RELATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE: WRITING, TEAMS, AND
TRANSFORMATION

By

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ABSTRACT

Writing studies scholarship has focused on institutional critique and more recently institutional ethnography as methodologies for approaching institutional design and change work through writing. While the field expresses interest in the relationship between writing and institutions, we lack a theory of institutional rhetoric, and most workplace studies approach the institution—the workplace itself—as a backdrop for the work being done and not central to the study design and findings. This dissertation responds to these disciplinary conversations by offering a case study on a coalitional team called SEEN (Supporting Equity in Essential Needs), a group of students, staff, and faculty working on a large institutional change project to make campus resources more accessible for students. Through qualitative interviews, writing artifacts, and situational analysis, this study demonstrates how to locate opportunities for institutional change based on participants' institutional experiences and offers a framework to manage and facilitate change in rhetorical, responsive, and relational ways.

The two research questions that guided this study were: (1) How do individuals and groups build relationships to make change? (2) What's the role of collaborative writing in participating, managing, and facilitating teams and institutional change? My data evidenced and this dissertation shows that coalitional teams composed of diversely situated participants (e.g., students, staff, and faculty) were able to leverage their relational networks to navigate laterally across hierarchically structured institutions to make change. By focusing on collaborative writing, my findings demonstrated how a diverse team that delayed consensus and integrated every member's expertise was able to make change across various institutional levels (e.g., department, college, and university). This dissertation forwards *relational* institutional change, a people-centered approach to design, enact, and manage more equitable and responsive departments, programs, and ideally, institutions.

For my family—the Kellys, Englishes, Bergstroms, and Rasokats—who were my first teachers.

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I'm fundamentally a hopeful person, because I know that decisions made the world as it is and that better decisions can change it. Nothing about our situations is inevitable or immutable, but you can't solve a problem with the consciousness that created it.
–Heather McGhee, The Sum of Us

Life is a series of changes. We're constantly moving from one activity to the next, from one hour to the next, from one season to the next. While we can't stop the flow of change, we can influence the direction of change in our lives if we take time to pay attention to the direction we're moving in.
–Summer Cushman, The Yoga Church

Feelings about/toward/in Higher Education Institutions, or it's Not the Vibe

The idea that change happens slowly in higher education surprises no one who's spent any amount of time teaching or learning in these institutions. In fact, I've often heard this claim followed by the explanation: "higher education is based on a Medieval structure that has changed very little since then." Although the advent of digital technology certainly changed the way we communicate, work, and learn in higher ed., and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for remote and online learning options, higher education continues much as it has for the last couple millennia. Critiques of higher ed being slow to change often relate to how well it's (perceived to be*)* preparing students for future careers, and its inability to reward talent and innovation with, arguably, arcane structures like tenure. These critiques connect to a broader cultural moment of dissatisfaction and frustration regarding the value and purpose of many bureaucratic systems that can seem at best to be lumbering along like always and at worst to be actively resisting innovation and change. It's not new to say the times are a-changin' (again and more), but there are also indicators that current changes are more seismic in nature, or, as my students say, the vibe is off.

Higher education, like other American institutions, is experiencing an inflection point. Arguments about whether or not a college degree is worth it, or what college is for are not new, and fewer than 40 percent of Americans graduate from a four-year college. However, the continued rising cost of education, fallout from the pandemic, and more high school students deciding to wait on college suggest a changing landscape for teaching and learning in higher ed. Even as some public universities, like my own institution, are experiencing record levels of first-year enrollment, the national view of higher education remains bleaker as represented in survey results from the left-leaning think tank Third Way/New America. Across three nationwide surveys with 1,002 college student respondents between August 2020 and May 2021, the percentage of students who agreed with the statement, "Higher education is not worth the cost to students anymore" increased from 49 percent to 65 percent, nearly two-thirds of respondents (Klebs et al., 2021). While a single survey series doesn't signal higher ed's end times, it does illustrate a continuing national shift away from pursuing an expensive college degree that doesn't offer a stable return on investment.

On the faculty and staff side, the "Great Resignation" of 2021 in which a record number of Americans voluntarily quit their jobs—47 million according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics—affected higher education as well. Anyone who taught or worked in higher ed through the fall of 2021 can probably recall how "burnout turned into demoralization" as the third term of "Pandemic University" began (McClure, 2021). McClure shares a useful distinction between burnout and demoralization in that burnout is often approached as an individual problem or experience whereas low morale or demoralization "means a group is struggling to maintain belief in an institution or goal, especially when times get tough" (McClure, 2021). Struggling to maintain belief in institutions mirrors another trend in the US: a social crisis in which more and

more adult Americans are losing faith in all kinds of institutions including public, private, civic, and political institutions. To name just a few examples: the government, police, public schools and higher education, medical system, church, Supreme Court (Gallup Poll Results, 2022). This trend isn't new, but it's significantly worsening: Jeffrey Jones writing for Gallup reported in July 2022 that Americans are less confident in major U.S. institutions than they were a year ago with "significant declines for 11 of the 16 institutions tested and no improvements for any" (Jones, 2022). Given this broader cultural context it seems obvious to assert that we're at a moment of profound lack of trust and confidence in institutions, and in higher education. The significance of this moment for my study, though, is that we bring this national angst with us into our institutions, departments, and hallway conversations.

As I'll posit throughout this dissertation, we don't leave our emotions, worries, beliefs, or anxieties at the door of our classrooms or workplaces. And, for higher ed especially, the institution *is* the lesson plans we make, the syllabi we create, the classes we teach, the research we engage, the data we gather, the committees we serve on, and the policies we enact. So, while arguably it's always somewhat fraught to collaborate with others, this is a uniquely difficult moment to do so given our deep polarization and the proliferation of national angst about everything from the cost of groceries to the health of democracy. As teachers, students, and colleagues, we live in this wider cultural context, but we also carry it with us through our institutional hallways and it often feels difficult and tense to know how to engage and work with each other.

I offer this quick sketch about the cultural and social climate surrounding institutions to get to the crux of my research focus: institutions are the structures of social life; they determine how we (citizens, neighbors, colleagues) are together, and they influence how we engage and

participate in our various communities. And yet, like Yuval Levin (2020) argues in his book *Time to Build*, "if we are too often failing to foster belonging, legitimacy and trust, what we are confronting is a failure of institutions" (p. 4). To make my position clear from the beginning: I don't believe we can ever fully separate ourselves from institutions, and I imagine anyone calling for the dismantling of institutions has never relied on unemployment benefits or food assistance to survive. As the COVID-19 pandemic made abundantly clear, functioning institutions are of the utmost importance. So, I see the current moment of mistrust and waning faith in our institutions as a time to engage and work to influence the direction of institutional change in order to remake institutions into systems that function and serve their participants. In this dissertation, I offer one such method for doing so: relational institutional change.

The case study I share in this dissertation focuses on a coalitional team of faculty-staff-students working to centralize and create greater access to basic needs resources for students at a large research university. The findings of my study echo with a recent National Student Clearinghouse Research Center report on enrollment data from fall 2022 that recommends in the aftermath of the pandemic, universities need to reevaluate their "enrollment management and student support services" (Enrollment Report, 2022). This focus on better supporting resources for student success is part of what this dissertation shares, and I do so from a people-centered institutional approach. The timeliness of my study speaks from and to the pandemic, but more broadly, suggests ways for higher education institutions to work toward "educating the whole student" that requires understanding and better supporting the various kinds of resources students need to be successful in the classroom on their journey toward degree completion. Understanding institutions from the experiences of their participants is one way to change how institutions work in responsive and participatory ways, and ideally, better improve how participants imagine,

describe, and experience their institutions. A claim that I imagine will surprise no one: it's difficult to change people's hearts and minds about something, oneself included.

In what follows, I briefly share how I became interested in institutions as a writing studies administrator and teacher, and how this interest shaped my research focus around issues of chronic basic needs issues and resource access while studying as a doctoral student. As a field, writing studies is uniquely situated to enact and influence institutional change, and I'll argue, writing is a key method for doing so. I'll then share chapter overviews of what's to come, and I'll preview how I build toward understanding that relationships are key to how participants navigate institutions, teams, and change.

My Institutional Change Background and Interest: Why Writing Studies?

I first got interested in institutions and how they work and change during my first quarter as an assistant WPA at a regional state university in the Pacific Northwest. It was the fall of 2015 and an event at Yale made national education news when the spouse of a professor sent an email questioning the university's guidance to avoid culturally appropriative Halloween costumes. In her email, Erika Christakis asked, "Is there no room anymore for a child or young person to be a little bit obnoxious … a little bit inappropriate or provocative or, yes, offensive?" ("Dressing Yourselves"). Student protests at Yale followed. And in my English department copy room, a colleague remarked, "Because college students don't understand institutions, they'll call for [professor] Christakis to resign, but it won't actually change the institution or what it is they're protesting." I nodded in knowing agreement, but internally I wondered: How do institutions change? What would it mean to understand how these systems work to then effect change?

Throughout my three years as an administrator, I kept this story in my back pocket, mulling over it as recurring questions surfaced regarding how to enact change in the US's social,

educational, and political institutions in recent years. When I started my doctoral work at Michigan State University in the fall of 2018, I again heard similar comments, this time about graduate students not understanding how, for example, a department works with various college funding lines and curriculum committees, and so when they made change requests, or demands, they often lacked the structural analysis necessary to propose actionable change initiatives and solutions. As I kept returning to this "students don't understand how things work" critique, I also noticed there were no courses offered on systems design and change work. I realized that learning about and understanding institutional systems is necessary for change projects, but that institutional change is not something often taught in a class or an employee handbook. In other words, institutional change requires participant engagement, but it is not clear or easy to understand how to make demands and enact desired changes.

More, and perhaps more troubling, "institution" is often used to describe what's unchangeable, the status quo, or a catch-all for what institutional participants separate themselves from and blame for inaction. This common approach to the institution as "other" creates distance between the participants who enact, sustain, and build an institution through their everyday workaday actions. This distance isn't always a problem, as I'll discuss further in chapter four when I define institutions based on participant experiences, but it can hinder change initiatives to treat the institution as something separate from one's position and institutional work. That is, in this separation between individual and institution, the institution can get black boxed in such a way that obscures the processes and procedures by which it operates and communicates, making change all the more illusory to accomplish, and creating the common critique: "_____ just don't understand how the institution works." For higher ed institutions, I could fill-in the blank with students, or even faculty, something I have also often heard in relation to faculty demands to

administration. Given that it seems such a common response that "no one" in higher education understands how institutions work, it is no wonder that institutional change can seem obscure. Even in rhetoric and composition, a discipline interested in institutional management and critique, defining institutions remains ambiguous and amorphous.

Beyond my master's in English Studies in which I took one course in public rhetoric taught by a new hire in the English Department, I really encountered writing studies in my role as an assistant WPA managing a program staffed entirely by literature and creative writing graduate students. In this role, I was still a new teacher myself, and I became more and more interested in teacher development and how the material conditions in which we work, teach, and learn affect this development. Before I knew to name it as such, I experienced what Donna Strickland has called the "managerial unconscious" in composition studies. That is, what she describes as the "unofficial schooling" of managing teachers and programs that runs alongside the "official schooling" of pedagogy and rhetorical theory in composition studies (p. 1). Management or "the middle manager" as I've heard WPAs described, often evokes disdain in the Humanities perhaps because the "managerial" seems to side with capital over labor, or because "scholars" don't want to be reminded that teachers are in the business of selling knowledge. Strickland argues for understanding how the field's emergence has been "inextricably tied to a managerial imperative" (p. 16). The managerial imperative also forms the basis for why writing studies should be involved in institutional change work—because in managing programs and teachers we already are.

While I see these foci as symbiotic (institutional interests emerging from administrative work and writing studies being well positioned to do institutional work), I was surprised to learn that the field didn't always share my interests. I assumed my discipline had a stable definition of

institutions given how many of my former English department colleagues discussed the material conditions of their work, administrative power, and institutional labor. However, despite often naming institutions as a location and issue in our scholarship, there is not sustained engagement in institutional change. For example, Ryan Skinnell (2019) notes, "it is a truth often acknowledged by rhetorical scholars that institutions have an outsized influence on public discourse" yet rhetorical studies, according to Skinnell, often falls back on "traditional rhetorical appeals" instead of understanding the influence of institutions: how they "speak," "act," and "shape discourse in powerful and distinct ways" (p. 70). In other words, rhetorical analysis of institutions does not account for institutions as actively shaping and constraining power, possibility, and change. So, while writing studies has a lot to offer institutional change work, the same is true for institutional research informing writing studies as a discipline.

In chapters three and four I'll more fully define and situate institutions, but I'll briefly start that definitional work here specifically in writing studies. In short, institutions are made up of documents, relationships, and physical structures. As Porter et al. (2000) argue, institutions are: "rhetorically constructed human designs (whose power is reinforced by buildings, laws, traditions, and knowledge-making practices) and so are changeable" (p. 611). But because writing is so ubiquitous in organizations and institutions, people often look through writing instead of *at* writing as a central aspect of what makes up and makes meaningful institutions. Bill Hart-Davidson illustrated this typical overlook of writing for me with a story:

> I'm always surprised when I'm working on something change or institutional focused and I offer to write the first draft of a by-law revision or a proposal, my collaborators always say yes. But if I were to word it like, 'do you mind if I have an inordinate amount of influence over this?' They'd probably say no, but it's the same thing because writing is such a huge influencing force. (Personal communication, August 26, 2021)

Similarly, when eyebrows raise over Porter et al.'s institutional critique article and questions arise about not being in organizational studies or psychology—why would writing studies be involved in management and institutional change?—Hart-Davidson asks, "But what are institutions made of?" Usually, silence is the response, to which he offers, "Documents" (Personal correspondence, August 26, 2021). In this way, writing has a unique role to play in this work given that institutions function largely by writing. This is a chance to connect the disciplinary expertise of writing studies to institutional management and change. As I'll discuss more in my findings, writing can be seen as a stabilizing force, how institutions maintain themselves and the status quo, or writing can be a destabilizing change force. Understanding this dual power of writing to both manage stasis and influence change is key to changing our institutions to improve the lived experiences of their participants. Making the institutional and rhetorical connections stronger between the field and our workplaces is an additional goal I have in developing a relational institutional change method. Akin to connections between rhetoric and relationality, I am trying to make what's already happening and co-constitutive more visible in order to more intentionally influence these connections. In the next chapter, I'll introduce the institutional change project I developed these ideas from. Before that, there remains one final framing concept for my institutional approach to introduce: the role of emotion and feeling in collaboration and change work.

My Institutional Change Background and Interest: Why Emotion?

Humans are deeply feeling creatures, and as I'll more fully define in chapter three, relationality— how we are together and how we can work together or not—stems from feeling. Early in my administrative work, I encountered a Maya Angelou quote that shaped my ideas about emotion being integral to relational management: "People will forget what you said.

People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel." This quote has proved true throughout the years of my career when former graduate teaching assistants or students reach out to share a memory or an update about their life. These emails don't quote what I perhaps thought was most significant about an assignment or a goal I had for a particular reading or support system in the writing program. Instead, these emails share experiences of feeling, and gratitude or reflection about an experience of having felt supported or seen or cared for that was often different from what I pedagogically or managerially had in mind about an encounter. From these experiences, I am continually learning how important it is to center emotion and experiences of feeling as key to both management and collaboration. In my conclusion, I offer a trauma-informed framework for workplace collaboration that stems from the need for emotional intelligence in leaders and administrators. To more fully situate feeling as key to the work of this dissertation, here I'll quickly share a working definition and explain why including emotion as part of collaboration from the outset is so important.

From reflecting on my own early teaching experiences and administrative work, I noticed that people respond to one another first, and most often, through feeling, despite how much cultural attention and value reason and rationality receive. Early in my managerial life, I started reading Brené Brown, whose work I will return to in chapter five on teams and vulnerability. Brown has written five *New York Times* bestselling books on shame, vulnerability, belonging, and most recently, emotion as the language of human connection. An opening example from *Atlas of the Heart* struck me regarding the need to understand, name, and express our emotions more fully. Brown shares that over the course of five years while facilitating workshops on shame resilience, she and her fellow researchers collected surveys from more than seven thousand participants asking them to list all the emotions they could recognize and name as they

were experiencing them. The average number of emotions named from the surveys was three: "happy, sad, and angry" (p. xxi). The extent of human experience that does not fit within these three emotions is staggering. As a rhetorician who studies what language does in the world, I am also invested in how language attunes us to being in relationships and in communities, or not, so when Brown quotes Ludwig Wittgenstein's idea, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (p. xxi) it resonates at a fundamental level for me in how I conceive of the co-constitutive nature of language, emotion, and relationships.

Being able to understand and express one's own emotions is important to collaborative relationships, and it's also important to understand, respond to, and at times, mediate the emotions of others. Throughout this dissertation I'll argue for the importance of emotional awareness or what more commonly might be referred to as emotional intelligence. I understand and define this intelligence in a humanistic, relational way in that an emotionally intelligent person notices and understands key components of emotional functioning (e.g., to be introspective, to communicate, to notice signals whether spoken, written, or shared via body language that express emotional reactions, to relate with patience and clarity to others, to notice and respond to misunderstandings). Emotional intelligence is key to my work on relational institutional change because we need to recognize emotion as always part of human experience and thus collaboration. Additionally, recognizing the importance of being able to engage, experience, and understand emotions helps with productive and safe collaboration and is one way to avoid harming one another, or to know to follow-up after harm has occurred.

Two final points to situate emotion at the outset of this dissertation come from Laura Micciche's (2007) work on emotion, in which she asks of emotion, "how do we teach something that happens *in relation*?" This relational focus on emotion supplants the common I-focus of

feeling (e.g., I am happy, I am sad, I am angry) and instead focuses on individuals in relation and on what emotions do, describing her focus as: "what emotions perform/embody/enact/generate and in how naming emotions affects our relation to the situation in and for which they are named" (p. 14). This point about naming emotion as a way of creating/affecting/defining one's relation to a situation adds a layer of *feeling* to Wittgenstein's idea that Brown quotes about the limit of one's language being the limit of one's world. That is, emotion is a relational force that happens between, around, and within individuals in relationship with others and the world around them. And the second point from Micciche I want to highlight here on the importance of naming emotions builds interestingly on Brown's point above in that Micciche asserts that because people feel emotions, and can categorize them within a particular culture, "emotions regularly escape critical thought," which "leads to neglecting emotion's role as that which binds the social body together as well as tears it apart" (p. 14). Emotion as something we all too often look through but not *at* as part and parcel of collaboration limits both team effectiveness and the efficacy of larger change initiatives. In other words, we never act without emotion, but we all too often act without awareness of and intentionality for the role our emotions play in creating and shaping our various relations, communities, and institutions.

The idea that emotion is often looked through but not *at* as central to collaborative world making rings true with my earlier point that writing is also often disregarded in institutional design and change because it is so ubiquitous. In this dissertation, by working through writing and centering emotion as fundamental to effective collaboration, I hope to point our attention to forces already at work and in so doing suggest ways to bring more intention to how one engages, influences, and practices institutional change. If we're going to engage in institutional change, we have to understand and have an eye for how people's emotions affect and determine projects.

In this way, understanding our own emotional experiences and how to respond to and mediate dissensus, and at times conflict, is central to the work of managing and participating in institutions, on teams, and for change.

Previewing What's to Come, or, How I'll Work to Change the Institutional Vibe

At the beginning of this chapter, I explained the larger context, strife, and situation in which we live and work, a context that brings up all kinds of emotion. We all experience emotional reactions to this social context, and these emotions, in large part, determine how and to what effect we can work together. As I'll argue, we make institutions together, often with colleagues and peers we don't agree with or particularly like. Yet the health and efficacy of our institutions relies on our ability to collaborate across differences, and so, we must pay attention to how we show up and to how we treat one another. Now that I've shared the larger cultural moment as backdrop for my institutional change case study and how I came to care about institutions through writing program administration, I'll quickly preview what's to come in this dissertation.

From working with what I came to define as a coalitional team, I developed a hunch that we need relational approaches to institutional change because institutional change only happens in relation to one another. Another way of saying: in collaboration. So in chapter two, I introduce my case study in terms of the SEEN (Supporting Equity in Essential Needs) team, the institution in which we did our work together, and the importance of trauma-informed methods for both our team's collaboration and our research design. To explain the context that gave rise to the team I studied, I introduce Michigan State University's (MSU) institutional history and background. The important features of MSU's history I focus on include it being the "pioneering land-grant university" in the US, its location in a suburban city less than five miles from Michigan's capitol,

and its dual purpose as both a leading research institution and an accessible, public serving institution meant to serve a diverse student population. As a rhetorician, the context in which SEEN collaborated is central to the specificities of our change initiative and what we accomplished, but the ways in which we did our research and enacted change have lessons that exceed our specific context, team, and moment. Trauma-informed (TI) methods are one major takeaway from SEEN's work that I introduce in chapter two and then return to throughout the dissertation before offering a TI framework for management in my conclusion. I'll also share a brief definition of institutions from writing studies and social science literature to situate my study within a working definition of institutions, naming tensions around issues of what it means to "institutionalize," and the importance of being honest about institutions' histories (and in some cases, ongoing issues) of harm.

In chapter three, I explain the theories of writing, and definitions of key terms I bring to my case study, as well as the methodology—situational analysis—I work from to define and map the context of my study. The "situation" of my study includes SEEN participants, the specificities of our institution, and writing artifacts we collaboratively drafted in order to see the role of collaborative writing more fully in institutional change work. In discussing the theories I bring to writing, I also illustrate the ways in which writing can be either a stabilizing or destabilizing force within institutions. These two chapters also establish my case study within my triangulation of relationality, project management, and institutional change to set the stage for how writing is a key method participants use to navigate institutions, teams, and change, that I take up in my data chapters.

In chapter four, I expand my definition of institutions to include participant experiences; a definition more akin to institution/ing, or understanding a static institution of documents,

relationships, and physical structures through its living participants and their stories. To situate institutions, I offer what I call "institutional lenses," that I braid together to illustrate how institutional characteristics affect and determine participant experiences. These characteristics include institutional purpose, structure, relationships in/as the institution, mindsets of stability and change that participants bring to the institution, and how institutional siloing stifles lateral communication. Taken together, I work to show how institutional crises are made possible by a lack of communication and connection between the institutional parts that make up the whole. In chapter five, I add teams to the institutional mix. In contrast to bureaucratic systems that privilege stability and predictability, cross-functional teams emerged in organizations to solve problems across departments and units. In tracing a brief history on teams in professional writing and technical communication literature, I surface three main claims about teams that also emerged in my data. To further illustrate these claims, I turn to SEEN's collaboratively drafted writing artifacts to argue for the necessity of coalitional teams to navigate relationally across hierarchical institutions, which requires safety, trust, and a deep understanding of how positionality, power, and privilege shift and intersect in different team scenarios and at different moments of collaboration (Walton, Moore, and Jones 2019).

In chapter six, I offer the final aspect of relational institutional change by zooming in on change itself, what it is, how to assess it, and why it's important to consider how change is experienced as a risk from participants in a workplace whose material well-being is connected to an institution's stability. To try to temporarily stabilize something as amorphous as change, I offer a detailed description of what, why, when, who, and how institutional change gets done, and my data shows that understanding these elements of institutional systems are crucial for managing and facilitating change initiatives in equitable and responsive ways. Ultimately, to

support and sustain change, requires institutional leaders to encourage and develop a stance of openness to institutional learning as opposed to defense. To support such efforts, in chapter seven, I suggest ways to encourage and manage relational change through trauma-informed leadership and management. Using the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) six TI-care principles, I offer specific managerial examples for each principle, as well as an additional category to foster institutional learning that supports change from an asset instead of deficit focus. The change management principles I offer are meant to make the theoretical work of this research actionable for leaders, managers, and participants across a range of institutional types.

