is the joining and/or combining of top-down efforts led by those in positions of authority and bottom-up efforts led by those without positions of authority. Top-down efforts are those initiated and carried out by people in positions of authority within the organization who possess formal power. Bottom-up efforts are those initiated and carried by those without positions of authority and formal power.⁵ Top-down does not necessarily mean that the change is dictated or mandated, although often it can be handled in this manner. Grassroots leadership and bottom-up change are typically used interchangeably and refer to efforts to create change led by those without formal authority. Grassroots leadership takes place locally. Social movements are the formalization and expansion of local grassroots leadership into broader efforts; this paper does not address social movements but the tempered radical's framework does borrow some concepts from this literature base. It is important to note that top-down and bottom-up efforts refer to the impetus for change, not the style or approach. It can be carried out in collaborative or non-collaborative ways.

Tempered Radical

The "tempered radicals" framework was coined by Meyerson and Scully (1995) who applied social movement theory to the study of corporations believing that hierarchical models of leadership were missing important bottom-up leadership that occurs within businesses (Meyerson, 2001). The tempered radicals framework examines the work of bottom-up and everyday leadership among those without formal authority within organizational settings. This framework describes activities and strategies within the leadership process that are not described within the dominant, position-based, and managerial leadership litera-

ture (e.g., negotiation, leveraging small wins, resisting quietly, and collective action).

As suggested by the title of the framework, tempered radicals differs from social movement theory because the strategies and activities used by leaders tend to be tempered so that they can remain within the organization. Meyerson (2003) offers the following example of tempered radicals:

Martha, for example, could stridently protest her firm's employment policies or could take a job with an outside activist organization and advocate for legalistic remedies to the inequity she perceives. But she can choose the tempered path, in part because she believes that she can personally make more of a difference by working within the system. (p. 45)

The faculty and staff within our study are very much like Martha and chose to stay within colleges and universities, even though they were pursuing changes that were trying to fundamentally alter the campuses on which they were located. Also, the activity of tempered radicals is not a form of distributed leadership as the individuals are acting outside formal authority structures.

Meyerson (2003) documents how tempered radicals use moderate, incremental actions to challenge the status quo of organizational norms. Tempered radicals engage in a combination of five distinct change approaches: (a) resisting quietly in order to pursue personal congruence (e.g., taking time off from work to observe important religious holidays not officially recognized by the organization or decorating one's desk/office to exhibit support for a particular social issue), (b) turning personal threats into opportunities by confronting discriminatory statements, assumptions, and organizational practices, (c) engaging in negotiations to identify alternative solutions to interpersonal and organizational conflicts, (d) leveraging small victories to achieve larger organizational results, and (e) organizing collective action around a critical issue or organizational controversy (e.g., starting an employee forum to address the issue of employer-provided child care). These change approaches are based on their comfort and understanding of power dynamics. Rather than using positional or formal authority to challenge the status quo, tempered radicals rely on the cumulative effect of incremental actions to create change. By choosing among a range of strategies for fostering change that differ on dimensions of intent (i.e., exhibiting personal congruence or challenging statements versus collective action and organizing) and scope of impact (i.e., influencing a small number of individuals versus swaying the opinions and attitudes of many organiza-

tional members), tempered radicals are able to construct a personalized and contextualized change framework.

Because tempered radicals engage in mainstream organizations, the framework anticipates that top-down and bottom-up change efforts will converge at times.⁶ While the tempered radical framework alludes to the convergence of top-down and bottom-up efforts, all of Meyerson's (2003) strategies (i.e., negotiation, resisting quietly, turning personal threats into opportunities) are focused on tempered radicals working with other bottom-up leaders and mostly in isolation from top-down efforts. Meyerson views the convergence of top-down and bottom-up leadership as initiating from the bottom-up. Often implicitly, top-down and bottom-up leaders converge through learning from each other—information sharing, changes in language, new ways of framing issues, negotiations, and personal interactions. However, Meyerson does not see convergence as unproblematic. Similar to social movement theory, Meyerson assumes elites typically compose the authority structure of top-down leadership and bottom-up leaders represent the interests of non-elites, often the marginalized and disenfranchised (Bernal, 1998; Bettencourt, Dillman, & Wollman, 1996; Kroeker, 1996; Tarrow, 1998). These differences in interest also reflect power differences, and the top-down elites are often considered to be resisting or oppressing the bottom-up leaders. The problematic nature of convergence is also apparent in Meyerson's discussion of challenges tempered radicals face when approaching change; tempered radicals feel pressures to conform their ideas to institutionally agreed upon norms, they back away from more radical goals, and they feel psychological stress and ambivalence in trying to satisfy others while still upholding their values and ideals. The tempered radicals framework helps to explain the leadership of faculty and staff on college campuses by identifying ways that convergence can occur. However, the implicit way (through interaction, information sharing, and tacit learning) that convergence occurs is hard to test empirically and Meyerson could not provide empirical evidence for this assumption. Additionally, these areas—sharing information, implicit learning and framing—may not be the only way that convergence occurs. Given the deficit in this framework around explicit ways that these levels of leadership might converge, we looked to distributed leadership models.

Distributed Leadership

Perhaps the most widely used model for understanding the convergence of top-down and bottom-up leadership is distributed or shared leadership. Models of shared leadership have their roots in humanis-

tic psychology (worker empowerment, professional development, and shared decision-making) and more recently are reflected in the work of Peter Senge (1990) and various authors of total quality management and responsibility centered budgeting (Freed, Klugman, & Fife, 1999; Seymour, 1996; Thompson, 1994). Distributed leadership, often associated with Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2003), emerged within educational rather than business settings, but shares many of the same assumptions. Distributed leadership emphasizes the interdependence of different types of leaders and their joint enactment and cognition; followers are considered essential parts of the leadership process.

Shared/distributed leadership models typically maintain at least three characteristics: empowerment, accountability, and a decision-making partnership (Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2003). Positional leaders cannot be everywhere to make the required important decisions, nor do they often understand the technical work currently being performed by individuals at other levels of the organization and with particular technical or functional skills. Therefore, empowering other individuals to play a leadership role and make decisions is important for organizational functioning and success. Accountability ensures that empowered staff use the resources at their discretion wisely and learn from their decisions—this remains a top-down model as those with authority impose the accountability structure. A decision-making partnership gives staff more ownership in the critical decisions being made and allows appropriate decisions to be made at all levels of the organization. As leadership roles are distributed throughout the organization, traditional leaders and their staff need to learn about group process and facilitation skills, role-playing, and leadership styles, including coaching and mentoring. Communication skills and interpersonal skills become increasingly important and may also need to be nurtured or improved to work between the various levels of the organization. Each of the skills becomes important for smooth convergence between the various layers of leadership.

Researchers focused on shared leadership emphasize the interaction between leaders at all levels of the organization, which was a new concept within leadership. These researchers focus on what type of individual skills (facilitation) or organizational structures (accountability mechanisms) or aspects of culture (trust) can lead to effective convergence between the levels. Despite its strengths, some argue that shared or distributed leadership assumes an apolitical stance and that top-down and bottom-up change agents have similar interests (Collins, 1998). Another critique, as noted earlier, is that the convergence is conceptualized only from the top-down. While there is considerable theory about

distributed leadership, we have relatively little empirical knowledge about how, or to what extent, leaders in education actually use distributed leadership; what it looks like; and how or if it can be effective. Additionally, existing studies solely focus on leadership that is shared or distributed from the top-down (Seymour, 1996; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2003).

