Facilitating Organizational Change: Using CHAT to Connect Community Engagement and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at an Engaged Institution

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to those who paved the way for me to be where I am today. I see you and thank you. I dedicate this to my feisty grandma – I feel you with me always. And I dedicate this to...ummm...uhhh...myself.
Abstract

There is limited understanding of the connections between community engagement and racial DEI at colleges and universities working to institutionalize engagement. Community engagement is not being institutionalized within an educational system that is a blank slate, nor does it operate within a vacuum. Community engagement operates within a racially inequitable system, yet there is a lack of empirical studies investigating how DEI is addressed as colleges and universities perform the work of transformation. This study provides insight into the ways racial DEI operates within community engagement, both overtly and covertly, in colleges and universities that are working towards organizational transformation into engaged institutions. In addition to responding to a gap in the literature, this study contributes to the field by identifying and analyzing the role of racial DEI within community engagement by considering what organizational contradictions exist when analyzing how community engagement and diversity, equity, and inclusion operate together. Using cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) as a theoretical framework and analytical tool, the findings of this study provide several implications for research and practice as it relates to organizational change approaches that reveal insights into complex institutional challenges aimed at addressing pressing social issues.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

In his seminal piece Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate, Ernest Boyer (1990) declared:

At no time in our history has the need been greater for connecting the work of the academy to the social and environmental challenges beyond the campus…thus, the most important obligation now confronting the nation’s colleges and universities is to break out of the tired old teaching versus research debate and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar” (pp. xii).

Boyer was responding to the need for scholarship within higher education to be reconceptualized to respond to pressing societal needs. Three decades later, higher education is still grappling with this exact problem, and questions remain regarding how to ensure higher education is viable in our ever-changing social context. Throughout the 1990s, the support of higher education began to wane, as the public criticized higher education for failing to fulfill the promise to serve the public good (Alter & Book, 2002; Boyer, 1990; Holland, 2005; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Ramaley, 1995, 1996). During this time, engagement scholars and leaders knew that higher education played a critical role in addressing pressing social issues, and acknowledged that the speed of responsiveness of higher education to social issues was problematic (Boyer, 1990; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Kezar, 2005). Higher education institutions historically considered any work with communities to be outreach and service, which are considered and rewarded differently within colleges and universities than research and teaching. This approach that the university served the community reinforced the belief that the university was the expert, and the
community was the recipient of that expert knowledge, which scholars identified as an ineffective way to truly address pressing social issues (Boyer, 1990).

In response to Boyer’s (1990) concerns and the increasing demand that colleges and universities play a more central role in addressing pressing social issues, presidents and chancellors from 25 public colleges and universities from across the country formed the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Institutions. The purpose of their 1996 gathering was to build a collaborative response and identify creative solutions to the changing landscape of higher education. This group wrote a series of reports over the course of six years, which provided institutions with valuable and tangible ways to make systemic and sustainable changes to higher education. One of these reports, *Returning to our Roots: The Engaged Institution* (Kellogg Commission, 1999) addressed the pressing need for higher education to rethink what it meant to contribute to society and to address the pressing need for institutions of higher education to make swift and drastic changes to address critical social issues. Scholars in the engagement field supported the concerns expressed by members of the Kellogg Commission, as they also knew that higher education institutions and communities must work together to address pressing social issues, such as homelessness, educational inequity, health disparities, etc. (Alter & Book, 2002; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Holland, 2001, 2005; Inman, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Ramaley, 1996, 2002, 2009; Spanier, 2011). Ramaley (2014) referred to these pressing social issues as, “wicked problems”, which she considered complex problems that:

- cannot be definitively defined; they continue to change as we study them; the choice of an appropriate response or solution is never clear-cut; there is little if any room for trial
and error; every problem is essentially unique; every problem is tangled up with other issues and may be a symptom of a larger, more complex challenge; and there isn’t much margin for error in understanding the issues and in choosing strategies for handling the problem because every choice creates a new problem of its own (p. 11).

Prominent scholars in the engagement field have argued that the only way to address these wicked problems is for higher education institutions to transform into engaged institutions (Holland, 2001, 2005; Hollander & Saltmarsh, 2000; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Zimpher, 2006). Colleges and universities that are considered engaged institutions are committed to institutionalizing engagement as a core practice, which facilitates the ability for colleges and universities to meaningfully connect with communities outside of the institution. While there are several definitions of community engagement, the definition most widely accepted is utilized by the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement (n.d., what is community engagement section), which defines community engagement as a “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.” Given this definition, transforming into engaged institutions requires higher education institutions to recognize that there are multiple ways that knowledge is produced. Accordingly, research needs to be disseminated outside of traditional academic outlets, and community expertise is key to providing critical information to address pressing social issues. This important partnership between higher education institutions and communities is foundational to community engagement. For community engagement to be a part of the institution, as opposed to simply an add-on, higher education institutions must transform into
engaged institutions that value these partnerships (Cantor et al., 2013; Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Holland, 2001; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Ramaley, 2002; Sandmann et al., 2008). The focus of this particular study lies within the organizational change approaches by which higher education institutions transform into engaged institutions.

**Problem Statement**

One key component of transforming into engaged institutions is for organizational actors within higher education to recognize and value knowledge that is produced both within and outside of higher education institutions (Andes, 2006; Boyte, 2009; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Cantor et al., 2013; Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Holland, 2016). In other words, higher education institutions must transform in a way that recognizes, respects, and values community knowledge and expertise to truly address pressing social issues. Although recognizing and valuing the knowledge and expertise that resides external to higher education institutions is one key component of transforming into engaged institutions, the expertise and knowledge provided by scholars of Color within higher education institutions are not fully recognized or respected in the academy (Chen et al., 2022; Jayakumar et al., 2009; Leggett-Robinson & Villa, 2019; McManigell, 2018; Padilla, 1994; Settles et al., 2021; Stanley, 2006; Turner et al., 2011; Turner & Meyers, 2000; Turner et al., 1999). As higher education institutions continue to work towards transforming into engaged institutions, respect and recognition for knowledge and expertise from both external communities and internal diverse constituencies must simultaneously occur (Musil, 2011).

While the literature on the transformation of higher education institutions into engaged institutions stresses the importance of diversity work in community engagement, the analyses
have not examined how racial diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work and initiatives aimed at institutionalizing engagement are explicitly connected to one another (Chen et al., 2022; Hernández & Pasquesi, 2017; Leggett-Robinson & Villa, 2019; Musil, 2011; Settles et al., 2021; Strum et al., 2011; Simpson, 2014; Telles, 2019). Strum et al., (2011) argued that community engagement agendas and diversity agendas have not been connected in meaningful and systemic ways, a connection that could facilitate transformation.

The attention given to the topic of racial DEI within the body of literature on transforming into engaged institutions is emerging, but there is a lack of direct connection between the work of racial DEI and the work of institutionalizing engagement (Telles, 2019). This persistent disconnect calls into question the ability of engagement, alone, to transform higher education institutions into spaces and places that truly respect multiple forms of knowledge with the goal of addressing pressing social issues. This gap identified in the literature provides an opportunity for empirical investigation into the ways in which racial DEI is addressed in the process of higher education transformation into engaged institutions. Thus, examining how racial DEI operates through the process of institutionalizing engagement will inform how institutions of higher education are transforming. By not addressing the historical and current-day racialized exclusion and the inequitable educational outcomes occurring as a result of that racialized exclusion, the institutional transformation that engagement scholars seek cannot come to fruition (Antonio, 2002; Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U], 2011; Baez, 2000; Barajas & Ronnvist, 2007; Bell & Lewis Jr., 2022; Bensimon et al., 2012; Diggs et al., 2009; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Dowd & Liera, 2018; Edwards & Montague, 2014; Feagin, 2006; Jayakumar et al., 2009; McManigell Grijalva, 2018; Moore,
Scholars in the engagement field make persuasive arguments that intentional connections between community engagement and diversity work must be made (Dowd & Liera, 2018; Hernández & Pasquesi, 2017; Musil, 2011; Strum et al., 2011; Simpson, 2014; Telles, 2019). While these arguments are compelling and important to consider when connecting these two areas of work, there is a gap in understanding the connections between community engagement and racial DEI at colleges and universities working to institutionalize engagement. Engagement is not being institutionalized within an educational system that is a blank slate, nor does it operate within a vacuum. Engagement operates within a racially inequitable system (Antonio, 2002; AAC&U, 2011; Baez, 2000; Barajas & Ronnkvist, 2007; Bensimon et al., 2012; Diggs et al., 2009; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Dowd & Liera, 2018; Edwards & Montague, 2014; Feagin, 2006; Jayakumar et al., 2009; Liera & Dowd, 2018; McManigell Grijalva, 2018; Moore, 2008; Padilla, 1994; Ponjuan, 2011; Simpson, 2014; Stanley, 2006; Strum et al., 2011; Turner, 2002; Turner & Meyers, 2000; Turner et al., 2011; Urrieta et al., 2015). Coupled with a lack of empirical studies investigating how DEI is addressed as colleges and universities work transform, understanding these connections becomes increasingly important to ensure organizational transformation does not mimic current inequities embedded within the institution.

As discussed in the literature on higher education transformation into engaged institutions, scholars stressed that knowledge and expertise do not exist exclusively in traditional spaces or ways of knowing (Andes, 2006; Boyte, 2009; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Cantor et al.,
In general, there are minimal empirical investigations about the connections between the institutionalization of engagement and racial DEI (Sandmann, 2008; Sandmann et al., 2014). Simply put, there is a need for empirical investigations, such as this study, to contribute to the field of engagement through empirically understanding how racial DEI is being addressed within the process of transformation into engaged institutions.

**Purpose of Study and Research Question**

Scholars in the field recognize there is an important, yet empirically unexplored, connection between engagement and diversity, equity, and inclusion within colleges and universities aiming to transform into engaged institutions (Rosean et al., 2001; Birch et al., 2013; Butler, 1990; Cantor et al., 2013; Checkoway, 1997; Cortes, 1999; Edwards & Montague, 2014; Fear et al., 1998; Hernández & Pasquesi, 2017; Jaeger et al., 2012; Johnson & Wamser, 1996; King et al., 1999; Musil, 2011; Simpson, 2014; Strum et al., 2011; Telles, 2019). This connection is important for institutions to consider, as the goals and practices of institutionalizing engagement require a critical consideration of how DEI is addressed through that transformation process. Consider, for example, Boyte’s (2009) concept of the cult of the expert – recognizing and valuing the knowledge that lives and is created outside of the academy. Already embedded within this concept are issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Are there diverse perspectives to contribute to the holistic view of this work? Are diverse perspectives given full consideration? Whose perspective is not being considered – where is the gap in our knowledge? More broadly, issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion are already rooted in engagement practices, whether DEI was intended to be present or not, or is being critically examined or not. For colleges and
universities to continue to work towards transformation into engaged institutions, there must be an understanding of how DEI is engrained in the process rather than if DEI is considered in the process.

The purpose of this study is to provide insight into the ways racial DEI operates overtly and covertly within the organizational transformation process that engaged higher education institutions experience. In addition to responding to a gap in the literature, this investigation contributes to the field by identifying and analyzing the role of racial DEI toward organizational transformation. To investigate the connection between engagement and racial DEI through an organizational change lens, the research question guiding this study is: What organizational contradictions and areas of congruence exist when analyzing how community engagement and diversity, equity, and inclusion operate together?

**Key Terms and Definitions**

Throughout this paper, there are key terms and concepts that require definition or explanation of conceptualization:

**Community Engagement**

In the literature, there are important distinctions between community engagement and public engagement. The purpose of this study, however, is not to contribute to the definition of either of these terms. In this study, the terms community engagement, public engagement, and engaged work are intended to encompass references made to the work that occurs between higher education institutions and external communities. I employ the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement (n.d.), which defines community engagement as “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state,
national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in the context of partnership and reciprocity” (what is community engagement section). Unless directly quoted, references to public or community engagement will be encompassed by the terms engagement, community engagement, and/or engaged work.

**Institutionalization of Engagement & Institutional Transformation into Engaged Institutions**

Scholars in the field of community engagement argue that higher education must have the ability to be responsive to pressing social issues if they are to remain an important aspect of our society – a transformation scholars call engaged institutions (Alter & Book, 2002; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Cheney et al., 2002; Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Holland, 2001, 2005; Hollander & Saltmarsh, 2000; Inman, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Ramaley, 1996, 2002, 2009; Spanier, 2011). These leaders and scholars maintain that transformation will take place by building the capacity of institutions to work with communities to address social issues. Thus, the term institutional transformation refers explicitly to the transformation of higher education institutions into engaged institutions by changing campus culture, policies, structures, and practices in ways that build reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships between institutions and communities. The terms institutionalization of engagement and transformation into engaged institutions are used interchangeably throughout this study.

**Engaged Institutions**

The Kellogg Commission (1999) defined engaged institutions as those “that have redesigned their teaching, research, and extension and service functions to become even more sympathetically and productively involved with their communities, however community may be defined” (p. 9). Although this definition was identified over two decades ago, there has not been
a singular agreed upon definition of engaged institutions used in the literature. Instead, there are several characteristics that scholars consider indicators of an engaged institution: have a direct connection with community in mutually beneficial and mutually respectful ways; recognize that knowledge and expertise reside outside of higher education institutions; and ensure students are prepared to address social issues. While there is not an agreed-upon definition, Judith Ramaley (2009) provided a compelling description of engaged institutions as being places that are “committed to direct interaction with external constituencies and communities through mutually beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of the knowledge, expertise, and resources of all participants” (p. 144). Ramaley’s description most closely encompasses the way the term engaged institutions is being conceptualized across the literature as well as in this study.

**Institution of Higher Education vs. Higher Education Institutions**

Although similar, the terms institution of higher education and higher education institutions in this study are used differently. The term institution of higher education and singular references to higher education refer to the system of postsecondary education within the United States, writ large. It is inclusive of the policies, practices, institutions, and institutional agents that are connected to postsecondary education. The term higher education institutions refers to the places and spaces where postsecondary education occurs, such as individual colleges and universities. Thus, throughout this paper, references to the institution of higher education are specific to the systemic-level operation of postsecondary education, and references to higher education institutions are specific to the actual places and spaces of educational practice. To provide a context-specific example, the transformation of higher education institutions into
engaged institutions happens at the individual institution level, justifying the use of higher education institutions instead of the institution of higher education.

**Racial Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

I have chosen to utilize the term racial diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to refer to the work commonly understood or referred to as “diversity” work in the community engagement literature. Racial diversity, racial equity, and racial inclusion within the institution of higher education are inextricably tied to one another. Racial diversity speaks to demographics, specifically referring to racially/ethnically minoritized populations. Racial equity refers to educational outcomes for racially minoritized populations. Utilizing Dowd and Bensimon’s (2015) definition of equity as “a standard for judging whether a state of affairs is just or unjust” (p. 9), I consider educational equity to refer to just or unjust outcomes in any and all educational venues within higher education institutions (admission, graduation, tenure, feelings of safety, sense of belonging, etc.). Racial inclusion is a combination of racial diversity and racial equity. Institutions can have racial diversity and racial equity in educational outcomes, yet still have practices that are not inclusive of minoritized populations. Therefore, in the context of this study, the term racial DEI refers to racial/ethnic demographic diversity, equitable educational outcomes along racial lines, and inclusive institutional practices specifically impacting racially/ethnically minoritized populations.

**Racially Minoritized Populations**

Racially minoritized populations refers specifically to Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), or people who identify as African American or Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, Latinx or Hispanic, American Indian or Native American or Indigenous, and/or multiracial people. Like
Dowd and Bensimon (2015), I also use the term minoritized populations (as opposed to minorities) to stress the fact that “the status of minoritized groups is defined by their lack of power and more limited access to economic and social assets, rather than by numerical underrepresentation in…educational institutions” (p. 8).

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter two begins with a discussion of the literature being reviewed for this study and includes the definition and purpose of engaged institutions, the use of organizational change approaches for institutionalizing engagement, and the organizational change processes necessary to transform into engaged institutions. A review of the literature on transformation into engaged institutions is followed by a review of the literature and context of racial DEI within U.S. higher education and the ways the literature on the institutionalization of engagement addresses racial DEI. Chapter two concludes with a summary of the literature review, identifies the gaps in the literature addressed by this study, and addresses the importance of connecting the institutionalization of engagement with racial DEI.

Chapter three introduces the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) framework that guides this study, including a brief history, components of CHAT, and the applicability of the theory to this study. It also includes an explanation and justification of the method used (a qualitative case study) and the data collection process (semi-structured interviews and document review) to address the research question. This chapter concludes with a summary of the research proposal for this study.

Chapter four reports the findings of this study, which uses the six CHAT analytical elements to analyze the data. This chapter is organized by first reporting the findings for
community engagement, followed by reporting the findings for racial DEI in community engagement.

Chapter five begins with an overview of the study, including a reintroduction of the research question, the theoretical lens guiding the research, and the methodological approach. This summary is followed by an analysis and discussion of the research findings, including an introduction and discussion of tables illustrating critical contradictions of analytical elements within community engagement and also within racial DEI within community engagement findings. Following the initial critical contradiction analysis is a discussion of the critical contradictions identified when comparing analytical elements for community engagement and DEI within community engagement. This chapter concludes with implications for practice, identification of limitations, potential future research, and an identification of contributions of this study to the field.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter begins with a review of five bodies of literature, which include (a) the definition and purpose of engaged institutions; (b) approaches to institutional transformation into engaged institutions; (c) theoretical approaches to organizational change in higher education; (d) the state of racial DEI in higher education; and (e) the ways racial DEI has been addressed within the literature on higher education transformation into engaged institutions. While there is a plethora of literature identifying how community engagement has been addressed in higher education spaces, the purpose of this study requires an organizational understanding of why and how administrative leaders led the engagement agenda toward institutional transformation. Understanding the beliefs, practices, approaches, and decisions of administrative leaders within the engagement space provides critical perspectives into how and why engagement is structured the way it is within higher education institutions. As will be discussed in detail later in this section, understanding the decisions administrators made throughout the early part of the transformation into engaged institutions is foundational to making sense of the organizational change approaches utilized throughout this process. Lastly, the literature review conducted for racial DEI within higher education institutions and within the community engagement scholarship provides insight into how community engagement and DEI are discussed and practiced together.

A review of several bodies of literature is necessary to understand both why and how higher education institutions change. To explain why a transformation was necessary, it is important to understand the history of engagement, and the approaches leaders utilized to institutionalizing engagement. To best understand how this transformation was envisioned and
enacted, it is also important to understand how organizational change occurs in higher education. Thus, a review of the literature on organizational change theory has also been included.

**The Definition and Purpose of Engaged Institutions**

As scholars began to realize that colleges and universities must change if they are to truly be responsive to pressing social issues, and that community engagement could transform both communities and higher education institutions, the focus of engagement shifted from a tool to provide a service to communities outside of higher education to an approach used to transform colleges and universities into engaged institutions (Bridger & Alter, 2006; Cheney et al., 2002; Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Furco, 2010; Holland 2001, 2005, 2009; Hollander & Saltmarsh, 2000; Inman, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Ramaley, 2002). There was and is no singular definition of an engaged institution. There are, however, three common characteristics discussed across the literature. First, engaged institution colleges and universities are directly connected with external communities in mutually beneficial ways (Barker, 2004; Beaulieu et al., 2018; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Cantor et al., 2013; Furco, 2010; Gordon da Cruz, 2018; Holland, 2001, 2009; Inman, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Ramaley, 2002; Spanier, 2011). Holland (2005) argued that regular assessment of community engagement needs to occur to ensure that both community and higher education institutions benefit from their partnerships. Fitzgerald et al., (2012) stated that engagement is not only about addressing pressing community issues, but should also be used as a means to meet institutional goals, such as research dissemination, financial stability, or admission and enrollment objectives. In short, an engaged institution works to ensure the voices and needs of a college and a community are addressed strategically to ensure long-term and positive outcomes for all partners.
Second, engaged institutions recognize that knowledge and expertise reside outside of colleges and universities, and important learning opportunities lie in non-academic spaces (Andes, 2006; Barker, 2004; Beaulieu et al., 2018; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Cantor et al., 2013; Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Furco, 2010; Gordon da Cruz, 2018; Holland, 2001, 2009; Inman, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Ramaley, 2002; Spanier, 2011). Boyte (2009) argued that the notion that expertise lies in higher education, something he refers to as the “cult of the expert”, prevents real solutions to pressing social issues from ever being addressed. He, along with other scholars, also argued that knowledge and expertise are already present in communities that are prepared to address how pressing social issues impact that specific community context (Boyte, 2009; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Cantor et al., 2013; Holland, 2016).

Lastly, engaged institutions ensure their students are prepared to address social issues, which includes ensuring that students learn about the impact of broad societal issues (e.g., educational equity, civic engagement, economic development, health disparities, etc.). It also includes enabling students to critically analyze pressing social issues (Andes, 2006; Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2011; Holland, 2005; Kellogg Commission, 1999). Service-learning has an important and valuable history of embedding engagement into an institution by ensuring students are prepared to be engaged citizens.

As a field, service-learning has been and continues to be empirically explored in important ways. While this study is not intended to address service-learning specifically, it is important to understand the foundation of service-learning and other engaged curricular approaches as an important process of institutionalizing engagement. Therefore, I will provide a
brief overview of the role service-learning plays as it relates to institutional transformation into engaged institutions.

Traditional service-learning in higher education is often described as a teaching pedagogy that connects academic learning outcomes with community service. Best practices in service-learning also use reflective activities to help students connect their academic and service experiences (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Britt, 2012; Furco, 2001, 2002; Jacoby, 1996; Mitchell, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2012; Ramaley, 1995). Service-learning research shows that students learn in critical and important ways when community learning and traditional higher education classroom learning are connected (Barrera et al., 2012; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000), which, as a reminder, is an important indicator of an engaged institution. Although an important characteristic for being an engaged institution is recognizing that knowledge and expertise exist outside of higher education institutions, traditional service-learning is founded on and, some argue, continues to operate as a charity model, and a way for the university help surrounding communities (Simpson, 2014). Consider, for example, as a part of a service-learning course, students enter into community spaces to help with a variety of tasks, then return to the college or university with no structured way to reflect or process the connections between what they learn in class and what they learn in the community. Some scholars argue that sending students into communities without asking them to critically analyze the underlying social issues that place communities in oppressive environments in the first place only perpetuates the hierarchical power of universities over communities (Britt, 2012; Jacoby, 1996; Mitchell, 2008, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2012). This critical lens on service-learning is called critical service-learning in the field, and it calls for a more social justice approach to service-learning as foundational to
transformation. Mitchell (2008) described critical service-learning as focusing “its attention to social change, its questioning of the distribution of power in society, and its focus on developing authentic relationships between higher education institutions and the community served” (p. 101). In other words, critical service-learning intentionally focuses on working with students to critically analyze and understand systemic issues of injustice to ensure students are active and engaged citizens.

Organizational Change Processes Necessary to Transform

As discussed earlier, there is an understanding that transforming into engaged institutions requires mutually beneficial connections with communities, recognition that knowledge and expertise reside outside of traditional academia, and dedication to preparing students to think critically about social issues. For these changes to be realized, colleges and universities were challenged to commit to making institutional changes in how engagement is understood across the institution, changes to institutional policies and practices that support engagement activity, and a recognition that transforming into an engaged institution impacts a broad range stakeholders both inside and outside of the institution.

Institutional Conceptualization of Engagement

Historically, engagement was, and is often still, conceptualized as outreach or service, a concept that does not align with the literature on institutional transformation into engaged institutions (Boyer, 1990; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Spanier, 2011). Fitzgerald et al. (2012) argued that the university “has a responsibility to fuel knowledge creation, transfer, and application to enhance societal purposes. A robust engagement function is necessary to most effectively achieve that knowledge system responsibility” (p. 19). In other words, engagement
should be considered across the three missions of a higher education institution (research, teaching, service) rather than be relegated to service and service alone. Similarly, Ramaley (2005) argued that being an engaged institution is not only about being responsive to community needs, but also about higher education institutions’ willingness and ability to learn and change as a result of engagement with the community.

As colleges and universities worked towards transforming into engaged institutions, there became a need to define and measure institutional commitment to community-engaged work. In response to this need, a new Carnegie classification was developed to identify institutional commitment to community engagement (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, n.d.; Driscoll, 2008). In 2006, 76 colleges and universities were awarded the initial classification for community engagement. In 2008, 108 institutions were awarded classification, and 361 institutions were awarded classification in 2015 (Carnegie Foundation, 2015; Driscoll, 2014). This classification provided a systematic and measurable way for institutions to identify and understand the impact of their engagement efforts. In response to critiques that a classification would not take important contexts of engagement work into consideration, such as mission, history, and place (Fear et al., 1998), the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement was carefully crafted to ensure individual institutional contexts were considered and reflected in the measurements. In other words, architects of this classification were careful not to define engagement for institutions, but rather build measurements based on where institutions were in the engagement process and how these processes may differ by institutional mission and community context (Driscoll, 2008).
Shift of Higher Education Institutional Policies and Practices

One of the most notable ways higher education institutions sought to address institutional engagement was to include engaged research within promotion and tenure (P&T) policies and practices (O’Meara, 2011). Traditional P&T processes often excluded engaged research, ultimately preventing engaged faculty from being fully considered for tenure (O’Meara, 2011). The traditional structure of P&T rewards traditional research, peer-reviewed publications, individual-focused work, and singular disciplinary contributions (Blanchard et al., 2009; Boyer, 1990; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Cherwitz, 2010; Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Lambert-Pennington, 2016; O’Meara, 2011; Saltmarsh & Wooding, 2016). O’Meara (2011) argued that P&T processes will continue to adversely impact engaged scholars as long as faculty work focuses on individual gains rather than collective work and impact. There have been several scholars who have suggested revamping the P&T codes, not to decrease the rigor of academic expectations, but to allow for both engaged and traditional modes of research, teaching, and service (Blanchard et al., 2009; Boehm & Larrivee, 2016; Franz, 2011; Holland, 2016).

Change in Individual Responsibilities as a Result of Engagement

Transformation into engaged institutions requires an acknowledgement that every person, every role, every unit, every practice is affected by engagement and that engagement cannot be considered separate from everyday practices within the institution; it must be embedded and understood at all levels throughout the organization (Holland, 2005; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Mitchell, 2016; Ramaley, 1996). Mitchell (2016) argued that for community engagement to be transformative, it is important that “all members of the campus community (i.e., students,
faculty, staff, administrators) recognize and understand their connection to the civic mission, and that they feel able and fortunate to do work that connects to that mission” (p. 260).

**Organizational Change in Higher Education**

While identifying the literature for this review, it became clear that there is disagreement amongst scholars about where the responsibility for institutionalizing engagement as a core practice organizationally lies. Some scholars argue that engagement needs to be centralized and supported at the top leadership level to institutionalize engagement, as this is where university-level decision-making and funding reside. Advocating for top-level leadership support, Liang and Sandmann (2015) argued that it is important to understand how high-level administrators understand, articulate, and guide the ways colleges and universities can transform into engaged institutions. Ultimately, scholars argue that high-level administrators are best positioned to support and guide community engagement initiatives. Sandmann and Plater (2009) asserted that “when engagement is aligned as an institution-wide priority, evidence of leadership resides in the portfolios of senior campus leaders” (p. 17).

Conversely, there are scholars who have critiqued some works as being too administratively focused in the approach to engagement. In the early exploration of transformation into engaged institutions, Ramaley (1996) stressed that the responsibility of institutional transformation must “draw upon the core strength of the faculty. Change is not administrative work. The best role for the senior administration is to consult with faculty and staff and to act on [their] recommendations” (p. 150). A decade later, Fear et al. (2006) continued this argument, asserting that elite administrators tend to use their authority to mandate
institutional transformation using a one-size-fits-all approach and that this type of top-down approach limits the understanding, discussions, and practices engagement.

The literature reviewed for this study focuses specifically on the necessity of and approaches to transform colleges and universities into engaged institutions from a top-level administrative approach to transformation. Thus, this body of literature focuses on the organizational change level, which is especially relevant to understanding the engagement movement in higher education. Institutional and social cognition theories of change provide a theoretical basis for understanding institutional transformation toward engagement. Specifically, institutional theoretical approaches focus on how external factors influence (and sometimes require) organizational change, whereas social cognition theoretical approaches focus on how individual actors influence, contribute to, and make sense of organizational change. Utilizing both institutional and social cognition theories of change provides a theoretical consideration for both institutional-level policies and practices and individuals within organizations.

Institutional Theoretical Approaches to Organizational Change

Institutional theoretical approaches to organizational change often examine the impact that external factors have on internal organizational change (Kezar, 2009, 2014; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Institutional change theorists argue that long-standing organizations, like colleges and universities, are slow to change because they are connected to larger societal goals, and argue that any substantial change in organizations is typically a result of significant external societal forces (Gumport & Pusser, 2012; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Slaughter & Rhodes, 2004). For example, foundations, accreditation agencies, or government agencies are among some external forces that often influence higher education (Kezar, 2018), and these types of
external forces played a large role in the evolution of engagement. There was significant outside pressure on the institution of higher education to better meet societal needs (Alter & Book, 2002; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Holland, 2001, 2005; Inman, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Ramaley, 1996, 2002, 2009; Spanier, 2011). In addition to external influences, it is also important to consider internal influences on organizational change within higher education institutions, as both are required for an organizational transformation.

**Social Cognition Theories of Change**

As previously noted, social cognition theorists focus on the role of the institution and the individual in how organizations change. Core components of social cognition theories identify that (a) individuals hold unconscious views that shape the way they see the world; (b) this worldview is complex and builds over long periods of time; (c) people’s views can change, but there must be consistent feedback loops for them to process any information that challenges their deeply-held views; (d) challenging deeply-held beliefs can prompt change; (e) making leaps in logic make root causes of social issues elusive; and (f) people are always trying to make sense of their world (Kezar, 2018). While there does need to be an understanding of the external pressures on the institution of higher education, an equal focus also needs to be on how individuals within the organization contribute to institutional transformation or support the status quo of the current organization. Kezar (2018) argued that change occurs when “people simply reach a point of cognitive dissonance, when values and actions clash or something seems out of fashion, and they decide to change. The outcome of change is a new frame of mind or worldview” (p. 30). It is the connection between individual worldviews and the influence that changing worldviews has on organizations that is most relevant to this study.
Social cognition theoretical approaches to organizational change lend themselves well to understanding the literature on institutionalizing engagement. Three theories are most relevant to this study: organizational enclaving and diffusion, organizational sense-making, and organizational single-loop and double-loop learning.