Across this dissertation, and my data chapters especially, I define and illustrate slippery concepts like institutions and change via participant experiences. This people-centered approach is what I add to ongoing conversations about institutional critique to move us further toward institutional change, and ultimately, what I offer is a reorientation toward *relational* institutional change. That is, the people who make up institutions are the ones best equipped to design and change those institutions. My study findings suggest that one way participants do so is by using writing to navigate institutions, teams, and change relationally. It sounds deceptively simple to focus on people, emotions, and relationships to improve and remake better institutions. Given the cultural moment I explained at the beginning of this introduction, it's more worrying than heartening to suggest that we must rely on each other to solve the present crisis of trust in our institutions when it is so difficult to collaborate and trust one another. But what I've learned from my participants and the work of this dissertation is that relational institutional change can't happen alone, or from my individual will and effort. It requires collaboration, a willingness to listen and change one's own mind, and hopefulness in each other. Akin to the epigraph from

Heather McGee that begins this dissertation, nothing about our situation is inevitable or immutable. Human choices got us here and created the institutions we work, study, worship, and vote in. We don't know exactly how higher education is going to change, or how our trust and belief in institutions will ebb and flow, but what's clear is that the primary determinant of the future of our institutions is what we—students, staff, and faculty—do in the present.

CHAPTER TWO: ACTING RHETORICALLY, ACTING INSTITUTIONALLY: INTRODUCING THE TEAM AND CONTEXT OF MY STUDY

In the previous chapter I offered a view on the current cultural moment surrounding institutions and the ways in which it can feel fraught to collaborate and build trust with one's colleagues amid broader social strife. I shared my institutional research background and interest, and why I consider the current moment to be especially opportune for engaging institutional design and change work. I also made a case for the role that writing studies can play in institutional design and change management. Institutions are made up of relationships, documents, and physical structures, and they function through processes and procedures communicated via writing. When a process is changed, it changes the lived experience of institutional participants, and so, rhetoricians have an important role in influencing, drafting, and managing change initiatives to make institutions more responsive, equitable, and people centered. Ryan Skinnell explains the relationship between rhetoric and institutions as mutual in that we act "rhetorically in a fundamentally institutional world," and by extension, act "institutionally in a fundamentally rhetorical world" (p. 171). Roles that are central to institutional management and governance and often occupied by writing studies teacher-scholar-practitioners include: administering writing programs, working across the institution in various faculty governance, committee, and administrative appointments, frequently engaging in reflective practice about administrative work, and producing documentation that informs and determines procedures. The field also cares about material working conditions (LaFrance 2019) and how to leverage institutional power via writing (Porter et al 2000; Skinnell 2019; LaFrance 2019).

With this writing-focused institutional backdrop, I'll first introduce the institutional change initiative and team I collaborated with and studied for this dissertation. Then I'll explain

how trauma-informed methods emerged for our research team, and briefly offer a working definition of trauma to argue for why understanding trauma and its prevalence is important in collaborative work. Then I'll introduce the institution and broader context where this change initiative took place, and where my ideas on teams, collaboration, and change emerge.

An Institutional Change Project: Supporting Equity in Essential Needs (SEEN)

In the spring of 2019, Ben Lauren (an associate professor in the department in which I was doing my doctoral work) invited me to a listening session for Michigan State University (MSU) faculty, staff, and stakeholders around student basic needs issues. As a co-chair of my committee and frequent project collaborator, Ben knew I was interested in work that involved people and systems design. And, he said, there would be free lunch. After this event, I started haunting the team's bi-monthly Hub[1] meetings, not quite sure what my role would be, but curious to observe how this group approached organizational research, determined stakeholders via team members' institutional networks, and approached a large institutional change initiative at a land-grant, research university through small, relational steps. As a researcher, I'm drawn to action-research that is people-centered and focused on enacting more immediate change or impact to participants' institutional experiences and working conditions. Thus, SEEN's focus on how to understand and change institutional structures to more equitably support student success immediately interested me.

Before I continue further situating SEEN, I want to address and explain how I'll be discussing my institutional context. While it's common, and can be important, to obscure

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[1] MSU's Hub for Innovation in Teaching and Learning was an internal design consultancy that provided support for students, faculty, and staff working on a variety of projects. The Hub offered a range of support from project management, to design sprints, and learning experience design. SEEN worked with the Hub for strategic reasons. We didn't want any single college or office on campus to "own" essential needs work. Rather, we wanted to centralize these resources on a decentralized campus. The Hub was able to sponsor this work as a central, independent entity on campus that was more neutral regarding institutional ownership.

location with something like, "My research was conducted at a large, midwestern research institution…" for my study, and the framework I ultimately offer with relational institutional change, the specificities of a context, participants, and an institutional landscape determine how change can or cannot work. Similarly, and as I'll work with more fully in chapter five, the people who make up a team determine how the team will collaborate and what they can accomplish together. So in this study, I name Michigan State University as the site of my work, and I discuss specific institutional history, current dynamics and at times tensions between units, and how MSU's decentralized structure shaped SEEN's approach. While I anonymize my study's participants, I do discuss how we (SEEN team members) were differently situated across the university by speaking generally about each member's individual unit or department, and rank. As part of my research protocol that I'll discuss further in chapter three, I shared drafts of every dissertation chapter with my participants and welcomed feedback on how I represented their experiences and data. Workplace studies like this dissertation must be done carefully and with great attention for how to protect participants as much as possible. The specificities of a situation are also important in different ways and determining what and when to share depends on the study, who's involved, and how things will be shared.

The specific people who collaborated to form SEEN's core team all influenced the work we accomplished. In the course of roughly three years (between the spring of 2019 to early 2022), the group that came to be known as Supporting Equity in Essential Needs or SEEN was composed of two faculty members in writing and rhetoric, the director of a university-level resource center for students who are parents, a researcher at a university level think tank that has since disbanded, a researcher from the Provost's office, a graduate student in writing and rhetoric (myself), and an undergraduate student in user-centered design. This was a dynamic and

committed team as evidenced by two members leaving MSU and remaining involved. Students excluded, no one was paid to participate in SEEN's work. This was also a team that models adrienne maree brown's (2017) idea that change happens at the speed of trust, and so, this team was an ideal case study for theorizing and developing a relational institutional change framework.

During our work together, SEEN conducted wide-ranging institutional research. This research included: campus listening sessions; fifteen focus groups conducted between July–August of 2020 with a total of 40 graduate students (MA, PhD, and MD) and 29 undergraduate students (including first-year through seniors) involved, with 36 unique majors represented; seventeen interviews with various campus stakeholders ranging from MSU police, MSU food bank director, folks in residential housing and services, to the registrar, etc.; an additional focus group specifically for LGBTQIA+ students in collaboration with a campus resource center for gender and sexuality; staff working groups to learn what kind of resource solutions they thought would be most effective; a presentation to four campus leaders to scale-up funding and support; and the development of a trauma-informed prototype for a web portal where students could access resources that was also designed by students. The institutional research we conducted informed the recommendations SEEN made to upper administrators, and in chapter seven I'll return to these recommendations to share what institutional change SEEN accomplished.

SEEN's work preceded the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was certainly affected and altered by the pandemic. COVID exacerbated much student need, demonstrating how fragile many institutional structures and resource systems are, and of course tightened university budgets, in our case making extra funding for a potential essential needs resource center impossible. Instead, administrators tasked our team with developing a solution without such funding and that

wouldn't act as another university silo. (I will further discuss issues of institutional siloing in the context of institutions and change work in chapter four.) And multiple times COVID slowed our research timeline as we responded to the state of perpetual overwhelm many stakeholders and participants were experiencing. Asking ourselves, is now the time to be doing this aspect of the work? How might we revise our plans to be more responsive to the present moment without letting COVID determine our trajectory? In this way, we tried not to let COVID determine our research or findings, being careful to note when findings regarding student need and resource access predated the pandemic. COVID certainly made many more stakeholders, university administrators, and faculty aware of the precarity many college students and their families or communities experience, and the need for equitable access to resources.

When I began this research, I assumed that SEEN team members were all invested in student success as an important part of what kept people from different institutional positions willing to participate in multi-year research that was outside their job descriptions, but I was also curious how the SEEN members understood their participation in change work, and how they assessed whether we had made change (or not). By studying a particular team here, I hope to forward an approach for relational institutional change that can be adapted and repeated (with attention to local specificity) elsewhere. To do so, my guiding questions were: How do individuals and groups build relationships to make change? What's the role of collaborative writing in participating, managing, and facilitating teams and institutional change? What makes up the situation of institutional change and how can it be studied? And, in what ways is a relational change framework repeatable and adaptable in different contexts?

SEEN's Origin and Research Mission

SEEN was a research group of students, staff, and faculty at MSU loosely started as a

learning community in the spring of 2019. MSU Learning communities are institutionally funded and supported groups who want to engage in conversations around curriculum and pedagogy. "Curriculum and pedagogy" can be approached expansively, and groups propose their topics and the structure that will best support their specific inquiry. But to be institutionally supported, a learning community must meet at least eight times during the academic year, explore important educational topics, and welcome all interested members of MSU's instructional staff, regardless of rank or discipline (MSU Learning Communities). Learning communities are proposed in the spring semester, and then, if accepted, meet during the following academic year. SEEN—a name whose origin came from student stories about not feeling or being seen on campus—was invested in change management and our research mission was to create greater access to campus resources for all students.

The topic of basic needs first emerged for SEEN's project manager, a faculty member in writing and rhetoric, after working on a community-engaged project with previously homeless participants who wanted to share their stories of being homeless in Michigan. The community partner from the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MICA) asked: "do you know how many MSU students are homeless?" Trying to answer this question (spoiler: the institution does not know how many students are homeless or face homelessness), this faculty member started working with the director of a resource center for student-parents, quickly realizing that issues of homelessness intersect with issues of food insecurity and other "basic needs" issues. SEEN defines basic needs as "regular access to healthy food; stable housing; financial security; crisis resolution; mental, emotional, and physical wellness; safety; and accessibility" (Personal communication). The interconnectedness of needs brought up questions of access on a large university campus: How do students learn about and access resources? Is information regarding

emergency funds widely available? What different need issues occur for undergraduate and graduate students? What resources are available to undergraduate and graduate students? How do needs differ depending on issues of identity/positionality, demographic factors, major, department, college, etc.?

From institutional knowledge and early conversations, SEEN learned that when students experience chronic and acute basic needs issues, they end up consulting a range of people and resources to find help. SEEN defined *chronic* need as repeated issues of insecurity regarding housing, food, emotional wellness, etc., and *acute* need as more one-off emergency help that doesn't repeat semester-to-semester or year-to-year. Resources and people are distributed across MSU, and accessing resources generally depends on who the student knows within the institution. As Participant 4 (P4) in my study explained more fully, one way of conceiving of how students find help is in "traditional" and "non-traditional" help seeking:

> Traditional help seeking is [an] advisor, or instructor. Non-traditional is more, finding that one person...You know, we talked to folks in facilities, particularly in family housing that clean that have developed relationships with students that see their kids all the time, that hear things, that learn things...those aren't folks that people normally think have knowledge of how to support students, and they really do. Non-traditional, or even units on their own, collecting money from their faculty and staff to support students. There's a lot of that that happens at MSU. (Personal communication)

In terms of issues of access to institutional resources, I am limiting "who students know" to who they can quickly get help from on campus for a variety of issues—this could mean an email response or scheduling a meeting with someone in 24 hours or less, or promptly being connected to the necessary person or the resource itself, like being able to get a meal the same day. Additionally, in trying to access resources, students often have to repeat their story regarding their circumstance and need multiple times to get help. While MSU offers students a range of resources (particularly for acute need issues), these resources are not visible to all students, and

these resources are unevenly distributed across different units and colleges, which oftentimes

operate independently and unknowingly of each other as I'll discuss further in chapter four on

siloed institutional structures. While units are positioned separately from one another on campus,

students interact with multiple offices all at once, and so an important institutional

communication project emerges in trying to coordinate available resources and care for students.

I'll discuss more about MSU's history and background in the next section, but here I want to

briefly share important institutional context between units and an organizational chart that

illustrates the institutional landscape students must navigate when trying to access resources.

MSU Dynamics, Tensions, and Future Plans

MSU has a long-term institutional history of antagonism between academic affairs and

student services that multiple research participants in my study discussed at length. This ongoing

institutional divide was significant to SEEN's work because it hindered attempts to support and

educate "the whole student," and limited the help students could find on campus. I'll discuss this

divide more fully in chapter four when I define and illustrate institutions via participants'

experiences and barriers that emerge from lived experience in the institution. But a little bit of

background is useful here for the student services organizational chart below: While this

organizational chart was last updated August 2019, it's what had been operational since 2019,

through the Covid-19 pandemic and into fall 2021. In fall 2020, MSU's then president

announced a temporary reorganization of Student Affairs and Services Programs to combine with

Residential and Hospitality Services (RHS). And in fall 2021, this temporary change was made

permanent. This reorganization means that the units formerly within Student Affairs and RHS

merged into the Division of Student Life and Engagement. The goal of this single unit is to align

student support services inside and outside the classroom, which also connects to the student

support goal outlined in the new Strategic Plan to improve the 6-year graduation rate to 86% by 2030. The new strategic plan also tries to expand what "student success" means beyond academic achievement, including measures like belonging and engagement (MSU Strategic Plan). This reorganization is significant because it demonstrates attempts to rectify the poor communicative relations between parts of the institution, but the effects of this reorganization remains more of a question as this work is ongoing. MSU continues to be an institution in transition as upper administration positions keep turning over more frequently than is common in higher education. However, other than sharing the changes SEEN was successful in bringing to fruition in my conclusion, I try to limit my focus to the main two years of time SEEN was actively researching and writing on essential needs issues on campus as opposed to including longer discussion of institutional changes or the ongoing instability in upper administration even though these were continuing developments as I drafted this dissertation. Figure 1 below shows how Student Affairs and Services were organized during SEEN's work, and the institutional landscape students had to navigate to access resources.
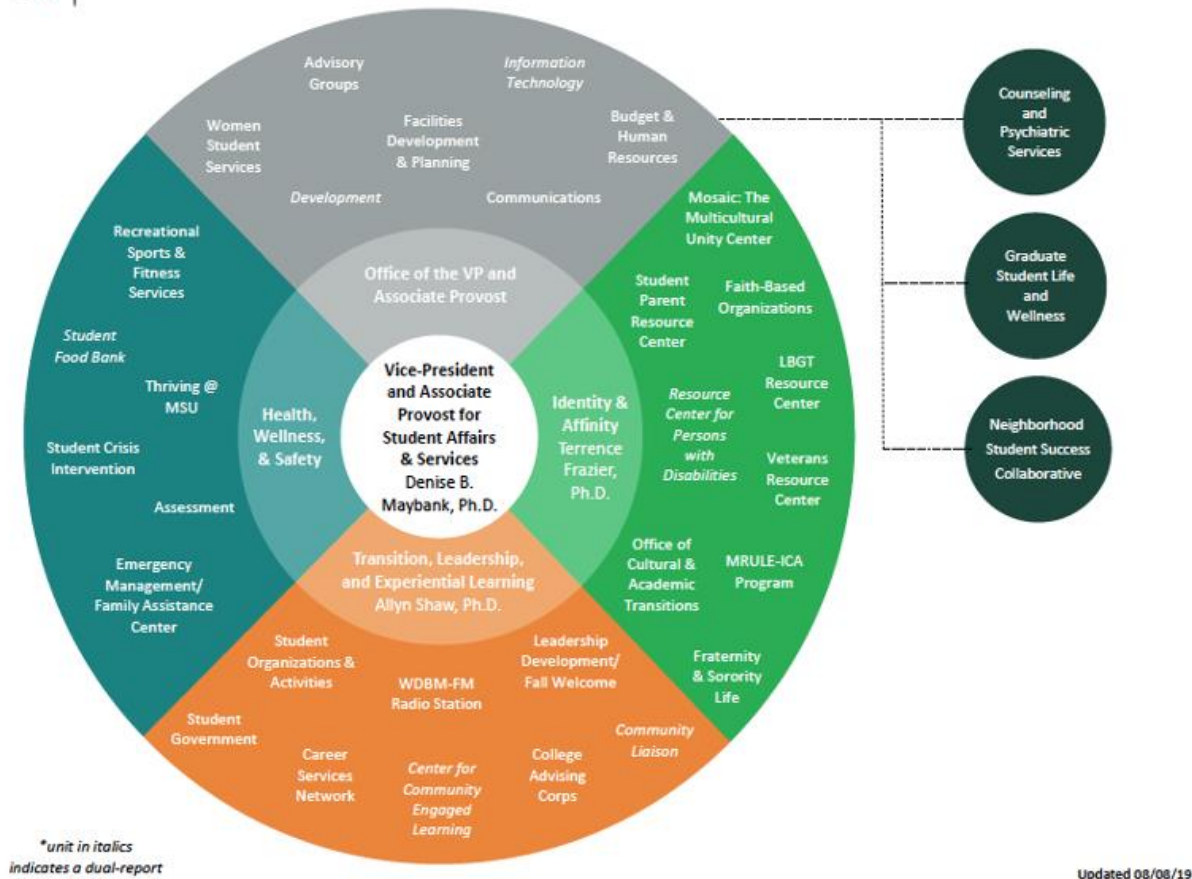
Figure 1: August 8, 2019, Student Affairs and Services Functional Chart.

During the course of SEEN's work, we came to define our research around essential needs issues. One of SEEN's team members suggested this shift in definition while we were conducting a landscape analysis of other universities' basic needs resources. North Carolina State University's website uses the term "Pack Essentials," which refers to their mascot and the fact that they are a "Wolfpack." This team member pointed out that "essential" is more positive than "basic," which invokes ideas of deficiency, and for writing studies, "basic writing" has a long history of being associated with remedial or pre-college courses. "Essential," on the other hand, suggests "essence," something essential to survival or success as opposed to something in need

of fixing (Personal communication). To shift institutional language use, during many of SEEN's presentations and early publications, we often titled our work: "basic essential needs," to start a conversation about the difference in these terms, and the essential need of resources for student success.

The Role of Trauma-Informed Work with SEEN

A central point of focus for SEEN was the fact that students had to repeat their story multiple times to access resources while experiencing a crisis. Two of the seven core SEEN team members are trained social workers who are very aware of the prevalence of trauma, and before SEEN, Ben and Shannon had been working on MI Homeless Voice, and during this community-engaged project, we realized the need for trauma-informed research methods. During the academic year 2018–2019, MSU faculty and students were collaborating with the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness Speakers Bureau on a project with formerly homeless people who wanted to share their stories through spoken word performances to try and change hearts and minds about homelessness. While not all research projects deal with such obviously difficult and potentially re-traumatizing topics, SEEN's research approach was directly influenced from the work on MI Homeless Voice. What started from trying to develop a more ethical and participatory research methodology that practiced consent as an ongoing process and ensured participants retained ownership of their data, became SEEN's trauma-informed methodology both for how team members were treated and asked to participate, and in SEEN's work developing the web portal for students accessing essential needs resources.

One area in which trauma-informed (TI) work emerged from MI Homeless Voice had to do with authorship and copyright issues. Ben and I began questioning authorship and consent in terms of how to ensure that participants retained agency and choice around their participation

and what would happen if they changed their minds about wanting to participate in the work. In standard academic consent processes, there is a single moment of consent when a participant signs a consent form and agrees to participate in the work. After this point, the data belongs to the researcher and while it is expected that consent form language includes verbiage around withdrawing or changing one's mind about participation, once a book or article or other type of work is published, it is not as possible to get one's data back or change one's involvement in a project. Two early approaches that influenced us to practice consent as an ongoing process with multiple check-in points were Maria Novotony and John Gagnon's (2019) work on shared ownership in research with trauma communities, and Melissa Eggelston's (2019) blog resources on the need for trauma-informed user experience research in website design. TI approaches relate to issues of consent because choice is one of six principles defined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) TI care (CDC and SAMHSA 2020). The six principles include: safety, trustworthiness/transparency, peer support, collaboration/mutuality, empowerment, voice, and choice, and cultural, historical, and gender issues, and I'll work with these principles at length in chapter seven when I offer specific management practices based on each one.

The importance of participant choice about how, when, and whether or not to participate in research and the need for participants to retain copyright of one's data was very apparent to Ben and me because of the type of project and subject matter of MI Homeless Voice. That is, we imagined what it would be like if a participant no longer wanted their personal story about having been homeless——that was not anonymous given the nature of spoken word performances—out in the world. We worried about being able to protect participants in the future if they changed their mind, and so ultimately, the team collaboratively decided not to publish the

work but to instead share the stories as a "living" album on SoundCloud and all the participants retained their copyright and editing privileges to the files. So, if a participant ever wants to remove their story from the album, they can do so by logging into SoundCloud and removing their file—no questions asked, or explanation needed.

While this type of publication may not always be possible when academics need a certain type and number of publications and are faced with particular timelines and demands for review and promotion, it was a necessary approach to engaging this community project in ethical ways that respected participants, treated their data as belonging to them, and ensured that every participant could withdraw or change their mind at any point during and after the project's completion. From this work, Ben and I continued our conversations about consent, what we felt comfortable with regarding how academics engage with participants and what they use data for (i.e., one's own career building as opposed to using data to change an institution), and the ongoing need we saw for trauma-informed methods in writing studies. So, from SEEN's beginning, the team implemented trauma-informed methods both for interacting with direct research participants in interviews and focus groups, and in the institutional recommendations we made about how to address student needs and resource access. The trauma-informed heuristic we developed is something I'll share more about in chapter five's writing artifacts, and I further extend in my TI management recommendations in chapter seven.

Trauma Definition and College Communities

Faculty, staff, and students—anyone who works with other people—are likely to encounter colleagues and peers who have experienced trauma regardless of whether they are specifically addressing trauma or researching topics that seem likely to cause a trauma response. I'll define trauma, its prevalence, and differences between acute and chronic trauma much more

fully in chapter seven, but for now, Rachael Dietkus offers an integrated definition for understanding trauma in design work: "Trauma is a response to anything that's overwhelming and that happens too much, too fast, too soon, or too long. It is coupled with a lack of protection or support. It lives in the body, stories as sensation, pain, or tension—or is a lack of sensation, like numbness" and importantly, Dietkus adds that context is critically important to understanding trauma because it "does not impact us all in the same way" (Service Design Network, 2020). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) ongoing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) research shares that nearly two-thirds of American adults have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience, and one in six adults reported experiencing four or more (ACEs Fast Facts). ACEs are not always traumatic, and whether something is traumatic largely depends on an individual's perception of an adverse experience. However, understanding trauma, even broadly, is important because of how common it is, and the ways in which it can impact one's ability to engage, to complete tasks, and to participate.

Regarding essential needs insecurity and college populations more specifically, the Hope Center 2018 #RealCollege report surveyed 86,000 students from 123 two- and four-year institutions across the US, finding that "45% of respondents were food insecure in the prior 30 days, 56% of respondents were housing insecure in the previous year, and 17% of respondents were homeless in the previous year" (p. 2). I share these brief examples to preview how trauma and trying to practice TI collaboration weaves throughout every chapter in this dissertation, and to argue for being trauma aware and trying to practice TI methods from the beginning of any project. Of note, in arguing for the importance of TI approaches I am not suggesting that everyone must act as a professional mental health professional, but it is important to be aware of trauma and the potential for trauma response because it affects executive functioning and

redirects the brain's attention to survival and away from the ability to learn, focus, and participate (Harvard Adult Capabilities Study, 2018). And for my study's focus, being trauma-informed is especially important in developing an approach for participatory institutional change.

MSU Institutional Context, History, and Future Vision

Essential needs issues will look different at different institutions given physical location and climate, institutional type and mission, and student body makeup and demographics—to name just a few dynamics that shape and impact need. Concerns and methods for approaching essential needs will also differ and need to be responsive to the people that make up a project, organization, or institution. So here I'll briefly sketch MSU as the context SEEN operated within, illustrating how this specific setting shaped our approach and response to essential needs resources on campus.