Our study was focused on grassroots leaders as they have not been the subject of much study in higher education. We were interested in the ways that leadership can emerge from the bottom-up not just being encouraged to participate by top down leaders. This distinction is important to us because shared and distributed forms of leadership tend to maintain traditional power relationships where agency is maintained with those in positions of authority. Top-down leaders define the change agenda, direction, and others are only brought into the leadership process for “advice” or in order to implement. The distributed model still sees followers as working at the will of leaders (those in positions of authority) and does not provide the agency we were interested in studying among grassroots leaders who take on the role of charting the direction, developing the change agenda, and creating the change. Therefore, the sharing of leadership in distributed leadership is typically limited and those without delegated authority are not given power, decision-making authority, or resources. Total quality management (TQM) is an example of the distributed or shared leadership model; it has been critiqued for distributing responsibility without really distributing power or agency (Pallas & Neumann, 1993). Our focus was on convergence that takes a distinctive focus—lead from the bottom-up among grassroots leaders and that disrupts traditional power relationships.

In summary, the tempered radicals framework is limited in its ability to analyze and detail the convergence of top-down and bottom-up, but is helpful in examining challenges that might occur when these levels meet (i.e., pressure to alter ideas) and helps to explain why convergence is not common (i.e., lack of shared interests). The distributed leadership model is helpful for conceptualizing specific strategies to work between the bottom-up and top-down, but the apolitical stance seemed limited in conceptualizing convergence between the two levels and the focus only on the top-down merging with bottom-up misses the key phenomenon we were interested in—grassroots leadership and how it can expand and be successful. While each framework has its shortcomings (e.g., distributed leadership is apolitical or tempered radicals does not describe convergence strategies), together we believed that these two might help frame a study of convergence from the bottom-up.

Research Design

This article on convergence is part of a larger study of faculty and staff grassroots leadership in higher education. Case study was chosen as the methodology for several reasons: (a) grassroots leadership and convergence are processes and case study is ideal for studying processes, (b) grassroots leadership/convergence might vary by institutional context, as suggested by the literature, so case study is helpful to examine contextual differences, and (c) multiple sources of information (interviews, documents, observation) are important to understand a complex process that happens over time and with various groups and individuals (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2005). We chose an instrumental case study research design (Stake, 2005) to foreground the phenomenon of grassroots leadership (including processes, activities, convergence with top-down leadership, and strategies) and background the particular case setting. We are ultimately interested in understanding the bottom-up leadership efforts of faculty and staff working within “typical” institutions of higher education (i.e., those institutions not characterized by an institutional commitment to innovation, activism, and change). Our criteria for selecting cases was: (a) typical institution, (b) presence of more than one grassroots leadership effort, (c) grassroots efforts among faculty and staff, (d) different institutional types, (e) presence of a series of nested cases (e.g., environmentalism) with multiple individuals we could interview per case, and (f) located close enough to one of the researchers so that repeated visits could be conducted.⁷

Because case selection is one of the most important criteria for ensuring trustworthiness in a case study, extensive document analysis and a set of interviews were conducted in order to determine if the site was appropriate for study. Prior to case selection, we conducted interviews with a set of campus informants to understand if the site had a concentration of individuals who would be considered grassroots leaders, but no unusual history or culture which led to the leadership activity. In addition, a document analysis of campus newspapers, faculty governance minutes and agendas, strategic plans, and curriculum were compiled to understand the campus culture related to change, potential nested cases, and the names of potential participants.

We identified five typical institutions of higher education representing different sectors (community college, liberal arts college, private research university, technical college, and regional public) assuming that grassroots leadership might differ by institutional type. A variety of studies have identified how institutional type impacts organizational

processes (Birnbaum, 1988; Kezar, 2001). None of these institutions has a well-documented record of promoting innovation or grassroots change (so they are not unique cases). However, the informants noted that some grassroots efforts were underway, and thus serves as an appropriate site for case study. Having a varied sample is not necessarily problematic and is often highly desirable in qualitative research as the goal is not to generalize, but to learn from varying cases. Appendix B provides a summary of information about the five institutions.

The case study was informed by a social constructivist paradigm. We interviewed faculty and staff grassroots leaders, with no goal of trying to identify a singular reality for how leadership unfolded. While we were open multiple interpretations, we were informed by the two theoretical frameworks that shaped our own perspectives in terms of data collection and analysis. We collected various perspectives and used these to develop an interpretation of what convergence looks like. We also believed the researchers' own experience with grassroots leadership and convergence was important to draw upon to inform the study and actively corresponded about our own personal experiences. Researchers' experience within the academy ranged from 6 years to 16 years and researchers had staff, administrative and faculty experience.

Identification and Recruitment of Participants

As an initial means of identifying grassroots leaders, we contacted influential faculty, well-networked university administrators, and an inside informant on each campus to ask for assistance identifying staff and faculty actively involved in grassroots (local, bottom-up) change efforts. Individuals identified as grassroots leaders were then contacted by a member of the research team and invited to participate in the study. After this initial round of participant recruitment, a snowball sampling technique was used to recruit additional participants involved in various movements on campus. In addition to recruiting individual participants who were considered grassroots leaders, we also focused on identifying change initiatives to serve as nested cases (e.g., diversity, environmentalism) and then we asked to speak with other individuals who were specifically involved with those initiatives. We continued to seek additional research participants until we had exhausted our recommendations and saturated the sample.

The findings presented in this article draw upon interviews conducted with 84 staff and 81 faculty members (total 165) at five different institutions engaged in grassroots leadership. The participants represented tenure- and non-tenure-track faculty at all ranks. Staff ranged from custodial, clerical, to entry- and mid-level staff in academic and student af-

fairs and other areas like operation or business. In terms of demographics, there was a gender balance, but faculty and staff of color were over-represented (greater than their percentage on campus).

Data Collection & Analysis

One-on-one, semi-structured interviews provide the primary data for this study. Each participant was interviewed at least once with the interview lasting approximately one hour. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The interview questions and prompts focused on four key themes to focus on our research questions: (a) the focus of the participants' change efforts, (b) strategies for creating change, (c) issues that enable and constrain bottom-up leadership, and (d) strategies for maintaining resilience, navigating power, and internal conflicts. One of the issues that emerged related to issues that both enable and constrain change is the convergence with top-down leadership efforts. Between 4 and 15 individuals commented on each nested case.

As noted under case selection, we also conducted informant interviews on each campus and document analysis to understand the context. Document analysis consisted of review of student and campus newspapers, minutes from faculty, staff, and student senate meetings and other governance bodies, community and local newspapers, planning documents, course syllabi and documents, and documents noted interviews as important to a particular change effort.

We visited each campus approximately four times and for some visits stayed on site for a week. During these longer campus visits we also conducted observations of the campus (such as informal luncheons of campus activists, rallies, or formal meetings of campus grassroots groups) and took field notes and collected additional documents (referred to in interviews) which were also analyzed.

