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Unfolding the Community Engagement Narratives of Three Universities Using a Discourse Analysis Approach

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Abstract

Although a large body of literature discusses the advancement of community engagement in higher education, a less substantial body of scholarship explores how engagement is promoted and institutionalized within universities. In this exploratory study, using a discourse analysis of official reports posted on the websites of three university cases, the qualitative results unfolded how community engagement was institutionalized. The study identified some of the basic mechanisms social language uses to create institutions within institutions, like university engagement. The study provided data to support the theoretical assumption that language, through a host of possible configurations of texts, generates discourses that engender social actions such as institutionalization. Those processes disclosed how engagement was produced, and it is still evolving. Further research strategies are discussed.

Keywords: university engagement, community service, civic engagement, service-learning, discourse analysis

As universities evolve, embracing new missions and models to transform people and communities, they continue to experience the emergence of new ways to bring out changes within the three critical missions of teaching, research, and service (Gregorutti, 2011; McAdam & Debackere, 2018; Yun & Liu, 2019). Particularly since the 1980s and in the American context, institutions of higher learning have been reacting to an increasing attempt to establish partnerships with surrounding communities. An important landmark that made this trend visible can be traced back to the 1985 creation of Campus Compact, an initiative sponsored by the presidents of Brown, Georgetown, and Stanford Universities and the Education Commission of the States to advance the mission of promoting a healthier democracy through the engagement of higher education with communities. According to its official website (https://compact.org), these leaders were concerned with the lack of involvement of higher education institutions in strengthening democracy and society. Ernest Boyer, with his *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990) report from the Carnegie Foundation, set another vital milestone to rethink the purposes of higher education. These and others' contributions were reactions to the increasing questioning of higher education that permeated American society (Hursh & Wall, 2011).

In recent years, universities and communities have been approaching each other, increasing the exchange of resources to partner on behalf of everyday needs (Bortolin, 2011; Hahn et al., 2015; Hoffman, 2021; Schneider, 2022). According to Campus Compact and similar organizations, those activities show remarkable growth involving people from academia and community institutions. At the same time, peer-reviewed publications have proliferated, exhibiting a host of ways in which engagement can be expanded, grounded on its virtues, through different models and activities, to advance communities and learning in the U.S. higher education system (Kuh, 2009; Ozias & Pasque, 2019; Yorio & Ye, 2012; Zepke, 2015).

The initial Academic Profession in the

Knowledge Bases Society (APIKS) survey report, a longitudinal study (Jacob et al., 2020), showed that U.S. universities and their professors are increasingly involved in community engagement. The 1,135 responses from 80 sampled institutions representing the four-year tertiary education spectrum from 33 states and two territories depicted a clear commitment to engagement. About 77% of the APIKS participating professors have been involved in some community service. Most faculty members were engaged, whether their orientation was toward research (72%) or teaching (78%), showing a widespread acceptance of engagement as part of their professional activities. Also, at an institutional level, most professors (70%) acknowledged that engagement is promoted through official mission statements. More than half of the academics reported that their universities provided formal institutional support to advance service. These profound and essential shifts have also influenced students, knowledge production, university relationships, and communities.

One may ask, what prompts universities to participate in transforming communities and themselves? According to Bringle and Hatcher (2002), that question can be approached through different exchange theories, since community engagement is essentially an activity rooted in human and institutional relationships that lead to "trading" mutual benefits. Enos and Morton (2003), borrowing from the transactional–transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978), suggested that "most of our service-learning and community service efforts can be characterized as transactional" (p. 24), and the same authors explained the idea by saying, "Too often, then, we think of campus–community partnerships as linear, transactional relationships between or among representatives of institutional interests" (p. 24), an approach that some researchers have criticized, stressing that engagement must move beyond transactional toward transformational (Bushouse, 2005; Strier, 2014; Welch, 2016). O'Meara (2008) underlined the importance of motivational theories to explain how individual and institutional goals and assumptions prompt engagement in each context. Isomorphism may explain some of the popularity of engagement among universities, as they copy each other (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Universities and faculty members start engaging through the emergence of a new epistemology, as Schön (1995) put it, that prompts them to share their resources. Based on the social theory of cognition, Sloman and Fernbach (2017) proposed that people rarely think alone. Humans build systems of knowledge, with practical implications, by relying on complex interactions not only with one another but also through their bodies and artifacts designed to cope with challenges.

According to Phillips et al. (2004), institutions are based on specific types of texts that configure a coherent discourse with sets of assumptions, principles, and purposes to develop actions that are later institutionalized: "Institutions can be understood as products of the discursive activity that influences actions" (p. 635). That happens through "texts" that can be oral, written, or symbolic, but all converge to facilitate actions. Using a discourse analysis (DA) may be helpful to explore this central question; as De Graaf (2001) put it, "Discourses are constitutive of reality. By looking at what people say and write, we can learn how they construct their world" (p. 301). Little research addresses the institutional discourse associated with promoting community engagement as a new higher education paradigm reconfiguring U.S. tertiary education's core missions. Numerous theoretical discussions have explained the importance of involvement to advance learning (Astin, 1984; Pace, 1980; Tinto, 1993) that provided the basis for engaging students in the context of criticism of higher education (Boyer, 1990; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Kosar, 2011; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Several studies explain how engagement became relevant for higher education by questioning prevalent practices (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009) and how the federal government supported the idea of engagement through funding that prompted several initiatives to advance the trend (Kuh, 2009; Ross, 2002). Other studies provided ideological explanations, such as neoliberalism as the source of engagement (Biesta, 2004; Hursh & Wall, 2011; Zepke, 2015). Several researchers have devoted time to explaining the types and characteristics of engagement (Furco, 2010; Saltmarsh et al., 2009; Strier, 2014; Welch, 2016). Still others focused on what facilitates engagement development (Dorado & Giles, 2004; Enos & Morton, 2003; Gehrke & Kezar, 2019; Hoffman, 2021; Hoyt, 2010; O'Meara, 2008). An extensive body of studies explores the

benefits and positive impact on students, universities, and communities (Astin et al., 2000; Eyler et al., 2001; Galiatsatos et al., 2015; Harden et al., 2017; Holley & Harris, 2018; Rama et al., 2000; Roberts et al., 2019). However, the effect of DA as a comprehensive methodology to explain the development of engagement in higher education has not been studied.

Understanding the mechanism and processes associated with the impact of narratives that produce engagement represents a significant gap in the current specialized literature on community engagement. Thus, this article aims to introduce this movement to systematize its general characteristics and explore how three case universities promoted and applied the central elements of this emerging trend. Moreover, understanding global paradigms, discourses, and narratives that configure and reconfigure specific and influential processes impacting higher education can benefit higher education administrators and policymakers in developing and implementing policies such as engagement.