MSU was the United States' "pioneer land-grant university" and the model for the US's land-grant system (MSU Today, 2018). In 1855, the Agricultural College of the State of Michigan, now known as Michigan State University, opened to provide its residents education in scientific agriculture and mechanical arts regardless of social class. A public-facing college like this revolutionized education in the US, and seven years later, Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act into law. The 1862 Morrill Act gave 30,000 acres of federal public lands recently appropriated, and in many cases stolen, from Indigenous peoples to Union states in order to sell in "land grants" to raise money to build colleges that would educate American settlers. The Morrill Act was passed during the same year as the Homestead Act, which distributed more than 270 million acres to settlers for development and farming. As la paperson argues, "universities do not exist in some abstract academic place. They are built on land, and especially in the North American context, upon occupied Indigenous lands" (p. 26). Land was sold to fund US

universities, and land was developed in order to build US universities, and la paperson contends, "land accumulation as institutional capital is likely the defining trait of a competitive, modern-day research university" (p. 25). Land accumulation as institutional capital isn't hard to see at MSU as I have many times been driving 10+ miles away from the main part of campus only to find that I am still on campus in the middle of acres and acres of farmland. To be precise, MSU occupies 5,300 acres of land. And this land is "the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples," and resides on land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw (MSU provisional land acknowledgement, 2018). I focus so much here on land because as a white settler-scholar I want to model that accounting for local context includes understanding institutions within their historical context and the ways in which institutions of higher learning are connected to histories of harm. I see acknowledging and working honestly and openly from this history as one way to change the futures of higher education.

Today, MSU is a Research 1 university meaning it prioritizes research, and is committed to graduate education through the doctorate, in addition to offering a range of baccalaureate and master's programs. MSU offers 200+ undergraduate majors, and the student body (as of fall, 2021) is made up of 38,574 undergraduate students, and 11, 204 graduate and professional students. MSU is really a city of its own, located in the small suburban city of East Lansing. East Lansing is adjacent to a capitol city, Lansing, and MSU's Union is 4.9 miles away from the Michigan State Capitol. As one of my participants remarked, "MSU is in the shadow of the legislature, and there's always talk of something that's happening downtown" (Personal communication). MSU occupying a capital city means that quite literally politics are never far away, and this proximity to politics shapes institutional priorities and mission.

Fall 2021, MSU welcomed the largest entering class to date with 9,065 new undergraduate students, and included 4,852 women, and 2,328 students of color (Enrollment report, 2021). MSU is a predominantly white institution (PWI) meaning that 50% or more of the student population is white. Total university enrollment for students of color is 11,784 as of fall 2021, and accounts for 25.9% of the domestic student total. International students account for 9.1% of the student body. In the late aughts, MSU focused recruitment efforts on international students, particularly Chinese students who came to campus with large disposable incomes. For a time around 2014, MSU had more Chinese students than any other US university (Wolcott, 2018). This large Chinese student population affected MSU demographics and campus culture and helped MSU mitigate declining state funding given that international students pay more than $40,000 annually in tuition and fees. In addition to bolstering campus tuition revenue, Chinese student presence also helped the local economy in bolstering the market for luxury apartments and cars (Wolcott, 2018). However, the number of international students enrolling has declined every year for the last seven years as of fall 2021.

More recently, MSU has turned recruitment efforts toward diverse domestic students. Largely due to these efforts, 2021 marks MSU's most diverse student body to date (Enrollment report, 2021). Diversity of race, socioeconomic background, dis/ability, veteran or "nontraditional" students, student-parents and caretakers, and gender and sexuality are all important topics in terms of student body demographics and who MSU administration still seems to "imagine" their students are. In other words, MSU remains a fairly traditional brick and mortar institution that is largely resistant to online teaching and learning. This resistance exemplifies who MSU administrators continue to imagine the student body is, and this hinders efforts to offer more flexible hybrid or online course options. Similarly, MSU's enactment of

block tuition in the fall of 2019 also assumes a particular student who is able and wants to take 15-credits a semester, something that seems nearly impossible if one has caretaking responsibilities, needs to work outside of college, or is experiencing an acute crisis. This administrative imagination regarding who students are and what they need to be successful was significant to SEEN's work because these assumptions determine how resources are created and distributed.

MSU's undergraduate students are largely from Michigan (80%) and 65% of recent MSU graduates are employed in Michigan (MSU About, 2021). MSU as a residential college serving mostly Michigan residents continues the institution's founding mission to serve and educate Michiganders. In addition to its land-grant roots, MSU's contemporary mission is "to advance knowledge and transform lives," as one participant mentioned in terms of the split between academic and student affairs at MSU: "I would always say to professors I knew, 'so you are advancing knowledge, I'm only transforming lives" (Participant 5, personal communication). MSU accomplishes this mission through education, research, and outreach, engagement and economic development (MSU mission statement, 2021). Additionally, MSU's tagline is "Spartans will," which the university describes as both a verb, "the action and work that Spartans do everyday to make a positive impact" and as a noun, "the determination, resilience and optimism that exemplifies Spartans" (MSU brand studio, 2021). This "will" shows up all over campus communications and mission language, as MSU Today puts it regarding MSU's land-grant history: "Spartans work to advance the common good with an uncommon will" (MSU Today, 2018). MSU continues to see itself as an "education for everyone" institution and invokes this identity often in how it sells itself and communicates its mission and value. In 2021, this public service mission shows up in MSU's celebration of its largest, most diverse student-class to

date. However, attracting and accepting a diverse student body is one thing, but whether or not MSU has the social and relational infrastructure to support such a diverse class remains more of a question. To do right by these students and support them to degree completion, the entire campus needs to be oriented around and focused on supporting and sustaining this student body.

The push to recruit more diverse domestic students without also expanding support structures for students who may not access traditional support is an example of universities trying to enact diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies but lacking a broader understanding of the kinds of support students need to make it to graduation. Something that SEEN's focus on educating "the whole student" was trying to educate campus leaders about. As Participant 4 explained above regarding traditional and nontraditional help-seeking, a more diverse student population doesn't necessarily seek support from "traditional" institutional structures. While I'm of course looking specifically at MSU, recruiting diverse domestic students is happening across institutions of higher education in the US, especially following racial justice protests during the summer of 2020 and continuing racial awareness in institutions in the US. DEI initiatives are now (importantly) part of every job listing, strategic plan, and university correspondence. But what I've consistently not seen as part of these statements, training workshops, or recruitment foci: the infrastructure that will be funded and developed to support these "nontraditional" or diverse domestic students toward timely degree completion, many of whom must take out student loans to be at college in the first place. It's this kind of institutional infrastructure that a relational institutional change approach can help to influence.

With continuing state and federal budget cuts to public education, MSU faces similar challenges to its public service mission that other land-grants institutions also face across the US. And MSU is facing a different kind of crisis in terms of a lack of institutional trust, and a

betrayal of public trust in the fallout of the Larry Nassar case. This betrayal has affected every facet of the university, and administration turnover, early retirements, and resignations have also affected every level of the institution. In early 2018[2], MSU's president resigned in disgrace, and the faculty senate passed a vote of no confidence in the entirety of the board of trustees. In many ways, MSU is a traumatized institution, with many if not most students, faculty, and staff lacking faith and trust in the university. Kathleen Fitzpatrick, MSU faculty in the English Department, makes the case that the institution is to blame here and that while it is important to hold individuals responsible, she argues that the "abdication of care is systemic, not (or not solely) personal" (p. 220). Fitzpatrick continues, "It is a massive failure encoded into the structures and policies of the university, structures and policies whose goals, as in many institutions across the country, is to protect the institution rather than the individuals within it, and this has resulted in an incalculable human cost." (p. 220). In addition to the incalculable human suffering caused by Larry Nassar and the broader institution, MSU also now faces the economic reality of the $500 million settlement to survivors. No amount of money could mitigate this suffering, and the university continues to operate under systems of liability rather than active accountability toward sexual assault reporting and misconduct. Following an 18-month investigation by the Lansing State Journal, it was reported that out of 49 faculty in violation of the university's sexual misconduct policy, at least 11 were still affiliated with MSU, and five of them remain employed (Ramsey, 2021). In this way, MSU, like many other institutions of higher ed, is reactive when harm occurs on campus as opposed to the needed more seismic culture changes required to be more proactive in preventing harm from happening and more people centered.

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[2] While I was finishing drafting this dissertation in the fall of 2022, another MSU president resigned, this time because of issues with the MSU Board of Trustees. Again, MSU's Faculty Senate, University Council, and, this time also the Associated Students of MSU, passed a vote of no confidence in the Board. While my focus remains on the years SEEN was operating, MSU's institutional upheaval continues.

With this brief sketch of MSU's landscape and recent campus issues, I hope to situate SEEN's work and contextualize some of the decisions we made specific to this institution and setting. While essential needs will look and work differently at different institutions, there are still important practices that can be adapted to account for context, which I'll outline more fully in chapters six and seven. For now, I want to draw attention to the fact that essential needs and issues of access are rhetorical (along with of course being embodied, actual, and physical) and so responses to design and change institutions must account for institutional specificity, population, and setting, knowing that what works in one location won't work again or in the same ways elsewhere. MSU's "education for everyone" history is particularly poignant to the project of SEEN because from its inception, MSU has seen itself as dedicated to the mission of educating its residents and students regardless of background.

Conclusion: The Institutional Landscape

In this chapter, I've introduced SEEN and the institutional landscape in which this team engaged in a change initiative around issues of student essential needs. I've also argued that writing studies and institutions are intricately connected, and so, writing is an important way of both engaging within institutions and working to change our workplaces. In this way, institutions are not just a backdrop to work in higher education, but instead are important topics to work in/on/toward making more equitable and accessible. And I introduced the need for trauma-informed methods, especially when working with students or research participants who are in crisis or are sharing stories of previous crises. Yet beyond more apparently difficult topics, institutional change work needs to be trauma-informed and aware of the potential for trauma responses from participants and facilitators given the prevalence of trauma in contemporary life, even pre-Covid-19, and especially now. I'll further this argument for trauma-informed design in

every following chapter. In the next chapter, I'll explain my study design and the methodological

framework I engaged to study how one team used collaborative writing to participate in and

manage a change initiative at a large midwestern research institution.

CHAPTER THREE: INTRODUCING KEY TERMS, THEORIES, AND SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS AS METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, I continued to explain how I became interested in institutions as productive sites of possibility and change. I introduced the SEEN research team, how I got involved, my different roles on the team, and why I stayed involved. I also gave a snapshot of the localized context of MSU as the site for this research study in a particular nearly three-year period, noting some current issues at MSU that affect the institution and its participants.

To study how the SEEN team formed, collaborated, and facilitated institutional change, my research design was qualitative and interpretivist, particularly based in situational analysis (SA), a methodology adapted from grounded theory (GT) after the "interpretive turn" (Clarke, Friese, and Washburn 2018). SA is grounded in the concept of the "situation" and offers a relational and ecological approach to understanding social life. SA is also explicitly posthumanist in that it goes "beyond the idea that only humans 'really' matter or 'matter most' in a given situation," and SA centers social justice concerns in qualitative inquiry through methods that explicitly account for power in "both its more solid and fluid forms" (Clark et al p. xxv). Ultimately SA is meant to be an action-oriented methodology that works from relationality and positionality, taking seriously the complexities, contradictions, instabilities, and partialities inherent both in social life and in what we can know. In this way, SA was an ideal methodology for trying to study something as complex as team participation and institutional change, a situation that is nothing if not messy and amorphous. Before I further explain SA in terms of my epistemological orientation and study design, I introduce some key terms that surface throughout my subsequent chapters: institutions, project management, and relationality before turning to writing, a practice central to my three key terms, and the theories I bring to writing.

Defining Terms: Institutions, Project Management, Relationality, and Writing

The Complexity of Institutions

The term institution is slippery, acting as something of a floating signifier in writing studies, or a "know it when you see it" concept. In the introduction, I defined institutions as being made up of documents, relations, and physical structures, but here I'll further define and situate institutions in order to better assess and manage institutional change in later chapters. To name just a few possibilities for what institutions can mean: a concept with specific legal privileges and cultural expectations (the institution of marriage), an abstract notion of opposition (what my parents refer to as "the man" regarding their government jobs), a physical place (an institution of higher education like Michigan State University), or habitual actions (the way "it's always been done"). In rhetorical studies, G. Thomas Goodnight's study (2008) on strategic maneuvering in the medical field explains that institutions: "regulate behavior through providing norms that reward "acceptable" conduct, sanction the ''inappropriate,'' and order expectations of exchange" (p. 360). He goes on to name the family unit as the oldest institution that regulates behavior and procreation, with "education and politics—extending notions of ''reasonable'' conduct grounded in norms of kinship-coming next" (p. 360). Institutions of higher education are particularly interesting for institutional studies because they have what could be called freakish longevity second only perhaps to religious institutions for how long they persist, and in doing so, order cultural behavior, determine intelligence, and influence cultural class markers and mobility.

When I first became interested in how institutions work, I imagined writing studies would have a stable definition of institutions, like I mentioned in chapter one. However, despite often naming institutions as meaningful sites of production in our scholarship that enable and constrain

participants' agency, there is not sustained engagement in institutional research, as Ryan Skinnell has argued (2019). Here, I'll offer an overview of how writing studies has approached and defined institutions while working to make the case for the field to engage more in institutional management and change.

To illustrate writing studies' work with definitions of institutions: in the 1996 *Keywords in Composition Studies,* Elizabeth Ervin reifies the institution as a problematic other, even with echoes of gender inequality. Ervin's definition of *institution* ranges from the term being roughly synonymous with other concepts like "patriarchy or the traditionally male intellectual 'establishment," or generalized "systems of exclusion and regulation," or "unstable constructs," or "material and discursive formations" (pp. 124–126). This varied definitional possibility demonstrates institution's baggage, and while Ervin concludes that institutions are "filled with weaknesses, tensions, contractions, and possibilities," she does not make a case for further engagement with the term or for engaging one's own material and discursive institution—the word also doesn't appear in the book's 2015 version (p. 126). Skinnell (2019) explains that rhetoricians have been talking about institutions basically as long as they've been discussing rhetoric, citing Aristotle's lecture notes on rhetoric, and Isocrates's "Antidosis" (p. 72). However, even though rhetoric and institutions "are, and have always been, intimately intertwined," Skinell argues that this doesn't mean rhetoricians have a precise definition or sense of what an institution is (p. 72). And in response to Michelle LaFrance and Melissa Nicolas' assertion that the term institution is surprisingly absent from writing studies scholarship, Skinnell counters that, "if institutions are nowhere, it is only because they are everywhere" (p. 71). In this way, it seems like institutions are often approached as the "environment," in that they function like a passive backdrop to the action of participants.

Beyond rhetoric and writing, much scholarly work on institutions comes out of the social sciences, economics, and political science, and this "classical institutional" work has often focused on macrostructural analysis, differentiating institutions from organizations, and how institutions constrain action and impose continuity, as Skinnell notes (2019). The macro institutional level of analysis from the 20th century is important to note as the main focus because it's a zoomed-out analysis less concerned with participant experiences. This focus shifted in the late 20th century toward trying to better understand the micro institutional level—individual action within the broader structure—with New Institutional Theory (Powell and Dimaggio 1991). More recently still in organizational studies, Patricia H. Thornton, William Ocasio, and Michael Lounsbury (2012), introduced the "institutional logics perspective," a metatheoretical framework for "analyzing the interrelationships among institutions, individuals, and organizations in social systems" to better understand how these various actors influence, and act within situations and in turn are influenced by the situation in various social systems (p. 2). Skinnell (2020) has been working to operationalize the institutional logics perspective for writing studies to offer rhetoricians a way to better account for the various aspects of institutions that are flexible and contingent—and so persuadable within situational and kairotic speech and writing—even when institutions appear static (p. 169). Similar to what I shared in chapter one, institutions mediate human interactions, and require many participants acting according to particular expectations and rules in order to sustain and reproduce the institution. That institutions are rule-governed also echoes in Michelle LaFrance's (2019) definition in which she explains institutions as "hierarchically ordered, rule-governed, and textually mediated workplaces, 'organized around a distinctive function, such as education, health care, and so on" (p. 24). In these ways, institutions are both socially constructed and socially restrictive.

To the rule-governed notion of institutions, Andrew Brown et al., (2012) writing in *Organization Studies* further define "institutional logics" those that aid in system reproduction by delineating roles, constraining and enabling agency, and determining criteria for evaluation and legitimacy (p. 299). These logics circulate and become meaningful via discourse and then become naturalized via behavior, or what Geoffrey Hodgson explains as "rules" becoming habituated practices enacted by individuals who believe their colleagues enact the same behavior (p. 6). So, agency and rule-following (i.e., behaviors) become entangled topics in how institutions perpetuate by constraint and action. I'll have more to say on agency in chapter four when I further define institutions via "institution-ing," the lived experiences of participants navigating institutional systems and processes, but for now, the important point here has to do with the interplay between an individual's subjective experience within an institutional system, and the seemingly objective institutional structure—or the micro and macro levels. That is, the institution must precede and persist beyond any individual or group in order to reproduce itself, and it accomplishes continuation in two ways. The first way the institution ensures its longevity is by constraining individual action. While arguably many actions are available to any individual in an institution, institutional logics determine—before the individual enters the institution— what can be recognized as action or disruption. The second way the institution persists is in necessitating a history that precedes any individual for the "objective" sense of the institution to function. This "objective" institution is also how institutional logics become refined, and the "meanings and practices they inscribe taken-for-granted and reproduced" (Brown et al., p. 299). By design, it's difficult to think outside of institutional logics when part of the logic is to perpetuate the institution. For institutions to persist, their logics must constrain and "normalize" action, creating the sense of an objective institution beyond any subjective individual or group.

While a definition of "institution" can be continually made and remade, there are some key features to note. Institutions are human-made, complex social, material, and rhetorical places, sustained and enacted by individual, everyday practices. Institutions also house specific logics that privilege system reproduction and continuity, and so, the institution is "objectively" beyond and irreducible to any individual or group. And while the institution is irreducible to its participants, the social aspect of institutions is particularly important for rhetorical studies and my argument here. In thinking about institutions as social entities sustained by action, it's also possible to see institutions as sustained by change. Given that individuals enact institutions, there is nothing inherently static about an institution, but this also means institutions are perpetually trying to work toward stasis because they are not stable—human actors are not "reliable" or always predictable. So, it could be more effective to approach an institution as a process rather than a stable, physical thing. That is, institutions are more of a verb rather than a noun.

How Institutions Work is Another Way of Asking How Institutions Change

I am, unsurprisingly, not alone in approaching institutions as active, even living, entities. Writing for *Theory and Society*, Gerald Berk and Dennis Galvan ask: "What if we reconceptualized institutions not as prior to, exogenous from, or determinative of action, but as the raw materials for action?" (p. 575). For Berk and Galvan this shift toward institutions as inherently active and changeable requires "rethinking institutions experientially, conceptualizing rules as skills" (p. 575). In this conceptualization, institutions are living things enacted by their human participants, and where there is living, there is change (p. 544). Rather than seeing institutional logics as the ground of stability and institutional reproduction, Berk and Galvan approach "doing rules" as "playing the rules as if they were instruments" (p. 544). With this approach, it's not so much that we change our practices to change institutions, but instead we

approach institutional change as something that is already at work and that we can productively direct and influence through our actions.

Somewhat similarly but writing for art and museum studies, Andrea Fraser defines the "institution of art" as every space where art is housed, experienced, and produced, and also that institutions are internalized and sustained in people's practices, tastes, and perceptions. This social and personal element "make[s] up Pierre Bordieu's 'habitus': the 'social made body,' the institution made mind" (p. 281). What I find useful about these approaches to institutions as living structures perpetuated by human actants is how they disallow, or at least trouble, an individual distancing from the institution and encourage instead that institutional participants question the institution by questioning how *I* "play the institutional instrument" I have access to and enact. As Fraser explains: "it's not a question of being against the institution: we are the institution. It's a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to" (p. 283). So, how I *do* my institutional role can perpetuate existing structures or enact change. As Stuart Blythe (2007) explains a paradox of agency in that "we gain it not by being autonomous individual[s], but by being part of something larger, by being a part of systems that constrain and enable simultaneously" (p. 173). My every day, mundane practices and "rule playing" make the institution, and so, innovation and change are available and already at work.

I also find myself in good company within writing studies when it comes to questions of institutional change. And while my field may not have stable definitions of institutions or sustained engagement with the topic, I would argue that the field's contribution to institutional conversations has been geared toward methodologies for institutional change. James Porter el al., (2000) published what has become a touchstone text in rhetoric and composition on institutional

critique. In this piece, the authors argue for focusing on localized institutions rather than remaining at a theoretical "macro-level," and since institutions are "rhetorically constructed human designs" that means: "we made 'em, we can fix 'em" (p. 611). Institutional critique as a rhetorical methodology is an active practice to enact critique—as opposed to a passive analysis of institutional wrongdoing. More recently, Michelle LaFrance picks up institutional conversations in writing studies to forward a methodology of institutional ethnography (IE). In this work, LaFrance pushes beyond Porter et al.'s institutional critique to approach the institution (macro perspective) through the ways individual people navigate institutions (micro perspective). The limitation she notes of institutional critique is that it "hovers above the actualities of on-the-ground experiences" (p. 14). To remedy this limitation, LaFrance combines institutional critique with cultural material analyses to understand "materialities as actualities" and the intricate "relationships among location, material cultures, and actual work" (p. 15). LaFrance argues that IE is useful for paying attention to disjunctures and contradictions between theory and practice, and for listening to stories that otherwise might not be heard. This attention to differences and lived realities within interconnected sites of an institution are the strengths of an ethnographic framework. While both approaches to change methodologies offer ways of understanding how institutions function via participants, they don't specifically focus on how people participate within an institution. That is, in an update and response to a critique of their 2000 article, Grabill et al. (2006) argue that individual participants in an institution have what Anthony Giddens' (1979) calls the "power to do otherwise'—to act contrary to the policies within an institution" (p. 225). It makes for compelling theory to think of always having the power to do otherwise, but in practice it seems less likely to inspire much institutional change. What's the compelling force to do otherwise? It can't only be observing that practices are unethical because that certainly hasn't

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changed the university's reliance on contingent faculty. There's a limitation in focusing either on how participants can "do otherwise," or how participants unconsciously navigate work processes without also accounting for the ways institutions prohibit participation. This limitation echoes Mia Birdsong's idea in *How We Show Up* that change makers are not often those who are comfortable with the status quo. In this way, it's important to center who is marginalized and excluded from the status quo in order to direct the focus of change efforts and make more responsive institutions.

A final aspect to understand about how institutions work and become stable is institutionalization, or according to sociologist Leon Mayhew (1982), "the process by which norms come to be routinized, established…and built into social organization (p. 12). One indicator by which institutions stabilize is funding, especially in higher education that has clear divisions between recurring and nonrecurring budget lines. What becomes institutionalized, though, can be difficult to see, and so to change, as Sara Ahmed cautions: "when things become institutional, they recede. To institutionalize x is for x to become routine or ordinary such that x becomes part of the background for those who are part of an institution" (p. 21). Ahmed's focus is on what it means for diversity work to become "institutionalized" in such a way that institutions adopt language around diversity and "institutionalize" approaches but don't engage or enact them. In other words, the lived experiences don't change for institutional participants who should benefit from these institutionalized diversity changes. But I also see her concern as being useful in working to change and redesign institutions. That is, when institutionalized ways of being/doing appear as a given and are long established with people's jobs and funding lines built into the ways the institution functions, it's difficult to imagine otherwise outside of and beyond these logics. My hesitation to institutionalize is ever-present as I also work to situate,

understand, and work in an institution, something I'll take up more in chapter four when I define institutions from participant experiences.

What I've noticed in conversations about institutions within and beyond rhetoric and composition is that agency is entangled within systems that include and exceed the individual. And while I've noted above rich conversations regarding institutions as human-made, rhetorically constructed, living entities, these conversations don't always include or discuss agency and the role of participation. That is, it is one thing to note that institutional players can act otherwise, and another thing to account for who is invited or allowed to participate in institutional change. Institutional change isn't possible without diverse participation, and so structures and approaches are needed for rule following, for action, and for engagement in seeing oneself as part of the institution one enacts. Here is where I see important contributions to institutional change conversations happening in project management.