**Organizational Enclaving and Diffusion.** In his work on innovative initiatives within organizations, Levine (1980) argued that the function of an organization “is to strictly maintain the status quo. Any change in an organization’s norms, values, and goals requires a comparable change in its boundaries” (p. 12). In the context of college and university transformation into engaged institutions, if the current state of higher education is to truly change, so must the boundaries that guide and uphold the institutional norms, values, and goals to allow for engagement to be institutionalized (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Institutionalization refers to whether an innovation is enclaved (treated as separate from) or diffused (embedded) within the institution. Levine (1980) defines enclaving as “the process whereby the innovation assumes an isolated position within the organization” (p. 14). Meaning that an institution will allow an innovative initiative, but only as an initiative separate from the everyday function of the organization. Levine (1980) defined diffusion as “the process whereby innovation characteristics are allowed to spread through the host organization” (p. 14). In other words, diffused innovations become a part of the organization by shifting norms, values, and goals to accommodate the innovation. According to Levine (1980), enclaved initiatives ultimately fail, while diffused initiatives have a better chance at success. Scholars examining the institutionalization of engagement suggest that if the overall goal is to transform into engaged institutions, engagement
must be diffused, not enclaved (Cheney et al., 2002; Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Holland, 2009; Ramaley, 2014; Rosean et al., 2001; Sandmann & Weerts, 2008).

Specific to the transformation into engaged institutions literature, Weerts and Sandmann (2010) take Levine’s notion of enclaving and diffusion initiatives within organizations and apply it to institutionalizing engagement within higher education. They identified that boundary-spanning, defined as a role that acts as a bridge between the university and the community, is an integral piece to moving engagement from an enclaved to a diffused initiative within an organization (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). They found four distinct boundary-spanning roles within public research universities. First, there are community-based problem solvers who are often responsible to “broker relationships between the community and university, negotiate expectations by community and university partners, and break down cultural barriers that may inhibit effective working relationships between the groups” (p. 643). Second, there are technical experts who are often tenured faculty and contribute their content expertise to the partnership. Third, there are internal engagement advocates, who create “the infrastructure to support engagement in mission, budget, and personnel decisions” (p. 647). Finally, there are engagement champions, who are often high-level administrators (president or vice president) who serve as “mouthpieces for engagement, but also work closely to align programs with rhetoric” (p. 649). While these four roles are presented as distinct, Weerts and Sandmann (2010) stressed that they are often fluid, and people move in and out of different boundary-spanning roles. They also stressed that these four roles must work harmoniously to effectively prioritize engagement within the institution. These four roles were identified as important in determining how institutional
actors internal to the university are able to bridge their work between the university and the community.

**Organizational Sensemaking.** Within the domain of social cognition theories of change, Kezar and Eckel (2002a, 2002b) found that the transformation of higher education institutions is directly connected to the process of organizational sensemaking. Sensemaking is a reciprocal process that allows individuals to gather information, make meaning of that information, and act accordingly. This process is considered important and central to making organizational transformation possible (Jappinen, 2017; Kezar, 2005, 2018; Kezar & Eckel, 2002a, 2002b). Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) identified four stages of organizational sensemaking: envisioning, signaling, revisioning, and energizing. Eckel and Kezar (2003) take these four stages a step further by identifying five core strategies that are necessary to create and sustain organizational transformation in higher education: senior administrative support, collaborative leadership, robust design, staff development, and taking visible action. They stress that:

Effecting transformational change is as much about ideas and thinking as it is about action. Getting people to adopt new mental models is a cognitive and intellectual process, and implementing transformation is not simply dependent upon changing structures, policies, and reward system (p. 16).

How members of an organization make sense of the changes around them and identify the ways they can individually influence and participate in those changes is important to evaluate and understand to enact change at an organizational level (Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Kezar & Eckel, 2002a, 2002b).
Organizational Learning: Single-loop versus Double-loop. Single-loop and double-loop learning within organizations represent two distinct ways of individual and organizational learning. Single-loop learning involves detecting mistakes within a system with the intent of correcting the mistakes. Double-loop learning, by contrast, requires individuals to consider the root causes of a problem and then identify changes that need to be made within organizational structures, norms, values, or goals to bring lasting change (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Kezar et al., 2008). Double-loop learning has been shown to be a critical component of making institutional changes, particularly concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion work (Bensimon et al., 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Kezar et al., 2008). For example, Kezar et al., (2008) found that teams working towards racially equitable educational outcomes needed six contextual features to be empowered to do their work: knowledge capacity, physical capacity, institutional willingness to reflect, project connection with institutional operations, leadership within both the team and the institutions, and racial climate including intergroup relations. These contextual variables allowed individuals to learn from their equity work, which, in turn, allowed the organizations to change from the process as well. Similarly, Bensimon et al., (2012) found that making double-loop learning foundational to their equity scorecard work enabled them to facilitate individual learning, which, in turn, facilitated organizational change.

The institutional theory and social cognition theoretical approaches to organizational change provide a foundational understanding of the literature on how higher education institutions transform into engaged institutions. Institutional theoretical approaches to organizational change provide insight into the external pressures that necessitate the structure and function of colleges and universities. Social cognition theoretical approaches provide lenses
to understand the connections between individuals and organizations when engaging in organizational change. This study fits within the intersection of the institutional and individual approaches to organizational change. Before an explanation of this theoretical intersection, however, it is important to describe the intersection of engagement and racial DEI as it is relevant to the underlying purposes of this study.

**Racial Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in U.S. Higher Education Institutions**

Several historical and contemporary barriers have prohibited racial diversity, equity, and inclusion within the institution of higher education. These barriers have led to distinct, observable, and measurable racial differences between the professionals in higher education and the community members they engage with in their scholarship. This section provides an overview of the literature on these challenges in creating racial representativeness, equity, and inclusion between members of higher education institutions and the diverse communities they aim to work with and impact.

**Demographics in U.S. & in Higher Education Institutions**

According to Colby and Ortman (2017), the population of people of Color in the United States has been steadily growing. It is projected that by the year 2060 the percentage of people of Color will grow to 56% of the population, thus making the United States a “majority minority” country (p. 9). This demographic shift has implications for how higher education institutions operate, particularly given the exclusionary practices within college recruitment, admissions, retention, and graduation of students of Color. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016c), the percentage of students of Color who were enrolled in postsecondary education had increased from 32.2% in 2005 to 42.1% in 2015. However, this demographic increase of people
of Color in U.S. colleges and universities has not necessarily led to equitable outcomes in higher education.

Much of the growth in college enrollment for people of Color has occurred in the two-year, open-access institutions, whereas the least amount of growth has occurred at four-year selective institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2016a). At four-year institutions, students of Color had a four-year graduation rate of 33%, compared to 44.2% graduation rate for their white peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2016d). Among the 807,032 tenure/tenure track faculty across the nation, 20.7% are faculty of Color and 73.8% are white. Additionally, the percentage of white faculty increases as the level of faculty rank increases (tenure track, tenured, full professor), while the percentage of faculty of Color decreases as the level of faculty rank increases (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b).

Inequitable Educational Outcomes in Higher Education

Although the racial demographics of higher education are shifting as the number of people of Color is increasing both in the U.S. and in higher education, inequitable educational outcomes for people of Color remain. It has been well documented that the experiences of students, staff, and faculty of Color within higher education institutions are not inclusive, respectful, or mutually beneficial (Antonio, 2002; AAC&U, 2011; Baez, 2000; Barajas & Ronnkvist, 2007; Bell & Lewis Jr., 2022; Bensimon et al., 2012; Diggs et al., 2009; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Edwards & Montague, 2014; Freedle, 2003; Hallett, 2011; Jayakumar et al., 2009; McManigell Grijalva, 2018; Padilla, 1994; Stanley, 2006; Strum et al., 2011; Telles & Mitchell, 2018; Turner, 2002, 2003; Turner et al., 2008; Turner et al., 2011; Turner & Meyers, 2000; Urrieta et al., 2015). It is important to consider that, historically, higher education in the
U.S. was originally created and intended to educate wealthy, white, professional men, and clergymen. Although the establishment of land-grant institutions shifted who had access to educational institutions, higher education continued to exclude people of Color, as the focus shifted to American land-owning farmers (Brubacher & Rudy, 2004). Those who benefited from the creation of land-grant institutions tended to be poor, white men and women, often in agricultural occupations, either fully excluding people of Color from higher education altogether or relegated them to the margins of educational institutions.

The exclusion of people of Color continues to be upheld through current-day policies, practices, and structures within higher education institutions. For example, college preparation (i.e., standardized testing, grade point averages, and early participation in college coursework) is a primary factor that college admission policies and practices rely on when making decisions about which students will be admitted and which will not. Scholars have found that academic-focused factors are culturally biased against people of Color, and tend to benefit the middle- and upper-class white population (Freedle, 2003; Walpole et al., 2005). Although research shows a cultural bias, many colleges and universities continue to use these factors to determine college admission.

Taking advanced placement (AP) courses or post-secondary enrollment option (PSEO) courses also reflects positively on college admission decisions, giving students who take AP or PSEO courses while still in high school a distinct advantage over those who do not or cannot. Studies have repeatedly shown that students of Color with high financial need do not have the same level of access to advanced coursework as their wealthier white counterparts (Hallett, 2011; Klopfenstein, 2004; Kozol, 1988), giving wealthy, white students a distinct advantage in the
college admission process over students of Color with financial need.

The inequitable educational outcomes for students of Color in admission policies and practices are mirrored in P&T policies and practices for tenure/tenure track faculty. The literature on retention of faculty of Color cites the hidden racism within tenure and promotion policies, overtly and covertly intended to exclude and deter people of Color from becoming faculty (Dowd & Liera, 2018; Jayakumar et al., 2009; Liera & Dowd, 2018; Turner, 2002; Urrieta et al., 2015). For example, research is considered to be the most important and influential factor in determining tenure, whereas service is often considered to be a distraction from research, often relegating service to an undesirable responsibility. However, faculty of Color are frequently expected to provide exponentially more service to the institution than white faculty (Antonio, 2002; Baez, 2000; Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Padilla, 1994; Ponjuan, 2011; Stanley, 2006; Turner, 2002, 2003; Turner et al., 2008). Faculty of Color tend to disproportionately serve on committees (especially those addressing diversity issues), formally and informally advise students of Color, and represent people of Color on campus when called upon. This places faculty of Color at a distinct disadvantage for earning tenure, resulting in fewer people of Color earning and pursuing faculty rank.

The same exclusionary practices are present concerning the topics that faculty are researching and teaching. Faculty who conduct research on and teach about issues of race have historically been less likely to be tenured than faculty who do not focus on issues of race (McManigell Grijalva, 2018; Padilla, 1994; Turner & Meyers, 2000; Turner et al., 2008; Turner et al., 2011; Urrieta et al., 2015). When race is the focus of their research, faculty of Color are frequently challenged by their white peers to prove their research is not biased, often receive low
scores on teaching evaluations, and are more likely to experience hostile environments in classrooms (Jayakumar, et al., 2009; Stanley, 2006; Turner et al., 1999; Turner et al., 2011).

There has been a plethora of literature that discusses the need for significant shifts in P&T policies and practices, shifts that are required for higher education institutions to transform into engaged institutions (Boyer, 1990; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Blanchard et al., 2009; Cherwitz, 2010; Dowd & Liera, 2018; Fitzgerald et al., 2012; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Lambert-Pennington, 2016; Liera & Dowd, 2018; O’Meara, 2011; Saltmarsh & Wooding, 2016). Although there has been a call to make significant revisions, there is limited empirical evidence exploring the impact changes to P&T policies and practices have had on faculty of Color recruitment, retention, or satisfaction. Dowd & Bensimon (2015) asserted that to understand the racial equity of an institution, it is necessary to disaggregate and critically analyze institutional data specific to racially equitable outcomes.

Racial Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within the Institutionalization of Engagement

The concepts of tokenism and marginalization are often used to describe the experiences of people of Color within higher education (Dowd & Liera, 2018; Diggs et al., 2009; Jayakumar et al., 2009; Liera & Dowd, 2018; Telles, 2019; Turner et al., 2008; Yoshinagoa-Itano, 2006). These terms that have a distinct connection to the experiences of people of Color in higher education are also frequently used in the literature on community engagement. In their discussion of the importance of institutionalizing engagement, Fitzgerald et al. (2012) suggested that a way to “avoid tokenism” (p. 23) is to make engagement central to higher education institutions. In her discussion of the long-standing practice of community engagement in higher education, Holland (2009) stressed that “questions persist as to whether [engagement] survives only at the margin of
academic organizations” (p. 86). Rosean et al., (2001), in their discussion of the value engaged scholarship provides to higher education, stated, “we acknowledge the presence of engagement work at the margins within the academy and argue for wider recognition and more explicitly valuing of its contributions” (p. 11). Similarly, Cheney et al. (2002), who identified that seeking out connections with disenfranchised populations was a means to move engaged scholarship forward, argued that it is vital to the future of education to “consider traditional concepts from the standpoints of marginalized or invisible groups. Be open to ideas from those groups that have not before been part of mainstream academic thinking” (p. 98).

The ways the literature on transforming higher education into engaged institutions addressed racial DEI issues are important to consider, as it contributes to the ways higher education institutions think about, understand, and act on transforming into engaged institutions. Telles (2019) found that racial equity is not frequently addressed in this body of literature, thus preventing a critical examination or discussion of the role racial DEI has on institutional transformation into engaged institutions. Instead of focusing on race, DEI discussions are often identified as diversity of thought or discipline, racial diversity is addressed in terms of community and student demographics, and institutional issues dealing with diversity and equity are often discussed as issues separate from engagement and transformation. The findings of this content analysis (Telles, 2019) are critical to the development of the current study; thus, a more in-depth identification and discussion of those findings are necessary.

Diversity of Discipline or Thought

Scholars writing about engaged work tend to discuss diversity in terms of diversity of discipline or diversity of thought. Johnson and Wamser (1996) discussed the need for the
scholarly work of faculty to be diverse, an approach where faculty strengths are utilized collectively, as opposed to individually, to meet the research, teaching, and outreach expectations in higher education. Similarly, Rosean et al. (2001) provided institutional changes to make to support faculty from a variety of disciplines in their engaged scholarship to move the work of engaged scholarship out of the margins of academia. Fear et al. (1998) provided a useful framework to understand the diverse ways higher education has institutionalized engagement by focusing on where within the institution engagement has been incorporated (e.g., realigning institutional mission, or restructuring faculty reward systems). Likewise, Jaeger et al. (2012) argued that the diverse activities of faculty create the best learning environment and productivity, particularly at institutions that are both land-grant and research universities. Each of these articles addresses the importance of diversity in faculty work and areas of expertise, which is an important perspective to take in engagement work to prevent engagement from becoming synonymous with any particular discipline.

**Demographic Racial Diversity in External Communities**

Race is specifically addressed in the literature on transformation into engaged institutions in two ways. The first is in reference to the diversity within community populations or in reference to the changing racial demographics of students. While Checkoway (1997) refers mostly to diversity in higher education in terms of disciplinary approach, they also briefly address the needs of diverse communities, and the mistake higher education makes when there is a lack of alignment between higher education goals and diverse community needs. Cortes (1999) identified four diversity topics that will be most salient in the 21st century: affinity groups, facilitating constructive intergroup relations, modification of identities, and restructuring
curriculum. They argued that these diversity topics would become increasingly important as the student demographics continue to change. Cantor et al., (2013) and Birch et al., (2013) described the importance of establishing anchor institutions, or institutions that serve as a community place-based organization that are the “social glue, or economic engines” (Cantor et al., 2013, p. 20), and that have mutual benefit and reciprocal partnerships as the foundation of engaged work between universities and communities. Although establishing anchor institutions is vital to institutionally sustain community-university partnerships, the racial diversity addressed by Cantor et al., (2013) is the diversity embedded in the community. The racial diversity referenced in these examples all focus on particular demographics of populations that are either external to the institution or are focused on students within the institution.

**Limited Connections Between DEI and the Institutionalization of Engagement**

Telles (2019) found that the way race is discussed in the literature on institutional transformation highlights the importance of racial diversity work internal to higher education institutions, but remains disconnected from the institutionalization of engagement. For example, Butler (1990) described the experiences of African American faculty in higher education, provides advice for faculty of Color to survive and thrive in higher education, and cautions administrators against expecting faculty of Color to tend to all diversity initiatives on campus. Narrative like this is critical to explore to begin to understand the connections between engagement and DEI. Common throughout critical narratives, however, is a missing direct connection between the racialized experiences internal to higher education with the external community engagement being conducted across campus. King et al., (1999) also provided invaluable insights into the importance of ongoing faculty development to create a better
understanding of diversity issues within higher education institutions, but this work is also disconnected from the institutionalized engagement work. Edwards and Montague (2014) conducted interviews with racially diverse community members who had been a part of a community engagement project from a local university. They found that community members overwhelmingly thought the university was doing a good job of recognizing and engaging in issues of race relations within the community, but that the institution could be more diverse. Although pointing to a lack of racial diversity within the university provides important insight into the need for more people of Color within higher education institutions, this reference to demographic differences did not connect the work of engagement to DEI work.

Butler (1990), King et al. (1999), and Edwards and Montague (2014) all focused on racial diversity internal to higher education institutions and the experiences of faculty of Color within higher education, but provided no direct connection to community engagement or engaged scholarship. Although the attention to the topic of racial diversity within the body of literature on transforming into engaged institutions is important, the lack of direct connection between the work of racial equity and the work of engagement raises questions about the ability of engagement to transform higher education institutions into spaces and places that truly respect multiple forms of knowledge with the goal of addressing pressing social issues.

Although most of the literature on the transformation of higher education institutions into engaged institutions addresses diversity in terms of thought or discipline, racial diversity of external communities, and diversity work that is not connected to community engagement work (Telles, 2019), there are a handful of scholars that have recognized the importance of systemically connecting community engagement and diversity work to transform higher
education institutions. Both Simpson (2014) and Hernández and Pasquesi (2017) identified that engagement does not address issues of diversity in the literature or in the work. Simpson (2014) argued there was a lack of attention to systemic issues of inequity and injustice within the civic engagement work in higher education. They argued that “in the context of social issues that are profoundly entrenched and complex, the scholarship of engagement does little to sustain even an awareness of these issues, let alone consideration of their resolution” (p. 82). Similarly, Hernández and Pasquesi (2017) argued that it is not possible to make substantial changes outside of higher education if the institution continues to lack racial equity within itself.

Strum et al. (2011) and Musil (2011) take the argument that engagement does not address issues of diversity a step further and argued there was a need for the community engagement agenda and the diversity agenda to work more closely together to transform higher education institutions into equitable spaces that can truly address pressing social issues. Strum et al. (2011) argued that community engagement agendas and diversity agendas have not been connected in meaningful and systemic ways, a connection that would facilitate the transformation into engaged institutions. They stressed the need for centralized leadership around structurally connecting community engagement and diversity work. They stated that people who currently “lead and teach and shape institutions of higher education have the ability to make choices, determine commitments, and enact strategies that address change in organizational structures and cultures to achieve full participation for the next generation of students and faculty” (p. 13).

Along the same lines as Strum et al. (2011), Musil (2011) identified four actions that can be taken by community engagement leaders, scholars, and practitioners that will allow a connection between engagement, diversity, and internationalization. These four actions include:
a) putting diversity back in the narrative of community engagement; b) actively seeking to learn more about diversity and internationalization as related to their own community engagement work; c) acknowledging and rectifying exclusionary practices that prevent people from participating in community engagement work; and d) connecting with those in the institution who are doing diversity and international work to build alliances among them.

As Strum et al. (2011) argued, to have full participation in the transformation of higher education institutions, building an architecture for both community engagement and diversity is critical, as the two fields need to come together to inform, support, and grow with one another. This study aims to contribute to this need by empirically considering how (rather than if) community engagement and DEI operate together within a higher education institution.

**Summary of Literature Review**

The literature on higher education transformation into engaged institutions identifies the great potential this transformation has for higher education’s ability to address pressing social issues. This literature suggests that engaged institutions are places and spaces that engage with external communities to address pressing social issues and that institutions are considered to be engaged institutions if there is a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with communities, a recognition that knowledge and expertise exist in communities, and a dedication to preparing students to think critically about pressing social issues. There have been significant changes made within higher education institutions as they move towards institutionalizing engagement. Take, for example, the establishment of a Carnegie classification for community engagement (https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/elective-classifications/community-engagement), which provided institutions with a detailed examination of the strengths and gaps an institution
has in terms of their goals to institutionalize engagement. Colleges and universities nationwide have significantly changed P&T policies and practices to be more inclusive of engaged research and teaching. There are also approaches to ensure engagement is being diffused throughout the institution to make it relevant and rewarded across all institutional actors, not simply in one unit or group of people.

The institutional theoretical approaches to organizational change literature emphasize that external influences often force organizations to change. Alternatively, social cognition theoretical approaches to organizational change focus on how individual-level understanding, learning, growing, and changing ultimately change organizations. The upcoming discussion will connect these two theoretical approaches and also introduce a new organizational change approach to understanding how institutionalizing engagement has addressed racial DEI. While the literature on organizational change theory helps illuminate how institutions of higher education transform, this group of theories does not address how two seemingly different areas of organizational change operate together (i.e., engagement and DEI). As a transformational tool, engagement provides an approach that can facilitate the organizational goal of institutionalizing engagement by breaking down walls between universities and communities, centering mutual benefit for all partners, and preparing the next generation to be civically engaged citizens. DEI provides a similar approach by facilitating transformation through diversity of people, striving for equitable outcomes and considerations for the needs of a diverse group of people within higher education, and ensuring policies and practices are intentionally inclusive. Therefore, a theoretical approach to this study must expand on current organizational change theoretical approaches laid out in the literature. Adding cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) as a
theoretical framework (which will be discussed further in chapter 3) provides the additional theoretical approach needed to connect engagement and DEI through an organizational lens.

Past literature shows that people of Color have had and continue to have inequitable experiences and outcomes across the education systems. Furthermore, the lack of empirical understanding of the ways racial DEI and institutionalizing engagement are connected. By only focusing on racial demographic diversity, the institutional work on community engagement and institutional work on racial equity will continue to be isolated from one another. Additionally, this singular focus on demographics conceals the ways racialized spaces and practices are created and upheld, which allows practices to continue to go unrecognized, unaddressed, and unchallenged by community-engaged scholars and practitioners. By continuing to address issues of racial equity as an important component of higher education – yet failing to directly connect racial DEI with engagement – colleges and universities run the risk of continuing to move forward with institutional transformation that is racially and ethnically exclusionary.
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The literature review in chapter two was guided by the need to understand how college and university leaders approached institutional transformation into engaged institutions, the historical and current state of racial DEI in higher education, and various organizational change theories utilized throughout the transformation process. Guided by this literature, the task of addressing this study’s research question requires a theoretical approach that sits at the intersection of institutional and social cognition theories of change. Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) provides an intersecting theoretical approach to accomplishing this task and addressing the research question of this study: What organizational contradictions and areas of congruence exist when analyzing how community engagement and racial DEI operate together?

Theoretical Framework: Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

As a theoretical framework, CHAT provides a way “to analyze how the learning of individuals can constitute organizational learning on behalf of their organizations” (Dowd & Liera, 2018, p. 9) and places the actions of individual actors in a larger historical and cultural context (Engeström, 2008; Kezar, 2018; Roth & Lee, 2007). Connecting the individual within the context of the organization allows for an analysis of not only individual actions, but the contribution of those actions to a larger organizational context, providing an important connection between individual actions and organizational learning (Engeström, 1999). The use of CHAT in this study provides an opportunity to examine everyday actions that contribute to how racial DEI is addressed by centralized units working towards institutionalizing engagement.
Five Principles of CHAT

Engeström (2001) identified five grounding theoretical principles of CHAT: (a) an activity system must guide the analysis; (b) multiple perspectives must be considered; (c) cultural and historical contexts are central to any analysis being conducted; (d) critical contradictions facilitate organizational change; and (e) organizational transformation is possible (Cong-Lem, 2022; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Dowd & Liera, 2018; Engeström 1999, 2008; Gedera & Williams, 2016; Lee, 2011; Liera & Dowd, 2018; Roth & Lee, 2007; Rueda, 2012).

The first principle of CHAT states that the activity system must guide the analysis. Engeström (2008) defines an activity system as a:

- collective systemic formation that has a complex mediational structure. Activities are not short-lived events or actions that have a temporally clear-cut beginning and end. They are systems that produce events and actions and evolve over lengthy periods of sociohistorical time (p. 26).

Roth and Lee (2007) also identified that the activity system being analyzed cannot be a brief or time-determined event, they argued that it is “an evolving, complex structure of mediated and collective human agency [which] are historical activities with objects and motives that contribute to maintaining human societies” (p. 198). For example, running a marathon does not constitute an activity, as it is an isolated action and has a specific time frame (beginning and ending) in which an individual participates. Education for the masses, however, is an activity system, as it maintains the societal structure of humans (it is not isolated). It also does not have a specific beginning and ending time period, yet the education system has undergone significant changes over time.
The second principle is that the activity system must be represented by multiple voices, traditions, and interests. This principle provides a structured way to “link the individual and the social structure” (Engeström, 1999, p. 19) and enables the unit of analysis of this study to be a centralized unit responsible for community engagement.

Third, the historical context of the activity being analyzed must be considered, as history informs the creation and direction of the activity, as does the social context surrounding the activity. Context is such an important consideration of engagement that a Carnegie community engaged classification measure was established and grounded in recognition of the role institutional context plays in how engagement operates at individual colleges and universities (Boyte, 2009; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Cantor et al., 2013; Driscoll, 2008, 2014; Fear et al., 1998; Holland, 2016; Hollander et al., 2002; Kezar et al., 2008).

The fourth principle assumes that organizational change occurs through critical contradictions. Engeström (2008) distinguishes between two types of contradictions: contradictions and critical contradictions. Contradictions are defined as “deviations from the normal scripted course of events in the work process, normal being defined by plans, explicit rules and instructions, or tacitly assumed traditions” (p. 24). Critical contradictions, however, represent systemic-level conflicts that “reveal substantive disagreements, fears, or other strong indications of systemic contradictions” (Engeström, 2008, p. 38). These critical contradictions are key to understanding how particular activities function organizationally and where intended and unintended consequences occur across activities; Critical contradictions, however, are not often outwardly visible. They can often only be identified through a critical analysis of the mechanisms of the activity itself (Engeström, 2008). Contradictions versus critical contradictions
can also be understood through single- and double-loop learning (discussed in the review of organizational change literature section). Ultimately, contradictions are technical problems that can be addressed with technical solutions via single-loop learning (i.e., identify the problem and fix it). By contrast, critical contradictions operate more covertly and often hide within the norms, values, and goals of an organization. Addressing critical contradictions requires double-loop learning, which can facilitate organizational change (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Kezar, 2018).

The fifth, and final principle is the assumption that transformation in an activity system is possible through ever-evolving organizations. Engeström (2001) argued that “an expansive transformation is accomplished when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualized to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of activity” (p. 137). In other words, organizations will transform as critical contradictions are identified, addressed, and readdressed over time.

**Six Analytical Elements of CHAT**

The five guiding principles of CHAT provide the theoretical framework in which this study is situated. In addition to these principles, CHAT also provides a theoretical approach to organizing and structuring data collection and analysis. This theoretical organization occurs through the six analytical elements of CHAT, which are the subject, object, instruments, division of labor, rules, and communities of the activity under investigation. These six analytical elements represent the mediational structure of an activity system, or the ways an activity system operates within an organization. These elements represent the multiple mediations within an activity system, which provides an explanation of the interplay between and among the activity system structure (Dowd & Liera, 2018; Engeström, 1999, 2008; Roth & Lee, 2007).
The first analytical element is the subject, which consists of the individual actors participating in the activity system. The second element is the object, which “embodies the true motive of the activity” (Engeström, 2008, p. 204) and represents the actions of individuals and groups that are working towards a particular goal within the activity system. The object is also considered to be the activity within the system that the subjects are aiming to change (e.g., curriculum, educational outcome gaps, etc.) to produce a specific outcome (Engeström, 1999, 2001, 2008; Lee, 2011; Liera & Dowd, 2018). The third analytical element is the instruments, which are the cultural artifacts utilized by individual actors to conduct their work. Instruments are both material (e.g., newsletters, websites) and symbolic (e.g., language and images) in nature. The fourth element is the division of labor, or the official and unofficial roles that individuals are assigned within a given activity system. The fifth analytical element is the rules, which represent the expectations for the subjects as they participate within the activity system. The sixth, and last analytical element is the communities, which are defined as the units and people the subjects have formal and informal relationships with while operating within the activity system.

Particular to this study, the activity system under investigation is the centralized unit responsible for the strategic direction of the institutionalization of engagement (e.g., a central office for engagement, a formal centralized workgroup, etc.). The subject in the activity system is represented by the individuals who are formally or informally connected to the centralized unit under investigation. The object, or the guiding motive of the activity system, is community engagement at the institution (e.g., defining and understanding community engagement). In other words, the object is community engagement within a particular institutional context. The
remaining four analytical elements of CHAT (instruments, division of labor, rules, and communities) must be identified through the data analysis process, as those definitions cannot be identified prior to data collection.

A useful visual tool in understanding how the six analytical elements work together is through an activity triangle (Engeström, 2001), which provides a conceptual model of the six analytical elements of CHAT (figure 1).

**Figure 1**

CHAT Activity Triangle

Engeström (2008) argued that “a conceptual model of the activity system is particularly useful when one wants to make sense of systemic factors behind seemingly individual and accidental disturbances, deviations, and innovations occurring in the daily practice of the workplace” (p.
a process that is key in understanding how racial DEI is addressed through the institutionalization of engagement.

**Relevance of CHAT in Higher Education**

CHAT is not new to the field of higher education, as organizational studies have utilized CHAT to tease apart institutional activities that influence organizational change. For example, Dowd and Liera (2018) used CHAT to examine the role of institutional data use in reaching institutional DEI goals. Using CHAT as their theoretical framework provided a lens to consider both the institutional and social cognition schools of thought. They argued that:

A focus on individuals is inadequate because change in higher education is complicated by the fact that institutional operations involve many different functional systems (e.g., curricular, administrative, programmatic), each within its own cultural practices and traditions (p. 9).

In their research on transforming community colleges into more equitable institutions, Rueda (2012) utilized CHAT to identify where the individual and the institution intersect within the organization. The purpose for using CHAT was the need for a theoretical framework that moved beyond analyzing individuals as learners within an organization without considering the larger organizational context they operated within. They argued that “the focus or analytic unit needs to go beyond the individual learner. Thus, the key focus [needs to be] the activity setting, not the learner in isolation” (p. 170). Similarly, this study’s utilization of CHAT as a theoretical framework allows for an organizational approach to understanding the impact of individual-level approaches to everyday work on institutional transformation.
CHAT is also well-suited to address the research question for this study. I seek to understand the organizational critical contradictions that exist when engagement and DEI operate together. CHAT allows for a specific activity system to be analyzed through multiple components of an organization while considering the context of an organization as an important component in the analysis process. It also provides a powerful way to identify critical contradictions specific to the ways racial diversity, equity, and inclusion within community engagement are addressed in the work of the central unit responsible for the institutionalization of engagement. CHAT also provides an organizational approach to data collection and analysis by providing the six analytical elements that structure an activity system.