Consistent with methodological norms of qualitative inquiry (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), the systematic coding of texts (i.e., interview transcripts, institutional documents) served as the primary means of data analysis. Formal data analysis began during the initial stages of data collection (with memo-ing, notes at site visits, and regular team meetings to discuss data at sites) and concluded with the write up of the final research report. The concepts reviewed in the literature were used as a point of departure to code the data including interests, politics, power dynamics, strategies like empowerment or decision-making partnership, pressure to conform, etc. Research team members took an active role in the data analysis and the research team met regularly to address data analysis questions, compare interpretations, and develop consensus on research findings. For this article, data

analysis focused on identifying examples of the convergence of top-down and bottom-up leadership. We examined the data exploring differences by institutional type and whether some aspect of the campus culture or institutional type was impacting the way that the bottom-up/top-down leadership unfolded. We also examined for differences based on the type of initiative—diversity versus service learning, for example. Within the five campuses, 17 examples of convergence emerged. Three outcomes of convergence were identified among the 17 examples. Six were labeled successful by the participants, six had mixed results or it was unclear if it would be successful yet, and five had failed. Convergence was mentioned in approximately 65 interviews.

Trustworthiness and Limitations

We used several methods to ensure trustworthiness within the study. First, because case site selection is one of the primary ways to ensure trustworthiness within case study, we spent several months identifying the institutions where we would conduct the study, being sure that these campuses had ample grassroots activity, but were also not unique or distinctive campuses. Second, we spent considerable time on each campus. Researchers visited the campuses regularly—several times a month over a six-month period or spent intensive intervals on campus—conducting interviews, meeting with informants, gathering new documents, and observing campus life. Third, we interviewed both grassroots leaders as well as other members of the campus (informants) in order to get a fuller picture of the work of grassroots leaders as well as the nested cases we were describing. Fourth, we had multiple researchers at most sites (though two sites had primarily one researcher) who talked and journaled regularly trying to provide richer interpretations of the data. Fifth, we had multiple individuals conduct data analysis and review the interpretation.

The study is limited in that we rely on individual perceptions (and memory) of the convergence phenomenon. We did interview multiple people for each initiative and triangulated their stories. We also interviewed informants and long-time employees about their impressions and these were individuals outside the change effort. However, we did not follow these efforts in real time and understand there would be a benefit if we could have followed these efforts over time, conducting interviews as the issue unfolded and observing the phenomenon directly. This would have required a major investment given many of the grassroots efforts we followed took place over 10–15 years.

Results

Three cases will be presented that represent different outcomes from the convergence of bottom-up and top-down leadership, which emerged across the 17 different nested cases on the five different campuses. The first outcome is when bottom-up leaders are able to successfully navigate and converge with top-down efforts to create lasting and long-term support and potentially institutionalize the change. The second outcome is when some bottom-up leaders feel that their change initiative has been compromised by working with top-down leaders, yet they acknowledge that the initiative has been further institutionalized and support garnered. The third outcome demonstrates how bottom-up and top-down leadership can converge quite easily, but result in destruction of the change initiative. We review three examples of these outcomes pulled from our research: environmentalism at a liberal arts college, diversity initiative at a community college, and science pedagogical innovation at a public regional college.

Environmentalism at a Liberal Arts College

The first case of bottom-up/top-down leadership takes place at a liberal arts college. Several faculty in the sciences began to meet and discuss how they were not contributing to solving real-world problems and students were graduating without a commitment to addressing challenges such as global warming. One of the faculty members wrote a provocative concept paper about how the campus might transform its curriculum and change its programs in order to address this problem. He describes this process: “the concept paper really kicked off the movement here; it got people talking, and helped us create networks with people across campus. We found out who was interested and where resistance was.” Some faculty and administrators called for these “environmental fanatics to be fired—it was a difficult time.” Debate ensued and while many were resistant to the ideas, several faculty from other disciplines (political science, sociology, anthropology, art history) eventually became interested in environmentalism and began meeting with the science faculty. They built this network through linking environmentalism to other initiatives. One faculty notes how environmentalism became linked to diversity:

Diversity was a real priority. It was being discussed across a variety of schools and disciplines. Some of us thought, hey, we can connect this to environmental problems in South America and Africa to social justice and equity concerns that researchers committed to diversity might embrace.

The main core of eight active faculty involved made efforts over the following 10 years to transform the teaching of science into more interdisciplinary courses. They obtained outside grants because they did not have institutional support for their efforts or resources to team teach. They petitioned the administration for an environmental studies program and for a sustainability plan for facilities, but had no success.

The president of the institution left and a new president came that was sympathetic to environmental issues (his first few speeches highlighted environmentalism). While the president had a slightly different vision for where the campus might go—his focus was more on research and technology transfer and less on teaching and campus sustainability practices—the group knew that convergence of their efforts with the administrators might create greater institutional change. In the previous 10 years, their efforts had been slow, gradually adding a course or getting more faculty members to support environmentalism on campus. A few colleagues within the network expressed concern that the president's vision was too different and were generally skeptical of administrators, "the president kept talking about research on environmental issues and he never brought up teaching or campus practices, which we are all really focused on, more so than research. That certainly worried many of us." Based on their concerns, a few individuals left the initiative.

The remaining group proceeded with a plan to capitalize on the interests of the new president. For example, they set up a series of meetings with the administrators and sent them strategically developed letters about institutional direction related to environmentalism using data and research to support their ideas. Members of the group identified two faculty members who had worked in the administration who could help them translate their ideas in ways that would be persuasive to campus administrators. They obtained a grant to start an environmental speaker series and the faculty initiative invited the administrators. The administrators "were impressed because it demonstrated external money, support, and connections." Faculty also began to integrate environmentalism through course assignments; students examined the carbon footprint of the campus and presented their results to the administrators. While the faculty often had action research assignments in the past, they did not necessarily have the students present their final papers to administrators, nor had there been previously a willingness among administrators to hear from students. One faculty member described the strategies they used:

Ann was great at writing letters to the administration. I could never write such persuasive letters. Dan and Liz could bring in the money, which

helped support a ton of our efforts—the symposium, how to form a major, and other stuff. Bob and Wayne had a team of students studying the campus. Lots of things were happening at once. With this opportunity to get the administration’s attention, we just went for it.

The efforts of the faculty resulted in a broadened vision for the campus from research on environmentalism to a commitment to teaching environmentalism, including a new environmental studies program. In addition to getting support for a program, they also obtained a new building to house their efforts and to increase their research in this area.

However, despite the progress, the environmental initiative faced some challenges. At times, the president seemed to be backing away from a commitment or direction the faculty thought they had agreed upon. One faculty member commented on how they addressed this issue: “when it appeared the administration was backing off, we came up with even grander plans as a strategy to get the president to continue on the existing commitments. So for the campus farm, they began to say they were not sure this was a good idea and we countered with—we think it needs to be twice as big as their proposal (and much larger than we really thought it needed to be).”