Project Management: The Making of Things, Structures, Processes

Although much technical and professional communication (TPC) scholarship presents PM as an important skill set for students to acquire (Dicks 2010; 2013), the field doesn't often engage the important relational aspects of PM (Lauren & Schreiber 2018; Lauren 2018). To change the current conversation regarding PM, Benjamin Lauren and Joanna Schreiber argue that the field would be better served by understanding PM as "complex (symbolic-analytic) knowledge with a coordinated set of practices" (p. 126). In other words, only teaching project management methods or treating it as a template to acquire and replicate short shrifts the relational, and rhetorical aspects of project management practices that are embodied, emergent, and (ideally) people centered. Focusing on the communicative acts of project management keeps the relational and the rhetorical at the forefront of how practitioners *do* PM, which can mean

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centering people and their relationships to and with each other as opposed to due dates and work

processes. Beyond academia, similar tensions arise in workplace writing between the centrality

of project managers (PMs) to effective collaboration and a lack of recognition about the

knowledge and skills of PMs. For instance, Brett Harned (2017) points out that project managers

are often underappreciated because if one is good at their job as a project manager, then their

work is often unnoticed (p. xiv), which can lead to routine underappreciation for PMs and for

project management as an intellectual practice (p. 4). Across collaborative spaces, project

management is an oft-overlooked but crucial practice to understand, influence, and take up

because anywhere that people are working together with deadlines, budgets, and goals, project

management is also at work—and should be intentionally practiced.

Benjamin Lauren's (2018) work on participatory approaches to PM that are both

rhetorical and relational is key to how I conceive of project management, and the role of writing

in this work. For example, Lauren argues that PM methodologies should be approached as a

rhetorical heuristic determined in a specific context and situation as opposed to a template

applied in the same way to every situation. By arguing that it is "through communication that

project management gets done," Lauren shows how PM is intrinsically rhetorical, and because it

is rhetorical, it is also relational (p. 2). Lauren is careful to be rhetorically flexible, noting that

reacting to the situation or needing people to work within a particular timeline are not inherently

non-participatory approaches (p. 165). And participation for Lauren is not necessarily

democratic, but instead asks: who needs to participate and when? What matters in every case is

that "the situation dictates the response," and "the action instigates participation" (p. 165). So, a

flexible rhetorical response is what undergirds PM. In this way, approaching PM as a rhetorical

practice means it is both participatory and emergent. PM offers institutional change a

participatory approach to inviting and facilitating collaboration via writing because it names the often-intangible processes that facilitate and allow for participation and effective collaboration. In chapter five, I share instances of participatory and emergent PM in the context of SEEN's collaborative writing artifacts. Because project management is both rhetorical and relational, it also informs how I conceive of relationality—or how we collaborate and accomplish work.

Relationality: How We Are Together

My conception of relationality draws from rhetorical theory and Diane Davis's work around rhetoric as first philosophy—meaning rhetoric is the ground for her contemporary theory of relationality (2010). That is, Davis attempts to expose a "solidarity that precedes symbolicity" (15). For Emmanuel Levinas, who Davis works from extensively, first philosophy is ethics; for Plato first philosophy is ontology; and for Rene Descartes, first philosophy is epistemology. So for Davis to posit rhetoric, an "other-oriented" practice, as first philosophy means that individuals are always already "inclined" toward a community of others, and Davis goes about showing an "originary (or pre-originary) rhetoricity—an affect*ability* or persuad*ability*—that is the condition for symbolic action" (p. 2). For there to be communication, the sharing of symbolic meaning, there must be a kind of originary rhetoric at work, Davis contends. In a similar vein, Jenny Edbauer (2005) made a case for a greater focus on ecological rhetorical placemaking and the complex set of relations and "the interactions between" one's relations in a rhetorical ecology. In perhaps the most evocative critique of previous notions of confining and determining what's included in a rhetorical situation and how to contend with discrete actors, Edbauer counters: "*The elements of rhetorical situations simply bleed*" (p. 9). More recently, Jennifer Clary-Lemon (2019) suggests that the way we attend to Edbauer's rhetorical ecology "requires an acceptance of the rhetoricity of bodies, what Diane Davis calls 'an affectability or

persuadability that is due not to any creature's specific genetic makeup but to corporality more generally" (p. 76). For Clary-Lemon, a more nuanced human-nonhuman relationality is used to consider the Anthropocene, our current geological epoch of planetary ruin, as only one possibility among many and not a foregone conclusion. Davis's work that influences Clary-Lemon's natureculture study is what initially got me interested in rhetorical theory and how my agency is distributed via my many relations. The crux of Davis's (2014) argument is that animals (humans included) are innately relational and that this "underivable rhetoricity" is a facet of all living bodies (p. 536). And so, rhetoric as an "other-oriented" practice means that our communication (broadly conceived à la Davis) grounds our relations, and Edbauer's ecological metaphor offers one way of conceiving of rhetoric, as the living, and changing force that it is, whose "power is not circumscribed or delimited" (Edbauer, p. 23). This connection between rhetoric and relationality influences how I conceive of rhetoric relationally and relationality rhetorically. In other words, it feels redundant to say both *rhetorical* and *relational*, because to be either necessitates both. A rhetoric of relationality, then, influences my research positionality and how I take up this work.

While I conceive of relationality largely from rhetorical theory, I also want to note and cite the cultural rhetorics (CR) scholars who have influenced my thinking. My conception of how we collaborate and work together draws from CR theory in two specific ways: 1) rhetoric is always culturally situated, and so, practitioners need to be explicit and transparent about their positionality, subjectivity, and commitment to particular knowledge systems (Haas, 2012); and, 2) CR's understanding of relationality illustrates how one's agency is entangled with one's surroundings, helping to de-center humans as the main (or only) active subject in any situation, and make apparent that no one acts alone or without consequence (Arola, 2019). This relational

orientation to research informed my dissertation study in that I work to center individual

experiences of institutional life as important data that should inform how the institution works

and understands its mission. Relationality helps me see that how we are together and how we

relate to one another—or not—greatly impacts the "we" who make up any institution or who

collaborate on teams.

Writing In/As/Through Participation

Throughout the extensive definitional work I offer above, writing is a key practice in

institutions, in project management, and in relationality. From my experience working with

SEEN, I realized that in order to do institutional change, we have to do it in relation to each

other, and so how we work together is of the utmost importance. I was curious what I could learn

from studying SEEN about how to collaborate and contribute to big change initiatives through

small individual and collective actions. As a writing studies practitioner, I saw writing as one of

the primary ways participants collaborated. So, I decided to look at the team's collaborative

writing to better understand participation, and how and why this team from different disciplines

and institutional positions seemed well positioned to manage and effect institutional change at a

huge institution like MSU.

Collaborative writing was particularly important because I was interested in how

different types of people situated in different fields and positions across an institution contributed

to the project. So while two SEEN members were faculty in writing studies, the rest of the SEEN

participants described very different relationships to writing. That is, some participants didn't

identify as writers, others expressed discomfort with or indifference to writing, but regardless of

how much any single participant talked in meetings or felt about writing, all of us engaged in

collaborative writing (e.g., ideating, drafting, offering feedback, revising, designing documents,

etc.) throughout the research design and study. I'll share data in chapter five specifically about how participants understood and contributed to the collaborative writing work we did together. For the purposes of this study, I defined writing broadly. For example, "presentations, reports, emails, memos, visualizations," and my research recruitment email explained: "Writing' doesn't have to only mean putting words on a page, but it could be feedback you gave or notes you took during a meeting, or even an agenda item you brought up for group discussion" (see Appendix A). Additionally, I situated "collaborative writing" as represented in an artifact that the participant believed demonstrated an important contribution from their work with SEEN. I'll discuss more about my approach to analyzing the writing artifacts in the methods section below, but before that, I want to introduce another important element of my research background: the theories I bring to writing and that situate how I analyze and approach writing, both as a verb and a noun.

I learned to teach in, and then helped run, a writing program deeply influenced by post-process thinking. The three basic tenets that Thomas Kent explains in his introduction to *Post-process Theory* (1999) are: writing is public, writing is interpretive, and writing is situated. *Public* refers to the social context of writing. In other words, writers always write in relation to one another (p. 2)—even so far as a personal journal entry is written to a future self. According to Kent, we never write alone. *Interpretative* is also relational in that "to interpret means to enter into a relation of understanding with other language users" (p. 2). Interpreting happens in reading (specific texts or utterances) and in writing (audiences and situations). In this way, writing is not a mechanical translation of thoughts into words. Communication is a negotiation in which communicators use their backgrounds and learned strategies to interpret and make meaning of the messages received from others. For Kent, interpretation doesn't end. Instead, making sense

of the world is a continual practice, much like writing itself. And writing is *situated*—"because writing is a public act that requires interpretative interaction with others, writers always write from some position or some place; writers are never nowhere" (p. 3). Writers come to the act of writing within their cultural and historical contexts, bringing their backgrounds, beliefs, and ideas about the world that shape their situation and their writing (p. 4). Kent's oft cited and debated claim is, of course, that writing can't be taught because there is no generalizable process or a Big Theory that captures writing. In this way, post-process made administering a program in which we were very much teaching writing all the more interesting. My co-director and I had two main post-process informed principles that shaped our curriculum and syllabus language.

The first principle: writing looks and works differently in different places. What 'good' writing means is always situational, so what works in one context won't work the same way in another. In my writing classroom, I would often hear student frustration that every teacher expects and wants something different in their writing. When this frustration arose, I tried to help my students see that this lack of consistency, while frustrating, actually shapes a useful approach to writing: every situation is going to require writing that only works in that situation. The second principle: writing participates in meaning making, so it's not just a conduit for knowledge made elsewhere. As a meaning-making activity, then, writing doesn't function very well as a noun (e.g., "My writing's pretty good"). Rather, writing is an activity that participates in and produces knowledge. And so again, it's situational, and the kind of writing affects and invents the knowledge produced. While I'm no longer administering a writing program, post-process still informs my thinking about writing particularly in terms of relationality (we write to and with others who have particular and specific demands and expectations) and rhetoric (the situation is always changing, and so, "it depends" is often the answer).

Researcher Positionality: Dual Roles and Relational Complexity in SEEN

As a participant observer with SEEN, my research interest regarding collaboration emerged *from* collaborating with this team, making the relationalities and complexities that compose a situation apparent to me from the outset. I occupied multiple positions within the team (e.g., graduate student, team member, study researcher), and I was all those positions at once, as one of my participants later said in regard to what it means to educate the whole student: "our lives are complex, and we aren't just any one thing. I don't get to just be a mom. I don't get to just be an employee. I'm all of those things. I show up at home with work. I show up at work with what's going on at home, you know, it's the same thing for students. Students show up to us in class with all the things" (P4 Personal communication). While I have discretion to focus on being a researcher in a particular setting or occupying my graduate student role in class or at an academic conference, these identities are also slippery, informing each other, and I cannot ever entirely step outside any of my various positions.

Attempting to be as transparent about my different positions and reflective on how these positions informed my perspective was one way I tried to responsibly engage this research. Additionally, I shared draft chapters of this dissertation with my research participants to conduct member-checks, asking for feedback on how I had interpreted and represented their data, and I then revised based on feedback when necessary. I also tried to practice personal reflexivity in post-interview memos in which I noted anything from the interview that complicated or contradicted my beliefs or assumptions about my research foci in order to notice if similar things occurred in future interviews. Then I returned to these moments of complications while coding. I also noted places where a participant might have agreed with my own hunch about something, and I would then check that agreement against other participants' responses to the same question

or topic. For the most part, I saw my participant-researcher dual role as a productive position from which to learn from my participants and from my study.

My dual position also made two other aspects of SA abundantly clear: that all knowledge practices are situated historically and culturally, and the researcher must be reflexive about their positionality and the partiality of their knowledge or ways of understanding the situation of study (Clarke, Friese, and Washburn 2018). SA as a methodology also draws from reflexive forms of ethnography, highlighting researcher reflection on positionality and the researcher's relation to the situation and participants as key components of study design. To practice my own reflexivity both as a method of my research and to ensure I was in line with my research values, I wrote memos after every participant interview. These memos were a place to be in conversation with myself and what I thought I knew about my situation. For example, the memos were a place to note where I learned things from a participant that contradicted or complicated how I had previously seen a topic or event, and they provided a textual space for me to question my understanding of the institution and change projects while developing what I was learning from my participants. These memos were also a sense-making activity where I began to notice the repeating stories that emerged about Michigan State University and common experiences working and learning in this institutional landscape. In addition to the written memos, given my ongoing collaboration with the SEEN through my dissertation drafting before SEEN finished our work, I also stayed in conversation with participants (with appropriate confidentiality) as I was coding and beginning to draft dissertation chapters.

Another layer of relational complexity in my study design is that one of my dissertation co-chairs and committee members was also a member of the SEEN team. To protect participant anonymity as much as possible, my co-chair who was not part of SEEN acted as an additional

principal investigator (PI) on my IRB-approved study. Both dissertation chairs helped in the development of my research protocol, one with participant knowledge of SEEN, and the other was able to offer outside perspective having no experience with SEEN. These dual perspectives helped me triangulate my own experience with SEEN as a participant insider and a research outsider—or at least a researcher who was attempting to gain some "topsight" perspective on the team while also being a team member (Spinuzzi 2013). In order to protect SEEN member relations and for participants to feel that they could speak freely during recorded interviews, I did not share any raw data with either of my PIs, keeping all my data on an encrypted and password protected drive, and only sharing data once it was de-identified and coded for emergent themes.

Given that I believe institutional change happens relationally, it also makes sense that my research questions and interest emerged from my relationships working with SEEN colleagues. From my previous work as an administrator that I discussed in my dissertation introduction to the kind of projects I was drawn to as a graduate student, I am perpetually interested in how people learn, work, and do stuff together—in a classroom, a workplace, a neighborhood, or an institution. Instead of avoiding complex and messy relational research or considering it a conflict of interest, SA provided a framework for me to work from that complexity, to be as transparent about my various roles and as honest as possible regarding the situatedness of my perspective with my participants and eventual readers, and to center this relational complexity as an integral part of "the social" from social life, which SA is particularly adept to study and understand. As Participant 4 mentioned above, each of us occupy complex and at times even conflicting roles and various identities we bring with us to any situation at work, home, or elsewhere. Attempting to name and describe my different roles is one way I continue to approach the complex and situated work of relationality.

Situational Analysis as Guiding Framework

This dissertation study took up SA as a guiding framework for studying an academic workplace and how an interdisciplinary or cross-functional team navigated an institutional change project at Michigan State University, a large R1 university with a decentralized structure that I introduced in chapter two and I'll more fully discuss in chapter four on institutional silos. Here, SA was used to study the situation of institutional change at this particular university during a specific moment of time, around issues of student access to essential needs resources. More specifically, SA was useful in understanding how institutional change can happen at a large institution and the efficacy of teams in managing these kinds of change initiatives.

SA is a methodology emerging from sociological research, specifically it's an extension of grounded theory (GT), which originated from the work of Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser in the 1960s. Researching in the midst of the social upheaval that was US politics in the 1960s, Strauss and Glaser were trying to develop an approach for qualitative sense-making of social life during the increasingly quantitative and "scientistically oriented" field of sociology (Clarke et al., p. 4). At the time, the social sciences didn't have a method for analyzing or collecting qualitative data that attempted to be "faithful to the understandings, interpretations, and perspectives of the people studied on their own terms, and as expressed through their actions as well as their words" (Clark et al., p. 4). An additional goal for Strauss and Glaser was to articulate a method that could work across different academic disciplines particularly in the social sciences and humanities without falling into disciplinary divides. In terms of these goals, Strauss and Glaser were wildly successful. GT became one of the most used qualitative research approaches nationally and internationally. But there were some limitations. As I've learned from

feedback anytime I've said, "I'm adapting a GT approach," and I hear, "Are you doing *real* grounded theory? Because *real* grounded theorists are purists…" GT had a positivist problem.

While there have been different emphases within GT during the half century it's been around, the split between interpretivist and positivist approaches within GT are represented in Strauss and Glaser themselves. That is, what's become known as "Straussian GT" led to constructivist GT, and eventually to Adele Clarke's work in developing SA in the 1990s (Clarke et al., p. 8). And "Glaserian GT" purports that "pure" and objective GT is possible and desirable, policing what work counts as GT and determining the correct way to do GT through positivist priorities that believe a researcher can be "outside" the research and doesn't bring prior knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and worldviews with them to the project. In other words, positivist GT believes there can be "pure" as opposed to "constructed" data in qualitative research.

As a rhetorician, the idea of Truth with a capital T as a possibility from qualitative research based on the multiplicities of lived reality sets off many red flags for me in terms of research and ethics. In contradistinction to Glaserian GT, Adele Clarke was a student of Strauss during the 1980s, and she wanted to develop a methodology based on her commitments to feminisms, antiracisms, and other social justice concerns. In her work with Strauss, she sought a GT approach to empirical research that "takes difference(s), power, contingency, and multiplicity very seriously" (Clarke et al., p. 33). Instead of seeking out commonalities and "giving voice" to an Other, SA "actively seeks to address silences in data, silences of resistance, protection, cooptation, and collusion" while approaching all data as constructed and all knowledges as situated (Clarke et al., p. 33). In this regard, Clarke's SA has a lot in common with research in

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rhetoric and writing studies ranging from cultural rhetorics to social justice oriented technical communication.

In my own administration work, I have long been interested in GT, and in trying to produce knowledge from research as opposed to positing a thesis and finding evidence to support and prove it. In the English 101 curriculum I co-developed, we had students practice their own GT work in a research project that required observation (original research), analysis (primary and/or secondary research), and theorizing. And when I imagined this dissertation study, I planned to adapt a version of Strauss and Corbin's (1998) GT approach in developing my theory from the "actions, interactions, and social processes" of my participants (Creswell, 1997, p. 63). Additionally, a grounded theory approach was important to me because it works to actively delay my own idea of what I want to say about a phenomenon, activity, or topic. In this regard, GT connected in important ways to listening, another methodological approach that reminded me that I will encounter data, experiences, and approaches that exceed my understanding and ways of seeing. Being open to what I don't know means holding assumptions about my data lightly, and to be reflexively mindful—à la Kenneth Burke—that my ways of seeing are, concurrently, ways of not seeing (Burke, 1984). What I didn't understand when I imagined this study, though, was that I was trying to approach GT like SA without knowing about SA.

SA is particularly useful for studying what I came to realize as a coalitional team in a distributed institutional system because it is an action-oriented approach with a focus on interactions and the relations that make up a situation, and SA goes beyond human participants to include discourse and non-human participants in the situation of inquiry (Clarke et al., p. 13). To illustrate this, SA makes the point that researchers can't just study what people do, something more akin to activity theory in technical communication, but it's also important to include and

study the situation from which people act/work/do. Additionally, SA provides methods for mapping the relations of a situation to construct the situation and to situate the research vis-a-vis the relationships among individuals, institutions, discourses, technologies, nonhuman things, processes, histories, et cetera. The outcome of this situational mapping, in addition to helpfully illustrating the situation, is "thick analysis" (Fosket, 2015) which will be familiar to writing studies researchers invested in ethnographic methods and Geertz's (1977) "thick description." As Clarke et al explain, "thick analysis explicitly takes into account the full array of elements in the situation—human, nonhuman, discursive" and instead of simplifying or approaching these elements hierarchically, thick analysis in SA "embrace[s] relationalities and complexities" (Clarke et al., p. xxvi).

While this methodology stems from sociological contexts, SA has been used in writing studies scholarship and particularly community engaged research (Opel, 2017) drew on SA to examine how medical patients navigate the complex and ongoing negotiations that make up the situation of a diagnosis and cancer treatment, and some of SEEN's approaches via Benjamin Lauren's work on project managing the team drew from SA. SA is already part of what many rhetoric and writing studies scholars do in research—ground inquiry in a situation that considers human and non-human participants with attention toward discourses and communicative practices. In this way, it's useful for naming, noticing, and contributing to processes that may already be at work in our research practices.

Arguably, SA is beneficial for approaching institutional change projects because it also aligns with writing studies disciplinary values: we typically seek to represent diverse viewpoints; we value collaborative knowledge production; we practice student-centered pedagogy and human-centered research and administration; we are often involved in institutional work beyond

our department and attempt to make processes and systems more egalitarian and accessible. Further, our field cares about material working conditions and institutional critique/change and has forwarded processes for leveraging our disciplinary expertise to more equitably affect and change institutions. Institutional critique is one such process that argues that institutions can be read like a text and changed given human action and documents (Porter et al., 2002). After all, like I introduced in both previous chapters, institutions are made up of documents, relationships, and physical structures. And so, writing studies has much to offer to change initiatives in terms of the field's values and research practices, and SA is one way to operationalize our expertise regarding writing, rhetoric, and discourse in institutional change work.

The Situation of Institutional Change

Rhetoricians are very familiar with the word and concept *context* and so a helpful way to distinguish between situation and context is that context is often what surrounds an event or action but is not necessarily part of it, whereas the situation in SA is co-constitutive—"that entities in relation to each other are constitutive of each other" in composing the situation (Clarke et al., p. 17). A situation in SA is more akin to an ecosystem in that it is an arrangement of relations that sustains over some amount of time and includes a number of events and elements that make up the situation. In my study the situation is institutional change, hence why MSU history and recent events were important to detail in chapter two and why studying the relations and actions of SEEN for a period of time within the context of MSU allows me to zoom in and out between writing and institutional change (the situation). This is particularly useful for my situation since institutional change involves writing and is itself a form of writing. In my situation, the SEEN team is more of a network inside of an institution rather than an organization itself, so writing is a useful way to trace the actions and relations co-constituting the situation.

My goal was to center the situation of institutional change and then see how writing showed up in it, which I'll detail more in my coding section.

In terms of bounding the situation in SA, the answer about how to do this and what to include really comes down to, "it depends." SA resists firm rules or a how-to approach to determining the situation the same way for every project, and so the researcher must attune to the situation and move back and forth between narrowing down to a specific focus and zooming out. To study the situation of institutional change, this study was designed to account for the ways in which small actions of change are distributed across many participants, artifacts, conversations, relationships, and spaces and sometimes accumulate into larger institutional change (and sometimes do not). In approaching change via participant experiences and writing, I hoped to more fully understand participation in change work and the documents and processes that make up the institution. To do so, I collected or co-created the following types of data:

- Interview data

- Textual collection and analysis

- Researcher reflexive writing: memos

In the following sections, I explain the particulars of my study design, data collection and analysis for the above set of artifacts to show what each contributed to the study and how the key findings emerged from this data set that I share in the three analytical chapters of this dissertation.

Study Design and Methods: Interviews, Writing Artifacts, and Researcher Memos

I designed this study during the spring semester 2021. After IRB approval (MSU Study #00006108), I collected data in the Summer 2021 and analyzed data during Fall semester 2021. The study design included semi-structured interviews with SEEN team members as well as

discussion of a written artifact chosen by each participant. I specifically focused on collaborative writing both to understand participation within SEEN, MSU as a particular institution, and the role of writing in change work. As I've shared above, institutions are made up of documents, relationships, and physical things such as buildings and spaces, and, as I'll argue, in terms of ease, they change in this order, too (i.e., easiest to write something new, harder to make a relationship, hardest to build a new building or change a structure, etc.). Focusing on collaborative writing included both textual analysis of the various written genres (e.g., reports, PowerPoints, interview protocol, emails, portal design feedback, our trauma-informed heuristic, etc.) and conducting individual interviews with team members about their background, participation with SEEN, and a discussion of the collaboratively written artifact they selected.

The study design was set up to elicit multiple and perhaps conflicting perspectives on the shared practice of institutional change work and whether or not these approaches were connected to participant position within the university. In other words, I was curious to see if and how position and situation affected one's participation in change initiatives. For example, the fact that university faculty don't have a direct supervisor who approves the research they invest time in was a point regarding the importance of faculty involvement that university staff members brought up (who do, of course, have to account for their working hours differently to a supervisor). All research is the "view from somewhere," (Haas 2012) so I was specifically looking for different perspectives to understand something as amorphous as change and how to account for and assess it.