Theoretical Approach

According to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (n.d.):

> The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good. ("What Is Community Engagement?")

This definition encompasses most dimensions of engaging with communities to advance multiple purposes. It reveals essential aspects of the impact of culture, mission, and environment on organizational behavior in the context of engagement. However, no comprehensive theoretical framework appeared as distinctive (e.g., Hicks & Lloyd, 2021; Warren, 2012) to explain the phenomenon. Since community engagement is built into the fabric of society, involving many factors and social organizations, such as universities and communities, DA can provide some of the epistemological foundations to uncover what influences the configuration and development of engagement in higher education, as Phillips and Hardy (2002) remarked:

> We find discourse analysis to be a compelling theoretical frame for observing social reality[,] . . . a useful method in a number of empirical studies[, and] . . . an epistemology that explains how we know the social world, as well as a set of methods for studying it. (pp. 2–3)

A core epistemological assumption of DA is that social reality is created through language that expresses itself through various types of text, such as verbal, visual, and written (Krippendorff, 2004; Wittgenstein, 1967). In tandem with many contextual interactions, these texts configure the discourses that yield social organizations (Gee, 1999). The final product of the dynamic between texts and context is a discourse that creates specific identities or, as Gee (1999) put it, "spoken and written language as it is used to enact social and cultural perspectives and identities" (p. 4). The same author clarified, "Language-in-action is always and everywhere an active building process" (p. 11), producing social reality: in this case, community engagement among higher education institutions.

It is essential to recognize that organizational and social discourses must be analyzed by different approaches, depending on epistemological assumptions. One available approach is critical discourse analysis (CDA), a variant of DA that is making its way into social sciences, as well as education (Bortolin, 2011; Garrity, 2010; Ozias & Pasque, 2019; Pasquesi, 2019; Saarinen, 2008; Wright & Kim, 2022). Indeed, an impressive amount of research has applied CDA to explore political or social justice problems that are, one way or the other, perpetuating current misbalances within communities. CDA focuses on the power dynamics that emerge from a text to support action; as Wodak (2013) put it, CDA has an "interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice and political-economic, social or cultural change in our globalized and globalizing world and societies" (p. 22). Consequently, CDA examines how any specific actor or organization constructs and utilizes the discourse to substantiate activity within a social power

struggle. Through an interconnected set of texts, language creates a discourse that CDA explores in its context but against a critical view of the power struggle (Foucault, 1966).

Instead, this study is concerned with assembling the essential elements that facilitate community engagement—the assumptions, principles, and purposes that are promoted to create an institutional discourse—namely, different variants of community engagement. A general DA approach can better fit the goals of the study, as Phillips and Hardy (2002) put it:

> Not all empirical work is so directly interested in power, however, and many studies explore the constructive effects of discourse without explicitly focusing on the political dynamics. Important bodies of work . . . [are] more interested in developing an understanding of constructive processes than power and politics per se. Rather than exploring who benefits or is disadvantaged by a socially constructed "reality," these researchers are more interested in understanding the way in which discourses ensure that certain phenomena are created, reified, and taken for granted and come to constitute that "reality." (p. 20)

Moreover, DA can be seen as an umbrella methodology to collect and treat data. Based on constructivist epistemology, discourse is understood as a language that formulates and recreates reality. Furthermore, even if the reconstruction of discourse is based on texts, like institutional reports, "We cannot simply focus on an individual text, however; rather, we must refer to bodies of texts because it is the interrelations between text . . . and systems of distributing texts that constitute a discourse over time" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 5). The reconstruction of discourse therefore must be performed in a "reference to the social context in which the texts are found, and the discourses are produced" (p. 5). This consideration of context is relevant given that discourses selectively assemble a combination of endorsed texts in a particular setting that makes them cohesively influential in creating social action through organizations like colleges and universities. As Gee (1999) asserted, "We continually and actively build and rebuild our worlds not just through language, but through language used in tandem with actions, interactions, non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, and believing" (p. 11). According to Gee, a discourse is embedded in a particular context that gives a significant meaning where it is inserted, as discourses are networks of complex interconnected texts expressed in multiple forms. Even though this process morphs as social interactions impact people and change institutions, Smagorinsky and Taxel (2005) argued that discourses allow people to decipher "the ideology behind that vocabulary. Furthermore, one's discourse is intertextual, enabling members of the same culture to instantiate similar referents when hearing the same terms and by and large share the same perspective on those referents" (p. 66). Those intertextual elements are embedded in a multilevel web of meaning crucial to assembling collective ideas that become institutional discourses.

Consequently, within each university, community engagement is guided by those shared meanings that loop back to reconstruct and evolve new dimensions of institutional discourses as implementation and reflection interact. Understanding these cycles of interactions can offer a way to unveil how engagement emerges and varies over time. Moreover, influential actors can use those mechanisms to advance alternative forms of discourses that would become new social actions. In short, DA provided a theoretical frame with epistemological assumptions that guide the method to explore the relationship between different expressions of community engagement discourses within the context of each case study.

Research Design

Using DA, this exploratory qualitative study employed three cases to understand the assumptions and motivators expressed through institutional discourses that the selected universities endorsed to advance community engagement. The research question prompted a qualitative methodology. As Creswell (2013) put it, "We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored" (p. 47) using that methodological approach. The complexity of the problem makes it very difficult to identify and measure the intervening variables; as Creswell explained, "Statistical analyses simply do not fit the problem" (p. 48). Also, as a central epistemological as-

sumption, qualitative methods contend for understanding variables in their environment, as they are a natural product of contextual interactions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Consequently, this exploratory DA examined three cases to see how institutions generated their narrative to justify social action—that is, community engagement. Creswell and Creswell (2018) clarified the point: "Case studies are a design of inquiry . . . in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (p. 14). In addition, multiple-case studies provide more data; as Yin (2014) pointed out, "The evidence from multiple-cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust" (p. 57).

Selection of Cases

Three universities were purposively selected for data collection (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). The selected cases have shown significant engagement involvement efforts at local, state, national, and even global levels. The three cases provided data to extrapolate theoretical conclusions as well. Yin (2014) recommended this exploratory qualitative option for cases as a methodological alternative to handle complex social issues.

Among the thousands of higher education institutions in the United States, this study considered ones that have already advanced the three main missions for higher education. This strategy is especially important since those institutions are fully committed to all the educational missions identified so far as relevant (Boyer, 1990; Crow et al., 2018; Harden et al., 2017). They look for the evolvement of teaching, research, and transfer of discoveries to the broader community through patents, spin-offs, and commercialization of ideas that generate employment and applied scientific breakthroughs (Baker & Wiseman, 2008). Also, the third mission is unfolded as serving and cooperating with communities, in multiple ways, toward their improvement. Relatively few institutions have pursued innovative ways to integrate their core missions with local, regional, and international communities.