**Case Study Method**

Drawing on CHAT as a theoretical framework and analytic tool, this study employs a qualitative case study methodology to address the research question seeking to explore how DEI operates within a centralized engagement unit by identifying the existence of critical contradictions within the work. Qualitative case study methodology is the most appropriate methodological approach to addressing the research question, as it allows for a deep, context-specific understanding and requires a focus on meaning, utilizes an inductive process, and provides a rich description of a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Merriam, 2009). Generating this “thick description” (Merriam, 2009) is necessary to address and understand the interconnectedness between engagement and DEI. Additionally, in qualitative research, “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15), which is also the approach in case study methodology (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995).
Aligned with qualitative methodology, this study employs a case study method to explore the connections between the institutionalization of engagement and the way racial DEI is addressed within the transformation process. Yin (2001) defines case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (p. 23). Similarly, Merriam (2009) defined case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40). Case study is also best suited to address research questions seeking to better understand the “how” of particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2001).

The bounded system, or specific system under investigation, is a higher education institution that is working towards transformation into an engaged institution. Such institutions are complex social units consisting of multiple, decentralized, and sometimes competing operations, making them complicated spaces to investigate. The drive for institutions to transform into engaged institutions is a fairly recent educational innovation, and requires additional empirical and theoretical understanding. According to Bhattacherjee (2012), using case study is most appropriate for “theory building at the formative stages, for studies where the experiences of participants and context of actions are critical, and for studies aimed at understanding complex, temporal processes (why and how of a phenomenon) rather than factors or causes” (p. 94).

Additionally, case study is most appropriate when “issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts. All these meanings are important in studying cases” (Stake, 1995, p. 17). The context of this study of a
higher education institution is important and influential in how the institution operates and is something important to consider in any type of institution-specific research design, but particularly when examining engaged institutions (Birch et al., 2013; Boyte, 2009; Doberneck et al., 2010; Driscoll, 2008; Franz, 2009). The context is also a highly important variable in case study research (Stake, 1995), further strengthening the argument for the use of case study to address the research question of this study.

The theoretical framework utilized in this study also support using a case study methodology. Case study is well aligned with CHAT in that case study examines a particular phenomenon at a particular site and is bound by those particulars (Yin, 2001), as does selecting a single activity system to analyze in a CHAT study (Engeström, 2008). Case study and CHAT also both rely on the historical and current context of an activity (Engeström, 2008; Yin, 2001).

**Case Selection**

The research question for this study focuses on organizational contradictions when analyzing how community engagement and DEI operate together. To address this question, it is important to select a college or university that has demonstrated a commitment to institutionalizing engagement and an interest in investigating how racial DEI operates within this work. Driven by this need, the following criteria were used to select potential cases: an established history of community engagement as can be seen via Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement indicators, doctoral universities with a very high or high research Carnegie classification, public research university, and a centralized unit responsible for advancing strategic plans to institutionalize engagement. One key element of establishing an engaged institution is institutional recognition that engaged research looks different than
traditional research, yet is considered equally as rigorous. To accommodate this important characteristic of engaged institutions, this study will focus on doctoral universities. Limiting the scope of this study to doctoral universities enables a consideration of the institutional support for a range of scholarly activities (e.g., research, teaching, and service) and provides a platform to analyze a range of community-engaged practices and activities as required by CHAT. Conversely, bachelor- or master’s degree-only institutions would limit the breadth and depth of investigation to engaged research in exchange for a focus on teaching and learning.

**Site Selection.** Key criteria for case study selection related to an institution’s historical record of working toward transforming into an engaged institution, as indicated by awarding of Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement in 2006 or 2008 and 2015. Additionally, institutions that had a research activity Carnegie classification of “very high” or “high research” were also considered for inclusion. This criterion was important to utilize, as the support of engaged research is an important indicator of institutional transformation. There were 65 total institutions that met these two criteria (51 public and 14 private institutions). One important component of site selection is ensuring I would have access to the institution, which required I identify an informant to facilitate the identification of participants, provide necessary documents for review, and provide some information about the institution's context. There were 12 public institutions and 3 private institutions where I had potential access to an informant. Given the numerical differences between the public and private institutions, in terms of meeting the initial two criteria and having the potential for an informant, focusing exclusively on public institutions was the best approach for this project. For the 12 remaining institutions – all of which had a history of Carnegie Community Engaged classification, had a very high or high research activity
Carnegie classification, were public institutions, and had the potential for an informant – I utilized institutional websites to help determine if there was a centralized unit that was responsible for community engagement at the institution. Some institutions had a centralized office, others had a centralized team or workgroup, and others had a single person in charge. Finally, institutional access was also taken into consideration when choosing a site, as having access to the institution is key to collecting data for this case study. Considering all of these criteria, a university referred to as New State University (NSU) was selected as the site for this qualitative case study.

**Site Selection Rationale.** Founded in the 1940’s, NSU is a public research university located in the U.S. As a high-research, selective, primarily white institution (PWI), metropolitan-serving institution, NSU offers certificates, bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees. Table 1 provides an overview of select institutional characteristics, such as the size of the institution, undergraduate enrollment by race/ethnicity, and the number and types of employees at the institution (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Exact numbers are approximated to protect the identity of the site.

**Table 1**

New College State University Institutional Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Enrollment Breakdown</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Students</td>
<td>~20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Students</td>
<td>~5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>~1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>~10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>~5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>~15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>~1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>~50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>~5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity unknown</td>
<td>~10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-resident</td>
<td>~5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employees</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional staff &amp; faculty</td>
<td>~4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Assistants</td>
<td>~700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Employees</td>
<td>~2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these institutional characteristics, NSU is among the first institutions to be awarded the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement (2006 and 2015), showing over a decade of work dedicated to institutionalizing engagement. They are also an institution that took a public leadership role in moving the institutional transformation approach forward. This public research institution was the focus of several academic publications and was highly active in terms of presentations at national and international conferences, again indicating a dedication to institutionalization of engagement. NSU also had a unique approach to centralizing engagement at the institution. Several of the original 12 institutions being considered had a centralized office that was responsible for engagement at the institution. NSU was one of the only institutions that had a council, or a formalized group of individuals, that was in charge of engagement, presenting a unique approach to structuring community engagement. Lastly, and a key component of the decision to choose NSU as the site, I was able to identify two individuals who agreed to act as informants and were also in administrative positions where they could allow
NSU to fully participate. One informant was the recently appointed president, and the other was recently appointed to the board of trustees. Both individuals have a strong history of leading institutional initiatives to embed engagement within similarly structured universities.

**Data Collection**

Case study data collection occurs through interviews, review of documents, and an archival analysis (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2001). Likewise, in this study, I also collected data by conducting semi-structured interviews with a wide range of participants, analyzing archival data (e.g., historical background of the site, etc.), and critically reviewing various institutional documents (e.g., internal documents, websites, etc.).

**Establishing Trustworthiness**

Scholars who write about case study research often utilize language from quantitative research to address research rigor (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2001). Scholars who focus on qualitative research methods, which includes qualitative case study, refute the notion that quantitative research language (i.e., rigor, validity, reliability, etc.) is appropriate for qualitative research, a dispute based on differences in ontological, epistemological, and methodological differences. Instead, scholars argue the term trustworthiness, as opposed to rigor, is a more appropriate term to describe the research process and purpose of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Merriam, 2009). Given that this study is a qualitative case study, I use qualitative research terms and criteria to address concerns of research trustworthiness rather than concerns of research rigor, validity, or reliability.

Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research is imperative and requires intentional choices throughout the research process (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009;
Lincoln and Guba (1985) established that trustworthiness needs to address four distinct areas of research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility and transferability refer to the internal and external (respectively) validity of data, dependability addresses reliability issues, and confirmability addresses objectivity and generalizability. To enhance credibility and transferability, I had prolonged exposure and engagement with the ways in which the case study site conducts community engagement work. To address credibility, institutional documents were analyzed and unstructured interviews were held prior to forming interview questions to ensure the questions were relevant within the context of the university. Additionally, triangulation of data among interviews and analyses of both formal and informal documents to ensure data is identified from multiple areas. To address transferability and dependability, an in-depth understanding of the case study site was gathered through document review and in-depth, semi-structured interviews to inform a thick description of the site. Collecting data via documentation review and interviews also ensured that data were collected from multiple sources to triangulate data to substantiate findings and ensure dependability (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2001).

Objectivity is addressed in the following section, where I discuss my positionality, and acknowledge how my own perspectives and experiences influence this study.

**Positionality**

As active contributors to the research process, it is important for qualitative researchers to identify and situate themselves within the research – identify our positionality and acknowledge how that positionality impacts the research process. Creswell (2013) stressed the importance of understanding “how individuals’ culture, gender, history, and experiences shape all aspects of
the qualitative project…in some way – individuals position themselves in the qualitative study” (p. 47). Following best practices identified in the literature on positionality in qualitative research (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Milner, 2007), and just as I have asked my participants to share their own personal identities and experiences, I will share my positionality to provide insight into the worldview I bring to this research.

Critical inquiry is the lens through which I see the world. Crotty (2012) stated that “critical forms of research call current ideology into question, and initiate action, in the cause of social justice” where “researchers find themselves interrogating commonly held values and assumptions, challenging conventional social structures, and engaging in social activism” (p. 157). This interrogation of and challenge to social structures is the backdrop for much of the work I do, the scholarship I engage with, and the lens I see the world through. Critical inquiry allows for me to engage in scholarly ways to better understand how social structures uphold inequities, racial inequities in particular. As such, the most effective way to communicate my scholarly identity is to identify scholars that have shaped my education.

Community engagement scholars such as Judith Ramaley and Barbara Holland, who relentlessly pursued the need for higher education institutions to transform into places and spaces that have the ability to address pressing social issues. Sociologists like Michael Omi, Howard Winant, Wendy Leo Moore, and Joe Feagin provided a constant reminder that institutional racism is very real and pervasive. It upholds inequities, determined along racial lines, across organizational contexts that are so embedded we do not always see them. Higher education scholars Alicia Dowd and Estella Bensimon who are unwaveringly committed to equitable educational outcomes for students of Color in higher education and provide concrete tools to
engage institutions in their pursuit of racial equity. These are among the long list of scholars who have helped me identify issues, frame arguments, and see as well as understand connections that are, on the surface, unconnected.

Lastly, my own identity as a white-presenting Latina who grew up in a working class family of educators informs the way I see the world. Growing up, my dad was a music teacher and my mom was an opera singer. Although we never had money, my parents’ connections to both the education and the music world provided cultural and social capital that my neighborhood friends did not have. Being in-between worlds has been a constant in almost every aspect of my life, not quite in the margins, not quite in the mainstream. Not quite Latina, but also not quite white. Working class background, yet exposed to social and cultural capital outside of my socioeconomic status. My academic life is no different. I am a sociologist working in the context of education, so not quite a sociologist, not quite an educator. While living in-between worlds can be difficult to navigate, I feel that this in-between-ness provides me with distinct vantage points to see the ways systems and people intersect, views that cannot be seen from anywhere but from the in-between spaces.

As a scholar, I am constantly contemplating the impacts of the routine and prevalent nature of systemic racial inequities in education generally, and higher education specifically. Likely because of the in-betweensness, my interests are at the intersection of systems and individuals – I am curious about how they influence one another. As described earlier, I lean towards a critical inquiry approach to research and am drawn to theories and research in sociology, education, and organizational change fields, which all guide the direction of my research.
Interviews

Merriam (2009) stated that “interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (p. 88), which is precisely the reason interviewing is an integral piece of this research design. Interviews are a key approach to gathering data for case study research (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2001), as they provide information directly from participants regarding their ideas, feelings, and beliefs regarding the topic at hand. The use of interviews is also supported by CHAT by ensuring multiple voices, traditions, and needs are recognized when analyzing the activity under investigation. For this study, I conducted both unstructured and semi-structured interviews. An unstructured interview was conducted with two key informants to help determine important questions to ask future interview participants, which is an important approach to conducting qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 participants. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for data analysis purposes. Following practices approved by the University of Minnesota IRB process, participants also completed a consent form (Appendix A) and a demographic form (Appendix B) prior to interviewing.

Participant Selection Criteria and Recruitment

Individuals were invited to participate in this study if the key informant suggested it, if document analysis indicated they had a connection with the centralized unit, or if they were recommended by another participant (i.e., snowball sampling). Snowball sampling is the process of identifying research participants by asking key informants or well-informed people about who else might be important to include in the study (Patton, 2002). I did not interview people external
to the institution, as this study is focused on a centralized unit within a particular higher education institution, and the experiences, beliefs, and feelings of those external to the centralized unit are beyond the scope of this study. Participants were recruited through email (Appendix C) requesting their participation in a 60-90 minute semi-structured interview. All potential participants responded to my initial email, and all agreed to participate in an interview. The duration of participation in the study did not expand beyond the initial interview.

**Participant Backgrounds**

The centralized unit responsible for community engagement at NSU is a formalized council I refer to as the Community Engagement Council (CEC), which included approximately 80 faculty and staff from across the university. While the larger CEC is an important group to consider, a small group of individuals began to informally gather to guide the direction of the larger CEC. This group organically developed into what I call the Executive Community Engagement Council (EEC) and was established as a means to manage and coordinate the work of the larger CEC. At the time of this study, there were between eight to ten people on the executive council who represented units from across the institution. It is important to stress that document analysis and interview data provided conflicting information on the exact participation on both the CEC and the EEC, making exact membership impossible to establish. While both the CEC and the EEC continue to coordinate the strategic direction and institutional work of engagement at NSU, the EEC is the focus of this case.

Sixteen interviews with fourteen participants were conducted, which included twelve interviews with faculty and staff who are active members of the EEC and four interviews with faculty who were never a part of the EEC and had very loose connections to the CEC (Table 2).
All participants have been key players in the direction of community engagement at NSU and all, save one, are still working at the institution.

**Table 2**

Participant Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Part of CEC?</th>
<th>Part of EEC?</th>
<th>Institutional Role</th>
<th>Institutional Unit Type</th>
<th>Self-identified Race/Ethnicity</th>
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<td>Academic Department</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan</td>
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<td>Jared</td>
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<td>Faculty &amp; Administrator</td>
<td>Central Administration</td>
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<td>Center</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Alie is a tenured faculty member whose work focuses on scholar activism, community vitality, and social justice through community organizing, youth empowerment, and mentorship. She has been at the institution for approximately 10 years. She identifies as an Asian-American female and is not formally connected to the EEC.

Anita is a tenured faculty member and director of a campus-wide collaborative that is grounded in both engagement and equity. Her work focuses on equitable outcomes in community engaged work, especially for communities of Color. She actively works to change practices and policies at the university that present barriers to community engaged work. She identifies as Mexican-American and white and has been at the institution for almost 10 years. Anita is not formally connected to the EEC.

Conrado is a tenured faculty member and former administrator. His work focuses on community health, in particular the obesity epidemic in communities of Color. He considers community engagement work to be a part of his role and responsibility as faculty and prioritizes preparing and mentoring students of Color to be the next group of professionals in STEM fields. He considers his relationship with race complex, as he grew up in a place that views race differently than it is viewed in the U.S. He identifies as Latino and has been at NSU for almost 20 years. Conrado is not formally connected to the EEC.
Ivan is a tenured faculty member and focuses his work on issues of equity and inter-group relationships and communication. His engagement agenda includes working with the local K-12 school districts and working with minoritized populations in their civic engagement endeavors. He has been at the institution for over 20 years and identifies as an African American male. Ivan is not formally connected to the EEC.

Jared is a tenured faculty member and the current president of the institution. He has a long-established history with institutionalizing engagement, establishing anchor institutions, and understands the importance of engagement to the success of an institution. He is equally dedicated to the role that equity plays in the work of higher education. Equity and engagement are two publicly established priorities identified in his presidency. He identifies as a white male, has been at the institution for approximately 10 years. He is one of the original co-founders of the CEC and, up until his recent presidency, he was an active member on the EEC.

Joy is a former president, faculty emeritus, and current board of trustees member. She has a long history of working towards transforming higher education through engagement and has a substantial publication record that identifies approaches, issues, and successes in institutionalizing engagement. She identifies as a white female and was an active participant with the CEC prior to her retirement.

Katie is instructional faculty in both her disciplinary department and in the capstone program. She has a wealth of experience in community-based work that has been focused on racial and gender equity. She is dedicated to working with students to understand inequity and power through community based learning (CBL). She has been with the institution for over 20 years and identifies as a white female. Katie is an active member of the EEC.
Lana is a staff member and the director of the capstone program at NSU. She was hired as the director at the program's inception and has been instrumental in the continued success of the program. She is dedicated to incorporating racial equity into the work done through the capstone courses (i.e., faculty development opportunities, new capstone course approval processes, community partners to connect with, etc.). She has been at the institution for over 20 years and identifies as a white female. Lana is an active member of the EEC.

Larry is a tenured faculty member and a department chair. His work focuses on educational equity in communities of Color. He describes his experience with engagement at NSU as being an “add on” and an “unfunded mandate”. He identifies as an African American male and has been at the institution for less than five years. Larry serves as new co-chair of the CEC and he is an active member of the EEC.

Melissa is a staff member that has been connected to the institution as both a student and as a professional for more than 20 years. She received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from NSU and has spent her professional career in the engagement world focusing on faculty development, evaluation of engagement programming, and the scholarship of engagement. She worked in both the Engagement Lab (EL) and the Office for Research Innovation and Strategic Partnerships (ORS). She identifies as a white female and is an active member of the EEC.

Rachel is the director of a research center and is focused on the transformative power of engagement. She considers herself a “bridge tender” between the university and the community and believes it is her role and responsibility to navigate and transform the university to make it a more equitable space. She works to make internal changes to policy and practice that she sees
acting as barriers to successful engagement work. She has been with the institution for almost 20 years and identifies as a white female. Rachel is an active member on the CEC, but not the EEC.

Sara is a staff member whose work focuses on supporting faculty development for CBL courses. She reports a lack of understanding and support in her job. She is dedicated to racial equity and believes that you cannot do engagement work if racial equity is not the focus of the work. At the time of the interview, she had been with the institution for less than five years and has since moved on from NSU into a new position with a local organization. She identifies as a white female and was an active member of the EEC prior to her leaving the institution.

Scott is a tenured faculty member and the former AVP over the EL. He has a long-established academic career in CBL, both locally and internationally, and is well known in the scholarship of engagement field. He identifies as a white male and has been with the institution for more than 20 years. Scott is an active member of the EEC.

Tom is a tenured faculty member and a department chair. He has a long history of dedication to CBL, specifically in preparing students for leadership roles and identifies as a white male. Although he did not give a numeric account of his time at the institution, based on the historical context of both the institution and the geographic area discussed during our interview, he has likely been at NSU for the majority of his faculty career. Tom serves as the co-chair of the CEC.

**Document Review and Selection Criteria**

Document review is an important element of case study research, as documents provide historical context, can substantiate or contradict data that has already been collected, and can provide support for identifying directions previously unexplored (Creswell, 2013; Merriam,
2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2001). Documents were identified through institutional website searches, a search for relevant stories in the local newspapers, and through participants who provided me with additional documents that they considered important to this study. The criteria for documents reviewed (Appendix D) are specific to the formation of the centralized unit under examination, are notes or transcripts of meetings regarding community engagement activities, documents identifying goals of the centralized unit (CEC, EEC, EL, ORS, etc.), relevant institutional websites, organizational charts, institutional policies/practices related to community engagement activities (such as tenure and promotion processes, etc.), and other documents deemed important by institutional informants and other participants interviewed for this study.

**Conceptual Framework for Data Collection**

As discussed in chapter three, CHAT informs the organization of data collection. This theoretical lens also guides the data analysis process. There are six analytical elements of CHAT, which are the subject, object, instruments, rules, communities, and division of labor (Engeström, 1999, 2001, 2008; Dowd & Liera, 2018; Roth & Lee, 2007). The interview protocol (Appendix E) is structured to identify the necessary information to identify the six analytical elements of CHAT. In other words, I gathered information from those who work in centralized units (subjects), which is responsible for institutionalizing engagement (object), in order to identify and explore the instruments, division of labor, rules, and communities used to work towards institutionalizing engagement. In addition to asking questions for the purpose of identifying analytical elements, the research question of this study requires that I also gather data specifically about racial DEI. Although I asked some specific racial DEI questions, which is important to make the connection between institutionalizing engagement and racial DEI (Dowd
& Bensimon, 2015), DEI cannot only be identified through a set of specific DEI questions. It is how racial DEI is addressed in the everyday practice of institutionalizing engagement that is important to identify rather than prompting individuals to discuss racial DEI. It is through a combination of specific racial DEI questions and through an analysis of non-DEI questions that engagement and DEI are teased apart.

**Interview Protocol**

As illustrated in the interview protocol (Appendix E), questions 1, 3-4, and 14-15 of the protocol focus on gathering data regarding the object, or the mechanisms by which the institutionalization of engagement occurs. Questions 11-13 and 16 focus on the subjects, or those directly or indirectly related to the EEC. Subjects are key in this analysis, as they are the individual actors whose learning contributes to organizational change processes (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Dowd & Liera, 2018; Kezar, 2018). Questions 5-6 address the division of labor for the subjects, or the way work is divided for the subjects. Questions 8-10 focus on rules that guide the work of the subjects. Questions 2 and 7 focus on gathering information about the community in which the subjects conduct their work. Although specific questions are intended to focus on a particular analytical elements of CHAT, the responses to these questions also provide information about additional analytical elements. For example, the instruments (tools used to conduct engagement work) are not directly asked about in the interview protocol; yet this analytical element is identified through data analysis of responses to other interview questions. I took a similar approach to data collection and analysis for documents as with the interview data.
Data Analysis

I used a constant comparative data analysis method, a process where all data are constantly compared with emerging thematic categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2013). I used open, axial, and selective coding to analyze data, which are coding processes that are most frequently utilized in grounded theory method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). While I did utilize a constant comparative method, the order of coding was changed based on the theoretical framework utilized in this study. Although selective coding is often considered the final step of coding in grounded theory method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009), this study utilizes a theoretical framework that already has categories identified and defined. These categories are the six analytical elements of CHAT (subject, object, instruments, division of labor, rules, communities), which assist in identifying the organizational processes internal to the activity system (centralized unit for engagement). Therefore, selective coding was first used to sort data into the six analytical elements of CHAT. Once the analytical elements were coded, I continued with a standard coding process, beginning with open coding, which is a process used to explore and identify initial concepts within the data where the initial concepts are temporary and will likely change as data analysis continues (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I read through each of the data sources and identified initial themes, which were created as sub-codes underneath the six analytical elements of CHAT. After open coding, I engaged in axial coding, which is a process where coding is more intensely focused on specific categories to identify actions, contexts, strategies, and consequences of a particular category (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Throughout the open and axial coding processes, there was a constant comparative approach as the themes were iteratively developed within each of the six analytical elements of CHAT.
Data Storage and Confidentiality

The data collected for this study is stored in a secured data system through the University of Minnesota. This is an individual, password-protected, duo-authenticated data system, and only the PI and student investigator have access to this system. Any written forms of data (including, but not limited to demographic forms, consent forms, field notes, etc.) were scanned and securely saved electronically, and the paper forms were confidentially destroyed. To de-identify the data, pseudonyms and generic position titles have been assigned to each participant. Additionally, specific references to the institution or information that could identify the location of the institution have been modified to protect the site's identity.
Chapter 4: Findings

The research question for this study focuses on understanding organizational contradictions when analyzing how community engagement and diversity operate together. This is addressed by using CHAT as a theoretical framework through a qualitative case study methodology. As a reminder, there are six analytical elements specific to CHAT that represent the mediational structure of an activity system: subject, object, instruments, division of labor, rules, and communities (Dowd & Liera, 2018; Engeström, 1999, 2008; Roth & Lee, 2007). These six analytical elements represent the multiple mediations within an activity system, which provides an understanding of the interplay between and among activity system structures. The first analytical element is the subject, the individual agents or actors within the organization participating in the activity system. Second, the object, or the guiding motive of the activity system, is community engagement at the institution (e.g., defining and understanding community engagement). Third, the instruments are the cultural artifacts utilized by individual actors to conduct their work, which are both material (e.g., newsletters, websites) and symbolic (e.g., language and images) in nature. Fourth, the division of labor represents the official and unofficial roles that individuals are assigned within a given activity system. Fifth, the rules provide guidance for how to meet the requirements of community engagement. The sixth is community, and are the units and people the subjects have formal and informal relationships with while operating within the activity system. Specific to this study, the following represent the six analytical elements of CHAT:

- Subject: individuals working with or in close proximity to the Executive Community Engagement Committee (EEC).
• Object: community engagement at NSU.

• Instruments: the ways community engagement is carried out and communicated across the institution.

• Division of labor: how community engagement work is divided and assigned across NSU.

• Rules: formal and informal boundaries and expectations established to guide how subjects conduct community engaged work.

• Community: Individuals and networks that contribute to the context of engagement at NSU, such as individuals, professional groups, community partners, as well as the larger historical, geographical, and demographic context where community engagement at NSU operates.

This chapter begins with an identification of the rich historical context of New College State University (NSU). Next, following the direction of CHAT scholars (Dowd & Liera, 2018; Engeström, 1999; Lee, 2007; Yamagata-Lynch, 2007), the findings for each of the six analytical elements are reported in two phases. Phase one includes the findings for community engagement, which provides an overview of community engagement at NSU as a whole, lays a foundation for understanding how community engagement operates, and identifies how the activity is mediated within the context of the institution. The second phase separately reports how DEI is addressed within each of the six analytical elements for community engagement. This separation of DEI from community engagement provides an opportunity to identify critical contradictions among community engagement analytical elements separately from identifying critical contradictions among DEI analytical elements, and, ultimately, compare the two.
Historical Context of Engagement at NSU

In addition to understanding the overarching institutional context, it is also important to understand the historical, structural, and organizational contexts of community engagement at this particular institution to fully contextualize community engagement at NSU. Currently, the centralized unit responsible for the direction of engagement at the university is a group of faculty and staff from different disciplines, units, demographic backgrounds, and levels of experience. Higher education institutions are defined as loosely coupled (highly decentralized) organizations: “loosely coupled systems are uncoordinated, have greater differentiation among component units, and are characterized by high degrees of specialization among workers, with low predictability of future action” (Weick, 1976, p. 95). This is important to understanding how NSU functions as an organization, as there is loose authority across units, which can have different and sometimes competing beliefs and practices related to community engagement and DEI work. In loosely coupled systems, organizations are held together by broad agreements about the purposes of the organization, a purpose that was inclusive of engagement, as evident in the rich history of dedication to community engagement NSU.

Beginning the Engagement Journey (mid-1940s-early 1990s)

Since its inception, NSU has had a strong ethos of engagement. The organization was established in the mid-1940s as a center working for another educational institution in the area. The center was responsible for responding to the needs of WWII veterans in the community who expressed a need for access to educational opportunities. Within the first ten years of being established, the organization was forced to physically relocate several times before settling in the center of a major city in the state. By the mid-1950s, the center had grown into a college, the first
state college established in the area. The college’s unique connection to the surrounding community contributed to the organizational transformation from a center to a college. The college transformed, once again, into a university in the late 1960s, as the first doctoral-level program was established. In the early 1990s, under a new president with an ambitious vision, NSU began the journey into the next transformation – an engaged institution.

**University Transformation Towards an Engaged Institution (early 1990s-late 2000s)**

The president of NSU in the early 1990’s was dedicated to enhancing and supporting community engagement at NSU and was adamant that engagement could not be done through a centralized unit, an approach widely supported by faculty and staff. The president’s vision for NSU was to transform it into an engaged institution. They recognized that the institution’s ethos required a shared level of commitment to engagement, which meant engagement was everyone’s responsibility, a shared commitment that supported the individual work of people, units across the institution, and institutional initiatives to diffuse engagement. With this top-level leadership support of institutionalizing engagement, NSU chose to embed community engagement primarily throughout the undergraduate curriculum, a decision for which the institution continues to receive national acclaim. Changes to the undergraduate curriculum occurred in general education requirements, most notably the creation of a set of community-based learning (CBL) courses that are graduation requirements for all undergraduate students at NSU. This work is primarily conducted and coordinated through the senior seminar program (the program name has been changed to protect the identity of the site). This program and the curricular changes intended to institutionalize community engagement are still in place.
Choosing to embed engagement into the undergraduate curriculum also had an impact on other areas within the institution, such as the need for faculty development specific to community-based learning, to establish and strengthen reciprocal community partnerships, hiring NSU faculty and community-based instructors to teach the new required classes, and providing staff training to communicate with and guide students through the new curricular expectations. The willingness and ability of NSU to shift the institution to support and enhance a new engagement-focused undergraduate curriculum shows a deep understanding of the ways engagement must be embedded within the institution if it is to be sustained.

In the late 1990s, a new president of NSU was named. The new president recognized that even though there was not a centralized unit responsible for engagement, there was a need to attend to best practices, particularly in terms of supporting engaged research and teaching. This led to the creation of a center, referred to in this study as the Engagement Lab, in the early 2000s. The Engagement Lab focused the majority of its work on faculty development, evaluation of engagement at the institutional level, and highlighting the already-established engaged work happening across the institution. One of the most important roles the Engagement Lab played was the attention to the academic dissemination and understanding of engagement, or the scholarship of engagement, which was also identified an important component of institutionalizing engagement (Bridger & Alter, 2006; Barker, 2004; Sandmann, 2008). The scholarship of engagement focused on academic publications about the processes of engagement, which included addressing questions about how the institution was embedding engagement, the evaluation of engagement (typically different engagement programming), and lessons learned through the process of institutionalizing engagement. Their participation and leadership in the
scholarship of engagement raised the level of attention NSU received for its approach to institutionalizing engagement. This president left after about a decade, and the new president, who conceptualized engagement very differently, would ultimately shift the institution’s engagement priorities.

**Shifting Engagement Priorities (late 2000s-late 2010s)**

In the late 2000s, NSU hired a new president who was dedicated to the centrality of engagement at the university but conceptualized engagement differently than the previous presidents had envisioned. This president was particularly interested in transforming the institution into what the engagement field refers to as an anchor institution. Simplistically explained, anchor institutions are universities and colleges that participate in multi-organizational partnerships focused on large-scale changes, such as educational reform, economic development, community health, etc. (Cantor et al., 2013). The new president believed that the research profile needed to be raised at the organizational level and determined that the research responsibility belonged in the president’s office, moving research out of the provost’s portfolio and into the president’s portfolio. In addition to the decision to move the organizational responsibility of research, the president also believed that strategic partnerships were, as institutional documents report, “business and civic partners that typically involve multiple colleges and tap into a range of university assets.” In response to the newly established organization of research at NSU, an associate vice president position was created along with two assistant vice president (AVP) positions. One AVP focused on research and the other focused on strategic partnerships. The new AVP for strategic partnerships was hired to run the newly formed, what is referred to as, the Office for Research Innovation and Strategic Partnerships.
ORS, which was a centralized unit established to manage strategic partnerships and serve as the front door to engagement at NSU for these partners.

ORS was responsible for coordinating, managing, and reporting on community engagement at the institution for the partners that established NSU as an anchor institution (e.g., fortune 500 corporations, the public school system, local healthcare systems, etc.). The partnerships established and coordinated through this office were referred to as “strategic partnerships,” a concept that was not well-received by those doing engagement work at the institution, as many thought it to be counter to the ethos of engagement at the institution. Engaged faculty and staff felt that calling large corporate partnerships “strategic” implied that the work with local community organizations was not as important as the work with for-profit corporations, as Katie highlighted during the sore topic: “if we invest in an office, do we then disinvest in partnerships that need our support more than [a prominent local corporation] needs our support?”