Since I am working with SA and participatory methods, my research design is not meant to be broadly replicable, but rather focused on a localized and contextualized mode of inquiry, providing a snapshot of a university in a particular moment in time and, even more specifically,

one team trying to make change within this university. I also intentionally focused on everyday work practices and how the participants understood their work intentionally and/or unintentionally contributing to institutional change. Though SA doesn't explicitly seek validity, replicability, or reliability from its data sets, it does provide room to consider nuance, contradiction, and context from individual participant experiences within larger institutional structures and across a variety of institutional positions and ranks. While my study is specific and situated, I share at length recommendations for how to support, manage, and participate in similar kinds of change work elsewhere.

Interview Data: Planning, Revising, and Responding to Emergence

Interview work was central to my research design. Participant interviews were meant to elicit stories, subjectivities, and felt senses of the team members to both understand participation and change processes. Looking at collaborative writing—both through participant reflection and my own artifact analysis—I wanted to see how team member stories and concerns showed up in our team's texts and what I could learn about change via writing. This meant engaging participants' experiences of change initiatives with SEEN and prior initiatives, their sense of belonging in the institution and their professional background as it related to SEEN work and change management, instances of failed change initiatives, and how they assessed if institutional change had occurred from SEEN's work and/or prior assessment of institutional change (see Appendix B).

Interviews were semi-structured, artifact-based, and reflective about one's position at the university, experience with change initiatives, and their SEEN participation. I asked participants to share a written artifact they believed represented an important moment of their participation with SEEN; I broadly defined writing as presentations, reports, emails, memos, visualizations, or

feedback. That is, "writing" didn't have to mean putting words on a page, but it could be feedback given or notes taken during a meeting, or even an agenda item brought up for group discussion. This work was meant to trace the role of participation in SEEN's institutional change initiative, and how each team member understood their role on the team and as a writer—or not. I was also interested in seeing the role of texts as part of the institution and how texts circulated and made change happen—or not.

To analyze interview data, I transcribed and coded the interview transcripts focusing on discourse markers related to personal values, belonging, and how participants navigated institutional change via relationships—or what emerged in my coding as relational institutional change. This coding approach enabled me to understand both particularities and patterns in and across the conversations I had with interview participants. To surface these findings, I analyzed interviews in a four-cycle coding process:

1. Started with transcription in which I noted affective moments: laughter, trailing off, worry/concern, felt moments of belonging or not in the institution that would later not be recognizable in a text-based transcription unless noted during transcribing.

2. Then coded for discourse markers related to personal values, belonging or moments of tension/not feeling seen, and how participants navigated institutional change via relationships.

3. I also coded for writing—participation in drafting, the role of feedback (either giving or receiving) and how a participant described their relationship with/to writing and as a writer or not.

4. Finally, I coded for repeating patterns across interviews by looking at themes that surfaced, and then determining what claims I could make.

In the process of coding, I started collecting notes to identify my evolving understanding of the data by tracking claims I felt I could reasonably make based on my data by identifying particular places in different interviews where I could link those assertions. These notes became emergent data claims, which then formed the basis for my following analysis chapters. That is, when drafting each of my data chapters, I worked to listen to my data and let the data determine how I shaped my claims and my chapter outlines. For example, in chapter four, I did not plan to focus so much on institutional barriers, but in coding my data and listening to participant stories, I noticed that every time a participant explained some aspect of how the institution worked, their next sentence was something along the lines of, "and here's why that's a problem…" In every interview, barriers surfaced in how participants described and experienced the institution, which became the chapter's structure: the back and forth between participant experience, institutional barrier, and further examples of how this barrier could show up in other types of institutions. Similarly in chapter five, the original outline I tried to impose on my teams' data did not end up working, and instead, what emerged were three central claims on teams that I then located in ongoing conversations from technical and professional communication literature. Then I returned to my data to see how it complicated and added to the field's ongoing interest in workplace collaboration. By the time I got to drafting chapter six, I was more prepared for and excited to see how the outline for the chapter would emerge from coding, listening, and through the process of drafting. To temporarily stabilize and study change, a what, why, when, who, and how structure emerged in order to account for and assess change work—an approach I wouldn't have come to without being in conversation with my data, and willing to revise my initial ideas.

Overall, my approach to data collection and meaning making was guided by participatory and rhetorical approaches outlined by Patricia Sullivan and James Porter (1997) in which they

helped the field move toward practicing methodology as a flexible heuristic that makes meaning in situ. This approach differs from needing to follow a methodology to a tee. Instead, I located results by being in dialogue with myself, with my former understanding communicated to myself via my writing memos, with my participants, and with my data. In conversation with my dissertation co-chair, I worried that my methodology seemed overly emergent and thus poorly designed. Or as Sullivan and Porter put it, flexibility can make the work come across as "sloppy or imprecise" (p. 69). In my experience trying to study teams, participation, and change, though, methodological flexibility is necessary in accounting for nuances and data that at times exceed both my understanding and my theoretical background. Paying attention to emergence is another way in which I see my training as a rhetorician preparing me well to do responsive, participatory qualitative research.

Textual Collection and Writing Artifact Analysis

As I previously mentioned while defining how I conceive of writing above, part of my interview protocol asked each participant to bring a written artifact to discuss during our interview. I situated "collaborative writing" as represented in a text that the participant believed demonstrated an important contribution they made to/in/for SEEN's research and writing. In my research protocol I described this further: "You might think about words you wrote, feedback you gave, or even your role in drafting a piece of writing. It is okay for you to choose something that you did not draft on your own but felt that you helped shape in important ways" (see Appendix A). My focus on collaborative writing was intended to study how participation happens via ideating, drafting, offering feedback, revising, and distributing/circulating texts. During the interview, the participant and I discussed the artifact's purpose, why it was chosen for our interview, the participant's role in making the artifact particularly in terms of the drafting and

feedback processes, how the artifact was used and what the artifact caused to happen relationally and/or institutionally, if anything (see Appendix B). When I coded my interviews, I then analyzed the writing artifact along with the interview, and my participant-observer experience working and writing with SEEN (I participated in much of SEEN's writing production and/or had background knowledge of the larger context these writing artifacts took place within or what they were used for). In my analysis, I also focused on the artifact's relationships (i.e., the text's relationship to the writer(s), the team, the institution), how it was distributed, and its impact. My artifact analysis allowed me to surface the varied and distributed relationships that writing creates, facilitates, and allows for—relational features that in part explain why writing is such a primary way that institutional design and change work happens.

Along with analyzing writing's relational features, studying participation via writing allowed me to account for various ways of being and participating on a team beyond who spoke the most in meetings or offered to write the first draft of a document. Writing also opened up space to look for categories of inquiry such as process (drafting), timing (kairos), audience, circulation, and genre in assessing what these different texts *did* and made happen in the institution. These categories were also helpful in describing and accounting for different team members' participation (e.g., some participants worked more on drafting, or offering feedback, or getting a document in front of a particular administrative audience, etc.). In this way, studying *participation* via collaborative writing helped me account for the ways that SEEN's design solutions and recommendations were not driven by any single participant but rather represented a synthesis of diverse, differently situated expertise, something I take up in depth with my artifact analysis in chapter five.

Finally, writing also proved helpful for studying an often ad hoc, amorphous kind of work like institutional change, and how change can be temporarily stabilized, studied, and influenced. With the categories of writing I mentioned in the previous paragraph, I was able to more fully account for and assess changes throughout this project and at different institutional levels that may have otherwise remained illusory. For example, change occurred at a team level via SEEN email correspondence and dialogue, and change occurred at an institutional level via focus group reports the team wrote and shared with administrators. And studying *change* via writing also helped demonstrate how sustained change often happens by accumulating in small documents written over time for a wide range of audiences. I will detail more about the role of writing in SEEN's institutional change successes in chapters six and seven.

Researcher Reflexive Writing: Improvising and Learning Via Interview Notes and Memos

An area of data I didn't originally plan to collect was my interview notes and memos, but in the process of conducting my interviews, I realized the notes I took after each interview to jot down questions or surprises or certain articulations of something I wanted to remember began to act as running dialogue with myself about my data and a kind of data itself. These interview notes then shaped my memos, which helped me remain open and reflective about my orientation as a researcher, which was made up of my own goals and desires. Writing memos helped me be honest with myself and my data about how I was shaping the work and what I was bringing to the data from my own positionality. For example, as I wrote in the introduction, my administrative puzzling over how institutions change and why no one seems to know how to do this work gave rise to my desire to envision possibilities for learning and doing institutional research. So discerning a process for doing change work is an agenda I brought to my interviews and my coding. Reflective writing throughout the research process helped me to make explicit

when some of these concerns and desires arose, or, when my data was telling me something other than what I wanted to hear—for example, can we actually institutionalize a relational change process or does that hinder the relational processes already in place? Through my memo writing, I tried to stay honest with myself, my motives, and my findings.

My process for memo writing emerged from returning to my interview notes and posing questions to the self who had written the initial notes. What did I mean here? How did my understanding of participant two's definition of institutional change develop further after participant five explained change in this other way? Conversing between my interview notes and my later memos also allowed me to trace how my thinking was developing and complicating after every subsequent interview. What did it mean if one participant thought SEEN had accomplished something that another participant said wasn't accomplished? How might these multiple, and contradictory positions play out in terms of participation and what I came to recognize as useful team dissensus?

The narrative space of memo writing also helped me make sense of affective moments in my interviews, especially since I had personal working relationships with my interview participants, there were moments when a participant would laugh, trail off, wave their hands and reference a previous moment we had shared or expressed exasperation. Listening to the interview recordings was one way to revisit and attempt to include these in my transcription, and memos were another place I could converse with my own interpretation of affect and what that might mean in the context of what was being verbalized and expressed. The memos were a useful sensemaking tool that could take more time than the span of one 90-minute interview, and they were a thinking space I could return to that then became a data set adjacent to the interview and

artifacts. In this way, they aided how claims emerged from my data and how I made sense of what claims I could make within the situation of my study.

Conclusion: Coordinating Institutions, Project Management, and Relationality for Institutional Change

I've covered a lot of intellectual ground in this chapter. I situated my research background in terms of the theories and beliefs I bring to my work, and how I define and understand institutions, project management, relationality, and writing. From this context, I then introduced grounded theory and, particularly, situational analysis as my guiding framework, and why I am drawn to the situated, complex, and partial knowledge available from studying a single team in one situation over a bounded period of time. This orientation to relational knowledge production influenced my study design, data collection, and analysis.

The extensive definitional work in this chapter is an important background for how I've come to understand the need for relational approaches to institutional change work. In reading writing studies scholarship, I noticed that an important but often overlooked topic is project management and how teams build relationships and create relational systems with particular workflows. Project management helps me see workflows as a central feature of how collaboration happens since workflows shape the way teams work and facilitate how team members can participate. As a result, we (colleagues, team members, project managers) need to develop workflows that center people and their relationships to and with each other in institutional change projects. These three areas (institutions, project management, and relationality) all connect through and by writing, as I'll argue throughout this dissertation. As a writing studies researcher and former administrator, I focus on the people and relations who make up an institution, and the writing that composes and communicates these relations and through these relations, the institution itself. It was only through triangulating these seemingly

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disparate areas of the field in my early doctoral research and through collaborating with SEEN

that I realized how these areas are co-constitutive, and so, can be intentionally practiced for

relational institutional change.

In the next chapter I'll further define institutions through participant experiences in a way

that constellates characteristics of an institution while resisting a static definition. In other words,

I offer a living illustration more akin to institution-ing to show how participants navigate the

institution, barriers to accessing resources or fulfilling one's institutional goals, and what can go

wrong when institutions are siloed and lack effective internal communication. Distinguishing the

individual institutional characteristics is important for understanding an institution's purpose,

how it works, and its effectiveness, but most importantly, I argue that by taking these

characteristics together it's possible to trace how and why various communicative breakdowns

occur. By focusing on barriers and centering embodied, specific experiences within the

institution, I also work to focus on institutional places that might be open to and responsive to

change.

CHAPTER FOUR: INSTITUTION-ING: HOW PARTICIPANTS CONCEPTUALIZE, EXPERIENCE, AND NAVIGATE THE INSTITUTION

In the previous two chapters I shared the context and institutional history for my case

study, and my research methods and design. In chapter two, I introduced MSU institutional

history and background in terms of being the "pioneering land-grant university" in the US, its

location in a suburban city less than five miles from Michigan's capitol, and its dual purpose of

being both a leading research institution and being accessible to a diverse student population as a

public serving institution. In chapter three, I defined institutions from writing studies and a brief

cross-disciplinary review of institutional theory from social sciences. I also situated how I

approach studying MSU as an institution via project management methods with a focus on

relationality, and the role of writing across these foci. Here, I move to my first of three data

chapters to argue for defining institutions and approaching institutional change by centering

participant experiences.

I want to begin this chapter with a participant story to set the stage for my sensemaking

discussion of institutions broadly and then specifically to situate MSU. This story was shared by

a participant about a student parent that she supported and advocated for during a fraught

experience trying to navigate institutional barriers. This story illustrates what institutions can be

like and feel like in a specific context, and more broadly, the painful difficulty of trying to

navigate an institution that lacks lateral communication between units, a common issue in many

institutions. In response to my question "Why did you start working with SEEN?" Participant

Four shared:

> Around the beginning of 2018, I had worked with a number of student parents who were
> facing eviction by MSU and I didn't know that was a thing. I've always known about
> students being kicked out of the residence halls because of drugs, bad behavior, violence,
> sure. But I truly didn't know that MSU would evict students for, and specifically for, non-
> payment. I had a student come to me, a single parent, with an eviction, a court thing
> saying you have seven days…And she was like, 'but I've been paying my rent, I don't
> understand, I've been paying.'

So I actually went with her to accounts payable because I was like, "I don't even know who to start talking to." I had her do a little consent of me to speak with her, to be in her meeting, and all. Shannon, it was awful. What was happening was she had been late and MSU was charging late fees, late fee on top of late fee. And her payments were going to the late fees first, and then what was left was being applied to the rent.

So she was constantly being short with rent because MSU says—if your May rent of $950 isn't paid, you get a $50 late fee, even if you paid $925—'there's no partial payment.' So she was paying her rent [partially], and [then] when she did start paying it all, she was in the hole with late payments. And then when financial aid got applied, it was applied to tuition first. So MSU is always going to get their tuition money first. And then, whatever's left over will get applied. But it wasn't getting applied [to housing], she got a refund. So instead of them even taking the money from her refund to get caught up, they just refunded her.

And you know, you can say, 'Why didn't you look at your account? Or why didn't you…?' But if you think you're doing everything right and you're not getting late notices…So let's start there. She never received an email, and they weren't sending them, we verified that. (Personal communication)

I include this story here at length because the context is important to illustrate at least three things: 1) P4 not knowing where to start to seek help for this student as someone who has worked in student affairs at MSU for twenty years shows what this student was up against institutionally in trying to figure this out while also being a single parent, experiencing financial precarity, *and* facing the possibility of being houseless with a child; 2) the unbelievable but true reality that this student had not received any communication from the institution before she was issued with a court-ordered eviction notice; illustrating institutional siloing and a lack of lateral communication between units as well as a lack of communication between the institution and the student; and 3) MSU's willingness to evict students for non-behavior related issues begs the question: what responsibility does an institution have toward and for its participants?

In what follows, I situate the lived reality of institutions through participant stories, and this opening example touches on all the intersecting complexities, barriers, and tensions that make up an institution. First, I share how this active definition of institution-ing emerged from

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my data in which institutional characteristics were defined via barriers they present for participants trying to navigate the institution. This in-process definition illustrates how institutions are enacted and sustained via individual acts and work processes and procedures over time, *and* this definition also includes the lived reality of participants experiencing the institution as key to understanding an institution. Then I situate the five characteristics for defining institutions in a broad example before zooming in on an MSU specific example of said characteristic and related barrier from my data. I conclude by arguing for the necessity of seeing these institutional lenses separately and as parts of a whole in order to discern where institutional problems or breakdown may be occurring and thus places where institutional change is needed.

How a ~~Definition~~ Experience(s) of Institutions Surfaced from Data

It was only when I went to code my data for how participants defined institutions that I realized I had not asked participants to define institutions broadly or to define MSU as a specific institution. Rather, I asked questions regarding their position(s) within institutions, experiences navigating institutions, lessons learned from managing and participating in change initiatives, and experiences of failure (see Appendix B). From these reflections and stories, a sense of institutions emerged with rich examples of frustrations, creative workarounds, and institution-ing as one way to define a system or structure from lived experience. This emergent, lived-in way of describing institutions is in line with chapter three's point that institutions are living, in-process systems that are sustained and enacted by change, and it helps illustrate the way in which this is a temporary, partial understanding that will develop and change along with the institution it represents. This emergent structure also, importantly, mirrors my argument to approach institutions as emergent, and to remain in the present tense so as to not become defined. As adrienne maree brown (2017) defines emergence working from Nick Obolensky: "emergence is

the way complex systems and patterns arise out of relatively simple interactions" (p. 3). Approaching institutions as living, rhetorical spaces helps ideation, iteration, and change remain possible as opposed to seeing *how things are* in the institution as a foregone conclusion.

In the following sections, I'll work to collage these experiences into a sense of institutions but not a stable definition. Part of what I learned from trying to study an institution is that a stable definition cannot be discerned, or that at least any sense of stability is temporary. The following structure of institutional characteristics followed by related barriers and tensions emerged from how participants shared their institutional experiences. For example, many stories started with "this is how it is…" and then the next sentence or two would be something like "and this is why that's a problem…" Given my study's focus on ways of assessing institutional change and how writing can facilitate said change, and that the folks involved in SEEN are committed to making institutions more accessible and equitable for participants, it made sense that two salient topics in my data were understanding the institution largely through barriers and working within an institution in order to change it. To illustrate big institutional characteristic claims, I share a related barrier that surfaces from each characteristic, and then I will zoom in on a localized example of that barrier at MSU to ground my discussion in a particular institutional context. This way of making sense of institutions by characteristic, problem, and MSU examples helps illustrate the big moving, rhetorical forces of the institution while also paying attention to the personal examples of how students, staff, and faculty survive, navigate, and ideally, thrive within the institution.

As I'll argue further in chapter six on change, facilitating change in small scale interactions, forms, or procedures is a way to both make change possible in small, human ways, and redefine scale in terms of meaningful change. That is, as adrienne maree brown (2017)

teaches via fractals that repeat at scale, "what we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system" (p. 53). Focusing on small, localized responses and changes is not a bad thing. In fact, to make any change possible, it's important to be realistic about its limitations. It is such a familiar and common human desire to both want to change an entire system and feel daunted by the inability to change an entire system. And in feeling daunted, it becomes easy not to do anything, instead asking, what good could a small, simple change make? So here, I turn our attention to how sensemaking institutions from experience resists static definitions and keeps possibility open and moving.

Reintroducing Participants and Context

I want to quickly re-introduce my participants because I see their institutional positions and the number of years worked at MSU as important background to how they experience, understand, and describe institutions. My participants ranged in years worked at MSU with the longest tenure being twenty years, and the shortest tenure being eight years, and all participants had held multiple positions at MSU either within student services, or administrative positions in addition to serving as faculty, and rank also varied across these positions. More specifically, P1 worked as a tenure-track faculty member and as the director of a graduate program in addition to teaching undergraduate students. P2, P4 and P5 worked in student affairs, two of them in director-level positions, and one as an institutional researcher. P3 was a student at MSU who also worked as a student employee in her college, collaborating on multiple institutional projects in addition to SEEN. And P6 previously worked in admissions at a different institution before coming to MSU as an associate professor, and administrator in his department. These various positions across rank, department, and campus units offered a rich background from which to conceptualize institutions as well as diverse lived experiences within institutions. This

background is also important to chapters five on teams and chapter six on managing change because varied perspectives and positions are crucial for team organization and trying to study and make change within any decentralized system.

Below, I'll zoom in on one institution, sharing my participants' voices and how they experience and understand institutions broadly and MSU specifically. The institutional snapshot below belongs to a particular moment in time: the academic year immediately preceding the COVID-19 pandemic (2019-2020) and the immediate aftermath of the academic year following (2020-2021). This institutional snapshot also captures a moment of cultural upheaval in which it can feel like everyone wants to make change, but how to do so is unclear. As one of my participants put it: "the hardest part of any kind of work is to envision what's not there yet" (P6 Personal communication). This timestamp helps situate context, although like all institutions, it is connected to the histories that have made it so, and to its future versions not yet actualized.

Participants' Conceptualizing and Problematizing Institutions

In the following sections, I offer five institutional characteristics that contribute to how participants experience and express the institution from my study. Each characteristic also surfaces a barrier, and then I ground these barriers with an example of said characteristic/barrier from MSU. To preview, the characteristics are:

1. The Purpose of an Institution
2. The Structure of an Institution
3. Relationships in/as Institutions
4. Stability, Change, and Mindsets
5. Siloing and the Stifling of Lateral Communication

These characteristics show up in all kinds of institutions and they constellate to create a series of lenses that can help an institutional researcher understand a particular situation. While I've separated them here to discuss each one individually, it's a false separation that allows me to

zoom in on each characteristic to make sense of and ultimately show how deeply braided together they all are. Taken together, they're meant as a way of seeing and surfacing specific institutional tensions, and as such I hope that they can be adapted to be responsive and useful in a variety of different contexts. That is, the characteristics might all show up together, or a few of them might show up in a particular institution, or they might show up differently than I've named them here but have much of the same impact and create similar barriers. As one of my teachers says, when thinking rhetorically, the answer to most questions is, "it depends," and that remains true when leaving room for complexity, specificity, and the unique relations of a place.

Institutional Characteristic: Purpose of an Institution

Understanding an institution's purpose is helpful for sensemaking how that institution presents itself, why it acts in particular ways, what processes and procedures it codifies, and what its reward structure values. It probably sounds obvious to say but the structure of an institution depends on its size, mission, and goals. Like I explained in chapter two, MSU is both a research institution and a land-grant university, so it has a dual purpose of producing knowledge, particularly in agricultural sciences, and of being accessible to educating the general population of Michiganders, other domestic students, and more recently, international students. As MSU describes itself, "Michigan State University has been advancing the common good with uncommon will for more than 165 years. A top global university, MSU pushes the boundaries of discovery to make a better world while providing students with life-changing opportunities." (MSU About, 2022). These two big claims of the institution illustrate the internal balance—or perhaps tension is a more accurate word—between research and teaching. Put differently, it's a tension between a desire for institutional prestige while remaining open to a wide range of students; something that is hard to do when a university is also competing for national rankings

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and when educational institutions are so often set up to determine prestige based on who they exclude.

Another way that MSU presents itself and its educational purpose is through its tagline "Spartans Will…" used explicitly in marketing to prospective students and their parents as a "Generation Will" sentiment and used in broader MSU marketing to illustrate examples of successful and influential Spartans in the world. I briefly introduced this tagline in chapter two on MSU's context, but it's important to mention here again given how it represents MSU's purpose. As the institution explains it, "The "will" carries a powerful double meaning. As a verb, it reflects action and the work that Spartans do every day to make a positive impact. As a noun, it describes the determination, resilience and optimism that exemplifies Spartans. This "will" is a unique differentiator for Spartans" (MSU brand studio, 2021). This tagline is how MSU creates its brand as an institution and the ways in which it exerts control over the stories told about itself. MSU's identity and ways of expressing its purpose are important to have in mind as I start to share how my participants describe MSU's purpose from their institutional experiences. Discrepancies between an institution's official narrative regarding its purpose and how its participants describe its purpose may—or may not—be indicative of definitive problems. But these discrepancies are important to pay attention to as indicators of how to understand a given institution and its participants' experience within it.