Consequently, institutions with such qualifications have been listed by the Carnegie Classification of Higher Education as actively involved with communities. As shown in their respective websites and activity reports, they have institutionalized engagement through programs that impact the three central missions of higher education. In short, the study was based on the following institutions: (1) Tufts University (TU), a medium-sized private school; (2) Michigan State University (MSU), a major public university; and (3) Loyola University Chicago (LUC), a medium-sized religious-affiliated school. This university exemplifies an extensive network of nonpublic and religious-affiliated institutions in the United States.

Source of Information and Data Analysis

The snowballing amount of information posted on websites is increasingly relevant for research in social sciences. Some recent researchers have successfully explored this data collection approach (Bennett et al., 2017; LePeau, 2015; LePeau et al., 2018). According to LePeau et al. (2018), "The institutional website is an important medium for creating and delivering messages that communicate institutional values" (p. 127). Official websites' contents express information essential to understanding assumptions within each university that evidence institutional discourses, as published reports substantiate perceptions and purposes that impact activities developed at each campus (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003; Lažetić, 2019; LePeau, 2015; Wilson et al., 2012). Moreover, as Bennett et al. (2017) pointed out, institutional websites "shape the public image of an institution and represent an important component of an institution's integrated marketing strategy. As such, websites tend to reflect the most important messages a university wishes to portray in shaping its image" (p. 54). Therefore, websites can provide reliable documents to explore institutional discourses. Since the information was available to the general public through web browsers, no Institutional Review Board process was required to collect multiple types of reports posted online. The three universities posted publicly available information that needed no special permission to analyze. Public information does not involve special authorizations to be studied and published as long as the sources are cited.

The websites of each selected institution were explored to find official written reports. Upon identifying key publications that showed information regarding reasons for activities, academic structures, and statements supporting community engagement,

most of them in PDF format, the researcher downloaded them to be later examined using NVivo software.

The written reports from the early 1990s to recent years were clustered into two broad categories. In the first category were institutional reports and papers generated for specific organizational purposes and used for advancing mission or strategic statements that consolidated community engagement. In the second category were endorsed documents or interviews containing relevant data; these were publications produced in other institutional contexts and later posted to support engagement. Examples included annual reports, articles, and special issues that offered different dimensions to explore institutional discourses.

The data from official websites were clustered by university. For instance, the 10 final reports selected from Tufts University's webpages included three endorsed papers and seven institutional reports. All 10 represented a total of 187 pages used for analyses. In the case of Michigan State University, the website screening provided 12 final reports, of which nine fell under the institutional reports category and three were endorsed papers, all totaling 525 pages. For Loyola University Chicago, there were 14 final reports totaling 424 pages. Eleven of those documents were institutional reports and three were endorsed papers.

Upon identifying and downloading the official and institutional reports through accessing the websites, NVivo Software (Version 12) served to process the database. The software facilitated the coding of each report to later configure the emerging themes that provided the bases of DAs. Each document was assigned a code name consisting of a letter identifying its originating university and a number to locate it within each case. "T" was for Tufts-Tisch College, "M" for Michigan State University, and "L" for Loyola University Chicago. Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide a full list of documents examined, with their code names.

Yin (2014) recommended that competent and close-to-the-topic peers review qualitative research. In this study, to ensure that

Table 1. Reports Selected From Tisch College at Tufts University

Code name	Title	Content	Type of report	Length	Year
Report T1	*Declaration of Purpose*	Main purposes for engagement	Institutional report	1 p.	2000
Report T2	*Summer Institute of Civic Studies—Framing Statement*	The basics of Civic Studies	Institutional report	9 pp.	2007
Report T3	*T-10 Strategic Plan 2013–2023*	Global strategies for Tufts University	Institutional report	45 pp.	2013
Report T4	*Tisch College Annual Report 2012–2013*	Citizenship activities in the university's schools	Institutional report	10 pp.	2013
Report T5	Interview with TCRC board members	Explained what the board members expect and endorse for the Tufts Community Research Center	Endorsed interview	9 pp.	2014
Report T6	*Civic Studies*	The principles of Civic Studies	Endorsed paper	5 pp.	2014
Report T7	*Civic Education and Deeper Learning*	Deeper Learning Research Series	Endorsed paper	22 pp.	2015
Report T8	*America's Civic Renewal Movement*	View from organizational leaders	Institutional report	27 pp.	2015
Report T9	*Strategic Plan 2016–2023*	Strategic positioning to develop civic life	Institutional report	26 pp.	2016
Report T10	*The Republic Is (Still) at Risk*	National data report of democratic involvement	Endorsed paper	33 pp.	2017

Table 2. Reports Selected From Michigan State University

Code name	Title	Content	Type of report	Length	Year
Report M1	*University Outreach at MSU*	Defining dimensions of UOE with strategic directions	Institutional report for provost	66 pp.	1993/ 2000
Report M2	*Background Papers*	History, conceptual understanding of UOE & recommendations	Institutional report for provost	281 pp.	1994
Report M3	*Points of Distinction*	Guidebook for planning & quality assessment of outreach	Institutional report	47 pp.	1996/ 2000/ 2009
Report M4	*Outreach Linkages*, Spring 1998	Sharing activities about UOE	Institutional report	4 pp.	1998
Report M5	*Outreach Linkages*, Summer 1998	Sharing activities about UOE	Institutional report	4 pp.	1998
Report M6	*Outreach Linkages*, Fall 1999	Sharing activities about UOE	Institutional report	4 pp.	1999
Report M7	*Criterion Five: Engagement and Service*	Description of the UOE model	Endorsed paper	32 pp.	2006
Report M8	*Scholarly O&E Reported by Successfully Tenured Faculty*	A typology of the engaged university	Endorsed paper	8 pp.	2009
Report M9	*Embracing the World Grant Ideal*	Affirming the Morrill Act for a 21st-century global society	Endorsed paper	21 pp.	2009
Report M10	*World Grant Universities*	The president of MSU explaining UOE	Institutional report	5 pp.	2010
Report M11	*The Engaged Scholar Magazine*, Vol. 10	Sharing activities about UOE	Institutional report	53 pp.	2015
Report M12	*UOE: A Forward Look to New Opportunities*	A provost's steering committee on outreach and engagement at MSU	Institutional report	21 pp.	2018

Note. O&E = outreach and engagement; UOE = university outreach and engagement.