To support the creation of ORS, the president decided to close the Engagement Lab and merge pieces of the work with another newly established office that focused on innovative learning. The work of the new innovative learning office focused on faculty development with technology in teaching, not on faculty development in engagement, as the Engagement Lab had previously been dedicated to. Even though this organizational change was referred to as a “merging” of offices, my analysis of interview and document data revealed that very little of the work focused on engaged research and teaching was retained. Sara explained that the new innovative learning office had “28 staff now and I’m the only community-based learning person” which only contributed to disconnect between her work and the work of her peers. What once
was a center with a direct reporting line to the provost with a hefty budget and a staff of highly trained, connected, and experienced community-engaged professionals was transformed into one position in an office that has a focus on innovative technology learning with an almost non-existent budget. The most drastic change, however, was that support for engagement moved from high-level administrative oversight to something that was, as Sara noted, “four levels buried under infrastructure.”

Although the Engagement Lab was not solely responsible for engagement at the institution, the structured way of bringing people together was lost once the lab was dismantled. Katie expressed that the closure of the Engagement Lab left a void in the work. Sara also commented that the combination of eliminating the Engagement Lab and distributing the staff across the university left a gap in leadership, as she described that “no one’s calling any shots.” Seeing that engaged faculty and staff were struggling with the lack of connection and support for their work, the new AVP of strategic partnerships in ORE and a dean of one of the colleges created the Community Engagement Council (CEC), approximately five years before this study was conducted. According to the council’s charter, the goal of the CEC was to “advance the wide array of community partnerships and collaborations – existing and emerging – which link [NSU] to local and regional communities as well as the state and beyond.” Shortly after the creation of the CEC, the president, who was reportedly under pressure from the board of trustees and union representatives, initiated an institution-wide strategic planning process. One of six areas identified as needing institutional attention was focused on extending leadership in community engagement. Seeing an opportunity to utilize the experience and expertise of CEC members, the co-chairs suggested that the CEC be the group to establish the strategic future of extending
leadership in community engagement. Thus, the formalized, yet unofficial, centralized unit was put in charge of a university-side strategic planning initiative.

This new purpose of the CEC was important, as it gave those who felt disenfranchised by the elimination of the Engagement Lab a new way to focus on engagement at the institution. Once the strategic planning process was underway, it was suggested to the administration that an equity lens be used to review the work submitted from each of the six areas, as noted in the strategic plan as ensuring that: “each specific element of the plan (such as vision and mission) and each initiative proposed intentionally creates a future for NSU that advances equity for historically marginalized groups.” The use of an equity lens after strategic plans were already established is an important timeline detail to highlight, as participants frequently referred to how the equity lens was utilized in the strategic plans.

Engagement in Turmoil (the late-2010s)

In the late 2010’s a new president of NSU was hired. Less than 18 months later, mere months before this study, this president was forced to resign. Document data reflects this president in a consistently negative light, often referring to the relationship between the president and NSU as a mismatch. Every single participant in this study voluntarily shared the various ways this president caused institutional destruction, and often referenced the need for recovery (both as individuals and as an institution) from the deeply felt consequences of the president’s actions. Participants used terms such as “survived this president” or “ran for cover” to describe this time period at NSU. At the time of these interviews, people were just beginning to “recuperate” from the “whirlwind.” A stark description came from a former NSU administrator who referred to the state of the university after this president’s exit as “the aftermath.”
Participants described that decisions made during this presidential term had severe and negative consequences for the institution in general, but especially for community engagement. During this president’s tenure, several high-level administrators vacated their positions (some by choice, but most were by unofficial/unverified force. Among the positions that were turned over during this presidency were the provost, the new AVP over research and partnerships, the new AVP over strategic partnerships, the AVP for research (which was quickly followed by what was described as an “implosion” of the institutional research office), and the AVP for diversity. The university was left with several administrative-level positions that were either newly filled or were open positions, limiting the historical institutional knowledge to the remaining faculty and staff remaining at NSU.

New Role for Community Engagement Council (2020- time of data collection)

After the most recent president’s departure from NSU, the only space that had retained responsibility for engagement was the CEC, which became an important centralized space for engaged faculty and staff. After completing the strategic plan, and amidst the institutional chaos, the CEC struggled to refocus their work. The 80-member group turned to a space where faculty and staff came to air frustrations, support one another, and attempt to regain stability. As agendas became unstructured, membership waned, and a lack of goals was perceived as lack of progress. Organically, and out of necessity, a small group of CEC members created a separate working group, which I refer to as the Executive Community Engagement Council (EEC), to manage and coordinate the work of the Community Engagement Council (CEC). This diverse group of people share a dedication to and belief in the transformative power of community engagement. There are eight to ten people on the EEC who represent units from across the institution.
Interestingly, consistent membership on the EEC could not be verified through document review or through interview data. While both the CEC and the EEC continue to coordinate the direction and institutional work of engagement at NSU, the EEC is the focus of this study.

*Findings for Community Engagement through CHAT Framework*

In this section, I situate community engagement structures, policies, and practices at NSU within the six analytical elements of the CHAT framework.

*Subject Analytical Element*

The first of the six analytical elements is the subject, which is represented by individuals at NSU working directly with or in close proximity to the EEC. As described at the end of chapter three, the EEC is a group of faculty and staff who represent a variety of units from across the institution and are deeply connected to how engagement operates within the university. The EEC is the centralized community engagement unit at NSU.

*Object Analytical Element*

The second analytical element is the object, or the motive behind the work of the EEC, which is community engagement at NSU. The object is understood and described by the subjects in one of two ways: as an external community-based approach, or as an internal institutional transformation-based approach. The themes identified in this element are divided according to external/community transformation and internal/institutional transformation purposes and definitions of community engagement at NSU. There are hotly debated beliefs across the institution about what “counts” as community engagement work. When the purpose of community engagement is identified as external community transformation, participants discussed the benefit to the community almost exclusively, with no identification of institutional
transformation or impact that can or must occur within an engaged university. When the institution is the focus of the transformation, discussions largely focus on how to prove community engagement is occurring, most often focused on addressing transformation via academic research outlets, such as academic publications or conference presentations.

**Object Element 1: Engagement to Transform External Communities.** Participants often discussed engagement as a mutually beneficial activity where both external communities and the institution benefited from their work together. For example, Katie described how important the idea of mutual benefit was to both the academic institution and the communities that the institutions work with. She believed her work in the senior seminar program made mutual benefit a reality:

My introduction to public engagement, or community engagement, really came through my own being welcomed into [NSU] as someone with expertise and something to share because I had worked in community-based organizations. So, the way I think about it is that [the senior seminar program] really is this opportunity that we can create and that we constitute regularly through the practices that build connections between and among institutions, you know, certainly as an academic institution and then the communities that we might decide that we're going to be in an active kind of relationship with, such that there's a reciprocal exchange of value and a mutual recognition of needs and ways that we can be in relationship with each other in possibilizing ways.

When discussing community engagement at NSU, participants also focused on the varying needs of the external community. Larry stressed the important nature of community input in university decisions, particularly when the discussion is around resource allocation. He
believed that “community engagement needs to connect existing resources to community needs. Like, we can’t answer the question of what to do or where to go if we don’t ask the community.” Similarly, Alie discussed making choices about how to partner with communities in service-learning courses, which also focused on the needs of communities:

I took a stance on totally being engaged with community. Because one, that was a value for me. And two, I guess I told myself I'm going to try to push this value and see how far it could be pushed in this particular shared [tenure] line. Given that, having survived it, I think now I'm a little bit more intentional on who I engage with in terms of like the community partners and putting like a timeline in place. Whereas, before tenure, my priority was, I guess you can say in my mind, I thought, okay, which are the most vulnerable communities, simultaneously, which was the most aligned in terms of service-learning projects that had the widest interest area of my student body that I worked with, particularly with that freshmen inquiry topic area.

Ivan similarly considered the benefit to communities through community engagement and believes educational institutions were created to serve the needs of their surrounding communities:

So, I see that as, you know, it’s great that the university model is about [we value our university/community connection] and I think it's wonderful to name it. But I see it as [it is] all institutions’ responsibility is to serve the communities within which they are embedded. By definition, that's why they were created, that's what sustains them. And so, it's both a sense of responsibility, but it's more than that, that's what institutions were designed to do. So, the first principle is to serve.
The belief that the purpose of community engagement is meant to transform external communities is also supported by how community engagement work is structured within NSU. The term community-based learning (CBL) is understood as an umbrella term for any course-, work-, contract-, or strategy-based activity that has an external community component. NSU’s approach to transforming the institution through engagement by embedding community engagement into the curriculum, at the time, was a unique approach and gathered widespread interest from the engagement field. Thus, the institution is most widely known for its course-based engagement, which simultaneously addresses community and student learning needs. Several participants proudly highlighted that the approach to engagement at NSU was grounded in community-based learning. Tom identified that his master’s program required 400 hours of work in communities of Color. Lana described one way the senior seminar program met student needs was by engaging community partners who would benefit from specific disciplinary fields. The example she provided was specific for undergraduate business students, who were tasked with developing “business plans and marketing plans for minority-run for-profits or non-profit organizations. In that course, the faculty member partners with a…different small business to help them with a business plan or marketing plan.” Scott also discussed the positive impact of CBL courses, as the courses he taught helped students see the world differently:

So right off, why do I do CBL? Because it has a significant immersion learning area, and I'm good at harvesting insights, seeing things that students don't see while they're doing them, and helping them see it for themselves as they do. This is just a strength of mine, my pedagogical style really plays to that, I'm really good on the ground, in the moment, helping students see what they sometimes see or don't see or giving you permission to see
the things that they think they might be seeing it's a really good strength of mine. Whether it's international or local, but much more important to me is…so that's good, plays to my strengths.

There is disagreement within the group of participants who focus on community-based benefits about what types of experiences should be considered community engagement. One side argues that engagement is an inclusive endeavor and, therefore, consider community engagement to be work that includes any type of work that occurs in or with the community. Melissa highlighted several initiatives that she considered community engagement at NSU. These activities include the redesign of the undergraduate curriculum, the development of the senior seminar program, formal connections with large public and private organizations (such as the education system, local government, healthcare providers, etc.), student employment, practicums or internships, and research projects involving external communities.

The other side argues that engagement ought to address equity and social justice issues that negatively impact communities. Sara shared a conversation she had with a colleague about what ought to be included in community-based learning experiences:

[My colleague] and I have had this conversation. She asked me if I think all community-based learning should have social justice as an orientation, and I said yes. She was like, I don’t agree with that. And that’s where we start to blur into workplace experiences she counts in that realm. There are very valid projects students can do with community organizations that are experiential that might not have social justice at the heart of them. And maybe I’m okay with that. Although, I think that there’s a way to think about the implications of your work no matter what it is. But for this thing that we’re co-designing
with a community partner, I think, is unethical for us to be coming at it without that lens of, what does this mean for our communities of Color? What does it mean for the partner to have a voice in what we’re doing? What does it mean for students to have their identity recognized as they’re intersecting with this community? Whether its boundary crossing or going back to their own home, like, that all needs to be considered.

**Object Element 2: Engagement to Transform the Institution.** Participants often discussed their understanding of engagement as being on two opposing ends of a spectrum: community transformation at one end, and institutional transformation at the other. When institutional transformation is the purpose, participants focus their discussions on the academic arm of community engagement, often referred to as the scholarship of engagement (Ramaley, 1996, 2002, 2009; Sandmann, 2008; Sandmann et al., 2008; Simpson, 2016). This group of participants also defined community engagement in terms of how engagement is connected to other institutional work, both formally and informally. For example, the CEC is the unit charged with identifying the future agenda of community engagement at the institution. Participants frequently identified the connection between the CEC and the strategic plan as a transformational approach to engagement. Jared argued that connecting the CEC with the strategic plan provided a “value-added to the work already being done” and allowed engagement to operate “at the grassroots level and highlight the work already being done, without interfering” with the work engaged scholars were doing.

Community engagement is also understood here as requiring navigation of institutional practices and structures that act as barriers to community engagement. Rachel discussed the idea
that as an internal NSU employee, it was her responsibility to point out where and how institutional practice acts as a barrier to community engagement:

So, when I find something that is a barrier, I advocate to change it and if I can frame it right, people generally hear it…I can't tell you how many infrastructure barriers I run into on a daily basis. And it's our job to advocate for it, and people don't see where the barriers are, they don't see that lack of transparency.

**Object Element 3: Boundary-Spanners between Community and University.** While external community transformation and internal institutional transformation are the most frequently discussed understandings of community engagement, another less frequent understanding was introduced by two of the participants; participants who consider themselves boundary-spanners, or individuals who straddle the community and the university worlds (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Community engagement with a focus on boundary-spanning roles allowed these two participants to identify and work within their dual ability to influence the transformation of both the community and the institution. Katie described her approach to community engagement as straddling two worlds, particularly in a classroom setting. She stated:

I want to do this work in as respectful a way as possible so that all the parties involved are freely in choice about participating, getting something out of the endeavor, bringing something to the endeavor that we’re coming from a strengths-approach and, you know, an idea that we all have gifts to bring to this situation and we’re all going to learn and grow and change together. So that’s really how I think about what engagement is. Like, sort of, really showing up on every side of that equation, bringing what we have to bear on generating something new together that benefits us all in our varying ways.
Rachel similarly described being in a boundary-spanning role as standing on a bridge between the university and the community:

I still define myself as a community organizer and an activist, and here I am in one of the most conservative institutions and have been over two different jobs for 30 years. Well, then, isn’t it the craft that we need to, the muscle we need to develop, the practice we need to get good at is being bridge tenders. I really do define myself as a bridge tender. And I completely understand my obligation to the integrity and financial viability of the university. But I also completely understand my obligation to the mission integrity of the university. And nothing I do, or let’s turn it around; everything I do is guided by a commitment to serve the community and to listen to and be guided by what the community wants.

Rachel also articulated her sense of responsibility to both the institution and to the community as work moves forward to transform both:

And both [the community and the university] have missions they want to fulfill. I work at an institution that says [we value our university/community connection], and it's my job to come back and say, if we are committed to race equity, it's my job to come back and say here's a way you can fulfill your mission better.

This section identified three overarching ways community engagement is understood at NSU. Most participants considered the primary purpose of community engagement to be work that aims to transform communities. Other participants considered the primary purpose to be work that aims to transform institutions. A profound, yet not popular, third way of understanding community engagement was identified as boundary-spanning and represents the intersection of
community and institutional transformation. The identification of the ways community engagement is understood at NSU (the object) provides an important context to what and how participants (the subjects) are connected to community engagement.

**Instruments Analytical Element**

The third analytical element is instruments, which are the cultural artifacts used to conduct and communicate community engagement at NSU. The five instruments identified that were used to describe, communicate, and understand community engagement work at NSU are the institution’s motto, academic dissemination, measurement, strategic plan, and individual collaboration.

**Instrument Element 1: Institution’s Motto.** For anonymity purposes, the exact motto is not shared in this study, as it may expose the identity of the case study site. Any direct reference to the motto throughout this study will be replaced with “[we value our university/community connection].” Generally speaking, the NSU motto focuses on the university's connection to the community and is prominently displayed in a public space for both the university and the community to see. Every participant referenced the institution’s motto multiple times throughout the interviews. This motto represents what Rachel called “the ethos of engagement” at the institution. As an instrument, the motto communicates the importance of engagement within the institution, and all participants agreed that the prominence of and meaning behind their motto is both an internal and an external indicator of NSU’s dedication to being an engaged institution, particularly within the local area. Katie described a connection between the institution’s motto and the university’s history of engaging the local community:
We were founded after World War II to serve GIs and, returning GIs, and to serve—we have an urban engagement mission. We exist to lift up and elevate and educate and build the capacity of people in the metropolitan area and in the case of my department, statewide.

Conrado also believed that the motto sent a strong message about the institution’s dedication to engagement:

If you are applying for a job at [NSU], and you walk in, and you see these big letters that say [we value our university/community connection]…And if you're not into that, it's a good time for you to turn around and go someplace else. So that starts defining engagement. You should not be surprised when you apply for a job at a place where it says [we value our university/community connection], then you should know that you're going to be engaged.

Similarly, Alie referenced the institution’s motto as playing a role in her decision to work at NSU:

[NSU] was built upon, I guess you could say, built upon serving our veterans. We were a small community college and then it grew into a state university. And so, with that, we have a motto [we value our university/community connection], hence why I was really attracted to this job 10-11 years ago.

**Instrument Element 2: Academic Dissemination.** The most frequently identified instrument to communicate engagement is academic dissemination, which includes higher education-specific ways of communicating information, such as publication, conference presentations, and highlighting the work of engaged researchers. The scholarship of engagement
is considered to be any academic endeavor that highlights how NSU is utilizing engagement to meet institutional goals. Scott explained the leadership role NSU played in documenting how to institutionalize engagement: “[NSU] was on the forefront, working through and creating the kind of protocols, and literature, and scholarships around how not to blow it. And, also, on the good side, is how to make it sing.” Jared also asserted that there was a difference between engaged scholarship and scholarship of engagement. He argued that, at the institutional level, the focus must be on the scholarship of engagement, which is “how we will transform this institution.” In addition to actively documenting engagement, Jared also stressed the important role publication played when communicating with the academic community.

Some participants did not identify themselves or their work within the academic realm. Rachel found it challenging to connect herself, her work, and her center to a rigid academic structure when communicating about her community engagement work. She shared:

It turns out what they mean by partnership is one-directional, and it turns out what they mean by partnership is primarily academic. Like, things like [senior seminar], things that [NSU] has a right to be very proud of like [senior seminar], career advising, community engagement in the classroom. So, it's like the work that I do wasn't really even kind of on their radar.

Later, she directly stated that “my area is not so much the academic, it's in research and it's also in professional education.”

Overall, academic dissemination focused on traditional approaches to sharing information in higher education, such as publication, conference presentations, and formal documentation of the impact of community engagement on the institution. Although academic dissemination was
discussed in a variety of ways, the most frequent form of academic dissemination identified was coursework and curriculum. Courses, such as CBL courses, were identified as the way NSU shows that engagement is embedded in the university. As described earlier, CBL at NSU is considered any course that has a community component connected to that course. The university shows great public support and admiration for the senior seminar program, which is considered a successful representation of how to embed engagement in curriculum. The program is highly respected and supported across the institution. Lana stated, “I cannot tell you the amount of times in a month I hear we’re the ‘crowning jewel’ of the institution because we have some notoriety, and have, I think, earned the respect of colleagues in the country for the work that we’re doing.”

Participants had different levels of direct experience with CBL courses, yet every participant identified the senior seminar program as one of the central ways the university made successful changes to as they work to become an engaged institution, which had a big impact on student development. Conrado described that all parties involved with the senior seminar program mutually benefited from the program. He enthusiastically stated, “[the senior seminar] is a way to have faculty who want to do [senior seminar], and have students who need to do [senior seminar], and communities who see the opportunity to engage with the university to solve a community problem.” Rachel also identified the senior seminar program as an important signifier that NSU is an engaged institution:

Community engagement in the educational setting means that almost everyone at [NSU] in order to graduate as an undergraduate, you have to have a senior seminar. So, we have an existing relationship with people in the community, but I want to underscore it’s
reciprocal. It's not just can we put a student with you and hope it works out. It's reciprocal. There's a lot of support for it.

In addition to those involved with the day-to-day operation of the senior seminar program, several others echo the sentiment that the program is highly effective and respected across the university. Ivan proudly talked about the number of students impacted by their participation in senior seminar courses: “We have dozens and dozens of [senior seminars] every quarter that our students participate in.” Conrado also pointed to the senior seminar program as proof that the institution and the community are transformed as a result of engagement:

I’ll give you a few examples where you see community engagement being operationalized. One of them is the capstone. So, every student who comes here has to do a [senior seminar], which is six credits, before they graduate, where three faculty and a community organization have come together and they have identified a community problem. Then, between the faculty, their community, and then students who sign up for their capstone, they work on that community problem.

Jared similarly highlighted the senior seminar program as an example of how the institution has transformed: “here at [NSU], students are required to take [general education], which requires a senior seminar course with a [community engaged learning] requirement.”

Courses, specifically those connected to the senior seminar program, are identified by participants as effective instruments that communicate community engagement at the university.

**Instrument Element 3: Measurement.** As an instrument, measurement refers specifically to data needs and data systems necessary to store, track, and analyze engagement work at the institutional level. The importance of accessing accurate data was a substantial
concern across interviews. Tom made it clear that measurement is “the number one concern” related to engagement at NSU. Sara shared Tom’s perspective on the importance of access to data, and the difficulty she experienced without data:

When I got here, things felt weird. Why can’t I, like, where’s my database of partners? Where’s my data anything? Where’s the infrastructure? And the truth is I had none. I think because of the bad blood of things, or people may have withheld information, or maybe didn’t think to share it. I don’t know. I would like to think that people didn’t purposely try to manipulate, but I think that both sides had information that I needed. It took me three to four years for them to be like, “oh, you don’t have those files?” Like, [long sigh], really?!

Sara also expressed deep concern about the misrepresentation of the institutional impact that CBL courses had on undergraduate education. She argued:

I get it, everybody spins. I get that. I’m just saying that can we, in a room where there’s like five of us that care about this work, say that this isn’t how we want to operate? We know why we’ve done it; we’re not judging the past. We’re thinking about the future. Like, what can we do to move forward with some data integrity in mind? To actually know what’s happening so that we can actually assess is it doing what we think it’s doing for our students and our community partners?

Similarly, Katie stressed the importance of data to show engagement work outcomes within higher education institutions. She stated, “we lack an ability to track the impacts of our efforts. We lack the investments that would really allow us to build on the legacy that we have.”
Even though measurement was identified as an important component of understanding the impact of community engagement work, some participants were skeptical of the intent behind measuring community engagement. Anita expressed concern about how her data was going to be used by the institution:

The idea that I’m just going to put my data into their stuff without significant oversight, without them understanding what matters, particularly about racial equity, is really tough. And so, you run into those tensions, and you run into faculty who just really don’t get it. So, the database thing makes me very wary of what we do. You know, I get at the same time it’s helpful. Just concerning.

**Instrument Element 4: Strategic Plan.** The NSU strategic plan was released in an almost 20-page, colorful, 8x11-sized magazine with the title of the strategic plan prominently displayed across the top. The institution-wide strategic plan was centered on the notion that NSU will use institutional knowledge production as a means to “advance community well-being.” As an instrument, strategic planning is an important and very public way that community engagement is shared, and formally prioritized, at the institution. This formal strategic planning process occurred in 2015. The CEC considered the strategic planning process as an opportunity to align their work with the strategic plan of the institution. Jared noted that “[the CEC] knew we were well-positioned to lead the strategic planning process around engagement.” Through their involvement with the institution’s strategic plan, the president also argued that the CEC “could add some wisdom and take all the ideas around engagement and bring them down to, you know, five or ten ideas that you could implement and think through what we would need to move that agenda forward.”
Although the president stressed the important role the CEC played in embedding engagement into the institution, participants identified that the strategic plan was flawed from the beginning. Faculty and staff both believed that the strategic plan was a result of internal and external pressure on the then-president to identify institutional goals. Anita described that the strategic plan did not necessarily occur because the institution was looking to revisit their goals:

I think it’s pretty common knowledge that there were issues around faculty governance and [the president] was like, okay, well, I guess we’ll have to do a strategic planning process, but only because we’re forced to because the union’s making us do it. So [NSU administrators] initiated a strategic planning process. The council, you know, while to my knowledge, not at the inception of the group, but shortly after, became involved with the strategic plan.

Anita was also concerned that there was inadequate thought and resources put into the work that was required to engage in a strategic planning process:

Yeah, the strategic plan, overall, had no budget connected to the implementation of strategic plan elements. Or people, in particular with our engagement pillar, attached as being responsible for implementing the strategic plan. And then the president who hosted that process left the institution. It was dead once the new president came in.

The strategic planning process, to some participants, represented an intentional way to facilitate institutional transformation via community engagement. Others saw it as a symbolic gesture with no real meaning or power behind it.

**Instrument Element 5: Individual Collaboration.** Individual collaboration in community engagement was identified as engaged individuals who are working across
disciplines and units to further the engagement agenda. The collaborative nature of the senior seminar program, as described by Lana, occurs as a result of the interdisciplinary structure of the program:

This is an example where you see this front and center, students who are interdisciplinary. They form teams and their task is to figure out how to move something within the community. They write grants. They do needs assessments. They work with other students in schools. They support nonprofit initiatives. But the goal is that they’re working in an interdisciplinary fashion with a community partner.

For other participants collaboration was a way to identify where staff could have the most institutional impact. Rachel stressed that having a connection with other engaged practitioners across the institution was important to furthering engagement within NSU:

A group of us who do the kind of work I do, like one who works on gentrification and another who works on something else, so a couple of us got together and went, well, we’re just going to make ourselves a subcommittee. So, we formed ourselves a subcommittee…and we identified all the places the infrastructure was not in alignment with our work.

Overall, participants believed that the connections created while collaborating in engagement work was just as important as the engagement work itself.

In summary, this section describes the instruments used to conduct and communicate community engagement at NSU. These include a focus on academic dissemination, coursework in particular, unanticipated barriers that present inequities across the institution, the important role measurement plays in continuing community at the institution, the role the strategic planning
process played in embedding engagement across the institution, and the importance of cross-unit collaboration to sustain and enhance community engagement.

**Division of Labor Analytical Element**

The fourth analytical element is division of labor, or how the work of community engagement is divided at NSU. The three themes identified in this section provide an understanding of the structure of community engagement at NSU, tenure/tenure track faculty roles associated with community engagement, and the leadership structure specific to community engagement. Before discussing the structure of engagement at NSU, an overview of the overall structure of the institution will be helpful to further understand the context of the university.

NSU is a public state university with a board of trustees at the highest level of the organization who are responsible for ensuring the mission of the university is being achieved. Under the board is the president of the university, who is responsible for the academic and administrative functions of the institution. Supporting the president in achieving institutional goals are a group of 10 high-level administrators who are each responsible for a different function of the university, which includes: enrollment management, academic affairs, technology, chief of staff, research and graduate studies, diversity and inclusion, finance, athletics, institutional research, and general counsel. For the purposes of this study, I will focus mainly on the area of academic affairs, where the majority of community engagement work occurs at NSU. Led by the provost, there are 10 individual colleges across the university that house different areas of study (e.g., education, business, liberal arts, etc.). These 10 individual colleges are divided into departments, which are specific fields of study within the larger college context (e.g., teacher education in education, accounting in business, psychology in liberal arts,
Within departments reside T/TT faculty, non-T/TT faculty, and staff, with responsibility for pieces of the overarching mission of the university. These responsibilities are divided by job categories and descriptions. It is important to point out that T/TT faculty are awarded tenure from the institution, but tenure is determined by work conducted in their individual departments. There is collaboration across the institution, as illustrated in the instruments section, but, as a whole, the institution is decentralized, and different units tend to operate independently.

**Division of Labor Element 1: Structure of Community Engagement.** As noted in the method section, community engagement at NSU does not organizationally sit in any single administrative unit, a decision reflected in the institutional ethos that indicates engagement is the responsibility of every unit and every person across campus. As a result, community engagement occurs in individual units or departments, and interdisciplinary collaboration must be intentional, as there is no centralized space for collaboration to organically occur. To address the lack of a centralized space, the CEC is, by design, interdisciplinary and operates across different departments. The work of the CEC and the EEC continue to operate as ad-hoc groups of the willing. Interviews and document analysis indicate the most frequently discussed topic within the analytical element division of labor within community engagement is the rewards and expectations for T/TT faculty.

**Division of Labor Element 2: The Role of Faculty.** Participants and institutional documents indicate that T/TT faculty are expected to teach five classes per academic year (September through May), while non-T/TT faculty teaching loads vary based on the requirements of their individual job responsibilities. At NSU there are three types of faculty. Instructional faculty are professional, full-time staff hired to teach in a classroom and who tend
to be on continuous contract appointments. Contingent or adjunct faculty are contracted term-by-term and only temporarily work for NSU. T/TT faculty are hired into permanent positions and are responsible for teaching, research, and service. Tenured faculty are permanent institutional employees, and tenure track faculty work towards gaining one of these coveted positions. Instructional and contingent faculty are frequently responsible for teaching undergraduate students, while T/TT faculty tend to work with graduate students. T/TT faculty are the only faculty group who can be “bought out” of teaching requirements to fulfill other university responsibilities, such as research opportunities or administrative appointments (meaning a portion of their salary can be paid outside of the typical departmental structure).

In addition to faculty roles, there are also professional staff who are responsible for a variety of community engagement work across the institution. Job descriptions and institutional needs dictate the division of labor for professional staff, who do not often have teaching or research responsibilities. Instead, their responsibilities range from running research centers, to directing curricular programming, to tracking CBL courses, to providing development opportunities for faculty, and so much more.

The division of labor based on different types of faculty roles is the most frequently discussed way community engagement work is divided at NSU. The institution tends to be structured around the needs and expectations of T/TT faculty, as is common within higher education institutions. Simplistically, the institution is structured, and labor is divided accordingly, to teach and advise students, engage in research and academic dissemination, and provide institutional service to NSU. T/TT faculty are expected to conduct research and
disseminate research findings, often through production of traditional academic outlets (i.e., peer-reviewed journals, books, conferences, etc.).

Becoming increasingly common practice among higher education institutions, NSU explicitly supports a community-engaged research agenda for T/TT faculty via the institutional promotion and tenure guidelines. Throughout traditional P&T guidelines, engagement is often referred to and considered to be “community outreach” and is separate from research as an area of responsibility for faculty. At NSU, when addressing the evaluation of scholarship, the P&T guidelines state:

Scholarly accomplishments in the areas of research, teaching, and community outreach (see E.2.4) all enter into the evaluation of faculty performance. Scholarly profiles will vary depending on individual faculty members’ areas of emphasis. The weight to be given factors relevant to the determination of promotion, tenure, and merit necessarily varies with the individual faculty member’s assigned role and from one academic field to another. However, one should recognize that research, teaching, and community outreach often overlap. P&T guidelines also frequently recognize overlap between research, teaching, and community outreach, and faculty work needs to be evaluated in that faculty member’s context. Providing an explicit inclusion of engaged scholarship:

Faculty engaged in community outreach can make a difference in their communities and beyond by defining or resolving relevant social problems or issues, by facilitating organizational development, by improving existing practices or programs, and by enriching the cultural life of the community. Scholars should widely disseminate the
knowledge gained in a community based project in order to share its significance with those who do not benefit directly from the project.

The P&T guidelines also articulate the criteria for evaluating the quality and significance of community-engaged research:

Faculty and departments should evaluate a faculty member’s community outreach accomplishments creatively and thoughtfully. Contributions to knowledge developed through community outreach should be judged using the criteria for quality and significance of scholarship.