Related Broad Barrier/Tension

All institutions struggle in different ways with the need for internal agreement regarding purpose. Such agreement is important in terms of unified messaging and action. A broad tension that emerges in this area is around agreement of purpose and change. That is, how does an institution remain relevant and flexible while also maintaining its identity? P2 discussed the need

for consistent messaging around change initiatives specifically, but this same issue also relates to messaging around/about institutional purpose. He explained this consistency through the lens of "sustaining moves" and cultivating relationships with people around shared language. For example, once the messaging had been created around a new project, "we didn't deviate. And then anybody who came into the project, that was their first orientation…I made them demonstrate their talks before they went out because I wanted to manage the message as the lead on the project, I wanted the message to be consistent. That was one thing, all the rest was personality and essentially a benefit if the message was consistent" (Personal communication). While this example pertains to a project within an institution, it's similar thinking to what goes into the dominant narrative of an institution: to remain consistent in "branding" so that prospective participants know what to expect, and why they would want to choose this institution. P2 described the relational aspect around shared language as well: "Then when individuals show up, you've got to be like, 'Yes, hi, welcome. Let me show you our welcome packet.' I'm going to welcome you in. I just used the word 'welcome' three times because I want you to be here, right? There has to be a relationship" (Personal communication). The relationship is important in terms of feelings of belonging for participants, and to encourage and then reproduce the institution's purpose. The need for consistency in messaging can be a tension in that institutions want stability and there's always the possibility that the messaging won't attract participants in desired ways and/or that participants might want to change or put their own spin on the messaging.

Related MSU Examples of Barrier/Tension

At MSU specifically, the tension around shared purpose shows up both in what the purpose is, and how to achieve it. For example, P5 explained a deep division at MSU between

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academic affairs and student affairs. In a follow-up question to this point, I asked whether this divide was unique to a research university that sees its main purpose as producing knowledge. In response, P5 explained that before MSU's current slogan "Spartans Will…" it had been "Advancing Knowledge, Transforming Lives," and that she would say to professors she knew, "you are advancing knowledge, I'm only transforming lives." The tension here emerges from someone working in student services who knows based on institutional messaging and her own experience that the research university and the land grant mission conflict. P5 continued that people would tell her MSU had an "identity crisis" because it didn't know what its purpose was: "and you don't have to be one or the other, you can be both. You can advance knowledge and transform lives. But there is a tension there and it's a tension that has existed at MSU for a very long time" (Personal communication). Beyond an institutional identity crisis, the other issue that arises when siloing turns to disdain between major areas of the institution, like student services and academics, is that it becomes more difficult to do institutional research and to improve and support student experiences at the institution. For example, in trying to understand essential needs issues at MSU, P5 shared that: "you need the police, the registrar's office, the office of financial aid, non-academic, and resident life, you need all of those pieces to really see the fuller picture. And a functioning office of Student Affairs would have done this ten years ago. Maybe five, but right, but it's not a functioning office" (Personal communication). So not only does this institutional divide affect collaboration between units, staff, and faculty, it also negatively affects institutional learning and the possibility of institutional improvement. Here, a lack of shared understanding around purpose affects communication and broader issues of collaboration and improvement.

Another issue around institutional purpose can be different competing senses of the same purpose. That is, a central purpose can be shared without effective consensus on how to achieve it. For example, P4 illustrated this tension in her discussion of degree completion. A crucial marker of success for MSU is graduation rate and a secondary marker of this success is the years to graduation for its students. A side note here that P5 repeatedly mentioned was how abysmal the university's graduation rates are specifically for Black/African American male students; a point I'll return to in my discussion of the need for institutional data sharing. Regarding MSU's primary purpose being student degree completion, P4 shared:

> Ultimately, students are here to get their degree, so everything we should be doing is in support of students getting their degree. I support that. I believe in that 100%. [...] I think what the university is starting...I think they've always known it, but what they're actually starting to name and be vocal about is how much other supports actually contributes to students getting their degree. So, 100%, obviously the colleges, the academic units, the content, mastery, all of that is incredibly important, but before a student can learn, they're...you know, it's Maslow[3] at its most basic level applies at the university. (Personal communication)

While the institution's purpose is to educate students and its success is in large part determined by low numbers of attrition, a tension arises here in what kinds of student support needs are legible to the institution. That is, there's a whole lot of support beyond academic tutoring or advising that sustain students toward degree completion. P4 was able to demonstrate this tension through her unique institutional position of both directing an office of student support in student services and teaching courses in her specialty area. Importantly, this means that her experience crosses the institutional divide between academic and student affairs. Her point regarding Maslow's hierarchy also speaks to the purpose of SEEN in working to get the institution to pay

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[3] Maslow's hierarchy of needs is an idea from American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1943) in which he defines five levels of human needs in a pyramid structure from the bottom (most important) upward: physiological (food and clothing), safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. The idea has been contested, added to, and defined in various ways, but it is common enough nomenclature that many people are familiar with the reference in terms of basic needs.

more attention to students' essential needs issues as a potential barrier to their learning. As P1 added, "I think the way we're talking about these things and tying essential needs to learning is something that this university needs to hear" (Personal communication). The focus on learning is crucial both to institutional purpose, and the kinds of support students need to complete their degrees and help the institution fulfill its purpose. P4 further illustrated the need for expansive student support in describing her twenty years of experience teaching:

> I have to say, I have never…maybe like three or four [times] honestly in twenty years as far as students who really struggled with content. The students I talked with and supported who were having challenges were due to life issues. It was not due to that they weren't competent [or] capable; it was really about helping students with the life issues so that they could be successful [in the classroom]. (Personal communication)

What P4 shares so beautifully here is that students are not just brains who show up in a classroom to learn without the rest of their embodiment, priorities, and personal commitments and responsibilities. There's a reciprocal relationship between the university having a responsibility to care for its participants, specifically students in this case, in order for students to accomplish their goals and ultimately contribute to the university's purpose. And the intricacies of this relationship and who MSU assumes its students are and what they need adds nuance to the discussion of institutional purpose and the importance of consistent messaging around mission and values. Institutional purpose can also be a mindset issue, as I'll discuss in characteristic four, the dominant mindsets regarding institutional purpose can sometimes conflict with student services and support if there's not effective communication happening between units. In other words, how an institutional purpose is enacted happens via its participants, their mindsets, and internal institutional communication.

Institutional Characteristic: Structure of an Institution

The participants in this study experienced, understood, and described institutions through, in part, how institutions are structured. For example, one participant explained institutions as being made up of texts and run on texts (e.g., policy sheets, forms) while people within the institution read, react, and implement the texts that then become legible as being an "institution" (P6 Personal communication). In this way, changing the texts can change the way people work, and so reading an institution like a text can also be a way to understand and work within an institution. Another feature of what makes up an institution are the people within it as P1 explained that while SEEN hadn't yet created broad-scale institutional change at MSU (at the time of our interview), SEEN had "changed the institution because it's changed the people in the institution" (Personal communication). To this definitional sensemaking, P5 added that "universities are based on medieval structures, so there's pecking orders," and these pecking orders make it difficult to work horizontally across units in a hierarchically structured system. And to navigate a hierarchy, informal networks are hugely important, which she clarified "can sound like gossip and yes, some of it is just gossip, but you need to know the gossip because you need to know who likes whom" and who can work together to get stuff done (Personal communication). These ways of understanding institutions echo with my working definition of institutions as human-made, complex social, material and rhetorical places, sustained and enacted by individual, everyday practices. As P6 added, institutions are also textually mediated and can be read as a text with specific logics and assumptions.

Related Broad Barrier/Tension

To this idea of institutions being the people who make them up, P2 added the tension of what happens when someone quits, leaves, or gets promoted and all their institutional knowledge goes with them? In terms of stabilizing an initiative or program beyond a single career or

position, he explained that in institutional work he had to think in terms of an organizational horizon of ten years or more, not one career. In this way, the institution and its initiatives must be much bigger than the people who make up the system, while still encompassing them, in order to achieve stability and trust. That is, institutions must come before and continue after any group or person's tenure, so while institutions are made up of their participants, they also have to be more than their participants. Similarly, institutions need longevity in terms of reproduction, and stability in terms of participation to develop a reputation that builds respect and thus also ensures system reproduction. This tension isn't unique to higher education, but it does show up in particular ways in higher education, especially in terms of how quickly (or not) change happens, which can make higher ed seem unresponsive to students who only attend and participate in the system for a limited amount of time.

Related MSU Example of Barrier

As a way to ground this discussion of what makes up an institution with an MSU example, P4 shared a story that shows both how unresponsive university policy can be and an institutional roadblock caused by an individual person. During the beginning of COVID-19 lockdown, P4 tried to start a university supported food delivery initiative for student parents because the Sparty's Market near student housing was closed, campus dining was closed, and the MSU Food Bank had suspended operations. P4 explained that she tried working with East Lansing Public Schools to start a food access initiative because "all of the students' regular avenues to get food were gone" (Personal communication). East Lansing Public Schools was willing to provide food boxes for students, but they couldn't deliver anything, so P4 requested the use of an MSU van to deliver the food herself, but the request was denied by her supervisor

who cited the university policy that travel was suspended. Here I must cite directly and at length because a paraphrase fails to do this example justice:

> P4: She was denying the van and in fact in an email said to me, 'Why can't they walk? They can walk from Spartan Village.' I don't know if you remember what the weather was like but I do, I'll never forget it in March, April, it was still cold and snowing. And I emailed her back and said, 'Are you suggesting to me that parents walk with a three year-old? I'm going to give you a case study of a real-life family at MSU: a single mom with a five and a three year-old, you want her to walk from Spartan Village to East Lansing high school, which is three miles one way? Have you ever tried to walk with a toddler? Do you know how long it takes? Do you know what you need to be paying attention to to do that safely? And it's cold. And it's far.' So I knew that I wasn't going to get any support from her, she just kept denying it. She wasn't going to ask, she wasn't willing to go up the chain, nothing. (Personal communication)

So, for the first two weeks of this initiative, for students who normally relied on the university for access to food, P4 and her colleague loaded up their personal cars with as many food boxes as would fit provided from the local public high school and delivered the boxes to student families living in campus housing. And then P4 documented what was happening and emailed a request directly to the university's Provost for an exception to MSU's travel policy and the approval to use a university vehicle. This request was approved given the extenuating circumstances and the need to be responsive during emergencies, but the roadblock of a single person could have prevented this if P4 hadn't been able to take the risk of emailing over her supervisor's head. As P4 told it in the paraphrased version of her email to the provost: "This is ridiculous that we cannot figure out an exception. Even though we're at Level 1, people still need to eat. You say that MSU doesn't close, okay. That means you're open. We still have a responsibility to those people that are here, how are we going to do this?"

While this is a COVID specific emergency and example, what's still significant here beyond COVID is the potential inhumanity of institutional policy enacted by individuals. When regular avenues to access food were suspended, a workaround became necessary, but

institutional structures that rely on and cite policy without a recognition of being people-centered and responsive to emergent need become barriers, in this case barriers to accessing an essential necessity like food. As P4 explained: "I think there's a hierarchy, but it was really personal. A lot of roadblocks start with a person" (Personal communication). This is a powerful example of how institutions are hierarchical, made up of people, and the barriers inherent in that very structure when individuals are unable or unwilling to make exceptions.

Institutional Characteristic: Relationships in/as Institutions

Participants all described institutions as relational structures that require collaboration to work within and navigate. That is, institutions are made up of and engaged through relationships or relationality. To situate relationality, what I described in chapter three as "how people are together, and can work together (or not) with non-human actors and their institutional environment," here I focus on relationships to illustrate how institutions are systems in which all the parts and relations need to be seen as interconnected and interacting to understand how the institution works, and that no part of an institution exists alone or acts without consequence to the other parts that compose it. A key part of relationality is trust, and trust between every institutional level. That is, trust building between participants and peers, between participants and the institution, between campus units and students, and between leadership and the campus community. Trust is necessary in both relationship building, and relationship sustaining over time, and like I'll discuss more fully in chapter five on teams, trust is built in many small encounters over time in which people honor their commitments, do what they say they will do, and follow through. As adrienne maree brown (2017) shares for change work: "move at the speed of trust," which I often have mis-remembered and quoted to myself as "move at the speed of relationships" (p. 42). Two ways of saying the same thing.

Institutions as relationships surfaced two tensions in my data that show up in higher education but are not unique to higher education. The first tension in institutions as relational structures emerged from creating organizational workarounds to avoid a personnel issue or the need to fire someone. P5 explained that multiple initiatives on campus (e.g., The Hub for Innovation and Learning, the neighborhood design in student services) were "political decisions to get around something that didn't work, that they didn't want to just fire somebody. A lot of it is that" (Personal communication). But these workarounds don't always make sense or function well, and she continued, "then a new Provost comes in and is like, 'this makes no sense,' and it does make no sense, they're correct, but they didn't have the thirty years of working [here beforehand]" (Personal communication). The institutional workaround to avoid firing someone who either cannot collaborate well with other offices or isn't doing their job effectively is a common organizational issue and it can impact participant trust in an institution and investment in trying to work within the system. This is another definitional moment in which my participants explained their experience of the institution through interpersonal relationships, and the institution's procedures, shortfalls, and how it tries to present itself both to participants and the outside world.

The second tension that emerged from institutions as relational systems is connected to the way the institution wants to present itself to the world. P4 noted that institutions, especially higher ed, want to be neutral and a feature of public institutions in our current political neoliberal context is that they try to navigate fraught issues neutrally, but she pointed out, issues taking place inside higher education are not neutral. She explained: "I feel like in higher ed, we've gotten to this place of, 'we have to be neutral.' You know, we're not neutral to food insecurity,

we're not neutral to supporting victims, supporting people who identify as LGBTQ, we're not neutral to students not having their essential needs. We are not neutral. To pretend we're these neutral human beings…" she trailed off, and then added "and society is not neutral." (Personal communication). One issue raised in the conversation of institutional neutrality has to do with emotionally intelligent and responsive institutions, something I'll take up further in chapter five on participatory methods and teams, and in my recommendations in chapter seven. But for now, the institutional desire to be neutral conflicts with the need to care for and educate "the whole student," meaning that students are whole people within the institution who bring their diverse backgrounds and needs with them to the institution. And institutions run the risk of damaging the trust of their participants when the institution betrays participants or cannot adapt its procedures to extend responsive care, like I discussed in the previous section's COVID-19 policy example. To perform institutional neutrality is a disservice to all an institution's participants, even though the effects of this neutrality are different for participants based upon factors such as positionality and one's relationship to the institution.

Related MSU Examples of Barrier/Tension

Relationships in/as/being part of the institution emerged in my data most often in how participants navigate the institution. For example, P6 offered two examples of institutional experience regarding change initiatives that worked by acquiring buy-in from the college's dean in attempting to revise a major, and, at a previous institution, buy-in from the provost for academic affairs in order to change an admission policy. As he put it, "you're dead in the water" if you don't do this initial proposal for support to move forward. P5 shared something similar in that if an initiative doesn't get the folks on board who will need to implement a program or procedure, it won't work because those participants can resist the procedure to the point where it

never happens. And like P5 mentioned in the previous section, informal networks are very important to navigating the institution and working. Beyond gossip, she added, "I keep in touch with lots of people who I might not necessarily need right now, today, but you just never know, right?" (Personal communication). Similarly, P2 described getting work done in higher education as a process of who you know as opposed to following a set of steps that will produce a predictable or desired outcome. As he put it, "higher ed is more chaotic than that" (Personal communication). While the importance of participatory methods might seem obvious and working via "who you know" is not unique to higher education, the frequency with which relationships were brought up to explain how something worked, why it didn't work, or how to get something done in the institution pointed my attention to the multiplicity of ways the institution functions because of and through its relations.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this section, relationality is contingent upon trust, and trust is also necessary to navigate an institution relationally. Two common ways trust is built is through small encounters over a period of time between participants, and/or via a trusted colleague's network and introduction. For example, when SEEN wrote a report to share with MSU administrators after conducting 15 focus groups with a total of 69 undergraduate and graduate students, we also shared the report with campus staff positioned across the university in a staff focus group. The director of the LGBTQIA resource center, offered feedback that queer students were not represented in our findings. P4 recounted: "We as a group had heard in our staff work groups, and [redacted name] was in one of the work groups and was very vocal about, 'Where's the LGBT representation? They have different needs, you know?" (Personal communication). So instead of moving forward with the report as is, SEEN paused research production and worked on relationship building. Here, given SEEN's response and willingness to

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address participant feedback, adrienne maree brown's (2017) second emergent strategy principle on trust in change work is exemplified: "if you trust the people, they become trustworthy" (p. 42). This principle works perhaps a bit like a prophecy in that one can look for ways to enact the idea or event that has been prophesied, but I also appreciate its focus in working from a place of belief in trust and an asset-based approach rather than a deficiency model, something I'll take up further in my recommendation for trauma-informed management in chapter seven. In these examples, informal networks like P5 mentioned above, or relational networks like the working group example require time and a willingness to act on the belief that others are trustworthy in ways that don't always align with project timelines.

Institutional Characteristic: Stability, Change and Mindsets

Institutions are living, breathing, rhetorical things that desire stability both in terms of longevity and reproduction, as I mentioned above, and for the psychological well-being and participation of its participants. But like all living, rhetorical things, institutions are also sustained by change whether that be changes in personnel, procedures, and policies, national or regional status, or land use and acquisition. Nothing stays the same at the same time that it can be very difficult to enact change, particularly in terms of people's mindsets. Given that institutions are made up of the people within them, like P1 said previously, if you change the people inside the institution, you change the institution. Unfortunately, as anyone who's worked with other people knows, it isn't easy to change someone's mind, or even one's own mind. Another layer of changing mindsets is complicated by the previous section on an institution's purpose. If participants don't or can't agree on an institution's purpose, then it is all the more difficult to reach stabilization, and a shared agreement about the state of things, what's working well, what might need to change, and how to effect that change. This tension between institutions wanting

stability but also needing change to remain responsive and relevant to their participants is an ongoing feature of institutions and how participants experience them.

Related Broad Barrier/Tension

The difficulty and importance of understanding mindsets, a concept that comes from organizational psychology, came up in my data around relationships in institutions, navigating the institution, and institutional change. In our interview, P2 defined mindsets specifically about assessment, his research area: "Mindsets form early, and then they are changed with formal training and socialization into a discipline, and those mindsets change again, or are shaped further, by the kinds of jobs we do and the reward-structures in those jobs. So people and rewards throughout one's life and training and things you engage with shape the way we think about assessment" (Personal communication). While this definition centers around experiences in higher education training and socialization, mindsets are also shaped by family of origin, socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, religion, regional background, and other intersecting positionality factors that shape how one sees and experiences the world. P2 goes on to say that this internal shaping process of mindsets "takes place for lots of things not just assessment, but all kinds of things, like teams, or change, or different kinds of orientations" to which I would add *institutions*. Individuals bring a variety of mindsets regarding what an institution is, how it works, what it's for, and how to act within it, and so understanding people's mindsets about institutions is important both for surviving and thriving in an institution. Mindsets are especially difficult to change when they're long-established, supported by one's higher-ups, and confirmed via one's lived experiences.

Every institution is shaped by its participants' mindsets that suggest certain orientations to how the institution should work, what it should do, and how it should do these things, and

often these institutional mindsets favor how things have been done previously and who has done them. Similarly, the people who successfully navigate the institution often reinforce the dominant mindsets because they're institutionally rewarded for doing so. For example, P4 shared, "A lot of [institutional] barriers come individually, but then they're supported by the institution, and many people who have risen through the ranks of academia have reinforced and supported" particular ways of working and being within the institution that can then be a barrier to doing things otherwise or changing the status quo. Here it's important to ask, "whose best interests are protected by a "we've always done it this way" approach? Something that remained true throughout my data was how often a barrier was very personal or began with a single person being unwilling to share data, approve a workaround, or even be willing to entertain a different perspective on how to enact a policy. I heard multiple times from different participants that something couldn't change institutionally until someone retired. In other words, the fact that institutions are composed of people is heartening because it opens possibilities for navigating and changing institutions relationally, but also daunting because anyone who has ever worked with other people knows how difficult it can be to collaborate with let alone change someone's ideas or practices.

Related MSU Examples of Barrier/Tension

A localized MSU example of how status quo mindsets can become an institutional barrier came from P4 when she explained that as an institution MSU has a long history of penalizing different or new ideas. In this example she noted what can be both a pro and a challenge in that "there's longevity at this university in people. So when you have that, even me at twenty years [working at MSU], it's hard for people to say, 'Well we've always done blah…' [or] 'X used to be done like this…' and to get out of that [thinking]," and to practice what she called "possibility

thinking" in which it's possible to ask more imaginative questions like, "What could we do to really X_____ support student success? How could that look? Can we just think for a moment? And folks are challenged to do even that at some level" (Personal communication). Longevity of employees acts as a stabilizing force within institutions, especially as participants maintain and share institutional history and knowledge, but this longevity also functions to maintain a status quo. Additionally, and more worrisome, P4 shared her institutional experience at MSU and MSU's history of "penalizing risk in thought and ideas." She continued: "I was in some of the staff strategic planning focus groups of the president, and there was about 55 staff from all around the university at different levels, and it was astonishing just story after story of instances where people were, like I said, penalized for innovation, penalized for wanting to do things different, which came off as a challenge to…" Here she trailed off before adding, "And I gotta say, a lot of them were women, and a lot of them were people of color. So…" (Personal communication). This resistance to innovation and change, particularly from women and people of color, bears out in the institutional reality and history of MSU as a predominantly white institution. Mindsets can become so dominant that they appear as if the institution has a single mindset, and when people are hired into a position and then rewarded for maintaining the dominant mindset, it's very difficult to break out of that pattern especially when difference is connected to identity factors and considered a threat to "how we've always done it." Never mind who this 'we' excludes.

Another area where mindsets play a role and act as a barrier at MSU have to do with how the institution rewards, or not, faculty collaboration. For example, P1 explained that faculty are encouraged to develop their "brand" in terms of what they will be known for through their research and publication output. He shared advice that he received from a mentor, "it's time for

you to create your own franchise; I need you to build the business that is gonna be [name redacted]" (Personal communication). This franchise point is important for institutional background because P1 also shared that it's been difficult to "sell" faculty at MSU on change initiatives, such as SEEN's work on supporting students with their essential needs, because "the benefit to the institution or to the student is not enough. It has to be, 'how am I going to benefit? How is this going to help me build my franchise?" (Personal communication). I'll discuss further issues of siloing and the rarity of faculty and staff collaboration in the next section, but this example specifically regarding faculty branding and a lack of buy-in to change initiatives represents another side of institutional resistance to innovation—when the institution doesn't reward collaboration, it makes it very difficult to make cross-disciplinary and cross-rank/position teams given the other pressures and deadlines faculty juggle. I don't mean to paint faculty as the bad apples here. Junior faculty are under an immense amount of institutional pressure and need to produce a certain amount of knowledge to protect their livelihood and ensure their own essential needs are met. But this example represents an institutional issue at a research university that isn't set up to encourage collaboration as part of junior faculty's work toward tenure, nor, more broadly, does it incentivize or even encourage faculty collaboration. Something I will share in my implications section is how SEEN offers a vision for creating a successful faculty career on institutional research and improving one's institution. For now, the need for faculty to develop their own brand acts as a mindset issue that is hard to change when faculty also experience institutional precarity.

Institutional Characteristic: Siloing and the Stifling of Lateral Communication

The structure of an institution depends on its size, mission, and goals. Centralization, for example, in an organization means that decision making, or power, is more concentrated or

"centralized" in a single unit or office. In contrast, decentralization is a structure that distributes decision-making, and in the case of MSU, resources, across units and departments. A university like MSU with more than 200 programs of undergraduate, graduate, and professional study across 17 degree-granting colleges serving 38,574 undergraduate students and 11,085 graduate students functions via a decentralized institutional structure (Enrollment report, 2021). This structure means that different colleges on campus have myriad policies, procedures, and resources available to students and may operate very differently than other colleges on campus. Also of note, three of the seventeen colleges on campus are "residential colleges," meaning that they have more significant types of contact with students and thus more complicated policies and procedures. The colleges also have different priorities and approaches to student support and services, and distinct educational missions. For example, the College of Arts and Letters' (CAL) mission is especially student focused with what it calls a "culture of care," meant to develop and prioritize inclusive practices for all members of the college (CAL initiatives, 2022). For the scope of my study on how participants use writing to navigate and change institutions, the important point here is how complicated decentralization can be for institutional participants, especially students who must navigate across offices and units that may or may not communicate, as illustrated by the story that opens this chapter. A lack of lateral communication caused by decentralizations turned into institutional siloing is the final institutional characteristic, but it also weaves through the previous four sections in terms of communication issues.