Table 3. Reports Selected From Loyola University Chicago

Code name	Title	Content	Type of report	Length	Year
Report L1	*Immigrant Student National Position Paper*	Dealing with undocumented students in higher education: The Jesuit position	Multiple institutional report	36 pp.	2013
Report L2	*AJCU Presidents' Statement*	Jesuit universities supporting undocumented students across the USA	Institutional report	2 pp.	2013
Report L3	*Impact Report 2013–2014*	Activities of the Center for Experiential Learning (CEL)	Institutional report	17 pp.	2014
Report L4	*Plan 2020: 2015–2020 Strategic Plan*	University 5-year strategic plan	Institutional report	23 pp.	2015
Report L5	*Transformative Education in the Jesuit Tradition*	Principles of Loyola's Jesuit pedagogy	Institutional report	15 pp.	2015
Report L6	CEL *Partnership Statement*	Partnerships with employers and community organizations	Institutional report	2 pp.	2016
Report L7	*Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm at Arrupe College*	Arrupe College as an alternative education for underprepared students	Endorsed paper	23 pp.	2017
Report L8	CEL *Guide to Critical Ignatian Reflection*	Guide to help educators utilize and deepen reflection in their courses	Endorsed paper	22 pp.	2018
Report L9	*Men and Women for Others*	Redefining education for social justice	Endorsed paper	19 pp.	1973/ 2018
Report L10	*Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, Fall 2019	Discussion and revision of the *cura apostolica paradigm*	Institutional report	45 pp.	Fall 2019
Report L11	*An Education That Empowers and Transforms*	Presenting the main characteristics of Jesuit education	Institutional report	10 pp.	2019
Report L12	*2018–2019 Annual Impact Report*	Activities of the Center for Experiential Learning (CEL)	Institutional report	29 pp.	2019
Report L13	*Mission Priority Examen Self-Study*	A comprehensive strategic examen of the university	Institutional report	164 pp.	2019
Report L14	*Ignatian Pedagogy and Service-Learning*	Analysis of engaged service-learning	Institutional report	10 pp.	2019

the final coding and derivation of themes that emerged from the data were performed accurately by this researcher, a qualitatively trained reviewer was hired to double-check the analyses. The final recoding provided a comprehensive agreement concerning the original coding. With the results identified from the 1,136 pages downloaded and processed from the three universities, the researcher applied a DA for each case.

Analyses were performed using an institutional approach, leaving out specific faculty members' points of view. When some professors and administrators expressed their ideas in a particular report, they represented a larger institutional constituency.

Institutional Discourses

The evolvement to support engagement at each institution was situated in a global set of values and assumptions of education that each of these universities endorsed throughout their history. These ideas were expressed in the reports and appeared as contextual discourses that facilitated specific discourse versions around the main functions of higher education in American society. The impact of those "meta" discourses created multiple types of institutional engagement discourses that are represented as follows.

Tufts University

Since the 1950s, when the Tisch College Center for Civic Education was created, this university has expressed some commitment to civic education. However, some of those ideas were formalized at the beginning of the 21st century. Mainly, the *Declaration of Purpose* (T1, 2000) functioned as a pivotal event in the institutional engagement configuration. The one-page document expressed the framework elements to advance institutional discourses with a civic and democratic leaning:

> We believe that the preservation of our democracy is dependent upon the ability of all citizens to realize that, as we enjoy the rights and privileges that democracy bestows on us, so must we accept the duties and responsibilities it demands from us. (p. 1)

Thus, the overall purpose of the institution was to educate "all members of the Tufts community in the values and skills of active citizenship, with the goal of producing committed community leaders who will take an active role in addressing the core problems of society" (p. 1). The *Strategic Plan 2016–2023* (T9) stated that every university student is interconnected to Tisch College, receiving training "for a lifetime of engagement in civic and democratic life, to study civic life and its intersections with public and private institutions, and to promote practices that strengthen civic life in the United States and around the world" (p. 8). The college facilitates "activities that improve democracy and civic life and that engage citizens and communities in addressing shared social problems" (p. 15), with the ultimate goal of educating "a new generation of committed and engaged citizens who will ensure that the American model of participatory democracy continues to flourish" (T1, para. 15). Tufts University has assembled a version of engagement that leans toward strengthening civic values to advance democracy. These foundational declarations established the bases for further institutionalizing engagement as a vital assumption for strategic thinking.

Paradigm Shifts

The metainstitutional discourse to develop civic engagement trickled down to reconceptualize the specific discourses for the missions Tufts University carries. Throughout the next almost 20 years after the *Declaration of Purpose*, faculty members, students, and administrators unfolded the implications of the new institutional discourse, creating and adjusting to the various aspects that involved teaching, research, and service. Out of those deep revisions, the online published reports evidenced three major discourses that emerged as paradigm changes for this university.

Communities as Partners. The new understanding of engagement made external communities more actively involved as contributors and not as passive receptors of the resources the university can supply: "Bringing together community and university is a strength where we have many things to share and learn" (T5, p. 3). The effort and discourse centered around the necessity of bridging both organizations, making the university more available to communities: "Loosen the control of the information from the university and use jargon less language so community people can understand" (T5, p. 7). The documents expressed an underlying assumption that "there is vast potential in taking a civic approach to these and other

problems, applying the concepts and methods of civic engagement in order to leverage the assets of individuals and communities" (T9, p. 10). Due to overwhelming social and, particularly, political challenges that threaten democracy, Tufts University sees in partnering with communities a wealth of assets to expand democratic values. Citizens are seen as "creative agents" who can turn things around, an assumption articulated as "We take the view that human beings can be seen as co-creators and designers of their actions and of the power structures within which they act" (T2, p. 5). In short, communities become a partner for the civic cause.

A Communal Epistemology. The discourse supporting communities as active participants in solving social issues carries the assumption that universities should not be seen as the primary source of knowledge; rather, community is the focus of knowledge that comes through

> bringing together the community representatives in the Tufts host communities and Tufts faculty, students and administrators interested in its local community issues, and with the ultimate goal of doing research that addresses the needs of its population and is beneficial to its communities. (T5, p. 1)

Communities working with faculty produce the best possible scenario as "Tisch College supports engaged research and generates new knowledge about civic engagement" (T4, p. 1). Research becomes "informed by practice and community-identified needs, and it strives to inform policy and practice. It is driven by a pressing need to answer vital questions about the best ways to shape stronger communities and a healthier democracy" (T9, p. 14). The goal is to facilitate a "paradigm-shifting research and scholarship, often in the face of numerous obstacles, and to persist until publishers, funders, and colleagues appreciate how their work fundamentally changes our understanding of the world" (T3, p. 36).