For Anita, this explicit support of a community-engaged research agenda encouraged her to pursue a T/TT faculty line at NSU:

Why I came to [NSU] was that there was actually a standard in the tenure package about activist scholarship and engagement, or engaged scholarship, or whatever they called it. And so, it was in the tenure profile to be the kind of scholar that I am; someone who was out there working with community, doing community-based research, doing community-based activism.

Based on the P&T guidelines, NSU outwardly supports engaged research, but Alie described conflicting expectations around what engaged research was and how it “counted” during her tenure process:

Thinking back on the people who were part of the promotion and tenure committee, they were not anyone who knew the undergraduate world. They only knew [my field], and they only knew graduate school. So, their expectation to be a scholar was just, was that their whole expectation around community-based was also very interesting. It’s not
written, like, there’s no document that sorta makes it explicit on what community-based or community engaged is. [The P&T committee] did appreciate wanting all types of scholars, but I guess when it came down to making it count and making it validated – very challenging. Layer that with a lot of mistrust from communities of Color in the region. So, in short, it’s been challenging, even up to the point of receiving tenure and post tenure.

NSU’s division of labor is largely based on job categories, which are, generally speaking, T/TT faculty, instructors, adjunct instructors, and staff who are responsible for various tasks across the organization. This division of labor is also determined by the P&T guidelines that explicitly support engaged scholarship that extends across research, teaching, and outreach. While the inclusion of engaged research helped recruit engaged faculty, there continues to be a disconnect between the inclusive policy and adequate support to practice those inclusive policies.

**Division of Labor Element 3: Leadership and Organizational Structure of Engagement.** Leadership and structure were identified, and often discussed jointly, as important problems for NSU to solve. There was a lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities, challenges in identifying leaders of community engagement initiatives, and a lack of larger institutional goals to align with community engagement work. Several participants noted that there is a lack of clarity about who is in charge of engagement at the institution and where community engagement should organizationally reside at NSU. Melissa argued that regardless of anything else, “someone needs to be responsible for this agenda.” Sara agreed that there needed to be oversight of engagement, yet she was also concerned about where community engagement needed to sit organizationally. She articulated that the responsibility for community engagement
used to be at a high level within the organization, but had recently been moved under the office she was in, which “has like 28 staff now, and I’m the only community-based learning person. There’s an executive director role, then an assistant director, and then me. So, engagement went from having a vice provost to four levels buried under infrastructure.”

Like Sara and Melissa, Ivan was also concerned about who was responsible for community engagement, and had very distinct beliefs about the role faculty played in leading the community engagement agenda at NSU:

I think faculty ought to play a significant role. And they ought to be included. Whether or not they should be leading that, I would say unless that’s their area of scholarship, I would say that’s not necessarily, it’s not theirs to lead. It’s theirs to inform. It’s theirs to shape. It’s theirs to even move. But it’s not theirs to lead. Instead, there has to be some superordinate structure within the organization whose role and responsibility it is to lead that work. You would hope that that’s connected to that same kind of superordinate structure that other institutions that are engaged in doing this effort. So, I see faculty playing, I think, a really critical role, but it is not theirs to lead.

The lack of clear roles and responsibilities for community engagement makes work difficult for many participants to understand where they fit, as lines are blurred, and lanes are not clear. Sara, after four years in her position, did not have clarity about what she was ultimately responsible for, what the institutional community engagement agenda was, or how her work aligned with that larger agenda:

I’m in a different space than this institution in terms of what do I mean and what am I trying to cultivate, and there’s tension there of like, what’s my position supposed to be
responsible for? And what am I training faculty to do? Because the institution doesn’t subscribe to the term “service-learning” and is hesitant to even say this is a particular thing that we want, not necessarily all these other things. They want all of it.

Larry was similarly concerned about the lack of clarity around leadership over engagement at the institution, as he questioned how the work will be attended to: “There are questions about how to maintain things like our Carnegie [community engaged classification], or do we keep doing the national-level work we’re known for in this current structure? Like, someone needs to report on our engagement activity.”

Rachel identified that the decentralized nature at NSU makes it difficult to conduct community engagement that requires working across institutional units (i.e., human resources, research office, finance office, etc.):

We want to have some better clarity for people you want to do this work, and you don’t want them wrapped up in knots trying to understand administrator stuff, but because the one office can only advise on what they do and the other office can only advise on what they do, there’s nobody who can really give a new PI or new faculty member information.

The lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities for community engagement at the institution also created concern about the workload expectations for those involved with the CEC and EEC. Tom was concerned about how membership on the council is determined: “Deans nominate someone to serve on the committee, so all colleges are represented, but the members may not choose to be on the committee.” Larry was similarly concerned about the workload required of being a member of the CEC:
Serving on the [CEC] is not in everyone’s portfolio, but they’re being asked to do the work. Take me for example. I’ve been asked to add this work to my portfolio to help maintain the work, and, but [laughs], I have a department to run!

Ultimately, there is widespread institutional support for community engagement, but it remains the responsibility of the individual and their job expectations. Participants, regardless of the type of role they held within the institution, expressed frustration with the lack of clarity around who is responsible for moving the engagement agenda forward, and identified the lack of clarity around leadership and organizational structure over community engagement as barriers to being success.

The division of labor analytical elements for community engagement are comprised of three themes: the structure of community engagement at NSU, the roles of T/TT faculty specific to community engagement, and the leadership structure surrounding community engagement. Overall, the division of labor is largely driven by the needs and expectations specific to tenure/tenure track faculty, which is upheld by the organizational and leadership structures of community engagement at NSU.

**Rules Analytical Element**

The fourth analytical element is rules, which are policies, processes, and practices that direct or dictate community engagement. The findings within this analytical element are most often discussed in terms of identifying barriers to community engagement. Rules that provide support for community engagement were not discussed by participants. Three themes have been identified in the rules analytical element: academic culture, mutual benefit, and the role of efficiency.
Rules Element 1: Academic Culture. Academic culture at NSU, like in most higher education institutions, was identified as having a traditional approach to academic research, but includes engaged research in the tenure code for T/TT faculty. Although Anita chose to pursue tenure at NSU because of the inclusion of engaged research in the tenure code, she was highly critical of the expectations of her as an engaged faculty member. She expressed frustration with the traditional approach expected of T/TT faculty:

So, I should say that like when I think about like the barriers, that's very much been like traditional academia. And I think that those still come at a cost because, you know, I really need, especially for the center to be successful, we're a soft money center, if we're going to be successful, that is big grants. That is responding to [the senator] wanting to talk to me even though it's going to be a bill that may or may not go anywhere, right. That's the game. And that means I have to get publications out. And I have to apply for big money.

As a recently tenured engaged scholar, Alie described her experience receiving mixed messages about her engaged research agenda: “I think they do lip service, they say yes, we support. But when it comes down to the nitty gritty and really counting [engaged research] as one's promotion and tenure, there's quite a bit of tension around that.”

In addition to the expectations for faculty around research and funding, Anita also described the difficulty engaged faculty have in meeting teaching expectations, particularly in a quarter system:

We teach in my program five classes a year on the quarter system. So that's a 2-2-1 or a 1-2-2, whatever, however you arrange it. And it's brutal. The quarter system is brutal. I
was at a university where we were on quarters, lived through the transition to what became trimesters, I can say unequivocally trimesters and semesters are better than quarters. They're just less exhausting. And so, so that kind of rev up and come down and the intensity of changing courses, makes it very hard to maintain a community engagement profile. I'm exhausted at different times, just the general academic calendar is weird because you don't get to go on vacation during the summer if you're doing community engagement work. I can take a step back, but I still have to go to regular meetings. And so, other academics are like why are you working here in the summer, and I'm like because I do community work and it doesn't stop on June 15 – but my contract ends.

As participants describe the academic culture at NSU does not provide adequate support or structure to support engaged T/TT faculty in their research. The traditional structure of academia, such as the academic calendar or the teaching schedule, has created barriers for engaged scholars by not considering the diversity of approaches necessary to engage with the community.

**Rules Element 2: Mutual Benefit.** Establishing trusting and reciprocal relationships is identified as a requirement of community engagement and is often referred to as mutual benefit. Participants believed mutually beneficial partnerships must have a high level of trust, honesty, and integrity. Ivan stressed that trust is foundational in any partnership, and a lack of trust negatively impacts the work that is possible through engagement:

Trust can remove barriers because then you can lower your guard. When you don't have trust, you waste energy watching out. When somebody does something that you think oh
wow, I didn't think they would do something like that, especially without checking with me or talking to me, or, you know, if we come together we probably could have come up with an arrangement. But when that trust is lost, then you have to constantly keep an eye on things, and that takes the fun out of it. It wastes energy that you could have been concentrating on trying to get something done. Now you're constantly watching out for what would happen. What is going to be said when I leave this room? Who's going to come around and take staff? I think that's a big one. That requires people to be honest and genuine.

Conrado also believed that the only way community engagement could be successful is through trust and integrity of partnerships. He described an experience he had connecting a potential funder to his community partners, which was not common practice:

I told the university foundation guy I want to have the funder meet with our partners. He said, yeah that's fine we can do that. Then I said that I don't want to be in the room and I don't want you to be in the room, and he got really nervous and asked what if they say something bad about [NSU]? If they say something about [NSU], then they say something about [NSU]. We can't help it. It is what it is. If they trust me, I need to be able to trust them, and whatever they say is probably true. And if it's not true, that's what they're thinking is true.

Katie also believed that to work in deep partnerships with communities, establishing mutual benefit was absolutely necessary:

I want to do this work in as respectful a way as possible, so that all the parties involved are freely in choice about participating, getting something out of the endeavor, bringing
something to the endeavor. That we're coming from a strengths approach and, you know, the idea that we all have gifts to bring to this situation and we're all going to learn and grow and change together. So that's really how I think about what engagement is, is like sort of really showing up on every side of that equation, bringing what we have to bear on generating something new together that benefits us all in our varying ways.

As a rule, mutual benefit requires that partnerships be grounded in trust, integrity, and honesty. The participants believed that mutual benefit was required in community engagement, both their work and the work of NSU, and frequently discussed the need to ensure the community would benefit from the work and the partnership.

**Rules Element 3: Efficiency.** The rules around efficiency were also presented as an indirect way of governing community engagement work at the institution. Efficiency was only addressed directly by one participant, so it is not a commonly identified theme. However, the notion that efficiency creates rules that pose barriers to community engagement was a novel way to address barriers to community engagement and it warranted including it in the findings. Katie stressed the negative effects the need for efficiency has on real community engagement work:

So much faculty support programming – faculty development work – often gets predicated on this, you know, learn how to do good community engagement in this one and a half hour webinar. And, you know, you’re at a conference and people want to know, where’s the handout? There are things we can say about [engagement], and we do put them on a thing called a handout. But none of that can effectively shortcut the work of being a human being and attempting to work in respectful, mutually beneficial ways with other human beings. And that cannot be, that can't be short-cut...my sense is that
there remains this persistent idea that we can engineer engagement work such that the messy stuff of relationships doesn't have to happen, or how do we make it more efficient, or more, you know, sort of effective. How do we meet less? How do we have to have fewer conversations? How can we, you know [long pause] and I'm just like, that not only misses the point but that's counterproductive. The point of it is to be, you know, in fully flowering relationships with each other so that we can do that work of making sure that our reciprocal needs are getting met. If we're really always looking to make something more efficient and more productive, that says that – those are sort of a capitalist version of what's valuable is, you know, time is money, so we better like, move it along.

Katie also argued against the notion that engagement ought to generate monetary resources for the institution, which is an important viewpoint to consider when looking at unspoken rules about the connection between engagement and the generation of money. This can be seen in our discussion about who was considered a “strategic partner” who would have more streamlined access to the university. Strategic partners, in this instance, were considered corporations or organizations that had the potential to contribute to the financial health of the institution rather than the long-standing community partnership work necessary to transform the institution. This represents a substantial shift in the ethos of engagement at NSU, as community partnerships were identified as core to how subjects define and understand community engagement. The term “strategic partners” was not well-received by individuals at NSU. Katie, for instance, passionately expressed her thoughts about the implications that come with determining who is or is not a “strategic partner” at NSU:
Okay, we're going to invest in this [Office of Research Innovation and Strategic Partnerships]. We're going to make it this showpiece, and we're going to highlight all of those shiny sort of partnerships that serve business students and engineering students. And then students in [gender studies] who are working with survivors of sexual assault, not so much. Let's, like, how do we talk about that? Like, that's not strategic. We want you to provide service like that but that doesn't actually, it’s not meaningful in some sort of way that can be monetized. There's not an argument to be made about how that, you know, makes our community more livable in the capitalist sense of that term.

In sum, the rules that impact community engagement reflect the larger academic culture at NSU, such as P&T guidelines and traditional models of academic work, as well as the importance of partnering for mutual benefit and establishing trusting relationships. Although not discussed frequently, the notion of efficiency was identified as antithetical to community engagement, yet the institution continually approaches community engagement in terms of efficiencies and monetization.

**Community Analytical Element**

The fifth analytical element is community, or the context of where community engagement work is being done. Participants discussed the community analytical element as being external and internal. The external community was identified as organizations and individual community members that operate outside the institution, such as academic associations, formal professional associations, individuals working or living in communities that participants are connected to, and the larger geographic location of the city. The internal community was identified as faculty, staff, and students operating primarily inside the institution.
Community Element 1: External Community. Four communities were identified as creating important contextual understanding for external communities: academic associations, formal professional organizations, individuals working or living in communities that participants are connected to, and the larger geographic location of the city.

Academic associations are considered external organizations that individuals at NSU conduct scholarly and engagement-specific work with. The associations are often discussed in terms of spaces where individual engagement work is disseminated. Jared noted that the Coalition for Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) was “an important venue for [NSU] to invest in and connect with.” Conrado similarly noted an important association that has propelled his individual engagement work:

Take the [sports medicine organization]. There is a section on knee replacement, there’s a section on Olympic sports medicine, there’s epidemiology, there’s, you know, this over here. And then there’s where we intersect. It’s usually like five or ten of us, and that’s research, and I don’t get that anywhere else but when I go to [this professional sports medicine organization].

National organizations that informed local decisions were also identified as important communities for participants. Lana, for example, cited a specific external organization that NSU follows closely to inform best practices around student success in liberal education requirements. She stated, “It’s a lot like the AAC&U model for general education. They have students taking pathways. So, sustainability would be a pathway that you could take. So, you take those courses, then you come to your senior capstone.”
The second external community, professional organizations, was identified as an external community that is distinctly different from academic associations. Academic associations are professional organizations external to NSU that operate nationally. Professional organizations are also considered to be organizations that are external to NSU, but are also active and direct localized partners in NSU engagement work. In other words, academic associations are geared towards individual relationships with a specialized associations, whereas professional organizations represent distinct partnerships between NSU and the external community. Ivan described these types of organizations as large-scale work with a local impact: “[it] could be the researchers working with the [city] police department, the trainers within the city of [name removed], the folks at United Way, the folks that I work with in the school districts. I think they are all our partners.”

The third community is identified as individuals within communities that are connected to the participants. These community members were identified as support systems for participants. Rachel articulated her appreciation for her external community connections and stressed the role they played in her success:

I am deeply indebted to my mentors and colleagues out in the community. You know, part of your topic is about equity. Universities are inherently white spaces and arguably exist to reinforce white supremacist culture. So, I can’t even conduct my own self professionally…everything I’ve learned has been drummed into my hard little head by a mentor or activist in the community. So, I depend a great deal and follow the lead of activists in the community, whether it’s race equity, which is today’s topic, or my colleagues in child welfare.
Anita similarly addressed the importance of the external community in her work. She shared that she “had to schedule monthly meetups with people, particularly people of Color…at the joint Office of Homeless Services. We have a standing monthly meeting because we always seem to be checking in. I’m trying to hold time for people.” Conrado also discussed his relationship with individuals doing their own engagement work in the external community, and highlighted the ways their engagement work was connected:

I work with the Latino community and that’s a separate group. Very, again, interdisciplinary. Some do business, some do health, some do education, but it’s, we come together because we want to improve the quality of life of Latinos in [our state]. So that’s another set of friends.

The fourth and final community identified is the larger geographic location of the institution, which includes references to the city where the institution is located (i.e., demographics, history of city development, struggles of the city, etc.). NSU is an institution that was founded and organized as an engaged institution before the concept of an engaged institution existed. Katie provided important contextual information in her description of the founding of NSU:

[NSU] has kind of been an ad hoc proposition from the very beginning, you know, we started, our beginnings were as a teacher’s college…in order to serve returning vets. And so, you know, we had this, really, engagement agenda from the very beginning.

Academic associations, formal professional organizations, individuals working or living in communities, and the larger geographic location of the city were all identified as important communities that influence community engagement at NSU.
Community Element 2: Internal Community. Internal community identifies the connections across campus that influences community engagement work at NSU. There are three areas that influence the internal community, which are administrative leadership, internal units or centers, and internal research related to community engagement.

The first area identified as an important community is the administrative leadership at NSU. Participants most frequently discussed the internal community in terms of the decisions about community engagement from senior leaders. Several participants specifically referenced the former president (and the chaos they created at the institution) as being an important contributor to the current internal community at NSU. Scott recalled the internal campus climate during the most recent president’s rule: “In two years, [they] just basically turned this university on its side. And everybody just ran for shelter. Finally, the NSU Board of Trustees got rid of [them], so now we’re all just kinda looking for water to get refreshed.” Anita, also discussed the institutional consequences of a leader that did not understand the foundational nature of engagement at NSU:

I was in a meeting last week where I was like, where was the outrage when [the president] eliminated the [Office for Research Innovation and Strategic Partnerships]? Like, this is our thing, right?! And no one really liked [the president], so it’s not like [they were] a beloved president. I get that [they went] rogue doing things and that people were afraid for their jobs, but it’s like, if this is our thing, why was the castle not stormed when [the former president] eliminated that office? And then when [they] left, why didn’t we reinstate something? And we move slow, I get that too. Like, this is our thing!
Scott shared Anita’s sentiment about the fear that reverberated across the institution during this time. He recalled, “Yeah, we got gutted. We got gutted right to the classroom door. But at the classroom door, if you know any tenured faculty members, that is our domain. This side of the classroom door is our domain.”

Sara identified an interesting conflict that arose as a result of how NSU is organizationally and hierarchically structured in terms of senior leaders. She stated:

Part of what complicates things is we have this legacy image, internationally, that we do amazing things, so we can ride on that and have been riding on it for a long time. We have some historic players that are still, like, [faculty name removed] still exists here. [Staff name removed] still exists here. [A former president] went out and did other things, and they’re back as Emeritus faculty now. [This same former president] is on the board of trustees. Like, that legacy’s continuing. So, there’s this dance of how do I help people recognize the current state of affairs and be open to conversations around what do we do about that without them feeling called out or judged for maybe decisions that were made in the past.

The second area participants identified was internal units across campus, which represented an important way to build collaborative approaches to community engagement at the institution. For example, Lana commented that the success of the capstone program could not have happened without the support from units across the institution. She stated that “critical colleagues and partners are advisors. If the advisors don’t understand capstones, then we have this huge disconnect, and students don’t understand why they’re taking the course, or how to choose a capstone.” Rachel also recognized and noted the important role of connecting with
internal units across campus to facilitate successful engagement work: “So, the vice provost of internationalization, we became friends…and all of a sudden now we’re starting to talk about global engagement and having our students in our classes have this engagement piece, and how do we prepare for that?” Conrado also shared how his work is facilitated by connecting across units to truly impact and sustain community engagement at NSU:

The [community health school at NSU] was in this college, the [public affairs college]...and these are professions that are engaged with the community. They train, both political sciences and public services. So, we…you collaborate across disciplines. I bring health, they bring urban planning, they bring public affairs, and so that’s the other circle of friends that influences my work.

The third internal community, research, was discussed as having an impact on program improvement, understanding the impacts of community engagement, and facilitating unlikely connections with other engaged scholars. Participants felt that research provided them with an important way to improve community engagement practices. Melissa stressed, “if we hadn’t done that research, we wouldn’t have known that [student reflection] was a problem. It allowed us to create reflection prompts for faculty to give to students. Research changed it all.”

Research was also discussed as an important way to connect with internal colleagues doing similar research. Although she overall disagreed with the hyper-focus on the academic arm of engagement at NSU, Rachel recalled some positive aspects of meetings she had initially questioned the purpose of:
One of the things that’s been good about [the research initiative] is they do have quarterly meetings of people, and people talk about research. So, I’ve met other CBPR people on campus, and we’re now doing super cool things, you know, amazing things.

Participants identified the internal community as both problematic and useful. Internal structures and academic leadership were identified as problematic for facilitating engagement at NSU. The internal community was also identified as an important way for faculty and staff to connect with others across campus in ways they would not have otherwise connected.

Overall, the community analytical element was divided into external and internal communities for the purpose of analysis. External communities are largely considered academic associations, formal professional organizations, individuals working or living in communities, and the larger geographic location of the city. Internal communities included administrative leaders in community engagement, units and centers across campus, and the role research plays in facilitating connections across campus.

Findings in the subject section identified that individuals directly or indirectly connected to the Community Engagement Council are faculty and staff from different disciplinary fields who come from units across campus. This group is responsible for different aspects of engagement at the institution. The findings for the object, which represents how community engagement is understood or defined at NSU, identified there an external community transformation focus and an internal institutional transformation focus. The findings for instruments, which show the ways that community engagement is communicated at NSU, included the use of their motto [we value our university/community connection], through academic dissemination with a distinct focus on academic coursework, the ways engagement is
measured across campus, through the strategic plan and that planning process, as well as collaborative work across disciplinary and organizational units. The findings for division of labor identified the ways community engagement work is divided at NSU. This division includes how community engagement is structured, the roles and responsibilities of T/TT faculty, and the overall leadership structure of community engagement at NSU. The findings for the rules, or the written and unwritten expectations for the subjects participating in community engagement work, identified that academic culture, mutual benefit, and efficiency all play important roles in determining guideposts for engaged work at the institution. The final group of findings is for the community analytical element, which establishes the relationship and larger context of community engagement at NSU. This element acknowledged important external and internal communities that influence community engagement. Externally, academic and professional organizations, the surrounding community, the geographic location where the institution resides, and the city's historical context are all important components of community engagement at NSU. Internally, administrative leadership, units and centers across campus, and making research connections are important components that guide community engagement at the institution.

_Findings for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within Community Engagement_

By establishing a foundational understanding of community engagement at NSU, an important next step in the process of understanding how DEI is addressed within community engagement is to identify how DEI operates within this foundational understanding of community engagement. Generally speaking, the findings for community engagement in the previous section do not change in this analysis. Instead, the findings are reframed to isolate DEI
from community engagement to provide points of comparison to identify critical contradictions between community engagement and DEI within community engagement at NSU.

In this section, the six analytical elements are being revisited with a specific lens on how DEI operates within community engagement at NSU. Laying the foundation for community engagement provided an understanding of the unit of analysis (object), how community engagement is understood within the institution (subject), the ways community engagement is communicated across the institution (instruments), the way community engagement work is divided across the institution (division of labor), how community engagement work is governed at the institution (rules), and the context in which community engagement operates (community). Understanding community engagement within the context of NSU allows for a closer inspection of how DEI work is being addressed within this community engagement work. Revisiting the six analytical elements with a focus on how DEI is addressed is intended to isolate taken-for-granted assumptions about DEI that may be operating covertly within community engagement, allowing for a deep and critical analysis of how DEI is being addressed within community engagement. For continuity, the organization of this section will mirror that of the prior section by reporting findings for each of the six analytical elements for DEI within community engagement.

**DEI within the Subject Analytical Element**

The subject here remain individuals who are directly or indirectly connected with the EEC at NSU, with an additional focus on DEI within community engagement work. In its current form, the EEC lacks racial diversity within its membership. Both institutional documents and interview data support the notion that the larger CEC was fairly racially diverse at the inception of the council and throughout the strategic planning process. However, at the time of
this study, the current membership roster could not be validated, making identification of racial demographics of CEC participants untenable. Even those who actively participate on the EEC are unclear about the membership of the EEC and the larger CEC. At present, demographic data indicates there is one person, an African American male, who is the council's appointed co-chair, and the remaining members of the current EEC identify as white. In terms of racial diversity among the subjects (those formally or informally connected to the EEC – the participants of this study), nine participants identify as white, and five identify as people of Color. All five participants of Color are tenured faculty who are engaged researchers and highly connected to the external community. Out of the five participants who identify as people of Color, Larry was the only one formally connected to the EEC and expressed concern about not having enough time or energy to dedicate to the council. The remaining four faculty indicated they knew about the CEC, but none were formally involved with either the CEC or the EEC at the time of this study. Interestingly, this group of participants had inconsistent verbal and non-verbal responses when asked specifically about the CEC, indicating there were unspoken beliefs about the CEC amongst participants of Color.

There was a common belief that the focus of the work and the stated outcomes of the CEC were not aligned with the needs or wants of engaged faculty of Color. The four faculty of Color who were not involved with the CEC made an active decision not to be involved, or implied they had not been invited to participate. Anita, although amusedly indicated she had no formal knowledge of the CEC, was adamant about not being involved because of her concerns about centralizing community-engaged work: “I think the other thing that happens is that as a faculty member of Color, myself and a number of my other colleagues are very wary of these
formalized institutional structures that claim to do engagement work, or partnership work.”

Conrado also reacted strongly when asked about his knowledge of the CEC. His answer was immediate, and laughed when he responded, “I don’t know about the [CEC] - I haven’t been invited.” His verbal response said he did not know about the council, yet his non-verbal response indicated that he did know and had strong feelings about it. The topic of the CEC did not resurface during our interview to have a more in-depth understanding of this inconsistency.

I had a similar discussion with Ivan about his knowledge of the CEC. His demeanor, unlike Conrado and Anita, was more aloof than amused:

So, I know the [CEC] existed. I know [name redacted] was the head of it for a while. I connected with it at some point because of some of the work that I was doing with the school districts. You know, I know of it, you know. I know it's trying to organize those efforts, but I'm not as - I'm not as connected to, I don't know what's happening now with the council.

The unwillingness or inability for engaged faculty of Color to participate with the CEC indicates there is likely a reason beyond individual preferences that prevents the council from racially diversifying its membership. However, at this time, there is no information to substantiate the intentional or unintentional exclusion of racially diverse participants on the CEC or the EEC. The fact remains, however, that the EEC is not racially/ethnically diverse.

**DEI within the Object Analytical Element**

The second element, the object, is community engagement work at NSU and identifies how DEI is perceived and defined in the context of community engagement at the institution. As a reminder, in the findings for community engagement within the object analytical element, the
object is dichotomized and understood as either community transformation or institutional transformation, but rarely both simultaneously. Similarly, there are two ways DEI is understood within the object analytical element. Most participants identified that when community engagement is focused on DEI, the work being done needs to be connected to historically marginalized communities. Although not a common theme, two participants identified that DEI is connected to community engagement when the institution transforms based on what is learned from the work with historically marginalized communities. This is an interesting and novel approach to organizational transformation.

**DEI Object Element 1: Community Racial Diversity.** All participants believed that diversity, equity, and inclusion are important components of community engagement, but there were differing beliefs about how to determine if community engagement was equity-focused. In other words, what “counted” as equity in community engagement was inconsistent understood. Community engagement work was often considered to have an equity lens if the work being done was with a historically racially marginalized community, which signaled that DEI was being prioritized. Tom identified that equity was already core to community engagement initiatives in his specific department. His example was a 400-hour community-engaged internship requirement, which is “all attached to communities of Color.” According to Tom, there is already a focus on equity because students are required to engage with underserved communities of Color. Similarly, Scott believed that his CBL approach was grounded in DEI because he required his students to engage in communities that were individually diverse for them:
I mean, if it’s powerful to take Jane and Suzie and Tyrone and whoever else, Juancito, to go to the poor side of town because you care about not only having students get out of class for all the reasons that we care about this work, but also getting out of class at a place where people don’t look, smell, think, talk like them, for all the other educational reasons that we do that, as well as the community building and the, you know, kind of humanity humanistic pieces. If that’s important, which it is, then it’s even more of a no-brainer to then just keep going all the way to like the poor barrio in Haiti, or in Nepal, or in Cuba, or wherever, if it’s done right. If it’s not done right, well, then you know the stakes are really high because a couple of missteps and all of a sudden you got marbles on the floor, and they’re not pretty marbles.

There was agreement amongst participants that an important aspect of community engagement was working with historically marginalized communities. However, participants also clearly identified that doing engaged work with marginalized communities was not enough. It is the impact of community engagement on external communities that matters most. As quoted previously in the object analytical element section, Sara identified that even if a community engagement project is not specifically about or directly impacting minoritized communities, it does not mean students should not understand inequities, even when challenged by her peers:

[My colleague] asked me if I think all community-based learning should have social justice as an orientation, and I said yes. She was like, I don’t agree with that. And that’s where we start to blur into workplace experiences. She counts in that realm. And like there are very valid projects that students can do with community organizations that are experiential that might not have social justice at the heart of them. And maybe I’m okay
with that. Although, I think that there’s a way to think about the implications of your work no matter what it is. But for this thing that we’re co-designing with a community partner, I think it is unethical for us to be coming at it without that lens of what does this mean for our communities of Color. What does it mean for the partner to have a voice in what we’re doing? What does it mean for students to have their identity recognized as they’re intersecting with this community? Whether its boundary crossing or going back into their own home, like, that all needs to be considered.

Anita was similarly concerned about community needs, but identified that equity work in community engagement must focus on transforming and protecting marginalized communities above all else:

When I think about the university's relationships and community, universities have consistently done harm to communities of Color, either through partnership work that's exploitative and one-way transactional or through just terrible decision making, like eminent domain taking, meaning building in neighborhoods that are and have been historically low income and not doing anything to support them, building their own housing in those neighborhoods. So, really complicated legacies of universities. So, I see the university, if they focus on racial equity, being able to do a form of reparation. Being able to try to undo harm through deliberate action and coordination. And I think universities understand that that's a net benefit both to the region, but also long term into their students, right. So the students, the communities that you're investing in externally become your students in the future. And as an open access school, I think we have a particular obligation to our students of Color, or our future students of Color in the
region. Because many of them won't have the financial resources or won't have gotten the support they needed in a K-12 setting, or will want to stay here and support family, or whatever their decision-making will be, this will likely end up being one of the best institutional choices for them. And so, the more that we invest in making sure we're serving those students well by supporting their neighborhoods, their families, their elders, the more we're lifting up that work.

**DEI Object Element 2: Equity at the Institutional Level.** While most participants discussed the impact of engagement on marginalized communities, some considered DEI to be connected to community engagement when there is a willingness and ability for the institution to make changes to inequitable institutional practices based on engagement with racially diverse populations. Rachel described the legitimacy of input from a diverse faculty member during the strategic planning process, input that ultimately changed the way the institution worked through its strategic plan:

I was there in the room when a colleague of mine from Social Work, a Navajo woman and Professor, stood up and said I think race equity should be the center of this plan, and no one on the fancy consulting firm that was helping us brand ourselves and get a strategic plan had ever thought of that. And the university leadership went yes, we should, and it worked. You know, when you're saying something that's outside the paradigm, it can take a long time to get it heard, but [she] said it, and within like three months it had been interwoven as a standalone and a cross-cutting lens for every other bucket of the strategic plan.
Similarly, Ivan believed that racial equity must be core to community engagement to rectify institutionalized exclusion:

I don’t think that you can do community engaged work without the racial inclusion imperative. It’s impossible to do that work authentically and effectively without understanding…because that work cannot sustain if people are systematically excluded. That’s just the bottom line. If we are unaware of those inequities and we create our organizations in ways that exclude voices, that’s not sustainable.