Ultimately, the president found himself with a more committed faculty because his vision was enlarged to include their grassroots efforts that had been developed over 15 years. The initiative is still primarily led by faculty but the top provides support—several top-down leaders acknowledged that it is important to honor those who have created the change by keeping them actively involved. Six years later, bottom-up and top-down leaders share a common commitment and concern for environmental issues. Both parties feel that the environmental movement has been a success on campus. As one faculty member quipped, “we have more than I dreamed—a new building, a campus sustainability plan, a major, lots of faculty interest, a new curriculum, and tons of new support for environmentalism. But like I said, we had lots of struggles, particularly early on, and people never believed we would achieve what we have—particularly working with the administration.”

Diversity Initiative at a Community College

The second example of bottom-up/top-down leadership takes place among a group of women leaders at a community college that is committed to hiring more women and faculty of color and helping students of color be successful that they labeled a diversity agenda. The group began when three women faculty started to have lunch and talk about the remarkably low number of women of color on campus and women

faculty within certain disciplines. Each lunch they began to invite more women until they were a group of 15 women across a variety of disciplines. They met off campus at least monthly to think about ways that they could hire and retain more women and faculty of color, and alter the curriculum and learning experiences to make students more successful. Over time, staff members also began to join the group as well. Their luncheons involved reading texts (on racism, for example) and sharing data that would help them to brainstorm solutions. One faculty member noted the importance of these early meetings and their approach to reading together, "I think you need a really solid base. These meetings helped us really, I mean, really get to know each other personally. We talked about experiencing racism, people were crying, people got mad. You need that openness and bonding to weather the long road of change."

Once the faculty had developed a foundation with each other, they turned to campus approaches for strategically creating change. They made a commitment to get on hiring committees and establish faculty development related to multicultural teaching. One faculty member noted that these strategies helped to make some progress:

Getting on hiring committees was pivotal and through that avenue, over the years, we did make some change on campus. The faculty development work came right out of our luncheon group and picked up on the same themes. We have continued these same two areas the last twelve years.

Several years after they began having lunches, campus leaders established an office of diversity, hired a director, and established a diversity hiring committee. However, these changes were not based on pressures from the bottom-up, but because the administration had seen the office on other campuses and had a stated commitment to diversity. While the group could have seen this as a sign to rejoice, they were skeptical at first: "it seemed to come out of nowhere as if someone said, 'you should have one of these offices.' So, we were not sure it would actually accomplish much or if the institution was really behind it."

The group met for a few more years and began reflecting on the top-down efforts of the diversity hiring committee and described common concerns about institutional efforts to recruit and maintain a diverse faculty. The women believed that by combining some of their ideas with a process that had institutional support and money, they could create broader change than they had alone in the past. One staff member noted:

Sure, we had gotten a handful of people hired and maybe changed the teaching practices of 20–25 faculty, but we were not making that much

change after lots of years. We were a strong community, but not a broad community. Sandra said, “maybe the new office and the diversity hiring committee” can be places we take our ideas and infuse them to have more impact. We know we were sort of isolated.

They met for six months to strategize better approaches including cluster hiring and mentoring. Then they realized they needed to gain access to top-down planning and they started by contacting the director of the diversity office—inviting her to meetings. The director of the office of diversity played the role of translator by working with the administration, but also attending the women’s group. One faculty member describes the advantages of working closely with the director of the office of diversity:

She [the director] helped open up communication channels between us and the administration. It also made us aware of how to work with the administration—who we needed to talk with—who is influential. We also did not really understand how to talk effectively with the administration. Also, she suggested not only contacts, language, but also strategies like waiting until the budget is settled or not asking for money right away. So, this helped formulate a better approach.

In order to affect top-down leadership efforts, some of the women contacted members of the hiring and curriculum committees and tried to persuade them to think about meeting goals differently. Since the women’s group had been meeting for years reading literature, gathering information from national conferences, and sharing data, they gave this information (packaged especially well—based on information they got from the translator) to committee members, which turned out to be particularly persuasive. Another member of the grassroots leadership group attempted to join the committee and eventually became a part of the top-down effort. The group also persuaded a member (a woman of color) to run for president of the academic senate.

The administration was slowly supporting diversity, but there were still many faculty dissidents. Having a champion of diversity as senate president could help ensure that diversity efforts would not be thwarted, particularly curricular reform. The group used these women in positions of power to access information, to share information with strategic people, and gain influence in certain conversations. In addition, the women started a luncheon series where they talked about strategies for recruiting and maintaining diverse faculty and strategies for working with diverse students. They created a coalition with a group committed

to student success and pedagogical innovations, making the argument that they had similar goals and interests. In the past, they mostly shared these materials among members of the group and were not able to reach out to faculty across campus—now they were reaching out to those interested in student success as well as others who expressed interest. One staff member reflected on the strategies used by the group during this time period:

This was an exciting time, but also sort of hard. We enjoyed our small group and with all this work to have an impact, we actually saw each other less, which I think led to some of the splintering in the group we are experiencing right now. I am getting ahead of myself, so we did two major things. We reached out to others with a similar interest in diversity, although they were calling it student success. We created a much broader group. We also lobbied certain groups hard like the hiring and curriculum committees and the senate. We invested in getting on those groups. These efforts were very successful.

After two years of using these various strategies, the hiring task force committed to a different approach to the recruitment and retention of faculty. Six years later, they have now been successful in dramatically changing the profile of their faculty and in altering the curriculum. The new strategic plan for the campus now highlights diversity as one of the major efforts for the next five years. As the quote above suggested, the group is currently experiencing some problems in terms of the direction in which to move forward—one group believes they can work with the administration and move forward and another group feels that they need to go back to being a bottom-up only group. The group that wants to return to a bottom-up approach believes that members of the administration have hired a more diverse faculty, but that they are hiring conservative individuals and that the radical goals of the group are being subverted and watered down. These women feel that they should not have trusted the administration with the hiring process. In fact, many women were suspicious of bringing the initiative to the institutional level, but they lost out in the earlier discussions. One faculty member describes this issue, “Several of us were worried that bringing attention to our efforts more broadly, it could actually compromise the work. We thought continuing the slower, smaller, personal approach was better. What is happening now suggests we were right.”

There is also concern among administrators that the “women’s group has too much power and that they are empire building.” Recently a new president was hired on campus and the women’s group was very involved

in this process. While campus administrators initially welcomed the bottom-up leadership to address a campus problem, now they feel that the women faculty have taken on too much power and influenced the current hiring of the new president. Some administrators worry about the idea of one constituency should have so much power and worry that the women's group is not open to listening to other perspectives on campus. One administrator who played a translator role to the women's group explained the issue:

I am really sympathetic to their goals. However, they are not being flexible enough. It is their way or the highway. We all make compromises. They expect us to, but not them. They have really created a power base, but I am not sure it is serving the institution best. I have tried to talk with them, but they do not hear me.

As a result, administrators have restructured committees, removing members of the women's group from some of these committees to decrease their power. The current academic senate president feels she is supportive of the women's group but because she works with the administration and believes that they are trying hard to diversify the faculty and support students of color, she is seen with suspicion by many members of the women group. She used to be part of the group, but as people become associated with the administration, they are increasingly seen as having "sold out" and were excluded from the group.

Campus constituents are mixed about whether combining the bottom-up leadership with top-down leadership has resulted in success. For some faculty members, the sheer numbers of faculty of color, the new curriculum, the changes in faculty development, and greater consciousness within the administration are examples of success. For other members of the women's group, their goals have been compromised by joining the top-down leadership and they wonder whether they could have met these goals without working with the administration and institutional structure and by being separate—not watered down any of their objectives. They also worry about the impending backlash; if they had stayed underground, the committee restructuring and other negative activities may not have happened.