While decentralization doesn't immediately conjure negative responses or connote ineffective organizational structure, a different term that I heard repeatedly in my institutional work with SEEN and in CAL does–that term is siloed. If I had a dollar for every time I heard a colleague describe MSU as "siloed," I could pay off my student loans. In contrast to

"decentralized," Merriam-Webster defines "siloed" as "kept in isolation in a way that hinders communication and cooperation; separated or isolated in a silo" (2022). Siloing at MSU means that offices have different data and knowledge but there isn't much lateral sharing of information, or, and worse, much lateral communication happening. As two participants shared with me regarding the culture of data sharing they entered when they started working at MSU, it wasn't until someone retired that a project on graduation rates per demographic could move forward because it needed institutional data from another office (Personal communication). Beyond data siloing, a lack of internal communication makes it difficult for an institution to achieve its purpose and for its participants to navigate its structure or form relationships.

Related Broad Barrier/Tension

Institutions are often designed to hoard information and resources, and the need for institutional communication is all the more important in a decentralized system because participants have to work laterally across a hierarchical institution. For example, if units on campus aren't communicating when students are accessing multiple offices and services concurrently, then the institution is missing information it's already collecting (via individual office records) but isn't sharing between units that could help it better support students toward degree completion. As P4 explained regarding SEEN research, "it has never been our belief or mindset that there are no resources at MSU. It is how to access those resources. It was really kind of refreshing to know that there were resources and that there were avenues, but they were really hidden" (Personal communication). Another reason I heard for hiding resources (i.e., not openly advertising a resource unless you "know" someone connected to allocating the resource) is to preserve resources because the student need could be too great. While siloing unique to MSU leads to resources being "hidden" or difficult to access, the broader tension emerging from lack

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of lateral communication is that institutions are less effective at being responsive to and for their participants when they lack effective internal communication. But as I'll discuss in chapter six on change, sometimes people within the institution do not actually want to know how bad a situation might be because then it would require change.

Hidden avenues to resources is a communication breakdown between offices and units that then makes it more difficult for participants, in SEEN's case, for students, to access help. Of course, without help, essential needs issues can escalate and worsen. Issues of access are also exacerbated by positionality and so first-generation college students and other historically excluded student groups, who may also be more vulnerable in terms of essential needs resources, can have a harder time navigating the institution to meet their needs. While the specifics of examples will differ in a different type of institution, the difficulty in navigating an institution because it doesn't communicate between units or offices is a broad barrier. And difficulty navigating institutions of employment, healthcare, government, etc. can be exacerbated by an employee's or participant's positionality. Whatever the institution, a lack of lateral communication contributes to institutional siloing and can make it far less efficacious in its purpose. In other words, institutions don't work well if their participants, offices, and activities are not in relational proximity to each other. Or, put differently, if they're not communicating.

Related MSU Examples of Barrier/Tension

Many institutions function via a decentralized model, especially large institutions like MSU, or even larger organizations and corporations that operate internationally. While large institutions are made up of many constituent parts that all need varying levels of communication, there are also often specific relational dynamics at play. For example, at MSU in addition to the many colleges on campus and their differing mission and values, there is also a deep divide at the

institution between academic affairs and student affairs[4], as multiple participants detailed with

their lived institutional experiences. The extent of MSU's siloing is evidenced through this

separate and antagonistic relationship between the two central functions of an educational

institution: supporting students (academic affairs) to degree completion (academic affairs). One

poignant explanation of this divide came from a participant who had worked in a director-level

role in student affairs:

> Student affairs at MSU was very poorly regarded. And so part of the very big division between student affairs and academic affairs is that people in the colleges didn't want to be associated with student affairs. There are other schools where these two functions are one in the same. I mean, if you're an academic advisor, you're really in student affairs. But at MSU they tried for years and years and years to separate those two things because the reputation of student affairs was so poor. And more and more things were taken out of student affairs. It was a huge divide. And it was all political. (Personal communication)

This quote details both specific institutional history that helps to explain the tensions and

relationships unique to MSU between campus units, and it also names a tension in decentralized

institutions when different units do not or cannot communicate and collaborate, whether that be

because of reputation, leadership, or something else. This tension showed up in the previous

section on relationships and an institution's resistance to firing someone who cannot or will not

collaborate well with other units. Personnel issues are fraught, and there is good reason for

public institutions to have long processes for employee terminations, but the interpersonal

collaboration issues exacerbate siloing at MSU and this siloing scales to the level of entire units

or halves of the institution being unable to work together. Issues of siloing were also evident in

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[4] When I refer to lowercase student affairs and academic affairs I am speaking more generally about student support as an activity or generalized resource or teaching and learning more broadly, as opposed to a specific office of either. When I refer to MSU's Office of Student Affairs, it will be capitalized. Of note, while I was drafting this dissertation, MSU's Student Affairs and Services Programs was reorganized to combine with Residential and Hospitality Services and became Student Life and Engagement.

section two on the institution's purpose when P5 brought up that a "functioning Office of Student Affairs" would have been able to research and better support student essential needs issues years ago, which negatively impacted the institution's ability to develop and improve.

This tension or poor relationship between academic and student affairs also plays out in another area of siloing at MSU that happens between faculty and staff and how rare it is for faculty and staff to collaborate without one dominating the conversation or decision making. A lack of institutional support for collaboration also surfaced in the mindset characteristic around difficulty in getting faculty to collaborate with each other in terms of competition and needing research to contribute to their academic "brand." Here, the lack of collaboration shows up again between faculty and staff. For example, "It's not common to have staff voice and faculty voice at the same table. It's just not. With one, with faculty not trumping the other, so to speak…But really thinking about how they're integrated. That is much less common" (P4, Personal communication). The nuance she adds here has to do with integrating faculty and staff voices and decision making in which both groups have equal say in determining an outcome. Similarly, P1 described how cautious he was to bring other faculty into the work of SEEN because he worried they would hijack the project to serve their own research agenda (Personal communication). Again, the issue of branding via research agenda surfaces. While some faculty members may not even think to collaborate with staff, or to imagine the need to, staff participants in my study repeatedly named the importance of collaborating with faculty. The reasons for wanting such collaboration included: having/accessing legitimacy within the institution and how the PhD remains the "gold standard" within the university, the importance of academic freedom (e.g., faculty don't have a direct supervisor who tells them what they can and cannot research or spend their work hours doing), and the ability to gain access to certain campus

stakeholders, especially with data-rich research and PhDs involved. As P4 put it: "there are no 'sides' to student success—everyone [at the university] should be invested in student success" (Personal communication). But institutional silos can very easily make "sides," and institutional silos also prevent faculty and staff from occupying the same rooms and from sitting at the same tables as equal stakeholders.

A related issue to lacking or stifling lateral communication emerges in who MSU assumes its students are, another issue of institutional mindsets as well, and the need for the institution to recognize the growing number of nontraditional students. P4 defined "nontraditional students" as, "students who didn't go straight from undergrad to grad, or straight from high school from the parents' home to living on campus, you know, not having dependents, not having served in the military, not having worked full-time, not being married or partnered," and that the number of "traditional" students is decreasing yet "MSU still is operating as a traditional brick and mortar" institution (Personal communication). Another layer of this issue as a problem of communication came from P4 extending this definition to traditional and nontraditional help-seeking behaviors. She explained "traditional helping seeking" is going to an "adviser or instructor," whereas "nontraditional is more finding that one person" that a student trusts. For example, "we talked to folks in facilities, particularly in family housing that clean that have developed relationships with students that see their kids all the time, that hear things, that learn things, …those aren't folks that people normally think have knowledge of how to support students, and they really do" (Personal communication). Here is another reason for faculty and staff collaboration to support institutional improvement. In this example, the communication issue is multidirectional in that the institution isn't listening to the changing reality of its students and thinking more expansively about who its students are, and also, the institution—or upper

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administration and directors—aren't thinking expansively about who on campus has knowledge about student needs and experiences and should be at the table when discussing how to best support and care for the "whole student."

An issue right under the surface in this section, and another reason for institutional "sides," is a sense of scarcity regarding resources, time, and who owns what research, all to the detriment of participants trying to navigate a decentralized system, and a detriment to the institution enacting and fulfilling its purpose. As a rhetoric and writing studies researcher, writing and communication issues are at the heart of my work, and as I'll continue arguing, are a central part of institutional change work. Communication breakdowns run through each of the previous characteristic sections, and they also now bring me back to where I started this chapter and the story of the student parent facing eviction who received no institutional communication about missed rent or late payments until she was faced with a court-ordered eviction notice.

Conclusion: Institutional Characteristics, Breakdowns, and Change

To weave these characteristics together, I'll share the end of P4's story that started this chapter after she confirmed that the university hadn't been sending correspondence to the student:

> I started asking a lot of questions to people: how did this happen? How did it happen that she didn't know? What's the process? Come to find, the registrar doesn't talk to financial aid, they're separate systems; they don't connect at all. Housing doesn't know what's going on. They're all separate. Nobody's communicating. Housing's seeing that she's not paying her rent, she's not paying her rent. Why didn't housing send an email? I don't know. You know, I couldn't answer that. (Personal communication)

While the most obvious institutional characteristic evident in this example is siloing and lack of lateral communication, every other institutional characteristic I've laid out intersects to allow for a situation like this to happen in the first place. Although it can seem like a straightforward mistake and that obviously housing services should have sent an email to the student, without all

the other institutional characteristics also playing a role, this situation couldn't have happened this way. That is, institutional purpose doesn't necessarily extend to housing, and the antagonistic relationship between student affairs and academic affairs compounds this—why would academic affairs be aware of a student's housing situation? The structure of the institution (e.g., decentralized, hierarchical, made up of texts and procedures, which all vary by department and college) obscures how to navigate an issue, which can be further compounded by the student's positionality. Obscured procedures are made even more complicated when the student isn't receiving communication, but a lack of lateral communication happens at least in part because of poor relations that make up the institution. Institutional mindsets are also evident that assume the student is responsible for knowing if there's an issue, checking her account consistently and being at fault if she doesn't know in time. And, of course, lack of communication very apparently weaves through these different characteristics as a glaring institutional failure, but a failure that is dispersed between these different characteristics.

In this one story, it's evident how the many layers, relations, and mindsets that make up the institution can break down in myriad ways, but what's especially important is being able to also see *why* and *how* these failures were possible. While housing services really dropped the ball before this became a court ordered eviction, without the lenses of institutional characteristics, it's hard to be able to see what exactly caused and allowed for this housing situation to become a crisis that threatened a student and her child with the prospect of being houseless. It's not enough to be able to see a communication failure. To be able to prevent further crises like this, institutionally we must understand how these characteristics make up the institution and then bump up against each other, creating and reinforcing barriers. These barriers then exist for all the institution's participants although the effect of barriers is not equally felt and distributed. So yes,

a lack of lateral communication is a problem, but what makes this a crisis is deeper than any single characteristic.

This is a story that causes a visceral reaction. In all my reading in the literature on institutional theory and how to define and understand institutions, I didn't come across anything that felt the way hearing this story did. And it's the power of this story that illustrated for me the importance of recognizing how people experience and live institution-ing. This embodied perspective is important to understanding institutions through their barriers, which is another way of approaching institutions through how they might be open to and responsive to change. And understanding how institutions might change is helped through the lenses of these institutional characteristics that allow for a way of seeing the whole by being able to separate and see the many parts that make up the larger structure and the ways in which those parts interact or not, and how they might exclude or disadvantage particular participants. Similar to the idea I introduced from Mia Birdsong's (2020) work on community and participatory change in chapter three that change makers are not often those people who are comfortable with and served by the status quo, taking a barrier-level approach to institutional change is a way of prioritizing change via who is excluded and underserved by the institution. One way to answer the question I posed in chapter three: "What's the compelling force to do otherwise [to create institutional change]?" is to center, learn from, and prioritize those who are marginalized in the institution while trying to accomplish their personal and professional goals. Organizing change efforts in such a way makes for more responsive and equitable institutions, and it's also a way of prioritizing DEI initiatives that help participants be successful and institutions better respond to contemporary needs and issues. In what comes next, I continue working to center relationships in institutional change as one way to do this kind of change work.

To build toward relational institutional change, in the next chapter I turn to participation more specifically by focusing on teams as my object of study. To do so, I situate three claims about how teams work (i.e., collaborate) in a brief overview of technical and professional communication literature from the last fifty years juxtaposed with my data. What surfaced repeatedly across the field's literature and my study's data was the need for emotional intelligence in collaboration, which I situate in three main claims about teams that emerged from artifact analysis of the collaborative writing SEEN produced. In studying participation via writing, I then offer ways to cultivate emotional intelligence in collaboration and suggest how to create processes and workflows that facilitate participation in change work. Throughout studying institutions via relationality and now collaboration, emotions continue to be a key feature in understanding how participants navigate, make sense of, and work toward change.

CHAPTER FIVE: STUDYING TEAMS VIA COLLABORATIVE WRITING: RELATIONSHIPS, DISTRIBUTED EXPERTISE, AND DISSENSUS

In the previous chapter, I offered five institutional characteristics illustrated through participant experiences to define "institution-ing," or a more lived-in definition of an institution by how participants navigate the institution. I argued that these five characteristics provide a lens through which to surface institutional barriers, and especially, institutional breakdowns that often occur from a lack of internal communication and can greatly impact participants, as exemplified in my data. Further, these characteristics, taken together, provide an approach to see *why* and *how* institutional breakdowns occur, and so, can importantly inform institutional change efforts. Now, I turn my attention to the role of teams in planning, enacting, and managing institutional change.

To begin this chapter on teams and how interdisciplinary teams manage and change institutions, I want to share a story from my data that illustrates in a single example the claims from technical writing scholarship that studies and theorizes how teams navigate changing workplaces that I'll be exploring and then further extending with my data. This story is from early in SEEN's formation when the initial group (two faculty members and a director in student services) were seeking funding from various administrative offices on campus to begin institutional research on essential needs issues and to be able to pay student designers for their work and expertise. In this example, the storyteller is a director in student services and she and the two faculty members are meeting with her direct supervisor for funding. In this example, the two faculty members are acknowledged for their expertise, but this acknowledgment is not extended to the staff member from her own supervisor.

> P4: I definitely consider and understand the hierarchy. You know, there was a moment, [faculty name redacted], [faculty name redacted], and I had met with [administrator] when she was still here, early on for funding. And you know, she said, 'Oh, I really…' to [the faculty members], 'I really want to thank you for your expertise and da da da da," and [faculty member] started, he was like, 'you know, P4 had a lot to do with this,' and there was no acknowledgement, none. It was like, 'oh, no, no, you're the faculty, you're

the...you know' so much so that at the end, she left, and [faculty member] was like, 'did that just happen?' He says, 'I'm so sorry that happened to you.' And I'm like, 'you know, I'm used to it.' But that's a problem, and what I love about SEEN, again, there is a place for different experiences and expertise, and it's valued and integrated, it's not that one is more important, it's all important, you know.

I think that's what's so incredibly important [is] that we have this blend that we have, and one of the things I love about our team is that we do need faculty voice. The reality is that we need faculty credibility. We need them, we couldn't do this without them, we just couldn't. And we also need student voice, we need representation of student voice. Not just service people who work with students; we need student involvement with this. And you know, we need service people. We need folks who are doing the day-to-day work outside of the academic structures. So that's one of the things I love about the way that we're doing this…we aren't the experts, but we're this group of individuals who have different roles and expertise to share…it feels innovative.

And there have been a couple times where I've said to [other SEEN members], 'I'm gonna need you to send that email,' or 'I'm gonna need you to initiate…' And I think the willingness of any of us to use our positionality for good to be a support to someone else on the team, to be an ally to a particular population, all of those things, I think is what makes us an impactful group.

And I have to say, with regard to higher ed, you know, is what you coined, the faculty-staff-student real collaboration. I've heard different things, 'Oh, [Student name] and [Student name] are leading this'...or, 'I'm doing a proposal, we're gonna present at X, Y, Z…'And you all [students on SEEN] having what feels to me like real roles. Real, in the team. You aren't just, 'hey we've got some students on the team.' You know, real...I couldn't do what [Student name] does and likewise with you. So it's that recognition of experience, and ability to contribute at all levels that I just have not seen, not with any regularity anywhere else.

This story surfaces three central claims that show up throughout technical writing scholarship on teams/teaming from the last fifty years: 1) the need to build cross-functional—and what the field has more recently understood to be coalitional—teams that can navigate relationally across hierarchical institutions, 2) the need to acknowledge and integrate every team member's expertise, 3) and the need to hear, respect, and integrate different perspectives and even dissensus as constructive features of diverse teams. In addition to existing TC literature on collaboration and my interview research data, I also asked every participant to share with me a writing artifact that represented an important moment of contribution for them from their work with SEEN.

Because participation, not unlike institutional change, can seem amorphous and at times difficult to trace back to an individual as ideas emerge and are co-created, I was hoping that writing artifacts, as defined and selected by the participants, would offer specific and tangible examples of individual participation through collaborative writing. So in each of the three sections on teams claims below, I will further situate each claim in my interview data and also in two of the participant writing artifacts.

In chapter three, I explained how I situated writing for participants in that the genre of writing could include anything from an email sent or received to a PowerPoint slide deck, a memo, a visualization or other institutional map, etc. Additionally, I tried to define "writing" broadly in that it did not only mean putting words on a page, "but it could be feedback you gave or notes you took during a meeting, or even an agenda item you brought up for group discussion" (see Appendix A). Three participants shared more than one artifact and more than one writing genre, one participant did not share a writing artifact and instead discussed the way that writing within SEEN was important insofar as it facilitated interactions between the research team and others. There was a total of six unique genres, and the only repeat genre were emails, although emails with very different purposes.

In what follows, I will share a brief history on teams/teaming from the field, paying particular attention to how these themes show up throughout TC's ongoing conversations on collaboration. Then I will more fully develop and illustrate the claims in my data. In this way, I hope to illustrate different kinds of participation and nuanced ways in which teams function to invite and value diverse expertise.

Teams/Teaming Literature Review in Technical Communication

Teams are often studied by what they do and how they do it. Or, put differently, by how the people who make up a particular team collaborate. Teams, collaboration, and how people work together is a touchstone in the scholarship of technical communication. Anyone doing a workplace study, for example, has to attend to how people work together, and this often shows up in writing processes and collaboration. Collaboration is also a key part of classroom spaces within the broader field of rhetoric and writing studies as a way for students to practice project work, reflective leadership and role assignment, and project management—although collaboration, not unlike writing, is often assigned but not taught. Rebecca Burnett, Andrew Cooper, and Candace Welhausen (2013) define "collaboration" for technical writers as "an intentional, sustained interaction toward a common goal," further explaining that collaboration is a rhetorical, and multimodal process involved in "75-80% of workplace writing" (pp. 454 & 457). The connections between classrooms and writing programs with workplace writing is a kind of symbiotic relationship that in part sustains the academic field of technical communication and tries to prepare students to contribute thoughtful humanist perspectives and technical expertise in their future industry profession. For the purposes of my study, I'll be focusing specifically on scholarship and studies on workplace writing and given the proliferation of writing on teams and collaboration in the field, I will be narrowing in even further on three claims that emerged in the context of my study and that show up in the field's ongoing conversations around teams/teaming. As a way of situating these claims, I will sketch a brief history of teams in the field starting in the 1970s through the COVID-19 pandemic's acceleration of remote and hybrid teams.

Given that teams are constructed by and through communication, professional writing

and technical communication (PWTC) has long studied how teams work and are managed (Burnett 1994; Dicks 2003; Hackos 2007), what makes teams effective or not (Edmondson, 1999, 2019; England & Brewer 2018), and how development teams function in decentralized organizations and in hybrid workplaces (Lauren 2018; Brewer & Mitchell 2021). Across the decades that PWTC has been studying and writing about teams, change is a recurrent theme, topic, and experience in workplace studies. Change shows up in how workplaces function and are organized (e.g., how many actual employees they have as opposed to contract workers), change is also a constant topic in how people collaborate, and of course, in technology. There's a pervading sense of anxiety in much of PWTC scholarship in the latter part of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. This sense of anxiety is a felt reality for many workers as white-collar workers moving companies more frequently, long-term employment for people without college degrees has dried up, the gig economy has proliferated, and according to Pew Research, for the first time in history, more than two-thirds of Americans don't believe the next generation will be "better off" (Pew Research, 2014). This sense of anxiety pre-dates the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic but has certainly continued in recent years especially as millennials prepare to potentially face the third recession of their working lives (the other two being the financial crisis of 2007-2008, and the pandemic recession of 2020). While PWTC's focus on change has shifted to what now feels more like precarity, the field has long been aware of the need to understand both current and changing workplace practices.

In the 1970s, PWTC was already anticipating how American workplaces would change in the near future and starting to study how cross-functional teams were becoming more common in large businesses. In Clay Spinuzzi's history of bureaucracy (2015), he explains that in the 1970s it became evident that bureaucracies—an organizational structure defined by behavior that is

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predetermined, predictable and thus standardized with formalized structures enacted under stable conditions—were not well-equipped to take on "wicked problems," that is, "ill-defined problems that require perspectives from different specializations" (p. 23). In response to bureaucracies, Spinuzzi explains that some large organizations turned to cross-functional project teams, "teams that brought together people from different specializations and different layers of the hierarchy, teams that were organized around a defined project rather than a department" (p. 23). These teams became a kind of "ad-hocracy," Alvin Toffler's term (1970), that could function more flexibly and informally in contradistinction to bureaucracies. Another important feature and flexibility of adhocracies is that teams can be temporary, forming to solve problems and operating in a flat hierarchy that share leadership responsibilities and then disband once a problem or project is complete (Spinuzzi, 2015).

Similarly, in *Reframing Organizations*, Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal open the section on organizing groups and teams by cataloging some of the most effective teams in US history: Thomas Edison's team that produced the phonograph and the lightbulb; the Skunk Works team that brought about major breakthroughs in fighter aircraft during World War II; Steve Jobs' team that created the personal computer with Macintosh in 1983; Ford Motors' Team Taurus that resulted in the Car of the Year in 1986; and SEAL Team Six Red Squadron that located and killed Osama Bin Laden in 2011 (p. 93-95). Through these examples Bolman and Deal argue that "teams of diverse individuals, typically working at a distance from the existing hierarchy, sparked major breakthroughs" (p. 95). In this way, small teams with diverse perspectives are a way for stable system-reproducing entities like bureaucracies to try and be more flexible and responsive. But of course, the acceleration of change and technological development would only increase as the latter 20th century turned into the 21st century and the standardized and siloed

design of bureaucracies became more and more obviously ill-equipped to respond to contemporary life and problems.

In the 1980s-90s, changes in documentation, particularly single-sourcing, and the increase of more and more computer users in companies influenced PWTC scholars to study teams through document cycling (Hackos,1994 and 2007). In 1979, Joann Hackos founded Comtech Services, a content-management and information-design firm, seeing a need in industry documentation training to ensure the growing number of technical writers were trained in responsible information development and usability to ensure organizational maturity. In the early 1990s, Hackos wrote *Managing Your Documentation Projects*, a codified approach for documentation lifecycle management from planning and design through development and production. In 2007, Hackos updated her Information Process Maturity Model in *Information Development*, extending conversations about collaboration in document cycling and project management as workplaces and teams continued to vastly change after the turn of the century and into the mid-aughts. Hackos' work is particularly important in the history of teams and project management, and for my study, her focus on collaboration over time of a document's life cycle remains key in trying to observe and understand participatory research via collaborative writing. As Stan Dicks put it, Hackos' 2007 revised book remains the "most important" book on technical communication and project management, and understanding teams is key to any successful project management.