Anita warned that unless an institution centers equity, it cannot truly transform:

I think that if we want to take our mandate seriously about being in a place where there is co-governance or shared governance in any capacity, then we have to center on racial equity. If we don’t, then we are simply replicating and recreating a white institution.

The president of NSU, Jared, also agreed that having an equity lens has been deemed important at the institutional level, but stressed that it has not been applied systematically: “an equity lens is used across the institution, but we don’t do it in any kind of systematic way. It’s, it’s more, it’s implicit…it limits how we see the impact of using an equity lens.”

Overall, DEI is considered a critical piece of community engagement at NSU. Most participants consider DEI to be present in community engagement when the work is connected to historically marginalized communities. Some participants stressed the importance of DEI within community engagement as being able to key to addressing inequity within the institution.

Although there was a theoretical understanding of the impact of addressing DEI and engagement together, participants were not able to point to concrete work that addresses inequity within the institution.
DEI within the Instruments Analytical Element

The third analytical element is instruments, which are used to describe, communicate, and understand DEI within community engagement. Four ways that the original five instruments (institution’s motto, academic dissemination, measurement, strategic plan, and individual collaboration) are used to describe, communicate, and understand DEI work within community engagement are: overreliance on demographic data, common collaborative practices as restrictive practices, training and professional development as individual growth, and the belief that DEI work is already happening.

DEI Instrument Element 1: Demographic Data. As discussed in the previous section, participants overwhelmingly identified the importance of the racial demographics of those involved in community engagement initiatives (i.e., the demographic makeup of a community or the demographics of the student body at NSU). In addition to using demographic data to legitimize the DEI connection to community engagement, it was also used to identify the success of community engagement initiatives. An increase in the number of people of Color connected to NSU is used to determine the success of DEI in community engagement. Tom connected the establishment of the institution’s motto [we value our university/community connection] with a shift in student demographics. He highlighted that since the motto was institutionalized, there has been an increase in the number of part-time, transfer, students of Color, and students with financial need at NSU. While there has not been a formal connection made between the motto and student demographic shifts, Tom believed that there is “a deep connection between engagement and student retention” and that the institution needs to establish that connection more clearly.
Alie noted that African American, Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander populations were growing in the community, thus impacting the demographics at the institution:

[African American and Latino] demographics are still on the upswing. We’ve also had an upswing of Asian/Pacific Islander. Back then, I was like the only, I’m still the only Filipina! Well, we just hired a Filipino scholar, but prior to last year, I was the only Filipina. And so, with that, all our demographics also increased at [NSU] with a whole other Asian/Pacific Islander group.

The strategic plan report also highlighted the changing demographics of the city, and centered the work of the strategic plan around these changing demographics:

The city is becoming more diverse. If [NSU] is to continue to serve our community, we must plan for the recruitment, retention, education and graduation of students from different racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural and identity backgrounds.

Utilizing demographic data to imply the success of community engagement initiatives shows that the institution is racially diversifying. However, utilizing demographic data does not adequately address equity or inclusion concerns at NSU, it merely identifies diversity.

**DEI Instrument Element 2: Common Collaborative Practices.** As instruments utilized to communicate community engagement, common collaborative practices that occur are often determined by larger institutional practices (i.e., decentralized organizational structure, committee participation, using shared documents to record work, timing of meetings, availability of meeting space, etc.). These common practices have been identified as instruments that create unanticipated barriers that prevent DEI from actively connecting to community engaged work.
Although these types of instruments are not frequently discussed by participants, the novelty of instruments producing unanticipated institutional inequities required closer consideration.

Throughout our discussion, Rachel provided several examples of how common institutional practices around how research is funded unintentionally embed inequities into the institution, which has prevented connections between DEI and community engagement:

A colleague of mine has advocated for years, and we’re getting closer to getting a yes, for the ability to run research funding in a way that bundles, like, makes it an hourly fee. Like, there is no explanation from our research leadership for the stratospherically high indirect. I used to work in the nonprofit sector, and we were never allowed to put anything more than 15% towards indirect. It looks unethical.

Lana also discussed how common practices, such as stressing innovation in work, creates barriers between DEI and community engagement. She argued that DEI work and community engagement work require creative thinking, but that progress is often derailed because of institutional expectations around innovation: “Sometimes those barriers are framed in terms of innovation. Let's innovate, innovate, innovate, innovate without really thinking about the impact that it has on students.” This is particularly important, as the findings in the DEI object section highlights that the student experience in historically marginalized communities is considered a critical way DEI and community engagement are connected.

For Rachel, the common practice of utilizing shared documents to record meeting notes and conduct work asynchronously presented a problem when there was not an agreement or understanding of what the shared work was:
We created a committee and identified all the places the infrastructure was not in alignment with our work. And in successive iterations of the council’s strategic plan, [our work] just in this mysterious weird way, kept falling off the map.

Katie noted a similar experience with notetaking, articulating that the final product of the CEC’s work (i.e., the strategic plan) did not represent the core focus on DEI that had been discussed during the strategic planning process:

So, our discussions often included focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion, but I’m sure it doesn’t show up in the way that we would have wanted it to in the [strategic] plan…it was part of our conversations, but it doesn’t necessarily show up how that really was.

**DEI Instrument Element 3: Training.** Training and professional development, specifically in DEI, was identified by participants as an instrument that is an important part of their own work and the work at NSU. Lana highlighted the inclusion of equity in professional development for faculty involved with the senior seminar program, actively connecting DEI with community engagement:

> Our faculty development is almost solely on the equity work. Do we help people with learning objectives? Sure. Do we help them with some improvement on course design, or grading criteria, or something like that? Yes. The vast majority of our faculty development work is the equity work.

Along similar lines, both Melissa and Tom referenced the human resources department’s workshops that focused on helping hiring committees recruit diverse applicants to demographically diversify the institution.
Although all participants believed that DEI work was important in community engagement, some voiced concern about the individualistic approach to DEI training and development and noted a distinct disconnect between DEI outcomes and policies/processes that guide community engagement. Anita observed this disconnect between decision-making processes and getting to an equitable outcome within engagement work:

I’ve been pushing myself as an engagement scholar to really think about what we want out of processes and policy-making and decision-making that tells us we have done things equitably. So, part of that is the decision-making structure, but what about the decisions themselves and trying to ask this question: do we actually need some type of idealized structure to get to the outcome? Are we having to use the process to get to the outcome? Or, as I think right now, we often use the process to not get equity. Like, what does that mean? I mean, I could tell you, most of the time, what to do for equity. But then we had to have process. So how do we account for equity in engagement activities in a way that doesn’t get so centered on process, and feelings, and like holding hands that still lets us get to equitable decisions?

Anita brings up an interesting argument that was not identified by other participants. Her belief that people at NSU are invested in their individual DEI development and the DEI development of their peers, yet the processes to achieve work across the institution are not aligned with the individual investment in DEI development. This indicates a potential disconnect between individual development and organizational development/change. More concisely, individuals highly value and are invested in equity, but cannot translate individual development into system-level change.
DEI Instrument Element 4: Formal Reports and Marketing Materials. As instruments, formal reports and marketing materials communicate the message that NSU is already prioritizing DEI work at the institution, and, therefore, by default, centering equity within community engagement. The strategic plan report, for example, specifically referenced equity 61 times, clearly articulating that equity is a priority at the institution. However, an explicit connection between equity and community engagement occurs only three times. The first instance that connects equity to engagement referenced the need to consider institutional financial priorities and ensuring community well-being is included in these priorities. The second instance referenced the need to for mutually beneficial approaches and that communities are not harmed or diminished through their work together. The third, and final instance referenced the need to build partnerships that focus on social justice and racial equity. This lack of direct connection between DEI and community engagement at NSU mirrors the same lack of direction connection in the literature on institutional transformation into engaged institutions (Telles, 2019). The most powerful connection between community engagement and DEI in the strategic plan report is specific to strategic goal four, which addresses the desire to expand the institution’s commitment to equity. Specifically, ensuring the expansion of a commitment to equity requires that the institution, “recognize that cultural understanding is a pre-requisite for an engaged education and that we have a responsibility to provide our students with the necessary competencies to be able to work with diverse colleagues and the organizations they serve” (p. 15).

In addition to communication through the strategic plan, the lack of connection between DEI and community engagement is also represented in discussions with participants. One of the
first things Tom said during our interview was that “everything [at NSU] is looked at through an equity lens.” He identified multiple, yet vague ways that equity was embedded within the institution, such as attention to equitable resource allocation, the presence of an active diversity council on campus, and having a focus on equity in the strategic plan. Yet, the example provided when asked to elaborate on the connection he saw between DEI and community engagement was limited to the connection of an internship requirement to student experiences in marginalized diverse communities. In a previous section, Tom proudly highlighted that master’s students were required to complete 400 hours of work specifically in communities of Color in order to complete their degree, implying that embedding work with marginalized communities into the curriculum for students is a critical step in working towards institutional equity, as it exposes students to diverse experiences that they may not have had outside of NSU degree programs. The combination of equity embedded in the curriculum, having an equity lens applied to all strategic planning areas, and the presence of a diversity council was evidence enough for Tom to consider equity to already be embedded at the institutional level, yet little concrete evidence was provided to substantiate his belief.

Participants also identified that NSU was already addressing DEI within community engagement by providing faculty with development in critical service-learning pedagogy. As a requirement to teach in the senior seminar program, faculty are required to complete a formal proposal, which includes reading and responding to Mitchell’s (2008) article on critical service-learning. This proposal is used to help faculty understand what is expected of them as senior seminar course instructors and help the committee select proposals that are most aligned with the
program’s DEI goals. Lana described the long and intentional process the senior seminar team went through to move their DEI goals forward:

The [senior seminar] committee went through a process to make sure that we were addressing a critical service-learning pedagogical approach to the best of our ability. Prior to that, I would say what we were doing was having the critical community-based learning approach as our North star for faculty development. So, come into our process; come and propose a [course]. You’re going to have to address diversity, equity, and social justice, and your ethics, agency, and community. That’s going to bring you to our door. Then, our faculty development will support all the critical community-based learning. We decided to start the faculty development a little earlier in this process because we’ve always believed that the faculty development in [senior seminar] starts with the [senior seminar] proposal. The proposal itself should be a tool for faculty development. It should be the conversations we want to have with faculty.

Although Lana believed this process was important and valuable, she expressed a simultaneous concern that the intense nature of completing a proposal would inadvertently dissuade faculty from participating in senior seminar courses:

My [senior seminar] proposal now has 57 checkboxes on it. Is that inviting to someone? Am I bringing them into this conversation? Am I furthering this work, or do I have a big 57-point wall up that people feel like they don't know how to scale over? And so, of course, I don't want people who are culturally incompetent teaching [senior seminar], but I also want to create a safe space for all of us to get more culturally competent.
Other participants believed that the institutional approach to the strategic plan was not reflective of how equity ought to be considered. As indicated by several participants, strategic planning was well underway before equity was a consideration in that process. As reported previously, Rachel shared that:

I was there in the room when a colleague of mine from Social Work Navajo woman and Professor stood up and said I think race equity should be the center of this plan, and no one on the fancy consulting firm that was helping us brand ourselves and get a strategic plan had ever thought of that. And the university leadership went yes, we should.

After this change in plans, each of the five sections of the strategic plan, which were identified and drafted by different working groups, were required to be reviewed by an equity committee prior to being finalized. Yet, feedback from the equity committee was not taken into consideration prior to the creation of each part of the strategic plan; it was an afterthought. When asked about the use of an equity lens in the strategic plan, Anita stated, “It was a useful application of an equity lens after the fact. I think that if we had racial equity centered from the start, we would have had an entirely different strategic plan.”

In summary, findings in this element reveal a persistent lack of explicit connection between community engagement and DEI, a gap mirrored in the literature (Telles, 2019). Differently stated, NSU’s discussions of equity continue to be outside of the context of community engagement – stressing the importance of equity, but in a more generally applicable way – which is reflected in the disagreement amongst participants about whether or not the institution was addressing equity in community engagement.
**DEI within the Division of Labor Analytical Element**

The areas addressed in the division of labor analytical element for the community engagement section are the organizational structure specific to community engagement, the roles and responsibilities of T/TT faculty, and the leadership structure of engagement. When considering DEI within these previously identified themes, a hierarchy that privileges T/TT faculty has been identified as the most substantial finding in this analytical element.

**DEI Division of Labor Element 1: Faculty Hierarchy.** As found in the division of labor analytical element for community engagement, the roles and responsibilities are different for T/TT faculty, for example, than they are for adjunct faculty. These divisions of labor created a hierarchy within the institution that divides T/TT track faculty from faculty and staff who are not in tenure/tenure track positions. Academic expectations (as defined in the P&T guidelines) are frequently time-restrictive and tend to reward more traditional approaches to research and publication. Engaged scholarship (as practiced through partnership) requires time to develop partnerships, collaborate, and establish mutual benefit. Participants identified that this faculty hierarchy at NSU conflicted with the ethos of engagement. This can be seen in the disconnect between the deep desire to transform communities and the inability to transform the university.

Ivan described the consequences of this contradiction from his perspective:

There's still hierarchies, for example, you know we have like fixed term faculty, we have adjunct faculty, we have tenured faculty, we have…you know all of those hierarchies, come with them ways of thinking that really undermine that work, that reinforce the kinds of things that we are trying to redress in our communities. We enforce inequities here. You know, we have, one of the big things that we're trying to focus on here is
applying an equity lens to the work that we do. Everything that we do. Well, it's difficult to apply an equity lens to the work that we do unless we are also connected to our own inequities that we allow to guide and inform us.

Lana was also frustrated by the barriers that faculty hierarchy posed to her work:

My adjunct pool tends to be, uh, white social activist that have either the economic freedom or the economic hardship of working part-time without benefits. And it's really complicated figuring out what to do about that cause it's not like I want to hire more people of Color paying the low wage that adjuncts have and no benefits. Like that's not helping somebody. But it's also not right how white my teaching, uh, staff is here. So, I'd say those are the things that I grapple with. And if I could change one thing, it would, by far, be having more persons of Color playing leadership and teaching roles in the [senior seminar] program.

Even though P&T guidelines articulate that “[NSU] highly values quality community outreach as part of faculty roles and responsibilities,” participants indicated that faculty who are engaged researchers continue to be held to the same structure of work as traditional faculty, creating a hierarchy within faculty rank that negatively impacts community engagement. Recall Anita’s comments regarding the pressure of being an engaged scholar in a previous section:

We teach in my program, five classes a year on the quarter system. So that's a 2-2-1 or a 1-2-2, whatever, however you arrange it. And it's brutal. The quarter system is brutal…that kind of rev up and come down and the intensity of changing courses, makes it very hard to maintain a community engagement profile. I'm exhausted at different times, just the general academic calendar is weird because you don't get to go on vacation
during the summer if you're doing community engagement work. I can take a step back, but I still have to go to regular meetings. And so, other academics are like why are you working here in the summer and I'm like because I do community work and it doesn't stop on June 15, but my contract ends, right.

Her comments highlight the disconnect between engaged faculty and traditional faculty needs. Engaged scholarship is often grounded in partnership, and the process of establishing these partnerships varies greatly, which does not always align with a traditional academic schedule. Overall, participants indicated that the approaches to how labor is divided at NSU need to be more inclusive of the needs and practices of engaged scholars, not only the needs and expectations for T/TT faculty.

Alie shared an experience where she invested heavily in an engaged research project that went awry, and the lack of a true partnership prevented her from using her engaged work in academic publication:

I guess you can say as a scholar it's hard because I couldn't finish the research process or the partnership through its entirety. It was stopped and kind of like halfway or three-fourths way. So I guess you can say it was hard navigating to make decisions about when not to publish or when not to talk about it from a scholarly perspective. So, I guess I just wait for years to write about it? Nothing was published, but there is intention, I guess to like to publish soon. It's been five years.

To conclude this section, P&T guidelines create two levels of hierarchy at NSU: one between T/TT faculty and non-T/TT faculty, and the other between engaged faculty and more traditional faculty. Although the P&T guidelines include strong support for engagement,
expectations to meet P&T requirements (i.e., publications, teaching, etc.) continue to come from a more traditional approach to faculty meeting their responsibilities. Applying a traditional framework and structure to engaged scholarship places engaged faculty in a tenuous position, as in Alie’s situation. These findings suggest that there are practices and expectations (e.g., faculty are on a 9-month contract with summers off) at NSU that do not match the current tenure policy supporting engagement work (e.g., explicit support for engaged scholarship in the P&T guidelines). This disconnect between policy and practice puts engaged faculty – in this case, engaged faculty of Color – at risk of not successfully meeting P&T requirements.

**DEI within the Rules Analytical Element**

In the findings for the rules analytical element for community engagement, academic culture, mutual benefit, and efficiency were identified as rules (policies, processes, and practices) that direct or dictate community engagement work at NSU. When considering DEI, there were three themes identified: missing cyclical process of mutual benefit, community engagement logistics belongs to staff, and DEI work belongs to people of Color.

**DEI Rules Element 1: Missing Cyclical Process of Mutual Benefit.** Mutual respect is considered essential to establish partnerships at NSU. Building trust, integrity, and honesty were identified as important ways mutual benefit could be realized at NSU. However, participants believed that building trust with some communities would be difficult because of the university’s track record of using and exploiting communities. For instance, Anita stressed the challenges communities have wanting to work with the university due to the history of community exploitation for university gain. As shared earlier, Ana stated, “When I think about the university's relationships with community, universities have consistently done harm to
communities of Color, either through partnership work that's exploitative, or through one-way transactions, or through just terrible decision making.”

Rachel also argued that understanding how the university has wronged communities in the past is an important step in preventing future wrongdoings:

That's what somebody like me can do is say, you know, this is a university. Not trustworthy. Likely to revert to an exploitative relationship with this beautiful building. How about we create and embed in perpetuity some sort of a charter or an ownership agreement? Like, not because y'all need it, but because this university is likely going to behave the way it always has.

Mutual benefit was identified as a defining characteristic of community engagement across the campus. However, when considering DEI within the purpose and definition of community engagement (the object), the conversations are almost explicitly focused on community benefit rather than on mutual benefit. Participants did not outwardly state that community benefit is more important than mutual benefit, but when the university was the focus of this discussion, participants readily identified the need for the university to be intentional and respectful in engaged work to ensure communities were not harmed. All participants discussed community partnerships as a benefit to the university by offering opportunities for students to have various experiences through community-based learning courses. The finding that there is a disconnect between expecting mutual benefit and not engaging fully in that cyclical process is noteworthy and discussed further in the future research section of chapter five.

**DEI Rules Element 2: Inequitable Practices based on Faculty Hierarchy.** The responsibility for different types of work is often dictated by the expectations for T/TT faculty. It
was made clear by participants that staff are considered to be responsible for the logistics of community engagement work at NSU (i.e., record keeping, documentation, understanding data and information, etc.). At the end of each interview, for example, participants were asked, "are there others that you believe are important for me to connect with about community engagement here at [NSU]?" The list of names provided by participants was often to individuals who were not T/TT faculty. They were often professional staff which indicates that those responsible for the day-to-day work of community engagement at NSU are separate from those responsible for university-level decision-making. For example, when asked about important documents that may be important for me to review, Scott pointed me in the direction of two staff members to identify and collect those documents:

Those two are going to have those materials, better than me, or they'll be able to put their fingers right on them. I'm an old salt now, I don't have a book on that I, this stuff is, I'm in the moment, I'm setting it up and making sure people notice. I don't have a worksheet I use or, it's just not my way. I don't even use any of this stuff [referring to books on his shelves]. I, this is not my way so I'm not going to be that guy.

In addition to expectations based on T/TT faculty role, there are also common practices that, by design, exclude faculty and staff who are not T/TT. As Rachel explains, these practices are not based on qualification or committee need, but on the financial structure of the institution; a structure that privileges tenured faculty:

The only people the university really authorizes to chair committees like [the CEC] are people who are tenured or tenure track. They will have been socialized through a very pure academic lens. And the only people, very often the only people, who can serve on
university-wide committees are people who can get there with their workload. Like, a
dean can, if you’re a tenure track professor, a dean can say, I’m going to give you
workload relief, a course release, if you’ll go serve on this committee. If the dean wants
me to serve on a committee and represent the school, they have to pick up a piece of my
salary, because my entire salary is funded by grants and contracts.

The findings around hierarchy highlighted Rachel’s concern with the connection between
committee membership and institutional structures around faculty hierarchy. In terms of being a
common collaborative practice that establishes a connection between DEI and community
engagement, Rachel’s concern about committees is that the process is actively determined by
faculty status rather than determined by the needs associated with the specified work of the
committee. As previously shared, Rachel argued that university-wide committees are typically
made up of T/TT faculty because of how they are paid: “our most community-engaged people
here are on the soft money side and don’t get appointed to university-wide committees such as
the [CEC], our Early Childhood Council, or other university-wide committees because of what
drives their time and their compensation.” Revisiting this topic establishes an important
connection between committee participation and the lack of connection with engaged faculty of
Color with the CEC. This disconnect highlights an important problem at NSU: the current
practices around how the CEC was established and is currently structured (as in other processes
of committee assignments) exclude, intentionally or unintentionally, T/TT engaged faculty of
Color, thus having a continuous impact on the racial diversity of committee membership.

As seen in this section, T/TT faculty roles and responsibilities created a hierarchy a
hierarchy that has had some negative consequences for DEI work at NSU. As a result of the
structure of decision-making within the institution, the faculty hierarchy also prevents non-T/TT faculty from actively engaging in university-level decision-making, where they have well-known expertise in the work; Recall this is the same group that has been identified (by T/TT faculty and high-level administrators) as holding much of the knowledge and information about how community engagement operates at the institution, yet are structurally excluded from decision-making by the rules surrounding T/TT faculty roles and responsibilities at the institution.

**DEI Rules Element 3: DEI Work Belongs to People of Color.** The rule that DEI work belongs to people of Color is unofficial and often subtle. Some participants identified that people of Color are inherently experts in DEI work. Anita stressed that community engagement work as faculty of Color requires additional work:

> I think that this is a question of what does it mean when we form relationships? And particularly for faculty of Color who are having to do additional labor to overcome historic mistrust and to really build an infrastructure to sustain [engagement] work, it’s, it’s tiring.

Scott took the lead from people of Color to help him determine his role in the equity space:

> I think here at NSU we do a much better job about calling [equity] out, and of course there are people who are awesome at it, who you know will bring in heavy readings. I mean, I’m a white male! I’m 59, gonna be 60. You know, I’m the problem in some people’s view. I get it, I get it. When they get to know me, nine times out of ten, they allow me to be an ally and sometimes they don’t. And that happens, and I try really hard to not have that happen. In my own experience, that happens sometimes, and I always shake and scratch my head when that happens and wonder what I could have done better.
But nine times out of ten, I’m allowed to be an ally and I appreciate that because it enables me to do my work and call it out. I mean I call it out right out. I’m like, yeah, here’s the white guy here, and here we are, and I talk to, like in class, and we’re good. We’re good with that. Undergrads get it, they appreciate it. People of Color really appreciate it.

There are also instances where there are assumptions about how faculty of Color are connected to communities of Color. Anita recalled a time when a colleague made an assumption about her connection to the Latino community based on her Mexican-American/white identity:

I think that there's, there is considerable pressure, there is an expectation like when we were trying to find an award winner, we wanted to nominate for this big award we give. The dean decided he wanted to nominate one of our Latino CDC’s here. He emailed me and was like, can you connect me with [Latino-serving organization]? And who at the mercado should we be connecting with about X, Y, and Z? I'm like, I've never met with anyone from [Latino-serving organization]. And then of course he's disappointed and then I feel bad, but also like I don't do community development. I guess he was literally racializing me. And assuming that because I'm a Latina I should know the CDC. Also, maybe I should have. Right? So, it's very fraught in those moments.

To conclude this analytical element, inequitable institutional practices around university-level committee formation act as a barrier to moving community engagement through the institution, as those with critical perspectives on the work of community engagement are actively prevented from participating in university-wide committees. Also discussed was the informal and subtle rule that DEI work belongs to people of Color.
**DEI within the Community Analytical Element**

DEI within the community analytical element is divided into external and internal communities, with an added focus on how DEI is identified within the community analytical element. In external communities, the focus of DEI was on the geographic context of NSU, as well as the racial demographics of the surrounding communities. In internal communities, the focus of DEI highlights the lack of racial diversity within the institution and frequently identifies NSU as a white institution with direct and indirect acknowledgement of the lack of racial diversity on campus.

**DEI Community Element 1: External Community.** DEI within external communities is identified in two ways: the historic and current-day racial context and demographics of city, and the need to work with racially diverse communities in the area.

**The Context of the City.** Throughout the interviews, there are several references to the city being a very “white” city, with a frequent concern about the implications that a lack of racial diversity in the city has on engagement and equity work at NSU. Lana identified that the geographic context of the institution is impacted by the racial demographics of the surrounding city, which she described as the “ whitest city in the nation.” Katie also highlighted her belief that the state was founded on the basis of whiteness:

So, we have to recognize [name of city] is a white city. We have to grapple with it. I think we have to grapple with that in context, and in the context of where we are. So, [name of the city], you know, [the state] and the way that [state] constitutionally was constructed was to be a white state.
Conrado recalled struggling to recruit faculty of Color to NSU because of the lack of racial diversity of the city: “Somebody asked me about this when I was recruiting him for a job here. He says, you know, how do you cope in a city that is so white?” Katie also shared her concerns about the demographic makeup of the city and NSU, and how the demographics make institutional change difficult:

As a predominately white institution in a really white city, I think we, I think people really want to be anti-racist in their work, but I think we lack courage around that. I think that’s hard to do. And people don’t want to make mistakes at it and don’t want to seem to be racist, or being called racist, and so that holds us back from doing some of that work.

So that work doesn’t advance in the way that it should.

Sara agreed with Katie’s sentiment that being in such a white city made DEI work particularly difficult:

I think that part of it is, [name of city] is this white city, right. And I think people want to be social justice warriors until it means that they need to do their own work. And that, I don’t know, I think that [living in such a white city] just complicates everything.

Some participants expressed concerns about why the city and the institution continued to remain white despite demographic shifts in surrounding communities. Larry emphasized that the city will “continue to remain one of the whitest places in the nation. You know why? Because people of Color can’t afford to live in this city [chuckles]. I know, it’s absurd.” Anita had the same sentiment about the financial reason behind the lack of racial diversity at NSU, as she noted that, “[NSU] is one of the whitest institutions in the country. You know why? Because people of Color can’t afford to live here. They priced diversity out.”
**Racially Diverse Communities.** Although the city was frequently identified as a very white city, participants also identified that working with racially diverse communities played an important role in ensuring they were able to maintain their own DEI work. As highlighted earlier, Rachel argued that it was her community mentors who held her accountable to DEI goals within a predominately white institution:

> You know, universities are inherently white spaces and arguably exist to reinforce white supremacist culture. So, I can't even conduct my own self professionally…everything I've learned has been drummed into my hard little head by a mentor, or activist in the community. So, I depend a great deal and follow the lead of activists in the community, whether it's race equity which is today's topic, or my colleagues in child welfare.

Rachel continued to describe why she relies so heavily on her external community mentors:

> Yeah, and you know who knows that better than white people? Every Indigenous or person of Color I've ever worked with is going, we know what y'all are going to do. We know exactly what you're going to do. You think you're the exception. You think you're going to be able to change. And they're better situated to know how untrustworthy my institution is, or I as a professional am. And that is actually one of the great benefits to a university or project within a university is to bring that kind of expertise.

As Rachel articulated, the external community provides critical DEI approaches to institutional aspects of community engagement. Several participants referenced external community partners and partnerships throughout our interviews. Rachel, however, was the only participant to refer to the cyclical process of mutual benefit through her articulation of how communities and universities learn from one another.
DEI Community Element 2: Internal Community. Included in the internal community are individuals at NSU who are engaged with personal DEI development, institutional DEI development, and the historical legacy of race in higher education.

Individuals Engaged in Personal DEI Development. Within the NSU engagement community, there is a widespread and strong desire to do DEI work and to do it well. Every participant referenced the importance of DEI work and highlighted how they and their colleagues were individually dedicated to personal development and growth in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Ivan stressed that institutional equity could not be achieved unless people were willing to understand how they, individually, facilitated inequities:

One of the big things that we’re trying to focus on here is applying an equity lens to the work that we do – everything that we do. Well, it’s difficult to apply an equity lens to the work that we do unless we are also connected to our own inequities that we allow to guide and inform us.

Katie echoed Ivan’s warning that individual DEI growth must be prioritized to move the work forward:

Race is always with us, so we can’t not, no matter what course we’re teaching, no matter whether it’s officially a course that’s engaged with community or not. So, we have to recognize that we’re going to have to grapple with that. We need to really try to create a space where we are deeply connected to each other, in relationship with one another, so that we can practice having the kinds of interactions that help us grow beyond the limitations that we come in with individually.
Anita, as an example, noted how her prior work experience informed her approach to hiring in her current role:

So, the racial equity lens I wrote for the campus, there's like five examples and it's everything from picking a caterer, and I learned that from when I worked for a Black U.S. Congressman because I was trying to find a caterer and a staff member’s like, why would you not hire a Black cater? And I'm like, oh, that's so obvious. This is a great example, and I used it for my entire life now.

Lana articulated her experience with faculty who worked with the senior seminar program:

Faculty members started book clubs. They're nearly all now written by persons of Color. That one [refers to a book] is one from the [specific work of Indigenous and decolonizing studies]...we'll just keep on kind of gathering together trying to center voices of persons of Color and continue to learn with each other on the journey.

The data indicates that faculty and staff at NSU are fiercely dedicated to individual DEI development and spend a lot of time learning and growing as individuals while also encouraging their peers – formally and informally – to also develop.

**Institutional Development in DEI.** Although every participant highlighted the successes in individual DEI development work, most participants identified that NSU was not successfully developing in DEI, particularly when attempting to connect DEI with community engagement. The lack of racial/ethnic diversity, exclusion of an equity lens in important university-level decisions, inequity embedded in organizational policies, and concerns that NSU privileged the appearance of DEI work rather than taking action to do DEI work were identified as the reasons DEI and community engagement were not successfully connected at the institutional level.
Several participants pointed to the lack of racial diversity at NSU as an indicator that NSU was not successfully utilizing an equity lens. Conrado was particularly critical at the lack of racial diversity in high-level administrative positions at the university:

I don't think they're doing a great job. And I don't know who's doing a great job, but, I think, things could be better. Just look at representation. You could look at the top administration, other than, even if you include right now the chief diversity officer. How diverse is the top administration? Normally you have the token chief diversity officer who is a minority, and that's fine. We'll take it if that's what it is. But how about the President and Vice Presidents, and vice provosts? [He laughs as he points to his administrative title on a brochure] I bought the title with a grant. Then when the grant disappeared, the title was gone.