*Science Pedagogical Innovation at a
Public Regional Institution*

The third example of bottom-up and top-down leadership takes place among a group of faculty in the sciences in a public regional institution. This faculty group were innovating their pedagogical style to include

more interdisciplinary, hands-on, and field based approaches. A few of the faculty members went to a conference sponsored through a National Science Foundation grant that highlighted the importance of rethinking the science pedagogy to increase the pipeline for women and under-represented minorities. When they got back they were excited and started talking to other colleagues about curriculum transformation, particularly assistant professors who are open to thinking about new approaches to teaching and learning. Many of the assistant professors were younger colleagues, many who said that they came to campus hoping to teach in more innovative ways, but discovered that this was neither accepted nor supported among their colleagues. The newer professors were excited that a few of the associate professors were beginning to support new views of teaching. The group began to meet informally and share ideas—mostly creating changes in their own courses, but also thinking about ways they might restructure the science curriculum more broadly.

A year after the faculty went to the conference, a new president came to the campus who had been a scientist and who was excited about innovations in the STEM disciplines. Within a few months, the president identified some of these innovators on campus and asked them what they needed in order to continue to work for change. The faculty suggested that they needed some resources, support from the president, and an examination of practices and policies that interfered with interdisciplinary work and hands-on curriculum. A faculty member reflects on this meeting with the president:

To get the president's attention on issues we cared about was great, especially given the challenge we were having with our colleagues. And then to be asked, what do you need to succeed. I am not sure I have ever been at a meeting like that. Soon after the meeting, changes started to occur on campuses. Deans were asked to look at barriers to interdisciplinary work, lots of mandates were coming down, and even funding. You started to hear interdisciplinarity and experiential learning in the hallways.

Within the first six months of the president's tenure, she established seed funds for faculty to create innovations in their courses and paid for this work as long as they presented the work to the campus, hoping to get other faculty on board. The president also started to highlight the work of these innovative science instructors in all of her speeches, providing the support that she felt would help them to be successful. The president created a campus speaker series around the importance of "Science for All" and secured the deans of several schools to sponsor and support new thinking around the sciences.

The increased resources and overt support from the president and some administrators created concern among some faculty and administrators across campus who were not convinced that a dramatically different approach to teaching science was needed. Several of the junior faculty came under great scrutiny from their colleagues and some uncivil behavior came to light, particularly when rumors were started about the “innovative” faculty members trying to diminish senior faculty reputation. The resistant faculty organized dissent and showed up at the speaker series to present contrary evidence to the views being presented (the value of lecture). Editorials were written for the campus paper and local newspapers that suggested that the president was irresponsible for providing money for unproven innovations. One faculty member reflects on the resistance:

I am not sure anyone anticipated this—editorials in the community paper even. We thought they may not agree, but this kind of onslaught was a complete surprise to everyone. We went from excitement about new ways to teach science to wishing we could just go back to lecturing and be left alone.

A year later, many of the faculty began to abandon their innovative teaching strategies fearing it would impact tenure or promotion. The faculty have begun to wonder whether support from the president—both how quickly it occurred and the amount that occurred was actually good for their initiative. The president and other administrators that supported the president found themselves in a position lacking support from campus constituents and retreating from their support of innovative teaching and learning. Both parties see the process as unsuccessful. While there was no more resistance to this initiative than found in diversity or environmental initiative, the way it unfolded suggests some lessons for future bottom-up/top-down changes.

Discussion

We now address the research questions about how convergence contributes to institutional change, strategies grassroots leaders used to connect to top-down leadership, and challenges that are experienced in convergence. We end by proposing a new model or framework to capture these insights called “Kaleidoscope convergence”—bottom-up/top-down leadership. We name it Kaleidoscope as sometimes it appears to help create institutional change and in others—it does not. Kaleidoscopes have many different patterns that can emerge and no

one set direction. As different pieces come together, varying outcomes emerge.

Convergence and Institutional Change

The experiences of these campuses suggests that bottom-up/top-down change can result in at least three different outcomes toward institutional change. In the first example, combining bottom-up and top-down change resulted in significant changes that bottom leaders felt they could not have accomplished without top-down support. Campus change agents had been working to create greater understanding about environmentalism for 10 years prior to gaining any support from the top. Perhaps one of the advantages of the long prelude to support from the top is that faculty and staff across campus had developed an awareness about environmental issues, created a network of individuals interested in environmentalism, and garnered support among faculty. The disadvantage to the long prelude is that faculty and staff involved in the environmental change noted that there were times that they felt the movement was on its last limb. Institutional change may not have happened if top-down support was not obtained at some point in time.⁸

On the community college campus, the women's group had mixed results from joining bottom-up and top-down leadership. Some women in the diversity movement feel they have been successful in creating institutional change moving from their smaller scale lunchtime efforts to capitalizing on hiring and curriculum committees and making their faculty development efforts formal and available to others. However, an equally large number of women within the group believe that they have sacrificed the integrity of their change process by joining their efforts with top-down leadership efforts. They perceive faculty hires, while diverse, are not progressive—one of their major goals. Part of the women's group believes that institutional change can only happen if the diversity initiative stays with the bottom-up group who can ensure that the change maintains its original goals and orientation. Institutional changes are considered compromised when the bottom-up and top-down work together. Change needs to occur slowly in pockets—and institutionalization does not require involvement or overlap with top-down leadership, which should be viewed with suspicion.

In the third example of the science faculty at the public institution, bottom-up change is compromised by too much top-down support that happens too quickly and too forcefully. Bottom-up leaders are generally excited about the prospect of support from top-down leadership and envision this as a way to create greater change. In many instances, bottom-up leaders did not approach this situation with caution or questioning

and typically looked forward to the increased resources and visibility. However, bottom-up leaders within certain initiatives were more suspicious—diversity efforts, staff equity, and other changes that involve intense power and politics—and looked on the prospect of top-down leadership with a wary eye in terms of the way it could impact institutional change. These bottom-up leaders believe that flying under the radar, not drawing attention to the initiative, and making slow and deliberate changes was ultimately better for creating institutional change with bottom-up initiatives that involves changes in power.

The last two examples suggest the importance of the tempered radicals framework that highlight how top-down and bottom-up leaders often do not share similar interests. The skepticism toward top-down leaders and their willingness to engage in changes that challenge their own privilege and authority are highlighted within the tempered radicals framework. The apolitical stance can even be problematic for top-down leaders, as demonstrated in the third example. Even a president's power can be undermined by taking an apolitical approach to change. In the environmental example, grassroots leaders negotiated with and shifted top-down leaders ideas and made minor modifications in their own. In the other two examples, there is little negotiation between the two levels. Negotiation and willingness to compromise may be an important consideration for convergence efforts. As we will elaborate on more in the section on challenges for convergence, too much skepticism of those in positions of authority and a fear of abandoning grassroots for shared leadership with the administration can also hinder and potentially destroy the change effort. These cases can be a cautionary tale for individuals unwilling to see those in positions of authority as capable of shared interests.