The discourse favored a displacement from academia toward a bidirectional and multidisciplinary approach to generating discoveries. The ultimate intent is to "develop new models of inquiry helpful to citizens" (T9, p. 19) to facilitate new "academic pathways such as Civic Science, the movement to put civic skills and democratic practices at the forefront of scientific inquiry and to make scientific knowledge a vital public resource" (T9, p. 20). These views underscored a deep desire to reverse current models of detached knowledge generation that "distinguishes Tisch College's research and strengthens our ability to impact civic life in America and around the world" (T9, p. 14). This is the institutional research discourse that emerged as a noticeable paradigm shift.

A Collaborative Learning. Several assumptions configured a new emerging discourse of civic learning since it was promoted as "the best vehicle to train young people to sustain our democracy. . . . Over time, investing in civic learning can ensure we train the future generations of citizens to safeguard our democracy" (T10, p. 3). Learning is enlarged to have a civic purpose that goes beyond the university and even personal benefit because the institution looks to "formulate the relevant skills and capacities, and to develop our understanding of the structures of power. . . . to promote the teaching and learning of those skills" (T2, p. 6).

This new idea of civic learning is presented as better than regular education since it contributes to society and enhances a higher level of learning among students:

> Specifically, we advance two theses: 1) Deeper learning has great potential to promote civic outcomes and, hence, to strengthen our democracy; and 2) strengthening civic education is an important way to promote deeper learning.
>
> Indeed, we argue that civic education, when implemented effectively, *exemplifies* deeper learning, requiring students to work together with peers and adults to diagnose and define problems, to deliberate and choose solutions, to implement strategies, and to reflect on the results. (T7, p. 2)

In addition, these experiences are transformational at personal and professional levels as well:

> Through our programs, many students have transformational learning experiences that inform their views of themselves and the world, that shape their future trajectories, and that enable them to become ef-

> fective agents of change. Thousands more are inspired by the culture of civic engagement we foster on campus. (T9, p. 11)

Moreover, Report 3 added that those experiences can "fundamentally challenge a person's assumptions and preconceptions, as well as their beliefs and values, affecting how they understand themselves, others, and the world" (p. 21), a process that would take a community of "professors, peers, coaches, advisers, chaplains, counselors, and others who are dedicated to helping students embrace and process transformational experiences" (T3, p. 22). This way, this new institutional discourse of civic learning is endorsed as having a better potential to tackle social issues and significantly advance students' learning.

Michigan State University

One of the first institutions of the Morrill Land-Grant Act was created to facilitate bridges between higher education and surrounding communities. From its beginning, the overall institutional discourse prompted this institution to solve social issues; as one of its presidents pointed out, "a state-assisted institution should serve the people, that departments and colleges should develop and implement plans that are consistent with the institution's mission" (M2, p. 32). Furthermore, this type of university "has always embraced the principle that knowledge gained in one setting should be widely disseminated to advance the public good in other places" (M10, p. 46). Promoting engagement was thus a natural fit for MSU, extending formal and informal programs aligned with that original institutional discourse.

Background Papers (M2) collected the main discussions for groundbreaking ideas that reshaped the global institutional discourse and, consequently, many subsequent reports found online. During the 1990s, those discussions unfolded in a national debate regarding the purpose of higher education in the country.

As the numerous university and community actors matured and evolved the implementation of the initial institutional discourse, MSU expanded to a global approach of the land-grant or world grant ideal thought to be a valuable model for all universities, as they "must be capable of reframing their approaches to knowledge creation, use, and dissemination as changes occur in the environment and as demarcations between nations, cultures, and fields of study become increasingly blurred" (M9, p. 7). Thus, through its products, higher education has the overarching mission of reshaping itself and the world, not just the states as in the land-grant model. "Together, all universities can use and act on knowledge to move the world toward greater good" (p. 2) to "embrace the ideals that make a difference in society and address the tensions inherent in the work we do" (p. 2). This overall institutional discourse provided the bases for several succeeding discourses impacting other aspects of MSU's missions.

Paradigm Shifts

The official MSU website houses a vast number of reports. Several subdiscourses emerged from the ones selected and analyzed for this study as professors, administrators, and community leaders interacted and reflected over the years after the foundational debates and reconstruction of institutional discourses during the early 1990s. At least three major specific discourses appeared as central from the reports.

Outreach as Emerging Transdisciplinary Scholarship. *University Outreach at Michigan State University* (M1, 1993) played a central role in defining outreach as the new dominant form of scholarship that "cuts across teaching, research, and services. It involves generating, transmitting, applying, and preserving knowledge for the direct benefit of external audiences in ways that are consistent with university and unit missions" (p. 1). Outreach was proposed as an all-encompassing idea that later became a central piece of the dominant institutional discourse at MSU.

Outreach is "better conceived as a cross-cutting function" (M1, p. 3), and it should be "integral to the intellectual life of the entire University, not isolated and marginalized in special units" (p. 8). This reframing was a revolutionary aspect that enhanced the land-grant values, but at the same time went further, embracing all dimensions of higher education and incorporating communities as cocreators of solutions taking each "individual practitioner not just as the beneficiary of its knowledge but also as a partner in the creation" (M9, p. 13).

This embracing approach intended to comprehend "complex and interrelated situa-

tions while focusing on the contributions that individual, family, agency, service system, and community outcomes make toward achieving larger desired community impacts" (M6, p. 2). This idea assumes that "not all knowledge and expertise resides in the academy, and that both expertise and great learning opportunities in teaching and scholarship also reside in non-academic settings" (M11, p. 14). Universities should therefore commit to "draw the separate academic disciplines and institutions outside the silos of their internal conversations, to create a new conversation that speaks with a collective voice to address challenges confronting all nations and cultures" (p. 12) to come all together, including all fields of knowledge and universities, to advance a "financially robust and culturally literate population that can understand what it means to participate in a democracy" (M9, p. 12). This transdisciplinary approach has social-knowledge-driven motives: "We strongly believe that transdisciplinary and participatory approaches to modeling complex problems hold the promise of co-creating new knowledge at the intersections of discipline-based and local knowledge . . . to manage the many complex problems facing communities in the 21st century" (M11, p. 42).

Applying Knowledge Through Outreach. All the core missions of MSU appeared to gravitate around knowledge and its implications in the context of being transformed by outreach, as MSU looks to discover new and "practical uses for theoretical knowledge, and to speed the diffusion of information to residents of the state, the nation, and the world . . . emphasizing the applications of information; and . . . contributing to the understanding and the solution of significant societal problems" (M7, p. 185). This aim puts the university in a "unique position to provide the kinds of outreach activities that will respond to society's needs while maintaining excellence in all knowledge domains" (M1, p. 11).