Both Larry and Conrado highlighted the inability to retain people of Color at NSU was also an indicator that the institution was not doing a good job with DEI. Larry shared that “there has been a mass exodus of African American students, faculty, and staff” since he arrived at the institution two years prior. Conrado, using an interesting metaphor, also addressed the inability for NSU to retain people of Color:

At the faculty level, there is diversity and inclusion, and I think we're not doing a good job in the inclusion part. I think we have been able to recruit people, but if you don't retain them, that means that they came to the dance, they didn't like the music, nobody asked them to dance, and they said, I'm out of here.
Lana highlighted that the goal of racially diversifying faculty and historic/current day hiring practices are incongruent, and highlighted the impact it had on her ability to diversify instructors in the senior seminar program:

Our faculty in general at NSU, and specifically in the [senior seminar] program as well, is too predominately white. And for [diversifying faculty] to have been on our agenda from the beginning and on our radar screen, but [long pause] it doesn’t match. I’ll say it flat out, it doesn’t match. It doesn’t match our historical hiring practices in terms of, we did not figure out a better way to recruit and retain faculty of Color. And it’s especially true in our adjunct pool.

As supported by the literature (Dowd & Liera, 2018; Jayakumar et al., 2009; Liera & Dowd, 2018; Turner, 2002; Urrieta et al., 2015), Conrado and Lana each identified instances where organizational practices contributed to the lack of racial diversity at NSU. These practices persisted despite a deep desire by individuals to grow and impact DEI work, and the intentional inclusion of equity within several organizational goals across the institution.

Participants also believed that the institutional struggle with equity resulted from the historic legacy of race in higher education – a legacy that is upheld through the current-day organizational structures of the institution of higher education. Katie described the influence that the racialized foundation of the United States had on how DEI operates in our world today:

We live in a country that was founded on genocide and racialized violence. There is no way that we can do any of this work without centering that fact and engaging with the repercussions of that, and the ways that continues to show up for us in the work.
Conrado also connected the struggles NSU had with equity to the historical structure and purpose of higher education; struggles he argued were not unique to NSU:

Yeah, it's not unique to [NSU]. I think, if you step back, 200 years ago or 100 years ago, the universities were founded by white men to train white men. And all the infrastructure, all the systems, all the hiring process, everything is designed by white men, for white men, and to change that is going to be extremely hard. And we will be, and we're going to make mistakes because this system has worked well for white men. And I’m sure it didn't work that well in the beginning and they perfected it to the point that finally we got a system we train white men well in. And they become doctors and they become CEOs and they become, you know. And now you want us to change? And do what women and minorities need? And we don't know how to do that, you know. It will take a long time before we make it happen the other way.

Both Sara and Jared pointed to the traditional structure of the institution as the reason DEI and community engagement were not successfully connected. Sara focused on the lack of leadership over engagement at NSU in her critique:

I think right now [NSU] is so twisted and overlapping in its layers of dysfunction, that I think it just adds another thing for people to be like, another reason to not do [DEI work]. Everything's working the way it is right now is the response. They’re like, well, we have the [research center on homelessness]. Yes, we do. They're doing really great stuff with research. So, can we like maybe pick that as a theme and get all of our student things aligned with it? And can we have our partners telling us what they want through the center? But that's like, we don't coordinate that way.
Mirroring the literature on the difficulty of making systemic change in loosely coupled systems (Weick, 1976), Jared was equally concerned about how the organizational structure impacted the connection between DEI and community engagement. He indicated that the institution was dedicated to what he called “social justice”, but the work was not done systematically, making the impact of the work difficult to identify. He also highlighted that the combination of the lack of leadership around engagement at NSU, and the decentralized structure of the CEC prevented a more collective consideration of how to connect DEI and community engagement.

There was also a belief that NSU’s claims that equity was being prioritized were a facade. Anita had strong opinions about how a recent incident was handled and argued that using an equity lens throughout that process could have resulted in a different outcome. For context, the institution was struggling with campus safety and decided the best course of action was to arm their currently unarmed security officers and lock down university buildings that had historically been accessible to the public (notably an important component of the institutional ethos of engagement at NSU). When asked explicitly for her thoughts on how NSU was doing regarding racial equity in community engagement, Anita immediately referenced two examples we had discussed earlier in our interview.

Nope… I think the police examples are great examples, and the building examples are great examples of how they are not applying an equity lens. And for the building example, they’re like, well, we’re going to apply [an equity lens] after we hear public comment, but your public doesn't know how to comment because you have not applied an equity lens. That’s the tradeoff. If you weighed the tradeoffs and you did what the equity lens said, at least we could then have a grounded public discussion.
A declaration that an equity lens was used to evaluate each goal was highlighted in the strategic plan, but Conrado was critical of when the equity lens was applied to each of the seven institutional goals in the strategic plan:

How do you highlight the fact that in every meeting [equity] is number eight? Can we make it number one next time because we run out of time and [equity] goes back to the end. So, you do need to have that representation so you can help the university realize that [attending to diversity and equity] is important to help the university in making mistakes. You help the university in genuinely having diverse voices in how the decisions are made. So, I think the university right now, there is no racial/ethnic representation.

Katie identified that there was a disconnect for students when the institution was more concerned about the appearance of DEI work rather than actually doing DEI work:

I think that institutions of higher ed are run in ways that show we care much more about how the thing looks than what the thing is. So more than actually doing the work of racial justice, we want to look like we’re doing the work of racial justice and be seen that way. And the [CEC], in part, was like, oh, we’ve lost the engagement edge. How do we show the world we’re still doing engagement? I would often respond, okay, I get that that’s important to do. It also matters that we’re actually doing it and are deepening that because our students really don’t give a fuck about whether or not the world knows we’re doing it. They just care about what their experience is. So, I’m troubled by institutions that care more about what the thing looks like and where so much of the activity is performative.
The findings of this analytical element focus on the racial demographics of both external and internal communities, showing an overreliance on the demographic background of both external communities and individuals internal to NSU. There is a concern that the surrounding city area is very white, yet to consider whether or not community engagement work addresses equity, the work must be connected to a racially/ethnically diverse community. Internally, racial/ethnic diversity is also a concern. There is a lack of racial diversity at the institution and people of Color who are successfully recruited reportedly leave abruptly. There is also skepticism about the direction of DEI at the institution. In other words, there is a belief that NSU is not doing a good job to recruit, retain, or support students, staff, and faculty of Color internally and the university has not taken steps to institutionally address this issue. However, in order for engaged work to be impactful in terms of equity, it must be done in connection with racially/ethnically diverse communities.

To conclude, the findings for DEI within community engagement are structured by the six CHAT analytical elements. First, the findings for the subject show there is a lack of racial diversity on the EEC and that faculty of Color needs are not being met by the EEC or CEC. Findings in the object analytical element, which is the way the connection between DEI and engagement is understood at NSU, indicate that for community engagement to “count” as DEI work requires that the community be a racially diverse community, but that these communities must be protected from the university. Findings also indicated that institutional inequities are important to address, but that there is a lack of clarity about how to address this on an institutional level. The findings for instruments, which show how DEI is communicated through community engagement work, include an overreliance on demographic data, show that
collaborative practices are resistant to change, identify that DEI development is largely individual-based, and illuminate an unsubstantiated claim that equity is already happening at NSU. Findings for division of labor, or the ways in which DEI work within community engagement is divided, focuses exclusively on the impact of faculty hierarchy on DEI work. The findings for the rules, or the guideposts in place that guide DEI work within community engagement, include a missing cyclical process necessary for mutual benefit, highlights a practice that the logistics of community engagement work is relegated to staff, and illuminates a belief that DEI work belongs to people of Color. Lastly, the findings for community, which represent who is contextually influencing DEI within community engagement, highlight an overreliance on racial demographic data to determine if there is a commitment to DEI work within community engagement. Additionally, these findings are divided into external and internal communities. Externally, findings indicate there is an overarching focus on racial diversity locally, but no consideration of racial/ethnic demographics outside of the immediate context (for example, the race/ethnicity of their internal peers is highly scrutinized, while the race/ethnicity of their external academic peers is never addressed). Internally, there is a core belief that individuals are dedicated to DEI development that transforms individuals, but that belief does not expand to the institution, as there is a lack of institutional dedication to the same kind of DEI development and transformation.
Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

This study addresses the research question, “What organizational contradictions and areas of congruence exist when analyzing how community engagement and racial diversity, equity, and inclusion operate together?” Using cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) as a theoretical framework and analytical tool, this qualitative case study examines the connection between community engagement and DEI within the organizational context of New College State University (NSU). This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings through identification and analysis of critical contradictions between CHAT analytical elements, including tables that provide overviews of these contradictions. This discussion is followed by an identification and analysis of critical contradictions and areas of congruence between community engagement and DEI within community engagement analytical elements. Next is a discussion of these findings followed by an identification of implications this study has for practice, limitations of the study, and future research opportunities. This chapter concludes with a brief overview of the contributions of this study to the field.

Critical Contradictions

The findings of this study establish the content and definition of each of the analytical elements for both community engagement and for DEI within community engagement. Defining the analytical elements in the context of the activity (in this case, the EEC) provides a deep understanding of how community engagement operates, both independently and in connection with racial DEI, at NSU. While interpretations can be made without further analysis, CHAT was chosen as a theoretical framework specifically for its ability to accommodate the organizational-level focus of the research question. CHAT is based on the premise that organizational
transformation occurs through a consideration of critical contradictions, which provide insight into the “substantive disagreements, fears, or other strong indications of systemic contradictions” (Engeström, 2008, p. 38) that can prevent organizations from transforming. Identifying critical contradictions between analytical elements in this study provides insight into complex and often unseen and unchallenged issues of DEI within community engagement. This approach provides the field with a concrete way to organizationally address the “wicked societal problems” that Ramaley (2014) argued present challenging barriers to universities and colleges to navigate. The following is an analysis of the critical contradictions between the six analytical elements for community engagement, between the six analytical elements for DEI within community engagement, and between the analytical elements for community engagement and DEI within community engagement.

**Critical Contradictions of Six Analytical Elements of Community Engagement**

As addressed in chapter 4, each of the six analytical elements (subject, object, instruments, division of labor, rules, and community) has its own set of findings. For the sake of simplicity, the following (table 3) provides a brief overview of the findings for each analytical element within community engagement.

**Table 3**

Overview of Findings: Six Analytical Elements for Community Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Element</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>NSU faculty and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group is responsible for different aspects of engagement at NSU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>External: a focus on community transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal: a focus on institutional transformation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Instruments | Motto: [we value our university/community connection]  
Academic dissemination – focus on curriculum and courses  
Measurement  
Strategic plan  
Collaboration |
| --- | --- |
| Division of Labor | Decentralized structure of community engagement at NSU  
Tenure/tenure track faculty roles and responsibilities  
Leadership structure over community engagement |
| Rules | Academic culture  
Mutual benefit  
Efficiency |
| Community | External  
• Academic and professional organizations  
• Community  
• City where institution resides  
Internal  
• Administrative leadership  
• Units and centers across campus  
• Research connections |

The following analysis and associated table (table 4) represent the critical contradictions between the six analytical elements for community engagement. While this table best represents the analysis of critical contradictions in this study, it is common practice to report CHAT critical contradictions in another visual diagram. To align with CHAT scholars, this visual diagram (Appendix F) is included as an additional means to understand the critical contradictions between analytical elements in this study.

**Table 4**
### Analytical Element Critical Contradiction No Contradiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Element</th>
<th>Critical Contradiction</th>
<th>No Contradiction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Object: importance of community impact vs. lack of community involvement in EEC</td>
<td>Division of Labor Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instruments: EEC members vs. academic focus of instruments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rules: EEC members vs. academic focus of rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Subject: importance of community impact vs. lack of community involvement in EEC</td>
<td>Community Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instruments: importance of external community impact of EEC work vs. academic focus of instruments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Division of labor: Importance of community impact vs. academic focus of division of labor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments</td>
<td>Subject: EEC members vs. academic focus of instruments</td>
<td>Subject Division of Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rules Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Labor</td>
<td>Object: Importance of community impact vs. academic focus of division of labor</td>
<td>Subject Division of Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rules Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>Subject: EEC member vs. academic focus of rules</td>
<td>Object Instruments Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>No critical contradictions</td>
<td>Subject Object Division of Labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rules Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subject Critical Contradictions.** Three critical contradictions have been identified with the subject, which are the object, instruments, and rules.

**Subject Element Contradiction 1: Object.** The contradiction between the subject and the object is due to the current internal focus of EEC membership (subject) and the disconnect with
the stated purpose of community engagement (object) needing to have an external community impact. This study found that the EEC is, by the description of their work, focused on the internal, institutional transformation of NSU. However, the study also found that engagement is understood as focusing largely on external community transformation. If external community transformation is a core way NSU understands engagement, it is bound to be contradictory to a council, led largely by participants of the willing, with an almost exclusive internal focus, whose stated purpose is to guide the internal institutional engagement agenda.

**Subject Element Contradiction 2: Instruments.** The subject is a group of different types of faculty and staff at NSU who are responsible for the direction of community engagement. However, the instruments used to communicate engagement at the institution, such as the focus on academic coursework or the focus on rigorous measurement, are academic and faculty-focused, which does not represent the diversity of work EEC members are responsible for. This was evident through the analysis of interview data, which showed that the EEC is comprised of five staff, three faculty, and six faculty with administrative responsibilities. Contrary to the role diversity within the council, instruments (such as conference presentations, academic publications, etc.) are highly reflective of the ways faculty communicate, but ought to also reflect the ways staff and administrators communicate.

**Subject Element Contradiction 3: Rules.** There is a similar critical contradiction between the subject and rules as between the subject and instruments, as the rules also frequently focused on the academic culture of the organization. Illustrating this point, data for the rules analytical element show that aspects of traditional academia – such as 9-month faculty contracts, or restrictions on how money can be shared outside of the university – acted as barriers to
community engagement. Unlike the academic rules, which focus primarily on one group at the university (faculty), the findings for the subject showed that EEC members represent a diversity of roles from across the university, many of which are not academically focused (staff). This critical contradiction reveals that the rules that guide community engagement are not necessarily applicable for at least half of EEC members who have non-academic roles. It is this disconnect that establishes a critical contradiction between these analytical elements.

**Object Critical Contradictions.** The object (community engagement at NSU) has critical contradictions with three analytical elements – the subject, instruments, and division of labor. The findings indicate that engagement at NSU is understood to have both an internal transformation and an external transformation focus. While an internal and external focus are both important ways that engagement is understood, the findings indicate that engagement at NSU overwhelmingly focuses on external community transformation. In other words, the focus at NSU is on transforming the community, not the university. Given the extent of the focus on external communities (e.g., having a community impact), analytical elements that focus on the internal transformation of the university (e.g., subject, rules, division of labor) will all show critical contradictions with the object.

**Object Element Contradiction 1: Subject.** As described in the contradiction between the subject and object section above, this contradiction is due to the internal focus of EEC membership (subject) and the disconnect with the stated purpose of community engagement (object) as having a strong focus on external community impact.

**Object Element Contradiction 2: Instruments.** The contradiction between the object and instruments is present because of the disconnect between external community transformation and
the internal and academic focus within the instruments. Overwhelmingly, engagement at NSU (the object) is understood in the context of external community vitality. The instruments, however, reflect an almost exclusively internal focus. There are external indicators of community engagement at NSU present within the instruments (e.g., institutional motto), yet these instruments were identified as providing an ethos that solely guided the work for those internal to the institution. It was not connected to how the institutional motto was interpreted by communities external to NSU. In the context of this contradiction, it is important to consider that this study focused exclusively on the EEC as the CHAT activity under consideration and was not inclusive of external community perspectives. This critical contradiction may change should the scope of the study change to include an examination of external communities.

**Object Element Contradiction 3: Division of Labor.** Much like with the instruments, the critical contradiction identified with the division of labor is based on the external focus of engagement at NSU. Engagement occurs in different ways across the institution and is often organizationally necessary and/or role-specific (e.g., engaged instructors teach community-based learning courses), as is common in many organizations. The critical contradiction, as reflected in the discussion throughout this section, is a result of the object’s disproportionate focus on external community transformation. The internal focus identified in the division of labor analytical element is, and ought to be, an expected outcome. Organizational needs, structures, and leadership are key internal decisions, and an external focus is not necessary or appropriate when determining how the work of engagement occurs. This critical contradiction leaves several unanswered questions: When considering how to organizationally align division of labor and the object, which one changes? Does a critical analysis of the division of labor (structure of
community engagement/leadership) need to occur to determine if an external community component is appropriate to include? Or, is the core belief that engagement is largely focused on external community transformation a belief that needs to be operationalized within the university?

**Instruments Critical Contradictions.** The instruments analytical element has one critical contradiction, which is with the object.

**Instruments Element Contradiction 1: Object.** As discussed in the contradiction between the object and instruments, there is a disconnect between the external community transformation focus within the object and the internal focus within the instruments used to communicate community engagement (e.g., courses, demand for measurement, etc.).

**Division of Labor Critical Contradictions.** The division of labor analytical element has one contradiction, which is with the object.

**Division of Labor Contradiction 1: Object.** The critical contradiction between the division of labor and the object is based on the external focus of engagement at NSU, as discussed in the contradiction between object and division of labor section.

**Rules Critical Contradictions.** The rules analytical element has one critical contradiction, which is with the subject analytical element.

**Rules Element Contradiction 1: Subject.** As described in the contradiction between the subject and rules section, the critical contradiction between these elements can be seen in the disconnect between the rules governing engagement, which fail to meet the diverse needs of the EEC both as a group and as individuals.
Community Critical Contradictions. There are no critical contradictions identified for the community analytical element, which suggests that there is alignment between the understanding of engagement and the community context of the engagement work. Findings suggest that the object and the community analytical elements were both discussed in terms of internal and external communities, which implies that the core belief that engagement at NSU is overwhelmingly focused on external community transformation, and this core belief is reflected in the community context of engagement work, as participants relied heavily on their community partners to inform their work.

Critical Contradictions of Six Analytical Elements of DEI within Community Engagement

Aligned with the findings in chapter 4, the findings for the six analytical elements of DEI within community engagement is reported (table 5).

Table 5
Overview of Findings of Six Analytical Elements for DEI within Community Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Element</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Lack of racial diversity on EEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty of Color needs are not being met through EEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>DEI work in community engagement must be with racially diverse communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Requires communities to be protected from the university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional inequities are important to address, but lack of clarity about how to do this exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments</td>
<td>Overreliance on demographic data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration practices are resistant to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DEI development is individual-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Claims that equity is already happening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Division of Labor | Faculty hierarchy
---|---
Rules | Missing cyclical process of mutual benefit
| Community engagement work relegated to staff
| DEI work belongs to people of Color
Community | Racial demographics determine value of community engagement
| External
| • Racial demographics of the city – it is “white”
| • Racial demographics of communities NSU engaged with – must be communities of Color to address equity
| Internal
| • Individuals dedicated to personal DEI development
| • Lack of institutional DEI development

The following analysis and associated table (table 6) represent the critical contradictions between the six analytical elements for DEI within community engagement. Similar to reporting critical contradictions for community engagement, I also provide the more traditional CHAT diagram (Appendix G) as an additional way to understand the critical contradictions between analytical elements in this study.

**Table 6**

Analysis of Critical Contradictions of Six Analytical Elements for DEI within Community Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analytical Element</th>
<th>Critical Contradiction</th>
<th>Congruence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Subject | Object: importance of DEI within CE vs. lack of racial diversity on EEC
| | Division of Labor: privileges T/TT faculty, but faculty participation with EEC is limited | Instruments
| | | Rules
| | | Community
### DEI Subject Critical Contradictions

The subject element has critical contradictions with two analytical elements – the object and division of labor.

**DEI Subject Element Contradiction 1: Object.** The contradictions between the object and subject are contradictory due to a lack of racial diversity on the EEC (the subject), yet an explicit belief that DEI is a foundational component of community engagement (the object). This critical contradiction indicates there is a conflicting belief about DEI within engagement: there is one belief that external engagement must be focused historically marginalized communities (i.e., communities of Color) to “count” as engagement that is addressing equity. Yet, there is an executive community engagement council that is responsible for the direction of engagement at

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Subject: importance of DEI within CE vs. lack of racial diversity on EEC</th>
<th>Instruments: Division of Labor, Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>rules prevent DEI within CE work from progressing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Labor</td>
<td>Subject: privileges T/TT faculty, but faculty participation is limited on EEC</td>
<td>Object: privileges T/TT faculty, but faculty participation is limited on EEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>Object: rules prevent DEI within CE work from progressing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>None.</td>
<td>Subject: privileges T/TT faculty, but faculty participation is limited on EEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumets</td>
<td>None.</td>
<td>Subject: privileges T/TT faculty, but faculty participation is limited on EEC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
NSU that has a lack of racial diversity among its members. To be clear, interview data revealed that EEC members were deeply committed to DEI. They spoke passionately about continuing to push the boundaries on DEI at NSU – across the institution, within external communities, and for themselves as individuals. Given their level of passion for DEI, it was not surprising when data revealed a belief that for engagement to address DEI, the work being done must be connected to historically marginalized communities. After analyzing for critical contradictions, however, this belief that addressing DEI requires a connection to a historically marginalized community (often code used to refer to communities of Color) was a belief held by a council that lacked racial diversity. As a reminder, there are 14 total participants in this study – eight are active EEC members, two are active CEC members, and four have no formal connection to either council. Five of the fourteen participants identify as people of Color – one is an active member of the EEC, and the remaining four have no formal connection to either council. Stated differently, on the eight-member EEC, there is one person of Color, who is also the appointed co-chair of the CEC. The remaining four participants of Color are all engaged faculty with no connection to the governing body of community engagement at NSU.

**DEI Subject Element Contradiction 2: Division of Labor.** Findings within the subject element showed a lack of engaged faculty of Color involvement with the EEC, suggesting a disconnect between the work of the EEC and the needs of faculty of Color. The findings in the division of labor element showed that the focus on faculty needs facilitated the creation of a hierarchy that limits the authority of those in non-T/TT faculty positions (i.e., nearly half of the EEC members). This contradiction is puzzling. There is a hierarchy that privileges faculty at a university that has been publicly vocal about equitable practices in engagement. The assumption
I had was that faculty, faculty of Color in particular, would be deeply engaged with both the CEC and the EEC, as they could have influence on the university-level council that is responsible for the direction of community engagement at NSU. That assumption was incorrect. Despite findings within the division of labor element showing how academic culture and faculty needs are prioritized across the university, the findings in the subject analytical element revealed that there is a disconnect between engaged faculty – particularly engaged faculty of Color – and the groups responsible for the direction of engagement at NSU, the CEC and EEC. For example, the subject analytical element findings show that faculty who participated in this study were both members and non-members of the EEC. The faculty who are members each also have administrative roles and are not necessarily representing faculty perspectives on the EEC, leaving a gap in faculty representation on the EEC. The faculty who do not participate on the EEC are all faculty of Color, who each had a hesitancy to participate on either council, and were skeptical of the purpose of those councils. This critical contradiction revealed a disconnect between the EEC members and faculty representation – particularly faculty of Color.

**DEI Object Critical Contradictions.** The object (community engagement at NSU) has two critical contradictions, one with the subject and one with the rules analytical elements.

**DEI Object Element Contradiction 1: Subject.** As discussed in the contradiction between the object and subject section, there is a lack of racial diversity on the EEC (the subject), yet an explicit belief that DEI is a foundational component for engagement (the object).

**DEI Object Element Contradiction 2: Rules.** The object and rules contradiction is primarily a contradiction of unspoken rules. Within the object, participants identified that there was a deep individual commitment to equity but stressed that DEI had not been adequately
addressed at the institutional level. The rules analytical element findings, however, indicated that the cycle of mutual benefit within engagement work was frequently incomplete and focused more on community benefit rather than focusing on the benefits for both the community and the university. The literature stresses that addressing community needs effectively and equitably requires mutual benefit (Barker, 2004; Beaulieu et al., 2018; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Cantor et al., 2013; Furco, 2010; Gordon da Cruz, 2018; Holland, 2001, 2009; Inman, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Ramaley, 2002; Spanier, 2011). Findings, however, indicate a disconnect between how DEI within engagement is understood at NSU (i.e., the need to protect the community) and the rules that guide how NSU engages with communities (i.e., missing cyclical process of mutual benefit). A key example of this contradiction can be seen through Rachel’s belief that it her personal and professional responsibility to act as a “bridge tender” – or boundary-spanner as Weerts and Sandmann (2010) would argue – to advocate for changes to institutional practices that act as barriers to engagement. As discussed previously, Rachel described her approach to mutual benefit as having a recognition of both the university and community:

And both [the community and the university] have missions they want to fulfill. I work at an institution that says [we value our university/community connection], and it's my job to come back and say, if we are committed to race equity, it's my job to come back and say here's a way you can fulfill your mission better.

This practice of double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Kezar et al., 2008) requires that institutions ask new questions that challenge assumptions of traditional practice. In this particular case, it can interrogate the cyclical process of mutual benefit and reshape how DEI is addressed at the institutional level.
**DEI Instruments Critical Contradictions.** The instruments analytical element does not have any critical contradictions. The instruments used to describe and communicate community engagement at NSU are primarily internally focused (i.e., individual approach to DEI training, the overreliance on demographic data, etc.) and frequently support the findings in other areas. For example, both the community and object analytical elements indicate that there is a lack of development and knowledge about institutionalizing DEI. Within these findings, consider that the instruments are largely internally focused. This example of a largely internal focus demonstrates the congruence between the instruments and the other analytical elements.

**DEI Division of Labor Critical Contradictions.** The division of labor analytical element has one critical contradiction, which is with the subject analytical element.

**DEI Division of Labor Contradiction 1: Subject.** As noted in the contradiction between the subject and division of labor section, findings within the subject analytical element showed a lack of engaged faculty of Color involvement with the EEC, suggesting that the EEC is not engaged in work that effectively meets the needs of engaged faculty of Color. The findings in the division of labor showed that the focus on faculty member needs facilitated the creation of a faculty hierarchy that limits the influence of those in non-T/TT faculty positions (i.e., nearly half of the EEC members).

**DEI Rules Critical Contradictions.** The rules analytical element has one critical contradiction with the object analytical element.

**DEI Rules Element Contradiction 1: Object.** As discussed in the DEI object critical contradiction section above, there is a deep individual commitment to equity, and a belief that communities, diverse communities in particular, needed to be protected from the university. The
rules analytical element showed that the cycle of mutual benefit within engagement work was frequently incomplete and focused more on community benefit than both the community and the university. The findings of this study show a disconnect between how DEI within engagement is understood at NSU and the rules that guide how NSU engages with communities.

**DEI Community Critical Contradictions.** The community analytical element does not have critical contradictions with any other analytical element. The communities identified as support systems for participants were divided into both internal and external communities, in which the discussions frequently highlighted the lack of racial diversity both internally at the university and externally in the city. Similar discussions occurred within the other analytical elements (e.g., the object with lack of knowledge to institutionalize DEI; lack of racial diversity on the EEC and CEC; DEI development is individually focused). These similarities indicate there is congruence between the community analytical element and the other analytical elements.

**Critical Contradictions in the Context of Organizational Change**

Thus far, CHAT has allowed for a disentanglement of community engagement and DEI within community engagement. This separation is an important step in addressing the research question of this study, which aims to identify organizational contradictions and areas of congruence when analyzing how community engagement and DEI operate together within colleges and universities striving to transform into engaged institutions. Isolating everyday community engagement practices from the underlying DEI approaches within those practices allows for a critical analysis of how intended and unintended DEI approaches both inform and are informed by community engagement. Although the findings and analysis thus far provide
important insight into everyday practices, an analysis of critical contradictions between the six analytical elements for community engagement with the six analytical elements for DEI within community engagement is required to fully understand how community engagement and DEI operate, organizationally, together at NSU. A similar approach was taken by Dowd and Liera (2018), who identified and analyzed critical contradictions between two activity systems (data usage within traditional academic departments versus data usage using an equity approach). Identifying critical contradictions between these two activity systems provided the authors with important insight into where shifts in organizational change were necessary to begin to transform an institution.

Following a similar reporting structure to the previous two sections, the following analysis represents the critical contradictions between the six analytical elements for community engagement with the six analytical elements for DEI within community engagement.

**Critical Contradictions Between Analytical Elements of Community Engagement and of DEI within Community Engagement**

The literature reviewed for this study was anchored in organizational change theories – institutional theories, social cognition theories, and CHAT – as lenses to consider the connections between community engagement and racial DEI from an organizational transformation perspective. Each theoretical approach to change was considered throughout this study. Institutional change theorists argue that long-standing organizations will not likely change unless external societal forces mandate a change (Gumport & Pusser, 2012; Kezar, 2018; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Slaughter & Rhodes, 2004), making institutional theories of change an
important a lens to consider the contextual (environmental) pressures that contributed to the current structure of engagement at NSU.

While it is essential to understand how colleges and universities are influenced (and are sometimes forced) to change based on external social pressures, organizations also change from internal pressures (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Bensimon et al., 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Kezar, 2018; Kezar & Eckel, 2002a, 2002b; Kezar et al., 2008; Levine, 1980; Weerts & Sandmann, 2010). Social cognition theories of change provided a lens to consider internal approaches to change in this study. NSU has a rich history of organizational change, as seen in its development from an educational center to a research university. The substantial organizational changes that occurred throughout the institution’s history suggest that the internal ethos of engagement, that has been foundational since inception, facilitated organizational transformation.

To facilitate an analysis through these different organizational change lenses required an organizational-level analysis, cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) provided this theoretical and methodological approach to understanding the connection between engagement and racial DEI at an organizational level. This use of this approach was important, as it balanced the internal and external focuses of the institutional and social cognition theories of change. CHAT scholars argue that identifying and addressing critical contradictions between analytical elements provides insight into where organizational change is enabled or prevented (Engeström, 2001, 2008; Dowd & Liera, 2018).

Thus far, critical contradictions have been separately identified and analyzed for both community engagement and for DEI within community engagement analytical elements. The
separation of the analysis provided insight into embedded inequities within engagement at NSU. Without separating the analysis, noteworthy critical contradictions would not have been identified. Specifically, the lack of racial diversity on the EEC is incongruously paired with a belief that for community engagement to address equity, that work must be done with a racially diverse community. What has yet to be considered are the critical contradictions between engagement and DEI within engagement analytical elements. Comparing across two sets of analytical elements is not common practice with CHAT scholars. However, one contribution of this study is to explore organizational transformation through two seemingly separate initiatives (engagement and DEI) simultaneously. This exploration required that community engagement and DEI first be isolated from one another to fully, deeply, and organizationally understand engagement and DEI at NSU. Comparing across these two separate groups of analytical elements provided insight, as discussed below, into the ways engagement at NSU addresses racial equity. In turn, this provides insight into concrete areas of practice that may facilitate organizational transformation. The following sections compare critical contradictions between community engagement and DEI within community engagement analytical elements. The four critical contradictions identified are the object, instruments, rules, and community analytical elements.