Strategies for Convergence

Bottom-up leaders can and do use specific strategies in order to converge their efforts with top-down leaders. As participants' experiences indicate, if these strategies are not used carefully, they can jeopardize their change initiative. The strategies are summarized in Table 1—Kaleidoscope Framework. First, bottom-up leaders *assess whether the timing is right* for converging with top-down leadership. As the environmental case demonstrates, creating a vision, network, and support seems important for ensuring the campus is ready for greater institutional support from the top. Successful cases of convergence had existed solely at the grassroots level for five and often 10 to 15 years. The innovative science case, for example, had only been in place a year.

TABLE 1
Kaleidoscope Convergence: Model of Bottom-Up/Top-Down Leadership

Assumptions	Bottom-up/top-down leadership
Overlapping interests of bottom and top	Not common, but occur at opportunistic intervals
Interaction of bottom and top	Bottom-up leaders can strategize to work with top-down leaders and preserve their interests, but not always. The convergence can result in different paths based on the pattern of interaction and the way the interests, communication, and strategies unfold
Direction of interaction between the two levels related to change	Focused on bottom-up and way it converges with top. Also demonstrates way top can be supportive of bottom-up (more research needed).
Strategies to work between the levels	Timing and opportunities, translators, learning language of those in authority, managing up, membership on committees, sensitizing those in power, negotiation, coalition with other initiatives, outside grants and support, skepticism and suspicion
Challenges	Bottom-up not realizing their interests are different from the top, appearance top-down is usurping the initiative, too much skepticism from leaders, bottom-up being considered a sell out, and power dynamics

Closely related to timing is *capitalizing on and being open to opportunities*. For example, several of the faculty who were part of the environmental initiative tested the waters from time to time with senior administrators to see if there were any opportunities for expanding their initiative. When the new president hired several new administrators who shared an interest in environmentalism, they seized the moment to broaden their efforts. With the diversity initiative, they also capitalized on a strategic time and opportunity when the office of diversity was established and there was more attention across campus to diversity than there had been in previous times. However the case of the pedagogical innovation demonstrates that bottom-up leaders may need to be cautious and evaluate the opportunity. Does the president already have support on campus before they offer up their support to our initiative? How long should bottom-up efforts be in place before they try to move toward institutionalization?

In both the environmental and diversity case, bottom-up leaders had relied on *translators* (director of the office of diversity, faculty who have formerly been administrators) to help them frame their change initiative, to identify the right data to package their ideas and to use the appropriate language to gain attention and support for their ideas. Trans-

lators played a key role in helping bottom-up leaders understand how to present ideas to leaders in positions of authority. Bottom-up leaders are often so involved with the language of a movement that they do not recognize that individuals outside the movement will not understand certain terminology or philosophical arguments. Translators also played a secondary role in that they communicated information up from the bottom and down from the top, creating a communication channel that typically does not exist. Successful bottom-up leaders learned to understand the importance of translators, to identify good translators, and to maintain a strong relationship with these individuals.

The environmental case is a particularly strong example of *sensitizing those in power to the change initiative*. Through the concept paper, speaker series, letter writing, sending information, and having students present information, the bottom-up leaders were slowly helping top-down leaders to understand the importance of environmentalism. They did not rely on any single strategy and took every opportunity they could to make people in power aware of their initiative and used very different approaches which might appeal to different top-down leaders. The women's group also sensitized people through the workshops and faculty development, but they aimed less at top-down leaders than in the environmental case. Another strategy related to sensitizing those in power that bottom-up leaders used might be called *managing up*. Bottom-up leaders did not assume that those in positions of authority knew what resources, staffing, or support was needed to help move their initiative forward. Instead, they worked with their grassroots network and the translators to develop plans that would be given to those in positions of authority to execute. For example, in the environmental case, the student assignments were plans of action presented to the administration which contained a great deal of faculty direction and feedback. The presentations and speaker series suggested ideas for institutionalizing environmentalism and diversity.

An important strategy used in the diversity case, but also used across other cases is *securing membership on key committees*. Committees or task forces on campus provide an arena where bottom-up and top-down leadership can come together because they are often representative of different groups throughout campus. Because they typically involve administrators, faculty, staff, and even students they provide an avenue for having influence and impacting those in positions of authority as well as influencing their planning efforts. If bottom-up leaders can get several representatives on the committee, they can have an even greater influence.

The environmental case, in particular, demonstrates the importance of *negotiation skills*. First, grassroots leaders had to negotiate with the president who had a different vision of environmental movement for the campus—focused on research and technology transfer (more commodified) to one focused on teaching and a social justice. Second, their vision was more expansive than the president's. Two members of the movement developed plans that were much more comprehensive than what they actually expected to obtain. They thought if they started with ambitious plans that by the time the administration scaled back their efforts, they would actually obtain what they had hoped. Perhaps the diversity case demonstrates where the bottom-up leaders may have needed better negotiation skills to push for the type of faculty and the curriculum that they had desired at the beginning, rather than compromising for what became to some of them a watered-down set of hires and curriculum.

The diversity and environmentalism cases also illustrate the importance of *creating coalitions with other grassroots initiatives* or top-down initiatives that have a similar goal. The coalition can be used to create a base of support so that top-down leaders believe there is even greater support for the initiative than one might initially identify. For example, in the environmental case at the liberal arts college the faculty aligned with the existing and powerful diversity initiative. At the community college, faculty and staff involved with the diversity initiative aligned with the student success effort. Leaders in positions of authority are nervous to support efforts if they believe it is not shared more broadly by people across campus. Grassroots leaders who connected their initiative to others sometimes generate more support and others created a sense that there was broader support than there might actually be.

Another strategy used by bottom-up grassroots leaders is *garnering outside financial support* for the ideas which can be used to impress top-down leaders about the importance of their ideas. Members of the environmental movement obtained outside grants for the speaker series and salary money to team teach courses. In both the examples of the diversity initiative and the science faculty, they used the support from external conferences and experts to bolster their ideas among those in positions of authority (for diversity) and to obtain colleague support (science pedagogy case).

Another important strategy suggested within these cases is the importance of *skepticism and suspicion*. Those in positions of power generally do not share similar interests; in the liberal arts and community college cases, the top-down leaders had different views of diversity and

environmentalism. It is important to identify their genuine commitments and not be fooled by empty rhetoric. In particular, many in power are now embracing issues like globalization, interdisciplinary diversity, or environmentalism because they see these issues can be commodified and marketized. Bottom-up leaders need to question and understand the commitment of top-down leaders. Thus, a tempered approach towards top-down leaders is encouraged by these cases.

Challenges for Convergence

Several challenges emerge when bottom-up and top-down leadership converge. Many have already been alluded to in the discussion including: (a) top-down and bottom-up leaders appear to have the same interests but actually do not, which results in miscommunication or manipulation, (b) the appearance that top-down leaders are usurping the change initiative, (c) too much skepticism, (d) proving that you, as a grassroots leader, are not a “sellout,” and (e) power dynamics.