Outreach is a new approach to knowledge and its purpose in higher education. "If outreach is not fundamental to what a university is and does, then the knowledge associated with outreach will be second-rate and not worthy of connection to an institution of higher learning," and that is why "outreach must be considered a fundamental feature of a university's academic mission" (M2, p. 100).

Knowledge creation is redefined through outreach, as professors and students extend the "university's research capacity to non-academic audiences through such activities as applied research and technical assistance, demonstration projects, evaluation of ongoing programs, technology transfer, policy analysis, and consulting undertaken in conjunction with the unit's programs" (M3, p. 3) to involve nontraditional partners to reconfigure knowledge impact. This process brings about "a relationship with partners who may lack academic credentials but possess nuanced cultural or technical knowledge about a particular place or set of circumstances" (M10, p. 45), enriching the final research use process. Success in this endeavor requires a combination of "research and engagement that holds the greatest potential to address local and world challenges" (M9, p. 16).

Wellness of the Whole Society. The cross-cutting scholarship discourse involved a different teaching–research paradigm that pursues personal and social health. The model is people/community oriented. "As we continue to work with people to frame the ultimate impact of their outcomes, a new picture has emerged. We began to realize that a powerful picture could be drawn if we thought of impacts as people-centered" (M6, p. 2). To maximize impact on issues that affect students and society, a far-reaching academic approach is necessary to expand "student development as scholars, researchers, leaders, and citizens; and [advance] opportunities for interdisciplinary research and teaching" (M11, p. 15).

This discourse is inserted in the context of two primary goals. First, according to Report 9, MSU should train students to "become learners for life, capable of adapting to changes in the processes and nature of work in a global economy" (p. 6), which will impact society as they engage in their jobs. Second, MSU ought to "continue to create, disseminate, and apply knowledge that drives economic development and creates jobs locally and globally" (p. 6) because, in a close relationship, both universities and communities improve the conditions of people and, therefore, society. The ultimate goal is to create social betterment through a "combination of both significant job creation and an educated citizenry that will move our nation toward a more sustainable prosperity and, ultimately, lead the world in solving problems of global scale"

(p. 6). Consequently, jobs are expected to transform the world, and not just to continue with existing misbalances for the sake of generating employment: They will "not only employ the world's population but also employ it to the betterment of all citizens and the planet" (p. 6). MSU spells out the terms for accomplishing this task:

> By broadening the conceptual definitions of teaching and research, these terms can quickly embrace most of the knowledge extension and application activities that have traditionally been included under the rubric of public service. In fact, all of what the university does should be defined as public service. (M2, p. 56)

This model provides "experience for students to engage with communities, and . . . a practical element" (M11, p. 5) and an opportunity to "actually take the things we're learning in the classroom and make them applicable to people's lives" (p. 6), a central goal for the official outreach discourse MSU promoted.

Loyola University Chicago

This university was founded during the second part of the 19th century, one of the most intensive periods of U.S. higher education history, when many colleges and universities were created to deliver alternative training as a response to the growing demand for education (Lucas, 1996). Its religious traditions equipped this school with a unique institutional discourse that fosters active service not only as a social or intellectual imperative but as strongly linked with a moral call to bridge academia with society for its betterment. As Pedro Arrupe, an influential leader of the Jesuit Society, put it, "We must help each other to repair this lack in us, and above all make sure that in future the education imparted in Jesuit schools will be equal to the demands of justice in the world" (L9, pp. 2–3). This view constituted the primary fabric for the institutional discourse since LUC cannot "separate action for justice and liberation from oppression from the proclamation of the Word of God" (p. 6).

Moreover, this social justice involvement, representing faith assumptions, has an "emphasis towards education as linked with responsibility for betterment of the world [that] can help students concretize their learning in ways they may have not previously been encouraged to do," as students are learning by practice that they have "a purpose that is bigger than themselves and simple intellectual mastery" (L8, p. 17). Students are expected to mature and contribute to people in need as they engage in their professional fields.

Due to the Jesuit commitment to social justice, "this union of faith and justice . . . has become the integrating factor of all that Jesuits and their institutions undertake" (L5, pp. 7–8). Thus, higher education is understood to transform society since "every Jesuit academic institution of higher learning is called to live in a social reality . . . and to live for that social reality, to shed university intelligence upon it, and to use university influence to transform it" (L13, p. 1).

Paradigm Shifts

The following three institutional discourses emerged in the context of a crossroad of the above global institutional discourse, which characterizes the Jesuit Society and, simultaneously, the national debate to advance and practice community engagement as an encompassing mission for American higher education.

Framing the Pedagogical Model. Understanding teaching in Jesuit higher education requires several assumptions that are not found in a public or private university, because "faith, knowledge, and the promotion of justice are intrinsically related: they are not three independent aspects of education that are merely juxtaposed, but rather they form a triad in which each is dynamically related and incomplete without the others" (L4, p. 4). Based on those elements, the model turns instruction in a transformational approach so as to help "students name their gifts, formulate their convictions, and ultimately take full ownership of their own lives. . . . [it] transforms students in order that they might transform the world" (L5, p. 7). A core and foundational assumption of Jesuit education is to transform the student first and then the society, as it "aims at assisting learners to undergo a series of internal transformations in how they go about understanding themselves vis-à-vis their own inclinations, passions, biases, and spontaneous reactions" (L5, p. 8).

This transformative education is built on *cura personalis* and *cura apostolica*. The first

term denotes personal care, "a hallmark of Jesuit education, . . . [which] recognizes that students bring the totality of their lives into the classroom and that reality has a direct effect on the learning process" (L8, p. 6). *Cura personalis* can motivate "students to live out core values that have shaped our University since its founding" (L11, p. 5) and promote "active listening and a practiced effort to understand their world, which may be quite different from our own" (p. 3). In the case of *cura apostolica*, "the same intimate knowledge and compassion found in *cura personalis* is extended, beyond any single person, to encompass our shared personhood and mission" (L10, p. 4), and "as *cura personalis* demands a humanistic and scientific education to create whole persons, *cura apostolica* orients our universities to grapple with today's vital society issues" (p. 9). These two foundational constructs cooperate to enrich a comprehensive and engaging idea of learning practiced at LUC.

Communities as Partners. In addition to the development some neighborhoods may have experienced through LUC's intervention, community engagement was endorsed as a powerful resource to advance transformational learning:

> We believe that students should leave the service-learning experience with a deeper and even changed understanding of themselves, our communities, and their potential to participate in the civic life of our communities, country, and world. Service-learning as pedagogy creates the opportunity for students to try on and live out the core principles and values of Loyola University in the world! (L14, p. 3)

In addition, scholarly engagement aims to offer students class-correlated content in the form of a "chance to volunteer directly in the community at an organization whose mission aligns with the course's academic outcomes" (L14, p. 3). Through such experiences, students can see "their potential in society and want to make a difference" (L3, p. 16).