**Critical Contradiction between the Object Elements.** As a social cognition theory, organizational sensemaking (Jappinen, 2017; Kezar, 2005, 2018; Kezar & Eckel, 2002a, 2002b) is important to consider throughout this critical contradiction. Kezar and Eckel (2002a, 2002b) argued that individuals make sense of the changes around them to identify how they can influence and participate in the organizational changes occurring. In this critical contradiction, there is a disconnect between the ways individuals make sense of community engagement at
NSU and the ways they make sense of DEI within community engagement. Specifically, there are three ways community engagement is understood at NSU. Overwhelmingly it was identified as work that aims to transform external communities. A subset of participants understand the role community engagement plays in transforming the internal institution. Less common is the third way of understanding community engagement, which was identified as boundary-spanning role and represents the intersection of community and institutional transformation. When DEI is isolated, the findings indicate a similar separation of internal and external characteristics of community engagement. However, the external focus shifted to one that prioritized protecting communities, particularly communities of Color, from the university as opposed to the asset-based approach discussed before DEI was isolated.

Within the community engagement object, the purpose of community engagement was determined to be either external community transformation-focused or internal institutional transformation-focused. It was rare that both areas of transformation were addressed simultaneously. The community transformation-focus findings frequently identified challenges that impact communities, and the transformational potential of community/university partnership work. The institutional-focus findings identified the need for academic and research dissemination to better understand how to transform universities into engaged institution.

However, the findings change swiftly when DEI within community engagement is isolated. For community transformation, the findings identified a concern that communities needed to be protected from universities, indicating a focus on community vulnerability rather than a focus on institutional practices that put communities in vulnerable positions. When DEI is isolated from the institutional transformational aspects of engagement, the findings shift from the importance
of large-scale research dissemination to a focus on individual faculty needs and behaviors. There is an additional finding that identified the belief that for community engagement to focus on DEI, the work must be done within racially diverse communities. This contradiction between the objects indicates there is a deep desire to do DEI work well, but a lack of understanding about how to institutionalize the work.

**Critical Contradiction between the Instruments Elements.** Using a double-loop learning approach to understand the critical contradiction between the instruments provides an interesting consideration of how DEI is addressed in community engagement. As discussed in chapter 2, double-loop learning requires individuals to consider the root causes of a problem to identify changes that need to be made within organizational structures, norms, values, and goals to facilitate organizational transformation (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Bensimon et al., 2012; Kezar et al., 2008). Analysis of the instruments element for community engagement indicated that the instruments used in community engagement were focused on the institutional motto, academic dissemination, measurement, strategic plan, and common collaboration practices. Double-loop learning theory consideration of root causes of problems is evident in the theoretical approach to the creation of CBL courses at NSU. There was an underlying recognition that community engagement was core to the institution, and, therefore, ought to be a core experience for graduates of the university. Through an iterative process, NSU was able to determine that all students within an engaged institution need to have community engagement opportunities, which is proven to facilitate institutionalization of engagement (Andes, 2006; Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2011; Holland, 2005; Kellogg Commission, 1999). Providing students with access to a range of CBL course opportunities ensured students were able to experience
engagement outside of their comfort zone while also ensuring diverse communities continued to benefit from student participation (i.e., availability of volunteers, expertise to address particular issues within a community, etc.).

When DEI is isolated from community engagement, however, instruments change from a double-loop learning approach to a single-loop learning approach. As stated in chapter 2, single loop learning differs from double loop in that it involves detecting mistakes within a system with the intention of correcting the mistakes and does not often facilitate lasting change (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Bensimon et al., 2012; Kezar et al., 2008). Determining that CBL courses were created in the name of mutual benefit, as they provide communities with relevant solutions and provide students with experience in diverse spaces. This likely required a double-loop learning approach to identify that coursework could be more inclusive. Although a double-loop approach was likely utilized at the onset of this process, the analysis of DEI in this process revealed that a single-loop learning approach was used when measuring DEI. The instruments intended to measure outcomes and impacts quickly became a way to count the presence of DEI within community engagement. Measuring community engagement, the way it is currently measured (number of courses available, number of students in courses, etc.) requires an overreliance on racial demographics to prove equity is present within community engagement work (e.g., the number of communities of Color NSU works with). Utilizing a double-loop learning approach would allow for a more critical consideration of the impact on DEI when current instruments for community engagement are utilized indiscriminately.

**Critical Contradiction between the Rules Elements.** The third critical contradiction is between the rules analytical elements, specifically mutual benefit and academic culture. Mutual
benefit is considered a foundational component (rule) of community engagement, both in this study as well as throughout the literature on community engagement (Barker, 2004; Beaulieu et al., 2018; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Cantor et al., 2013; Furco, 2010; Gordon da Cruz, 2018; Holland, 2001, 2009; Inman, 2004; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Ramaley, 2002; Spanier, 2011). Participants recognized the importance of mutual benefit in community engagement, yet the data suggests that what was being learned through community engagement was not being reciprocated back to NSU in impactful and sustaining ways. Participants tended to highlight the prevalence of community-based learning courses at NSU when discussing mutual benefit between the university and the community. Simplistically stated, students are looking for places to fulfill their CBL course requirements and communities are looking for volunteers to address a wide variety of community needs. Data also suggests that important institutional practices (such as determining how much overhead to charge for a grant based in partnership work, or how to effectively take and share meeting minutes, etc.) often act as barriers to community engagement, but little interest has been shown in wanting to address these organizational-level issues. Instead, administrative leaders were perceived to overly focus on research and measurement.

In addition to the rules of mutual benefit, the rules guiding community engagement were heavily influenced by academic culture (e.g., P&T requirements for T/TT faculty). Analyzing DEI within community engagement revealed that there was a faculty hierarchy that often relegated the logistical requirements of community-engaged work to staff, as T/TT faculty were not expected to or rewarded for taking active roles on the CEC or EEC. Consider, for example, the finding that engaged faculty participants believed they should play a role in the CEC, but not be responsible for the CEC – a belief that ultimately deemed staff “responsible” for the processes
to institutionalizing engagement. Relegating work to staff is not, in and of itself, problematic. However, this study found that not being T/TT faculty prevents participation in university-level work. Recall Rachel’s frustration with how committee membership was determined, as those who often had the most knowledge of engagement were frequently prevented from participating on university-wide committees because of how their roles are funded. This power differential between faculty and staff, coupled with an overreliance on staff to, at least in practice, be responsible for community engagement, creates a scenario where those with the least amount of power are responsible for the bulk of the institutionally-foundational work necessary to further diffuse community engagement across NSU.

Weerts & Sandmann’s (2010) discussion of boundary-spanning roles within community engagement provides insight into this critical contradiction with their identification of boundary-spanning roles that facilitate diffusion of engagement: community-based problem solvers, technical experts, internal engagement advocates, and engagement champions. At NSU, the community-based problem solvers and internal engagement advocates were overwhelmingly staff, as indicated by their job titles and self-reported work responsibilities. The technical experts were the engaged faculty and the engagement champions were the administrators (who were also often faculty). Recall Rachel’s explanation of how decisions about university committee membership are made (based on faculty status and funding structure). Using her description provides a notable example of the disconnect between the two boundary-spanning roles that have the most information and experience, and the two boundary-spanning roles that make institutional-level decisions about institutionalizing engagement.
Critical Contradiction between the Community Elements. The fourth and final contradiction is between the community analytical elements. Within the external community, participants identified that academic or professional peers, community partners, and the context of the city influenced their work at NSU. When DEI was isolated, the racial/ethnic demographics of community partners and the racial context of the city were frequently discussed. However, the race/ethnicity of their academic peers was not ever included in DEI discussions. The exclusion of DEI when discussing external peers presents an important contradiction to consider, as academic and professional peers external to the institution inform the scholarly work of faculty, which is ultimately the work that is expected of and rewarded for T/TT faculty at NSU. This contradiction highlights an important inconsistency. On one hand, the racial demographic information is used to identify if there is a DEI component to a community engagement project at NSU. On the other hand, academic work with external peers does not warrant consideration of the racial makeup of peer groups to inform if there is an equity focus in their own engagement work. Put in the form of a question: Why is the demographic composition of a community a determinant of equity work, but the demographic composition of external academic peers is not? This illustrates a critical contradiction worth exploring in community-engaged practices.

Within the internal community, participants relied on both their peers and those in leadership roles to guide and support their community engagement at NSU. To guide and support DEI, however, participants indicated they relied heavily on their peers who were equally dedicated to DEI development and, for the most part, stated that the university had not done enough to address equity at the institutional level. When community engagement and DEI are detangled, however, it became clear that community engagement and DEI development were two
separate conversations. Participants indicated they relied on leaders and individual peers to support community engagement, but their DEI support only came from specific individuals (who had dedicated themselves to individual development in DEI). This critical contradiction indicates that there is a disconnect of support between community engagement and DEI within community engagement. Once DEI is introduced into the community engagement conversation, high-level leaders are no longer considered support systems and participants do not believe the institution is doing enough to support DEI across the university. Social cognition theories of organizational change articulate that individuals learn from the organization, and organizations learn from individuals (Jappinen, 2017; Kezar, 2005, 2018; Kezar & Eckel, 2002a, 2002b). This critical contradiction highlights the disconnect between the work of individuals and the work of the organization. Specifically, the work being conducted individually is not translating into institutional change, like scholars who advocated for transformation into engaged institutions had hoped (Holland, 2005; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Mitchell, 2016; Ramaley, 1996).

To conclude this section, a number of critical contradictions were identified between community engagement and DEI within community engagement. I found three substantial findings worth highlighting again. First, critical contradictions showed that the object, or the definition and understanding of community engagement at NSU, is in critical contradiction to almost every other analytical element. It is not aligned, in a critically important way, to the makeup of the EEC, the way work is organizationally divided, the rules that govern those different roles, or the ways community engagement is communicated. How community engagement is understood and defined at NSU is not reflected similarly at the organizational level.
Second, critical contradictions between the rules analytical elements showed that the university benefit was missing from the discussion and practice of mutual benefit. There is a deep belief in the mutual benefit of CBL courses, and long-term partnerships have been established from these practices. Outside of CBL, working to address institutional barriers to community engagement has been an ongoing struggle at NSU. Additionally, there continues to be misalignment between community engagement needs and institutional practices common in traditional academic culture. Through data analysis, I learned that important institutional and foundational work that facilitates community engagement at NSU has been largely relegated to staff, a group identified as having the least amount of influence at the institution and is a group that has been actively excluded from participating in university-level decision-making opportunities.

Third, critical contradictions between the community elements showed that, in terms of external community, racial demographics of communities often determined if the work was equity-focused. Yet, determining an equity-focus of academic work does not consider the racial demographics of the faculty conducting the work. There was a similar disconnect within the internal community. Institutional leaders were overwhelmingly considered an important partner for participants in community engagement work. Yet, it was believed that the same administrative leaders were barriers to DEI work.

**Implications for Practice, Limitations, Social Context, and Future Research**

In consideration of the overarching findings, I offer three specific findings that I consider important contributions of this study that inform both practice and future research: missing cyclical process of mutual benefit, instruments across the institution act as barriers or
misrepresentations of how equity within community engagement operates, and the critical role of
top-level leadership to guide institutional approaches to equitable community engagement.
Following the implications for practice, I address the limitations of this study, provide my
thoughts on future research opportunities, and offer concluding remarks.

*Mutual Benefit as Cyclical Practice*

Mutual benefit, as a core belief and practice for community-engaged scholars and
practitioners, ensures that both the institution and the community benefit from the work being
carried out together (Barker, 2004; Beaulieu et al., 2018; Bridger & Alter, 2006; Cantor et al.,
2013; Furco, 2010; Gordon da Cruz, 2018; Holland, 2001, 2009; Inman, 2004; Kellogg
Commission, 1999; Ramaley, 2002; Spanier, 2011). Mutual benefit is cyclical and cannot be
only community benefit-focused. The findings from this study suggest that while mutual benefit
is a rule that guides community engagement at NSU, the benefit for the institution was either
unclear or exclusively student-focused in nature. Recall Rachel’s frustration with her peers
because they were not utilizing their positions at the institution to influence institutional policy
and practice in support of community engagement. Consider the purpose and definition of
community engagement (the object) and how they relate to the rules guiding the work. In this
case, the findings in the object for community engagement section, the purpose and definition of
community engagement at NSU were focused on both community and institutional
transformation (though participants favored the former over the latter). There is a critical
contradiction between the rules and the object, which illuminated that mutual benefit was
considered vital in community transformation but was not considered a means to transform the
institution.
A practical strategy moving forward is that practitioners could conduct a critical assessment of the mutually beneficial ways community and university engage together. Ensuring mutual benefit is a vital core practice to enable both community and university transformation. Partners must critically analyze how their processes pose barriers to meeting organizational goals and identify ways to address those barriers together. This differs from a college or university catering to community demands and deeming that kind of a response “transformational.” An interaction of this type is primarily transactional and does not have the potential to transform an institution or a community. Rather, Rachel’s approach to engagement is illustrative to the type of partnership that would move from transaction to transformation. As previously discussed, Rachel has a sense of responsibility to transform both the university and the community. She shared that the kind of engagement work she did was not transactional, but transformative. Her work was grounded in long-term partnerships where all parties are mutually responsible for themselves and each other – a partnership Rachel described as one of the strongest partnerships that can exist. It is grounded in the recognition that each partner comes with different strengths that can contribute to a similar goal. This recognition is embedded in the work that they do together (i.e., co-writing grants). I suggest that an ongoing critical account and assessment of the mutually beneficial ways community and university engage together is a necessary core practice to inform both community and university transformation.

**Utilizing Instruments as Powerful Practitioner Tools**

Findings in the object for DEI within community engagement element reveal a widespread concern that the institution is not addressing equity adequately. However, there is a lack of clarity about how to address equity. Findings within the instruments for DEI within
community engagement showed that training and development tended to be individually focused, but not inclusive of institutional transformation. In the context of these types of findings, I suggest analyzing how organizational tools are being used to conduct and communicate engagement with a lens towards equity. Consider Katie’s statement that the equity conversations that occurred in EEC meetings were not necessarily reflected in official meeting minutes. To center equity requires a critical consideration of common practices, such as what kind of information to record in official meeting minutes, as these common practices are often invisible and go unexamined.

**Clear Leadership Structure to Connect Community Engagement and DEI**

Engagement scholars argue that having a centralized unit responsible for institutionalizing engagement provides an important mechanism for transformation into an engaged institution (Driscoll, 2008, 2014; Hollander et al., 2002). The findings of this study indicate that the elimination of two offices that had responsibility for the strategic direction of engagement left participants unclear about the engagement strategy at NSU. The EEC currently serves as the centralized unit with responsibility for the direction of engagement. In a short span of time, engagement went from a university-level center with oversight of the engagement strategy at NSU, to a decentralized group of engaged scholars and practitioners who have the time and funding necessary to participate.

As an example, the findings of the community analytical element for community engagement identified that the leaders of the institution (i.e., the president or provost level) are highly supportive of the institutionalization of engagement. Although deeply committed, administrators at that level cannot provide oversight of the institutionalization engagement, yet
no one else was deemed in charge. Participants described the challenges they faced in their work because there was a lack of leadership over engagement, and they had a lot of questions about what the structure of engagement was going to look like in the future. Drawing on the organizational learning literature discussed in chapter 2, a double-loop learning strategy could be used to engage in critical and honest discussion about the direction of the university related to engagement. For example, one of the Equity Scorecard exercises (which also used CHAT) was to engage in a critical consideration of disaggregated data using an equity lens, which is an important practice to establish and engage with frequently (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015). Engaging in practices like this may provide an onramp to ask hard questions to determine the best organizational structure for engagement, such as: What is the current status of NSU in terms of institutionalizing engagement? What are the commitments that NSU has toward supporting the goal of institutionalizing engagement? What are the barriers that you all face together as you move forward? What assets are in place to support institutionalizing engagement?

Engaging in equity questions in a structured way can facilitate change and support double-loop learning (Bensimon, 2005; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015). Specifically, the equity scorecard developed by Dowd and Bensimon (2015) is a tool to identify where, organizationally, inequities exist. Drawing on their work, leaders can ask critical questions – from an organizational lens – to inform where inequities may be present in their own thinking and processes. Drawing on this process, NSU leaders may conclude that the institution needs a more centralized, formalized structure to institutionalize engagement or leaders may conclude that the current decentralized structure serves the needs of NSU well.
Limitations

Several limitations require consideration when engaging with the findings of this study. First, the results of this study are not intended to be generalizable, even to institutions similar to NSU. The purpose of qualitative research, a qualitative case study in particular, is to establish a deep and rich understanding of a particular context (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). While the findings of this study are not generalizable, they can be used to inform future research on the topic.

This study includes one in-depth analysis of a single institution – a large, public, high-research, urban-serving university with a long history of working towards transforming into an engaged institution. Utilizing this research approach with institutions that are substantially different (such as a small, teaching-focused, private, liberal arts college) may not have the same results as the current study, as the institutional context of this study is critical to the effectiveness of the research outcomes.

In terms of participants, there were a total of 14 individuals who were included in this study. All participants were internal to NSU and were officially or unofficially connected to the CEC. Including additional participants who are connected to the centralized unit in a different way would be an interesting addition to these findings. Additionally, the scope of this study was internally focused. Therefore, no information was collected from community partners or from the surrounding community. Adding a community-based understanding of how racial DEI operates within community engagement would also be an important contribution to this line of research.

Contextual Update to Reflect Significant Societal Changes
Our world has changed in rather significant ways since data was collected for this study. Development of this research study occurred prior to three key social events: the COVID-19 global pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, and the Supreme Court ruling to overturn affirmative action in college and university admission processes. For a full discussion on these important contextual considerations, see Appendix H.

**Future Research**

The model provided in this study results from the analysis of one institution at one very particular point in time. Future research ought to include additional institutions, both similar and different, to more fully understand the usefulness of critical contradictions to identify how DEI is addressed within community engagement. Adding additional institutions to investigate (i.e., multi case study) would also allow for comparison among sites, which could provide important perspectives regarding how different structures of community engagement work impact racial DEI within that work. Another consideration is to include a different organizational approach to guiding community engagement. At NSU, the unit responsible for community engagement was largely decentralized and was guided by a council made up of willing participants. Examining institutions that structure DEI and community engagement in the same organizational unit or an institution with a formalized office dedicated to community engagement would also provide important insights.

This study initially began with a focus on racial diversity, equity, and inclusion within the work of community engagement. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that equity, in general, was a priority for participants at NSU. Racial DEI was addressed, but the data took an anticipated direction and showed that participants did not focus exclusively on race, but
addressed equity more generally. There were instances of racial equity discussions within the data, but documents did not always support the focus on race, making it difficult to triangulate findings exclusively regarding race equity (aside from demographics). Future research could hyper-focus on race, as this study could not do, or it could expand the definition to be more inclusive in the focus on equity (e.g., consider the intersection of race and LGBTQIA+ identities, consider dis/ability issues as connected to engagement, etc.)

Lastly, for a more focused study on race, an additional theoretical lens that is specific to race must be utilized. In the current study, organizational change theories, including institutional and social cognition theories of change as well as CHAT, were used as theoretical approaches. Future research might use racial formation as a theoretical grounding to guide the study. According to Omi & Winant (2015), “the process of race making, and its reverberations throughout the social order, is what we call racial formation. We define racial formation as the sociohistorical process by which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed, and destroyed” (p. 109). Of particular use in this theory is the concept of racial projects, which helps to “connect what race means in a particular discursive or ideological practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning” (Omi & Winant, 2018, p. 125). When combined with CHAT, this theoretical approach could provide further structure specifically around racial DEI, allowing for a more in-depth understanding of how racial formation and racial projects occur within community engagement.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study contributes to the community engagement field as it pertains to the connection between community engagement and racial diversity, equity, and inclusion. The
literature in the area indicates there is a struggle to identify impactful ways to understand DEI work in direct connection within community engagement work. Scholars frequently call for empirical studies to explore this connection (Hernández and Pasquesi, 2017; Musil, 2011; Simpson, 2014; Strum et al., 2011). This study sought to contribute to this literature by investigating the research question, “What organizational contradictions and areas of congruence exist when analyzing how community engagement and racial diversity, equity, and inclusion operate together?” Using cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) as a theoretical framework and analytical tool, the findings of this study help the field move forward in the realm of research and practice by providing insight into the strength of using an organizational change lens to investigate the connection between DEI and community engagement. First, the use of CHAT as an analytical tool, in and of itself, is a substantial contribution to the broader field of community engagement. It is the first of its kind to use this organizational strategy in the community engagement/DEI space and demonstrates the benefit of analyzing critical contradictions across various campus agendas aiming for organizational transformation. CHAT was especially useful in the context of identifying invisible organizational norms, values, and goals that shape how DEI is addressed in community engagement, which illustrates the power of this framework in disentangling complex and sometimes competing agendas at an organizational level. Second, this study provides insight into the usefulness of identifying critical contradictions within an organization to address complex institutional issues. Identifying critical contradictions pinpoints specific misalignment of organizational elements and reveals deeply embedded norms, values, and goals that are likely root causes of institutional issues. This is particularly evident in the final critical contradiction analysis, as it showed how common beliefs and practices within community
engagement – such as a reliance on demographic data to prove equity was being considered – can be unintentionally inequitable. Lastly, the cyclical process of mutual benefit is missing at NSU. This process plays a key role in enabling community and institutional transformation, not just in name, but also in practice. Establishing the benefits that engagement work has for communities and universities, rather than solely focusing on benefits to communities, provides an ongoing means to consider how to utilize engagement as a means to meet institutional goals.

While these three key contributions are noteworthy, this is one study. Echoing the request from engagement scholars, I also stress the need for additional empirical studies that address the connections between community engagement and DEI. As colleges and universities continue to work towards institutionalizing engagement, an iterative consideration of DEI throughout this process will be important to ensure that institutionalizing engagement does not restructure the inequities already embedded in the current higher education system. It is my belief that transforming into institutions that are both engaged and equitable is possible, as community engagement and DEI are reliant on one another. To be an engaged institution requires inclusion of multiple forms of knowledge. To be an equitable/inclusive institution requires a deep understanding of the community contexts surrounding a college or university. In the end, the goals are one and the same. Considering the future research possibilities, I look forward to the continued critical consideration of the connections between community engagement and DEI.
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Appendix A: Consent Form

This consent form is for the Engaged Institution Racial DEI study and is intended for participants prior to an in-person interview, instructors of classrooms where observations are being conducted, and for facilitators of meetings where observations are being conducted.

Title of Research Study: Engaged Institution Address Racial DEI
Investigator Team Contact Information: Arien Telles

For questions about research appointments, the research study, research results, or other concerns, call the study team at:

Investigator Name: David Weerts
Investigator Departmental Affiliation: OLPD
Phone Number: 612-625-2289
Email Address: dweerts@umn.edu

Student Investigator Name: Arien Telles
Phone Number: 651-308-7991
Email Address: atelles@umn.edu

Key Information About This Research Study
- You are invited to participate in a study about your experiences, thoughts, and work specific to community engagement in your institution. This study is looking at how community engagement work and racial equity work are connected.

What is research?
- The goal of research is to learn about the new things in order to help people in the future. Investigators learn things by following the same plan with a number of participants, so they do not usually make changes to the plan for individual research participants. You, as an individual, may or may not be helped by volunteering for a research study.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research study?
- We are asking you to take part in this research study specifically because you have been identified as important person to talk to in terms of your work or connection with community engagement on your campus.

What should I know about a research study?
- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
• You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?
• This research is being conducted to help us better understand how community engagement work and racial equity work are connected on your campus.

What will I need to do to participate?
• If you agree to participate, I will conduct a 60-90 minute individual interview, observe your classroom, or observe your meeting related to community engagement. We may do a follow-up consultation with you as well to clarify any responses. For analysis purposes, the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed, and field notes will be taken as a part of observation of classrooms and meetings. As a part of the interview or observation, you will also be asked to complete a short demographic form.

Risks of Being in the Study
• There are no risks to participating in this research.

Benefits of Being in the Study
• There are no benefits to participating in this research.

Compensation
• There is no compensation connected with interviews or observations.

Confidentiality
• Any written or other kinds of external dissemination will de-identify by either speaking generally about the findings, or assigning a pseudonym and generic position titles describing your work to ensure de-identification. Any written form of data will be secured in a locked drawer in the student investigator’s office.

What happens if I say “Yes”, but I change my mind later?
• Participation in this study is voluntary and your decision to participate will not affect you in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without consequence.

What happens to the information collected for the research?
• The information collected for this research study will be stored in a secure, individual password protected data system through the University of Minnesota. Only the PI and the student investigator will have access to this data. Any written materials will be scanned and stored in the same data system then shredded, or will be stored in a locked drawer in the student investigator’s office.

Whom do I contact if I have questions, concerns or feedback about my experience?
• The lead investigators and researchers conducting this study are: Dr. David Weerts, Associate Professor and Arien Telles, PhD Candidate, both in the Department of
Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. You may ask any questions you have now, or if questions arise later, contact Arien Telles atelles@umn.edu, 651-308-7991.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an IRB within the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). To share feedback privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants’ Advocate Line at 612-625-1650 or go to https://research.umn.edu/units/hrpp/research-participants/questions-concerns. You are encouraged to contact the HRPP if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Will I have a chance to provide feedback after the study is over?

- The HRPP may ask you to complete a survey that asks about your experience as a research participant. You do not have to complete the survey if you do not want to. If you do choose to complete the survey, your responses will be anonymous.

If you are not asked to complete a survey, but you would like to share feedback, please contact the study team or the HRPP. See the “Investigator Contact Information” of this form for study team contact information and “Whom do I contact if I have questions, concerns or feedback about my experience?” of this form for HRPP contact information.

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research. You will be provided a copy of this signed document.

Signature of Participant __________________________ Date __________

Printed Name of Participant __________________________

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent __________________________ Date __________

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent __________________________
Appendix B: Demographic Form for Interview Participants

This demographic form is for the Engaged Institution Racial DEI study and is intended for participants prior to an in-person interview. Please complete and return to the interviewer.

Name: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________
Institution: ____________________________ Years at Institution: _________________
Role at Institution: ____________________________
Connection to Community Engagement: ____________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Purpose of Participation (check one):
__ In-Person Interview  __ Lead of Meeting, Event, or Classroom being observed

Race/Ethnicity (check all that apply)
__ American Indian / Native American
__ Asian/ Pacific Islander
__ Black/ African/ African-American
__ Latinx / Chicanx/ Hispanic
__ White
__ Multiracial (please list): _______________________________

If none of the above represents your racial/ethnic identity, please fill in your own description:
______________________________________________________________________________

Gender (fill in): ________________________________
Appendix C: Email Template for Recruiting Participants

Participants identified through organizational charts and/or from key informants will be sent an email inviting them to participate in an interview. This email will read:

Dear PARTICIPANT NAME,

My name is Arien Telles and I am Ph.D. candidate from the University of Minnesota and I am currently collecting data for my dissertation. I have been working with PERSON REFERRING PARTICIPANT OR KEY INFORMANT and they suggested that you are an important person to talk to for this study. I would like to invite you to participate in a 60-minute interview with me to discuss your work with engagement. If you are able and willing to participate, I will be on campus between XX DATE – XX DATE. Please let me know if there are some dates/times you are available to meet with me. Thank you for considering my request,
Appendix D: Document Review Protocol

Criteria for selecting documents to review:

1. Historical formation of the centralized unit responsible for institutionalizing engagement
2. Transcripts or notes from meetings regarding community engagement activities
3. Documents identifying the goals of the centralized unit responsible for institutionalizing engagement
4. Relevant institutional websites
5. Job descriptions for those directly connected to the centralized units
6. Institutional organizational charts
7. Institutional policies/practices pertaining to engagement (e.g., tenure and promotion)
8. Other documents deemed important by the institutional informants or others interviewed for this study
Appendix E: Interview Protocol

1. How do you define engagement? (Object)
2. Does your definition align with the way your institution defines engagement? (Object)
3. What role do you think engagement plays at your institution? (Object)
4. Do you think your institution is working towards institutionalizing engagement? (Object)
   a. If so, how are they working towards this goal? If not, why do you think this?
5. What role do you play in the institutionalization of engagement? (Division of Labor)
6. Describe the kind of work you do within the unit. (Division of Labor)
7. Who do you consider to be your colleagues in this work? (Communities)
8. What and/or who guides the way you are involved with community engagement? (Rules)
9. What and/or who creates barriers for your participation in engagement work? (Rules)
10. What and/or who facilitates or removes barriers for your participation in engagement work? (Rules)
11. Who or what plays a vital role in you being able to do your job? (Subject)
12. What does “racial diversity, equity, and inclusion” mean to you? (Subject)
13. Are racial diversity, equity, and inclusion important in your engagement work? If so, how? If not, why? (Subject)
14. Given the conversation thus far, what role does racial diversity, equity, and inclusion play in your engagement work? (Object)
15. Are racial diversity, equity, and inclusion important in the overall work of engagement? Can you provide an example? (Object)
16. Who else do you think I should be interviewing for this study? (3-5 names)
Appendix F: CHAT Diagram of Analytical Elements for Community Engagement
Appendix H: Contextual Update to Reflect Significant Societal Changes

Our social world looks very different than it did when the data for this study was collected. Three key events have drastically impacted the social context of higher education during this time. First, is the COVID-19 global pandemic, which appeared in the U.S. around February 2020. My last interview for this study was conducted on a Friday afternoon in March 2020. By the following Monday, the entire world shut down. People did not leave their homes unless absolutely necessary, many lost their jobs. Restaurants and businesses closed for almost a year, and some never recovered. K-12 schools and colleges closed, sending teachers, staff, and students into a virtual learning environment that no one was prepared for. Millions died as a result of COVID-19.

On May 25, 2020, about two months after the state of Minnesota shut down as a result of COVID-19, George Floyd was murdered by Minneapolis police (Office of Public Affairs, 2022). His murder sent shockwaves through Minneapolis, as riots broke out across South Minneapolis. This horrific event prompted conversations in higher education institutions across the nation about the need for educational institutions to be anti-racist institutions, and discussions of DEI transformed into conversations about antiracism instead (Bartlett, 2021; Medlin, 2022; Smith et al., 2020).

In June 2023, three years after the murder of George Floyd and the COVID-19 shutdown, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned affirmative action, making it unconstitutional to consider race in college admission decisions (Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard, 2023; Students for Fair Admissions v. UNC, 2023). The U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education (2023) provided clear direction that this decision was isolated to college admission
practices and did not impact areas such as targeted recruitment, college programming, or financial support for college. Prior to this guidance, college and universities across the nation chose to end the use of race in several areas of campus, including targeted recruitment efforts, scholarships, and programming for students of Color on campus (Hildago Bellows, 2023; Jaschik, 2023). The impact of this legal decision remains unclear. What is clear, however, is that DEI efforts across higher education are under attack and further challenges to the use of race in education are anticipated (Florio, 2021; Hawkins, 2023; Knox, 2023; Wood, 2023).