In the environmental case, bottom-up leaders determined that the president’s vision was different even though it sounded quite similar to most campus observers. In the diversity case, the bottom-up and top-down leaders felt they had similar interests and the bottom-up leaders felt that communication had not been clear or active manipulation had taken place. We found the same issue of different visions with service learning, campus and community partnerships, work and family life centers, gay and lesbian support, and other initiatives. It appears that in many situations top-down and bottom-up leaders have similar ideas, but do not always adopt the same orientation or approach to these initiatives. Sometimes these are real differences of political interest, and in others they are simply different interpretations that top-down leaders may be open to changing once they become aware of other ideas. It seems that a major challenge is to realize that these interests often differ, up front. The environmental case demonstrates that if the differences are identified there is the possibility for negotiation.

Once top-down leadership is converged with bottom-up leadership, it is important that those in positions of authority not usurp or even be perceived as usurping the change. The administrators in the environmental case allowed bottom-up leaders to continue to shape the initiative as it moves forward. In the diversity case, and to some degree in the science pedagogical innovation, top-down leaders began to drive the initiative. This made it appear that the top is appropriating the ideas of others and not giving them credit or honoring their prior work. One strategy that those in positions of authority could use is creating stakeholder groups

to maintain grassroots involvement. Top-down leaders would also benefit by officially acknowledging the prior work done by bottom-up leaders in public speeches and events.

While being skeptical and suspicious of top-down leaders' interests is an important strategy for bottom-up leaders, being too skeptical can also be problematic. The environmental case faced a series of skeptics who did not want to work with top-down leaders. While the network was able to convince the majority of bottom-up leaders to continue, several other cases examined had too many skeptics who prevented the bottom-up network from converging with top-down leaders. As noted earlier, in some instances this choice preserves the integrity of the bottom-up change initiative, but in others this choice resulted in the bottom-up initiative remaining a fragile idea and constantly outside of any institutional support, sometimes failing entirely. As the case study of the diversity initiative demonstrated, bottom-up leaders who work with top-down leaders to create greater support for the initiative can often experience the challenge of being considered sellouts. Almost all of the bottom-up leaders who were given the label of having sold out did not believe that their work with top-down leaders had compromised the change initiative. The process of labeling people as sellouts often stopped communication, broke trust, and closed channels to top-down leaders and within the group. Too much skepticism and labeling people sellouts generally resulted in splintering within the group that can slow down, damage, or obliterate the movement.

As predicted by the tempered radical literature, power dynamics served as a barrier to convergence. The diversity case shows how top-down leaders became threatened by the women faculty as their power began to grow and a backlash was beginning to ensue which destroyed the relationship between members of the top-down and bottom-up groups. In the science pedagogy case, the power dynamics were between more long term faculty and administrators and newer faculty and administrators. The seasoned faculty and administrators had many powerful connections in the community. As these dynamics unfolded, they destroyed the alliance between the top and bottom. Taking an apolitical approach and ignoring power will likely not serve bottom or top-down leaders well in converging the two levels.

Findings Compared to the Literature and Future Research

The convergence of bottom-up and top-down leadership has not been fully captured in previous research through the tempered radicals or distributed leadership frameworks. Our findings provide an understanding

of how bottom-up leaders might successfully work with top-down leaders to garner support for their change effort and we provide novel information not provided in earlier research including strategies bottom-up leaders can use that lead to successfully convergence and highlight challenges they need to avoid. We summarize our findings in Appendix A, but the entire discussion section has reviewed these findings in detail. In this section, we compare our findings to the existing literature to demonstrate our contribution to existing knowledge.

Our findings builds off of Meyerson's Tempered Radicals Framework, but adds significant new information about shared interests, strategies, challenges, and outcomes. For example, Meyerson did not identify any strategies for converging with top-down leaders. But, our study highlights specific strategies bottom-up leaders can use to navigate the treacherous path of convergence and end up with a more successful result by using translators, managing up, and sensitizing those in power, for example. The study findings help bottom-up leaders to anticipate and better manage challenges such as internal group dynamics, local power conditions, or dissent and cynicism within the collective leadership effort. Our findings differ from Meyerson in terms of the outcomes or opportunities for convergence. While convergence is not commonplace in our study, it was more prevalent than Myerson hypothesized. Our grassroots leaders found opportunities to broaden and sustain grassroots movements through convergence. Yet Meyerson's framework is valuable and did resonate with many of our findings. For example, our findings indicate the importance of skepticism and suspicion that is needed for bottom-up leaders to maintain their interests in the face of corporate interests, power, and authority. Our study fills in significant holes in the tempered radicals framework.

Our findings demonstrate the limitations and inadequacies of using the distributed leadership framework to understand convergence from the bottom-up. Distributed leadership, perhaps wrongly, assumes shared interests between top-down and bottom-up leaders and our findings demonstrate and predicts that grassroots leaders and those in positions of power often have differing interests. Also, convergence is always assumed to be positive for the change effort in distributed models leading to further and deeper implementation and change. Our findings demonstrate that grassroots leaders are not always served well by converging with top-down leaders. In fact, convergence may have more negative outcomes than positive outcomes and be a poor choice more often than not, so grassroots leaders need to think about convergence carefully. It can be a strategy to further their change efforts and significantly broaden them, but it can also undo their hard work. Convergence

from the top-down has more predictable success for those in positions of power (if they can enact convergence which can be challenging), so top-down leaders need not reflect as long and hard on the choice about whether to convergence.

Our case examples illuminate how grassroots leaders' strategies for convergence differ from top-down leaders within distributed leadership who focus on empowerment and accountability mechanisms. For example, timing and opportunities are imperative for grassroots leaders, but are less significant for top-down leaders as they can mandate change at any time; they do not have to wait for opportunities. While it may be wise to gauge timing, it is not as significant an issue. Also, grassroots leaders need to learn the language of those in authority positions whereas within the distributed leadership model, top-down leaders already have the language and expertise of those with formal power. Furthermore, top-down leaders do not manage up as often; sometimes with a board, but this is a less frequent issue. Distributed leadership depends on the fact that top-down leaders can create formal and official structures to enhance or enable convergence such as new decision-making and accountability frameworks. In contrast, grassroots leaders typically do not have access to shaping official institutional structures.⁹ The best grassroots leaders can hope for is to utilize or co-opt an existing structure. This was demonstrated in the case examples in the way that grassroots leaders joined existing committees and governance structures to support their changes.

The challenges for grassroots leaders in the convergence process are quite unique from the distributed model. Those in positions of power rarely suffer from issues such as bottom-up leaders pretending to share their interests, bottom-up leaders usurping their initiative, facing too much internal skepticism (as they can demand compliance), or being considered a sell-out among top-down leaders. They do experience power conditions and dynamics that can undo their efforts to converge and a whole set of different challenges such as lack of buy-in from the broader campus staff, distrust from employees, or a history of uncollaborative administration that leads to poor morale and negativity. In summary, this comparison of outcomes, strategies and challenges is intended to demonstrate the unique contribution of our findings and how it differs from previous work (tempered radicals and distributed leadership) on converging top-down and bottom-up leadership toward the creation of change on campus.

While the study did not focus on ways that top-down leaders can assist in smoothing convergence from the bottom-up, we feel this would be a fruitful area for future research. One issue that emerged was the

way top-down leaders allow bottom-up leaders to remain central in the effort and honor their early work. From discussion with informants, it appears that some top-down leaders did want to assist bottom-up leaders and may not have always known the best way to do so. Areas to examine include: how can top-down leaders support bottom-up leaders ideas without usurping them? How can bottom-up leaders remain effectively included when the top level becomes involved? How can top-down leaders best serve as allies?