Loyola University treats partners as social entities that are "co-educators of our students, and in this role, we rely upon them to provide the necessary orientation, training, and supervision required for our students to complete their assigned responsibilities" (L6, p. 1). This dynamic of community involvement facilitates "the development of high-impact learning experiences connecting classroom content with real-world experience" (L3, p. 1), a learning exchange that "integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skill development in a professional setting . . . allowing students to 'learn by doing' and reflect upon that learning" (L3, p. 4). This inclusive model of relationships with communities also facilitates some levels of "interdisciplinary research, a space where faculty and students from different departments or schools can converge and collaborate" (L11, p. 8) toward common issues:

> Experiential pedagogies will help break down the artificial silos between teaching and research as faculty develop interdisciplinary work with community partners to identify research questions that are important to advancing the common good and developing solutions. This integrative and experiential approach will be more effective in moving toward solutions to complex problems and will challenge perceived categories and presuppositions, requiring depth of thought, imagination, and analysis. (L4, p. 16)

In short, the transformational learning view of education is conducted through multiple levels of academic community engagement developed as students mature in their specific knowledge field in real social contexts.

Contextual and Redemptive Engagement. From the beginning, the religious belief system that LUC endorsed to carry higher education in Chicago aimed for the advancement of society through a combination of inclusive interactions between university and community actors working together to facilitate

> a place where a committed community can be formed among people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds. This is precisely the kind of community our world needs today: a community that can look beyond the specifics of its own tradition in order to learn, study, celebrate, and pray with all people of goodwill who are ready to rebuild and renew our world together. (L11, p. 6)

This comprehensive view was rooted in a dialogue mode of facilitating a "culture where students do not feel like isolated individuals but rather members of a community that encourages respectful discourse and debate, which celebrates hard work and accomplishments, and that promotes social justice and responsible freedom" (L11, p. 6). Students are stirred to answer questions that have personal, professional, and social repercussions, "'for whom' and 'for what' as they prepare for their careers. . . . How will this work contribute to or impact the communities that it serves? How might it contribute to society and to the struggle for peace and justice?" (L11, p. 7). To address those questions, the university uses "classrooms as well as [working] through encounters across Chicago and the world" (L4, p. 21) to tackle current issues, stating, for example, that "climate change, environmental degradation, aging societies, global security, growing economic disparities, the displacement of peoples, systemic poverty, homelessness, violence, and emerging infectious diseases require sustained effort, interdisciplinary knowledge, and innovative approaches" (L4, p. 16). Consequently, universities become a hub for "healing" social problems. These institutions advance engagement through learning and systematic research to "redeem" their students and, by extension, society.

Discussion

The three universities showed similar ideas regarding the importance of engaging with communities, although each institution used different internal processes with alternative assumptions about motives for engagement. Every institution elaborated its version of engagement, drawing from its traditions and institutional values. The analysis implied a change in basic teaching, research, and service assumptions across the three cases. However, following its institutional values, Tufts University evolved an engagement discourse that prioritized civic ideals for the advancement of society. The central institutional discourse was to promote democracy as an ideal model for higher education. Engagement was conceived as the approach to improve communities through civic values and skills, so this overarching discourse impacted the three primary missions, aligning them to contribute to that purpose. In the case of Michigan State University, the land-grant ideal was a precursor of community engagement. However, the university dialogued with a multitude of contemporary actors. It developed a new and comprehensive discourse of outreach as a cross-cutting function that directed all missions to bridge academia with real social issues. This all-embracing function of higher education became the world grant ideal, which distinguished MSU and set the tone for many other universities in the country and overseas. Finally, in the case of Loyola University Chicago, the institutional discourse to advance engagement was framed within the moral and social responsibility the Jesuit Society assumed as central for its universities. This unique view of reality promoted, first, a transformation of students and, later, enhanced social justice. Moreover, a series of anthropological and biblical beliefs produced a redemptive pedagogy that was the channel to renovate students' lives, which later would translate into bringing social redemption.

Now, why has all this happened? A quick answer can be that isomorphic forces play a decisive role in explaining the diffusion across institutions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Universities copy each other to compete and position themselves better as new trends emerge, a tendency that shows particular strength when leading institutions take initiatives that others consider attractive. For instance, the creation of Campus Compact in the mid-1980s impacted many higher education institutions, and soon several of them joined the movement, strengthening isomorphic forces.

Moreover, and adding to these efforts, well-known and visible national organizations like the Kellogg Commission and Carnegie Foundation, along with reports from leading scholars, such as Astin (1984), Lynton and Elman (1987), Boyer (1990), and Gibbons et al. (1994), provided multiple dimensions to the discussion of university engagement. The overall content of the reports, among the three cases, exhibited the development of each institution's internal versions of engagement that are well integrated into the national discussion of the trend. The reports showed several quotations and references to the widespread ideas of community engagement that influential actors and organizations disseminated.

Exchanging benefits from exchange theories was another relevant element that facilitated engagement (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Universities envisioned relationships with communities as highly beneficial, since

learning and research could be advanced through real "hands-on" scenarios. At the same time, communities accepted universities as resourceful partners in solving complex problems. This transactional element, criticized by some scholars (Bushouse, 2005; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Strier, 2014; Welch, 2016), is somehow present in the explored reports of this study. Some motivational theories (O'Meara, 2008) may serve as a backdrop to understand why universities, professors, and students want to engage with surrounding communities. However, isomorphic forces do not provide enough explanatory power about the mechanisms universities use to develop and morph engagement.

An institution's contextual environment may also play an important role. According to Sloman and Fernbach (2017), people think and act in a social context. Their social theory of cognition may explain some of the forces that propel engagement; as Schön (1995) also pointed out, those dynamics facilitated deep questioning about practices. Multiple examples of collaborative learning, research, and service have demonstrated the relevance of this "thinking and acting together" with the other as a superior and complete model for society in general. This assumption was framed within a large set of studies that indicated the positive impact of engagement, proving more relevance for this theoretical extrapolation. More studies are needed to explore these dimensions.

DA can be seen as an alternative theoretical model to explain the emergence and development of community engagement in these cases. Mainly for this study, the institutionally endorsed online reports available at each website offered multiple texts, written ones, to lay the "bricks" to construct several institutional discourses. Those discourses delivered the needed legitimization of community engagement in the universities. The diffusion and acceptance of those now-institutional discourses across campuses prompted the institutionalization of engagement. This relationship of discourse and social action or institutionalization is an interaction between "the production and consumption of texts," as Phillips et al. (2004, p. 635) stated it. In other words, the visible inclusion of different forms of community engagement in the analyzed cases showed a significant institutionalization of the discourses promoting the trend. Thus, engagement appeared as a by-product of language expressed through texts constituting a coherent and influential discourse. This result seems to confirm a core assumption of discourse analysis.

The cases followed a consistent path of internal revisions of their actions, reflecting deep questioning of previous institutionalized practices and discourses. This questioning was also stimulated by a national revision of actions that generated many "texts" that slowly became macro and micro discourses influencing these three universities.

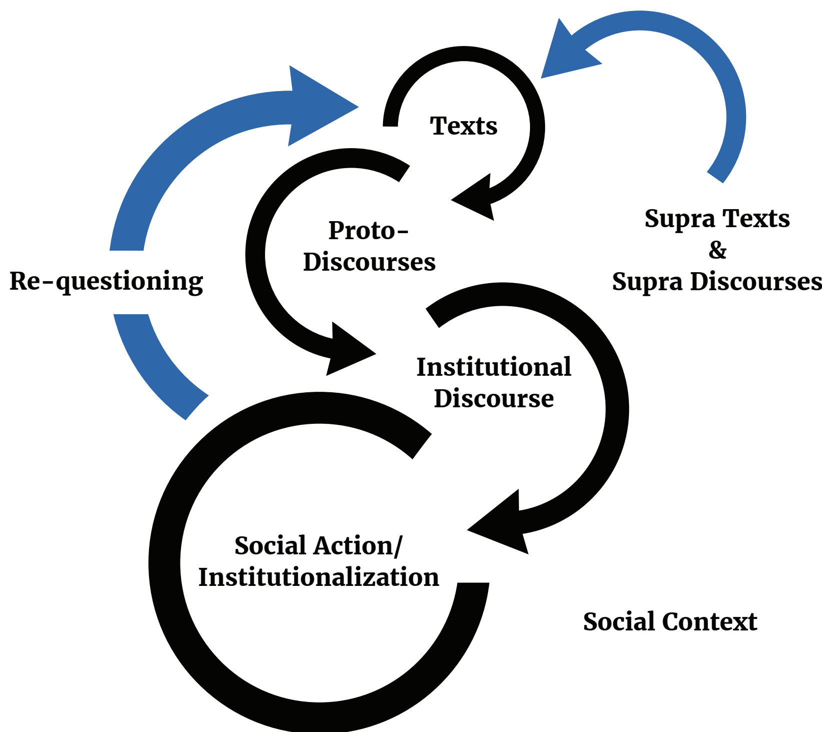
The three institutions dialogued in their texts with the national discussions and emerging discourses that offered the context, as supra texts, to produce texts. At the same time, they navigated the flow of ideas. As they participated in this process, they produced their texts and discourses in a constant relationship with the prevailing macro discourses. Then, slowly, the institutionalization of discourses occurred in the form of centers for community service, strategic planning, service-learning, civic life, new classes, challenging lectures, new funding to promote more engaged research, and academic structures with new jobs, to mention a few examples. Figure 1 shows the iteration that happened in the data.

These manifestations of institutional actions created new texts that contributed to new micro and specialized discourses for specific institutionalizations as engagement became more complex and an overarching feature of higher education. As institutionalization occurred, new cycles of revision and questioning of existing practice emerged in a changing context that generated new texts, as shown in Figure 1.

Another source of texts could be seen through the influential and established "supra" institutional discourses. For instance, the case of MSU and the land-grant institutional discourse functioned as a supra background discourse. Again, a requestioning of the existing actions facilitated a flow of new emerging texts that gave way to a new institutional, more comprehensive discourse called the world grant ideal to extend the land-grant model to all universities across the globe. This discourse, portrayed through several texts, was intended to enhance the original land-grant discourse.

The below data-driven model provides clues to explain some of the whys and hows

Figure 1. Path of Iterations of Texts, Discourses, and Social Action



behind the transformation of institutional discourses to compelling forces that generate social institutions, as well as some evolving processes within institutions to transform themselves into continually "alter" organizations. In short, through these cases, the DA methodology has helped expand the understanding of the institutionalization of community engagement.

Additionally, the theoretical assumption that social organizations are created through language interactions in a context and expressed through multiple forms of texts seemed to fit this study's three cases adequately. In other words, the emergence and evolvement of the varied types of community engagement among the three universities followed a similar pattern that can be explained using a discourse analysis method. Based on officially endorsed online reports, universities communicated their dialogues with supra texts and discourses, creating versions of texts and institutional discourses that yielded many forms of institutions. As community engagement became an overarching institutional discourse, a sort of supra discourse bounded within each university case, it stimulated the generation of complementary texts to address specific dimensions of engagement. Those texts became part of new subdiscourses that produced different social actions to conduct, for instance, teaching, research, and service.

In sum, the multiple community engagement discourses among the three cases could critically influence how universities see themselves and carry out their essential academic missions. In addition, university engagement appeared as a by-product of a complex and deep questioning of the practices under which institutions operated. The revision of purposes with private and public support for redirecting academia toward more valuable and relevant contributions to society, along with redesigning of learning and research in the context of epistemological paradigm shifts, may explain much of this movement reconfiguring higher education.

These findings may now be used to investigate more cases to expand understanding of other institutions that advance engagement with alternative purposes that may enrich the discussion. The U.S. higher education system has many institutions, such as community colleges and four-year colleges, with private and public funding. Extending the study to those leaning-toward-teaching institutions may unfold new elements to

explain institutionalization of community engagement with alternative mechanisms.

Further research is needed to quantify the described iterations of texts, discourses, and social actions to find, through them, alternative maps of emerging patterns of institutionalization. In doing so, the related "analytic generalizations" could turn into statistical generalizations, through which the current theoretical assumptions could become a "grand theory." Such a theory can be evaluated as a theoretical framework for predicting factors facilitating community engagement in higher education.

This study relied on what universities published online. At the time of data retrieval, it was unknown to the researcher whether some other sources of information not publicly available existed that could have helped to understand each institution's case better. In addition, discourses may not be fully captured through what was published online, as web content constantly changes. This study recognizes that internal discourses are subject to changes over time, making it even more difficult to extrapolate results. New faculty members and institutional leaders may reshape, in short periods, existing assumptions that have a profound impact on the relationship between community engagement and established missions (LePeau et al., 2018). Further data triangulation should be explored by confirming website information through interviews and observations.

The study shows that universities share extensive information through their websites. The increasing amount of visual, audio, and written reports that are freely available can be utilized to generalize some of the conclusions of this project. Those online contents express relevant perceptions of social issues. Developing strategies for quantifying online text to unveil conceptual constructs, such as institutional discourses, may provide statistical tools for developing and testing theories.

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