While bottom-up leaders have created many strategies for successfully converging with top-down leaders, few developed successful strategies for managing internal dynamics within the bottom-up team such as intense skepticism or questioning the ethics of other members of the group. This is an area that needs much more research and exploration as this became a pivotal challenge that strained and destroyed many bottom-up initiatives. The distributed leadership model suggests that group interaction can be a major deterrent of shared leadership, and some of the concepts within this theory may be helpful within future research on how bottom-up leaders can help foster healthy within-group dynamics and overcome some of these challenges.

As change agents from both the bottom and the top continue to struggle to make meaningful changes on campus, the results of the study can be used to inform their work. The strength of this research lies in understanding the complexities and varying outcomes of convergence between top-down and bottom-up leadership. The study clearly highlights some of the strategies used by bottom-up leaders to successfully merge with top-down leaders to institutionalize or gain support for a bottom-up change as well as to identifies challenges of which bottom-up leaders need to be aware. We hope that this new way to think about leadership helps open up a new avenue for research and ways to think about practice. Can we in higher education genuinely embrace change from the bottom-up as well as believe that some top-down efforts can synergize with these efforts for the betterment of the whole? This may be a potent new path for research and practice.

Notes

¹ Taking a cue from existing literature, throughout the paper, we use bottom-up change and grassroots interchangeably. They both refer to the level at which the leadership occurs.

² Improvement and meaningful changes are the opinion of the researchers in these studies. Other stakeholders may find the changes to have been harmful or unproductive, but clearly the research does demonstrate that changes are occurring on campus as a results of grassroots leadership.

³ Our study uses the definition of leadership offered by Astin and Leland (1991): leadership is a practice that involves pursuing change and is often collective.

⁴ Convergence is similar to, but unique from, distributed leadership in which individuals in positions of authority delegate power. Grassroots leaders are operating without any delegated authority. Distributed leadership (in being tied to authority) always comes from the top-down, whereas convergence can come from the bottom-up.

⁵ The issue of authority that faculty and staff possess is debatable. Officially, they have no authority (Birnbaum, 1988). Organizations such as the American Association of University Professors have argued that faculty should be at least advisory as part of shared governance and have delegated authority for certain areas such as curriculum. Some campuses observe the recommendation for shared governance as a principle. Most campuses do not have shared governance beyond an advisory capacity (which means not true authority). Therefore, the study authors acknowledge there is no absolute statement that can be made about authority, but generally, faculty and staff have no formal authority on most campuses particularly as it relates to overall campus decision-making related to budget, enrollments, or operational functions. Faculty have autonomy as professionals and this provides discretion and some level of informal authority particularly related to their own teaching and research. Meyerson's study notes how ultimately all employees have agency and some informal discretion and power (which is different from formal authority). We are not suggesting that people do not have informal authority and agency, merely that they do not have formal authority. Not having authority is different from not having power or influence.

⁶ Traditional social movement theory tends to see grassroots and top-down leadership as isolated from each other and is less open than the tempered radical's framework to identifying convergence as possible. On very rare occasions, grassroots efforts change mainstream society, such as in the civil rights or abolition movements, but generally these two levels are not conceptualized as converging. Bottom-up leaders and top-down leaders are assumed to not share similar interests or concerns—for many social movement theorists, convergence is contradictory (Tarrow, 1998). One of the important contributions of this paper is to challenge this assumption and see some of the possibilities of convergence in institutional settings.

⁷ When we use the term *case* we are referring to the site. When we use *nested case* we are referring to the initiative within a site such as diversity or environmentalism.

⁸ While we only presented one case of each outcome, there were many other examples on the campuses we studied of these different outcomes. It cut across different types of change initiatives (campus and community partnerships, to diversity, to mentoring programs, to service learning, to childcare centers) on different types of campuses.

⁹ Certainly the case examples do demonstrate they create informal structures such as networks.

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APPENDIX A

Two Frameworks for Understanding the Convergence of Bottom-Up and Top-Down Leadership Compared to Study Findings

Assumptions	Tempered radical	Distributed or shared leadership	Study findings within higher education settings
Overlapping interests of bottom and top	Typically do not share interests which is why tempered radicals emerge	Shared interests are abundant and power and political differences not conceptualized	Not common, but occur at opportunistic intervals
Interaction of bottom and top	Mostly top-down trying to enforce dominant norms or bottom-up trying to create change in top leaders; some implicit transaction happens in the form of organizational learning	Should be encouraged more to create more shared interests and strategies	Bottom-up leaders can strategize to work with top-down leaders and preserve their interests, but not always. The convergence can result in different outcomes based on the pattern of interaction and the way the interests, communication, and strategies unfold
Direction of interaction between the two levels related to change	Bottom-up trying to create change incrementally	Top-down can help provide structure of empowerment and accountability so that both levels can be involved as leaders. But mostly top-down shaping bottom.	Focused on bottom-up and way it converges with top. Also demonstrates way top can be supportive of bottom-up (more research needed).
Strategies to work between the levels	Set of strategies for bottom-up leaders, but no distinctive strategies for joining the two levels	Specific set of strategies needed: empowerment, accountability, decision-making partnership. Communication and facilitation skills are key to making these levels work together effectively	Timing and opportunities, translators, learning language of those in authority, managing up, membership on committees, sensitizing those in power, negotiation, coalition with other initiatives, outside grants and support, skepticism and suspicion
Challenges	Pressure from top to conform to their norms through rewards and social isolation	Lack of effective communication between levels, leaders lack facilitation and group management skills. Weak accountability structures.	Bottom-up not realizing their interests are different from the top, appearance top-down is usurping the initiative, too much skepticism from leaders, bottom-up being considered a sell out, and power dynamics

APPENDIX B

Characteristics of the Five Campuses: General Characteristics Of Sites

Char.	Community	Research Univ.	Public Regional	Technical	Liberal Arts
Size	25,000	25,000	17,000	30,000	3,000
Control	Public	Private	Public	Public	Private
Selectivity	Open access	Highly selective	Moderately selective	Moderately selective	Highly selective
Resources	Constrained	Moderately strong	Moderate, constrained more recently	Constrained	Strong resources
Location	Outside urban	Urban	Rural	Suburban	Suburban
Student body	Diverse by race, gender, social class	Diverse by race and gender	Diverse by gender	Diverse by race, gender, and social class	Diverse by gender, and increasingly by race
Administration	Weak	Strong & controlling	Weak	Strong & controlling	Strong
Faculty and staff demographics and political orientation	Very diverse and progressive	Increasingly diverse, and moderately conservative	Not diverse and fairly conservative	Very diverse and progressive but more conservative	Increasingly diverse and progressive
Culture	Student oriented, developmental, proud of mission & colleagues, unionized	Entrepreneurial, top down and hierarchical, image conscious, striving	Student oriented, known for innovative teaching ideas, collaborative work relationships recent budget problems	Very contentious relationship between faculty and administration, unionized, adjusting to more diverse student body	Collegial, close knit, currently some politics between the administration and faculty, classic liberal arts experience