The proliferation of developed-over-time and collaborative, iterative documentation in workplaces also necessitated better understanding of effective collaboration and the role of useful conflict. Something I'll address more fully in claim three below, but throughout the 1990s, PWTC scholars were working on how to facilitate and benefit from productive conflict on teams

that arises from collaboration (Burnett, 1994; Edmondson 1999). Productive conflict is something that I haven't seen as much recent scholarly engagement with but seems especially important to understand and facilitate as part of interpersonally healthy, diverse, and productive teams.

In the 1990s, the other huge change, of course, occurred with the explosion of the world wide web (WWW), and the vast shifts in technology that the WWW necessitated and that stemmed from this increase of computer users. Then, user-generated content continued these changes in how people participated, contributed to, and shared information. Into the early aughts, this was a fast-changing time for technology and collaboration, accelerated again in the 2010s with social media affecting both workplaces and the workforce. These ongoing changes to technology, interaction, and documentation also connect to the more recent proliferation of remote work and distributed or partly co-located teams.

In the early 2020s, documentation and collaboration continue to be key features of how PWTC scholars study teams in workplaces that keep changing at an accelerating pace, making it seem more and more like the only thing that stays the same about workplaces is change. And one of the most significant recent workplace upheavals is the COVID-19 pandemic that suddenly made the terms "remote work," and "virtual" or "hybrid teams" seem commonplace. In a recent article on leading hybrid teams, a well-known name in teamwork and technical communication, Pam Estes Brewer and Alanah Mitchell share suggestions for managing hybrid teams. A hybrid team means that a team spends some amount of time face-to-face (f2f) and also meets virtually in technologically supported ways. Strategies for managing hybrid teams sometimes overlap with strategies for (f2f) and virtual teams, but also have unique challenges depending on how much time a hybrid team spends f2f which helps with team trust and conflict management, and the

potential for the team to be split into subgroups based on demographic attributes or individual behavior (p. 2). Hybrid teams are an important addition to understanding contemporary team dynamics and strategies for collaboration, especially as Mitchell and Brewer assert that "according to one April 2021 Gartner poll, 99% of HR leaders expect employees to work in some type of hybrid arrangement (both in the office and remotely) going forward" (p. 1). And despite teamwork challenges, the authors explain that collaboration continues to be an important organizational tool as it "allows for increased resources, creativity and innovation, improved decision quality, and ultimately an increased return on investment" (p. 1). Considering hybrid flexibility in how and where collaboration happens are now all the more important to include in understanding effective, and distributed, teamwork.

From the 1970s to 2022, PWTC is a field deeply concerned with teams in academic and workplace settings, and how collaboration and documentation help researchers study and better understand what makes teams effective and satisfying for participants. Teams continue to be a way that many workplaces function, so better understanding team participation, how to build structural and interpersonal trust, and how to create a work environment in which people feel safe, seen, heard, and respected remains ever important. In this quick historical overview of teams/teaming in PWTC, I've tried to situate my three major claims regarding cross-functional and coalitional teams in the field's long and ongoing conversations about collaboration. In what follows, I'll analyze these three claims further in the context of my study, showing how my data and findings map onto what the field knows about teams, and extend these conversations around coalitional teams working on institutional change projects.

Claim One: Cross-Functional or Coalitional Teams Navigate Relationally Across Hierarchical Institutions

What Literature on Teams/Teaming Says

In the early 2000s, cross-functional teams (CFTs) proliferated, and the work of technical writers increasingly involved more teamwork and social interaction, James Conklin offered the field's first study that described technical writers' experiences on CFTs (2007). His study also demonstrated how work processes continually change and adapt to industry needs, so the formerly solitary text-based technical writer role was changing more to collaborative and participative ways of working. For the technical communicator this means "shifting their focus from documents to processes and relationships" (p. 227). More recently, Benjamin Lauren's (2018) work on Agile and the ways in which development teams function in decentralized workplaces argues for the necessity of effective communication within teams in order to invite and engage participation (p. 36). But effective communication for participation requires team psychological safety, which doesn't necessarily happen organically without processes and structures in place to support such collaboration. A major contribution from Lauren's work regarding participation and project management is that he centers people not projects or processes. Human connection and communication are more complicated than a series of procedural checklists and due dates, and so, Lauren makes the case for PWTC to see project managers as writers who must write and coordinate team communication to achieve efficiency based in relationships and *how* a specific team of people work together. In other words, CFTs or coalitional teams require psychological safety and an emphasis on the people who make up a particular team in order to be efficient and effective.

Additionally, interdisciplinary, or cross-functional teams are important to navigating laterally across hierarchical institutions, and how a team can navigate an institution (or not) is

critical to the work and change it can accomplish. From my study, I came to understand this approach as *navigating institutions relationally*, and I observed how this happens via what Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) call coalitions. Intersectional coalitions, for Walton, Moore, and Jones, are groups that pursue "shared, inclusive, and socially just action" (p.6). Coalitions complement Lauren's (2018) approach to participatory project management in that coalitional work happens through centering marginalized voices, facilitating participation, delineating team roles, and communicating. Coalitional collaboration is crucial to navigating institutions relationally and it requires and builds from team psychological safety and self-reflection on positionality. That is, from collaborating with SEEN, I learned that cross-functional or coalitional teams are necessary to engage in institutional change work. But in order for these teams to *do* institutional change work, there must be team psychological safety and reflection and awareness of Walton, Moore, and Jones' 3Ps: positionality, privilege, and power. And when CFTs or coalitional teams engaged in institutional change work are characterized by psychological safety and awareness of the 3Ps, these teams are equipped to navigate relationally across hierarchical institutions because they utilize, support, and respect team member's networks and distributed institutional knowledge.

This first claim on teams is big. It encompasses team structure and organization (cross functional or coalitional), the team dynamics needed for collaboration to happen (psychological safety, and the 3Ps), and how these first two features allow said team to navigate relationally across a hierarchically, siloed institution that doesn't make it easy for faculty-staff-student collaborations to happen. I'll further develop and situate these ideas in the following data and return to them throughout my second and third teams claims below.

What My Study's Interview Data Surfaces

In my interview data, P1 described SEEN's team composition as "coalitional" and P4 further illustrated this "coalition" in the opening story in which she talks about every SEEN team member's willingness to use "our positionality for good to be a support to someone else on the team, [or] to be an ally to a particular population" (Personal communication). A coalitional team in a university setting means faculty-staff-student collaboration which requires psychological safety between participants to contribute, to trust one another in the research process, and to listen to and incorporate feedback from each position without one trumping others, like P4 described can happen in the previous chapter with faculty dominating collaborations. In the opening story to this chapter, we see coalitional design at work when P4 explains that sometimes she would need a different SEEN member to initiate a conversation or send an email. Conversely, P4 was also aware of times when she needed to be the one to do so. This awareness stems from understanding one's own and each other's positionality, privilege, and power to know who the right voice in a situation is and who should lead a particular initiative or start a conversation based on where they are situated institutionally and who the audience is. And as Leslie Noel and Marcelo Palva (2021) explain in terms of design and cultivating diverse teams, understanding positionality helps teams determine how diverse or homogeneous they may be, and what internal work they need to do to see exclusionary practices and then work to promote inclusion (p. 67). It takes a great deal of self-awareness and psychological safety on a team to do what P4 explains in knowing when to ask a colleague to send the email and when to do so oneself. Importantly, this action needs to be reciprocal, like P4 further illustrates that SEEN's early staff-faculty partnership allowed her to get a "foot in the door" with upper administrators:

> P1 introduced me to many folks at the assistant Dean, [and] Dean level that I was able to talk about the service side, the human element to student success and academic barriers.

Then I was able to share real student experiences with folks, ask them to consider and think about what kinds of support they could offer to individuals. (Personal communication)

In this example, a key part of navigating the institution relationally happens via individual networks that allow different team participants access to stakeholders they otherwise wouldn't know. Coalitional teams need diverse participation to support and allow team members to navigate laterally via relationships across hierarchical institutions.

Another part of this chapter's opening story I want to draw attention to is the need for staff in coalitional teams inside higher education. Even though faculty and PhDs, especially at a research university, remain the "coin of the realm," and their expertise is immediately acknowledged and at times perhaps over-praised like the opening story illustrates, staff members also have and sustain networks crucial to forming coalitional teams. As P4 put it, "We [SEEN] need service people. We need folks who are doing the day-to-day work outside of the academic structures" (Personal communication). Staff members often remain at a university longer than faculty do and so they have incredibly important institutional knowledge and memory that can help inform both graduate students who are in a more temporary research position, and faculty who may be newer to an institution. In addition to relational networks, staff members' knowledge of institutional processes and procedures, former and current administrators, and previous initiatives that worked, failed, or were abandoned at the institution are also vitally informative to current institutional projects. Institutional structures are not set up in such a way to encourage staff and faculty collaboration, especially not on research initiatives like chapter four's data findings illustrated. But this coalitional team structure is what allows for staff and faculty working together to navigate more laterally across hierarchical institutional structures because they can work relationally across divisions or departments via each other's networks.

Coalitional teams require acknowledging staff expertise and relationship building around research areas in institutional change projects, something quite different from faculty franchise building[5].

What My Study's Writing Artifacts Illustrate

The following two writing artifacts are both email correspondence, one of two repeated genres in my data collection. The first artifact more fully illustrates how staff-faculty relationships allow for strategic, relational navigation of institutional structures by collaborating via team member's networks. And the second artifact illustrates how SEEN team member roles shifted during the course of our research and individual's career changes. This role flexibility allowed for team members to contribute different kinds of expertise to SEEN at different moments of the project. The other thing to pay attention to in these artifacts is communicative work of emails, and how they maintain team reporting and cohesion, and move research forward.

Artifact 1: Role Flexibility in Coalitional Teams

An interesting feature of SEEN's coalitional team structure was that multiple SEEN team members left MSU for other jobs during the course of our work but chose to stay involved with SEEN from a distance. There was also flexibility in how people's positions on the team shifted when they left the university. For example, P2 took on more of a consultant role for the team as evidenced in the email exchange with another SEEN team member he shared with me. In this exchange P2 is describing how to sustain relationships after SEEN got the attention of campus upper-administrators and these executives assigned their deputies to attend SEEN meetings. In

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[5] Faculty franchise building references P1's discussion from chapter four that MSU faculty are encouraged to build a research franchise and "brand" that they will be known both institutionally and in their discipline. Franchise building makes staff-faculty-student institutional collaborations difficult if the goal for faculty is ultimately to support their personal brand and makes it likely that faculty will dominate collaborations with their research agenda, like P4 and P1 both describe.

the email P2 shares that there are relational patterns to pay attention to the first key indicator being "if/when this next group of parents [deputy admin names redacted] suggest or ask for a clear set of talking points or a slide deck to take to their constituents. Once the new partners begin to speak this project in their own words, then the exponential work begins" (Writing Artifact 2). P2 then suggests that the sustaining relational move after this "signal" is for SEEN to have a data structure to receive and manage interest in the work, and then needs to communicate monthly updates to stakeholders, as P2 put it: "People know things take time and they'll be patient when they are included in the timeline…they'll give you once chance, but not two" (WA2). The significance of this artifact is both how SEEN members' roles shifted depending on their position within or outside MSU, and the strategic writing taking place to help the team plan for prototyping and, importantly, sustaining institutional relationships through intentional communicative acts. Without team members positioned in different spaces and able to occupy different roles, from P2 originally as an institutional researcher at MSU to then being an outside change consultant, SEEN wouldn't have been able to be as strategic in how it navigated and cultivated relationships.

Artifact 2: Team Members' Networks

In this example, P4 is reporting to the entire SEEN team on a meeting three team members attended to address the lack of representation of LGBTQIA+ student experiences in the draft focus group report. The report was shared with staff members during the working group described in the next writing artifact. In the email P4 shares a summary of the meeting and next steps for facilitating a specific focus group for this population with four key planning factors: 1) need to have a facilitator from the community in order to "speed up the trust building relationship needed for these students to answer openly"; 2) need to have a trauma-informed

facilitator "especially around language use (i.e. saying 'you guys,' 'ladies,' 'son/daughter,' 'mom/dad vs parent or family')"; 3) need to invite specific students because it is "the only way we will get strong representation beyond cis-white women or men"; and, 4) the importance of compensating students for their time and expertise because "they are asked to participate in so many conversations and groups" (WA 4.1). I quote these recommendations at length here because they are important practices for participatory research, especially with marginalized groups, and because this initial relationship building happened via P4's relationship with this other staff member that then allowed for the rest of the SEEN team to join these meetings and further develop this collaboration. The other necessary next step P4 shared was "the importance of following-up and letting students know how we plan to use the information and steps. [Student name redacted] and I talked about providing information as to where we are in the process and staying in contact with participants through updates as we move the work forward" (WA 4.1). Similarly to P2's explanation of sustaining relationships in the previous example, this intentional communication is important for research participants and stakeholders at every level. SEEN was able to build different relationships because of its team member's networks, and then sustained those relationships with written follow-ups that worked across/beyond institutional hierarchies.

In working across the literature and my data, what surfaces in CFTs and coalitional teams is a difference between "representation" of diverse team member positions and integrating diverse expertise in collaboratively creating solutions. In other words, a diverse team does not mean everyone is able to participate equally and contribute expertise. This valuing of distributed expertise is different from having "representation" on a team. I'll take up the nuances of this difference in the following section.

Claim Two: Coalitional Teams Need to Acknowledge and Integrate Every Team Member's Expertise

What Literature on Teams/Teaming Says

To design coalitional teams, Katzenbach and Smith's (1994) provide a useful definition: "A team is a small number of people with complementary skills, who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" (p. 112). The authors go on to offer six features of successful teams, but I want to highlight one feature in particular: "high performance teams develop the right mix of expertise" (p. 115). Katzenbach and Smith are writing for industry so it may seem more obvious that work teams would need and integrate every participant's expertise, but in higher education, often teams require representation from diverse participants but may not integrate all feedback equally. Amy Edmondson's research on team psychological safety (1999), a shared understanding "held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking," is also a necessary part of inviting and incorporating every participant's expertise (p. 350). Behaviors that represent team psychological safety include admitting errors, asking questions, and asking for help, and discussing problems, which become more possible when the feeling of interpersonal risk is low. Edmondson's research is also important for team learning and feeling psychological safety in one's team helps to improve team outcomes by making collaboration more effective in supporting substantive conflict (Burnett, 1991) to improve ideation, something I'll discuss further in claim three.

What My Study's Interview Data Surfaces

Higher ed institutional initiatives often work by inviting people from different positions to work on teams together and often these teams have different representation requirements (e.g. two undergraduate students, two faculty members, a librarian, two graduate students, etc.). But

there's a difference between including differently positioned people at the table and treating all participants as contributing knowledge or leading certain parts of the initiative. For example, P3 described multiple initiatives in which she felt like "just" a student and that her feedback wouldn't be taken as seriously as others' contributions (Personal communication). Role delineation and intentional team design (e.g., inviting participants with complementary and contrasting expertise) are important ways to integrate diverse expertise.

While it's well known that diversity across many attributes is an important feature of effective teams (Page, 2007), a key difference in SEEN's team makeup was that every team member was recognized as having unique expertise and acknowledged for their contributions. For example, the opening story illustrates this approach when P4 acknowledges that she couldn't do the work that the undergraduate student designer on the team was doing or the work that I was doing as a graduate student trained in writing studies. She explains that students on the SEEN team had what felt like "real" roles, not just 'hey we've got some students on the team" (Personal communication). I want to point out two things here that I think allow for what P4 names: student team participants having tasks delegated to them and being paid for their work, and this also requires other team members, like P4, believing they have something to learn from student colleagues, which unfortunately is not always the case. So part of what's nuanced about SEEN valuing diverse expertise came from the intentional design of the team and the people who were asked to participate, but also required a learning orientation that team members felt and cultivated toward every colleague on the team. Similarly, P4 mentions in the opening story that students on SEEN also led different parts of the initiative, presenting at conferences, writing proceedings papers on the project, and presenting to industry groups on the trauma-informed

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design heuristic. This distributed approach to leadership helps everyone feel responsible for different parts of the project, and able to benefit individually from the professional experience.

Part of acknowledging expertise is crediting team members' intellectual contributions, celebrating each other's efforts, and encouraging and allowing for every team member to lead different parts of initiative. P3 contrasted her experience working with other teams to show how SEEN's collaboration felt different. For example, she told a story about working on other college initiatives and feeling like her perspective as "just" a student was not considered as valuable as "actual employees of the university" (Personal communication). She shared, "There's been instances where there's talks of changing a department name and then they're asking for my input and what I think as a student and then when I do give it, it just feels like another piece of feedback but not that they're going to take it as seriously" (P3). In explaining what was different in her experience with SEEN, she continued: "I feel like my voice is more heard. I'm acknowledged for my work, and that makes me feel better about giving feedback and thinking that my feedback does have some kind of impact…They'll be like, 'Oh this was done because of [name redacted],' or "with the help of [name redacted],' that helps me feel like I'm in [the team] (P3). Giving credit and acknowledging contributions might seem simple but they were important features both for trust building within the team and for helping every team member have buy-in and ownership of work. Similarly, P1 described participatory research this way: "I bring people in before something is fully realized to help...to ask them if they'll help me fully realize it. Never bring a finished [idea]... instead, 'here's what my solution is, but it's just an early solution. I would really need your help to shape that solution more.' Because once they help me finish it, it belongs to them too, and they fight for it. And that is the move; you invite people to participate" (Personal communication). There's a key feature in this description of participatory research in

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that he's including participants at the beginning stages of research design as opposed to forming the research design and then bringing that to participants. Co-participation from the beginning is connected to acknowledging team members' contributions so that everyone feels responsible for the research.

What My Study's Writing Artifacts Illustrate

The following two writing artifacts are both visual mock-ups shared with stakeholders to pitch SEEN's solutions to issues of essential needs on campus. The first artifact more fully illustrates student expertise on SEEN's team in ideating, designing, and revising trauma-informed prototypes for the resource portal. And the second artifact illustrates staff and faculty expertise on SEEN's team in developing and pitching SEEN's case manager prototype for better supporting students with essential needs issues. This journey map leveraged faculty research expertise that drew on SEEN's student focus group findings to bring student stories to administrators. The participant descriptions of these artifacts also help to illustrate the role of collaborative writing in producing these solutions.

Artifact 1: Student Expertise in SEEN

The team's lead designers developing the portal for campus essential needs resources were both undergraduate students studying user-centered design. One of these students graduated, so eventually the revising and prototyping for the website was done by one undergraduate student who was paid for her time and expertise. In our interview, she shared two different versions of the portal prototypes as writing artifacts and discussed the revision process that took place after getting feedback from campus stakeholders and presenting our prototype to a Trauma-Informed Design Group made up of industry professionals and academics interested in trauma-informed design. In discussing the revision process, P3 described the importance of

getting feedback on language from the research team and other stakeholders, particularly in terms of whether the language on the website prototype invited interaction with users of the site (P3 Interview). This was an important example of drawing from different expertise on the team to contribute to designing the portal. In describing the revision process, P3 shared that iterative design processes also "goes hand-in-hand with what we talked about with trauma-informed design and learning. We're always constantly learning, and then we have to apply what we learn" (P3 personal communication). P3 also shared that part of her design revision process was making the portal prototype easier for a developer to design based on a web pixel grid type of layout and revised MSU branding and colors. This is design knowledge that the academics on SEEN's team didn't share and P3 was able to contribute to the team. Importantly, in addition to P3 gaining meaningful experience working with SEEN, it was also crucial that the team was able to pay her for her time and expertise. It's not enough for students to gain "experience," they also need to be monetarily compensated when working on research teams.

Below I've included four screen captures to demonstrate different iterations of the portal design, and how the different versions were redesigned to better invite interaction with users like P3 describes. In between each iteration, the student designers and I sought feedback from campus stakeholders positioned across the institution (e.g., one stakeholder was the assistant director of accessibility in the college; another stakeholder was a professor of technical writing and visual design; and another stakeholder was an associate provost who had partly funded SEEN's early research). I took notes during these meetings and the undergraduate student designers and I would then meet to discuss how to integrate and iterate the next prototype based on feedback. We also sought feedback from the SEEN team specifically evaluating the portal

design using a trauma-informed heuristic we developed into an assessment tool to guide their
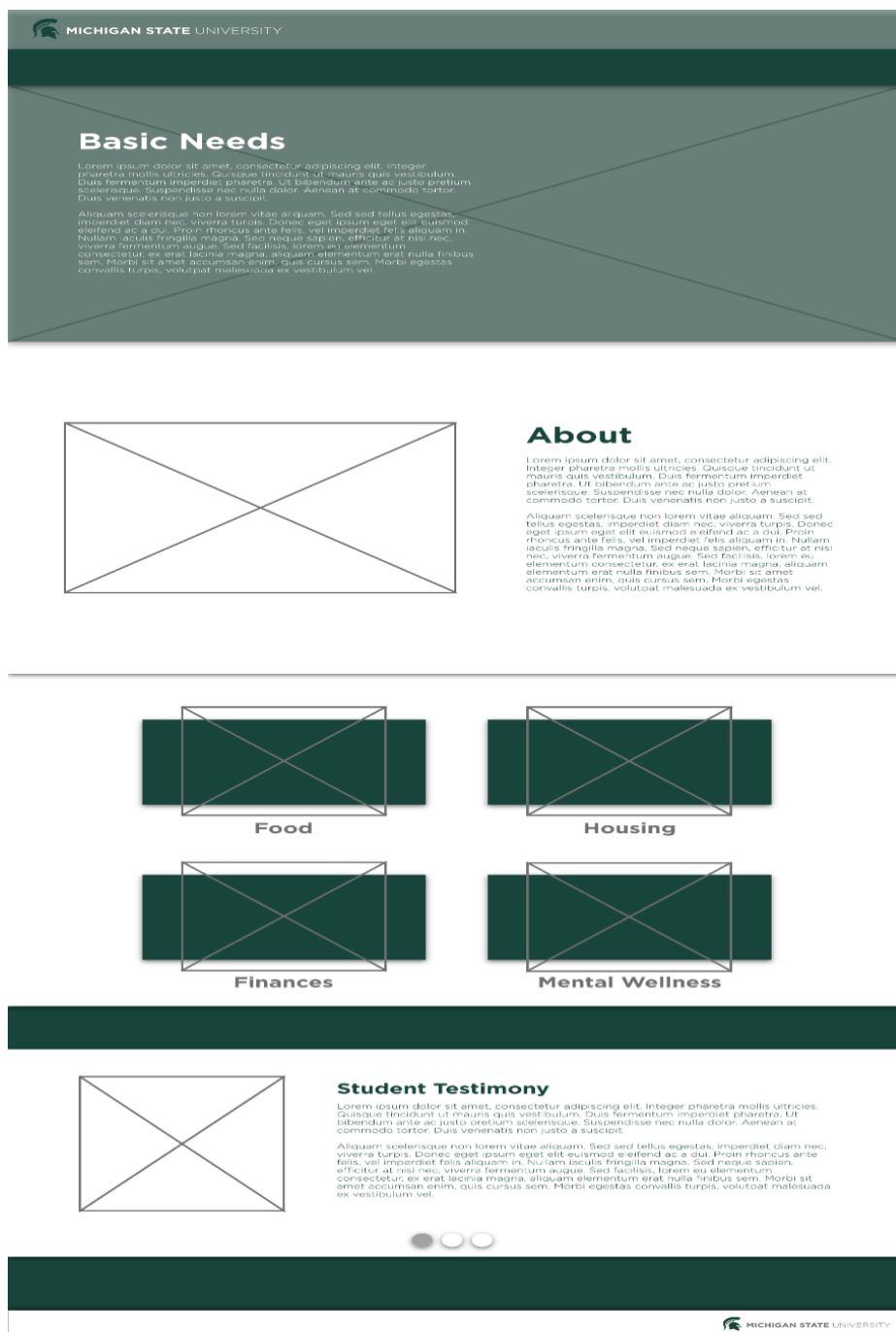
feedback.

Figure 2: The first portal landing page prototype. Here, SEEN was still using the language of 'basic' needs as opposed to essential. Resources were limited to food, housing, finances, and mental health, and student testimonies were prototyped as a sliding menu requiring a mouse to click and display.
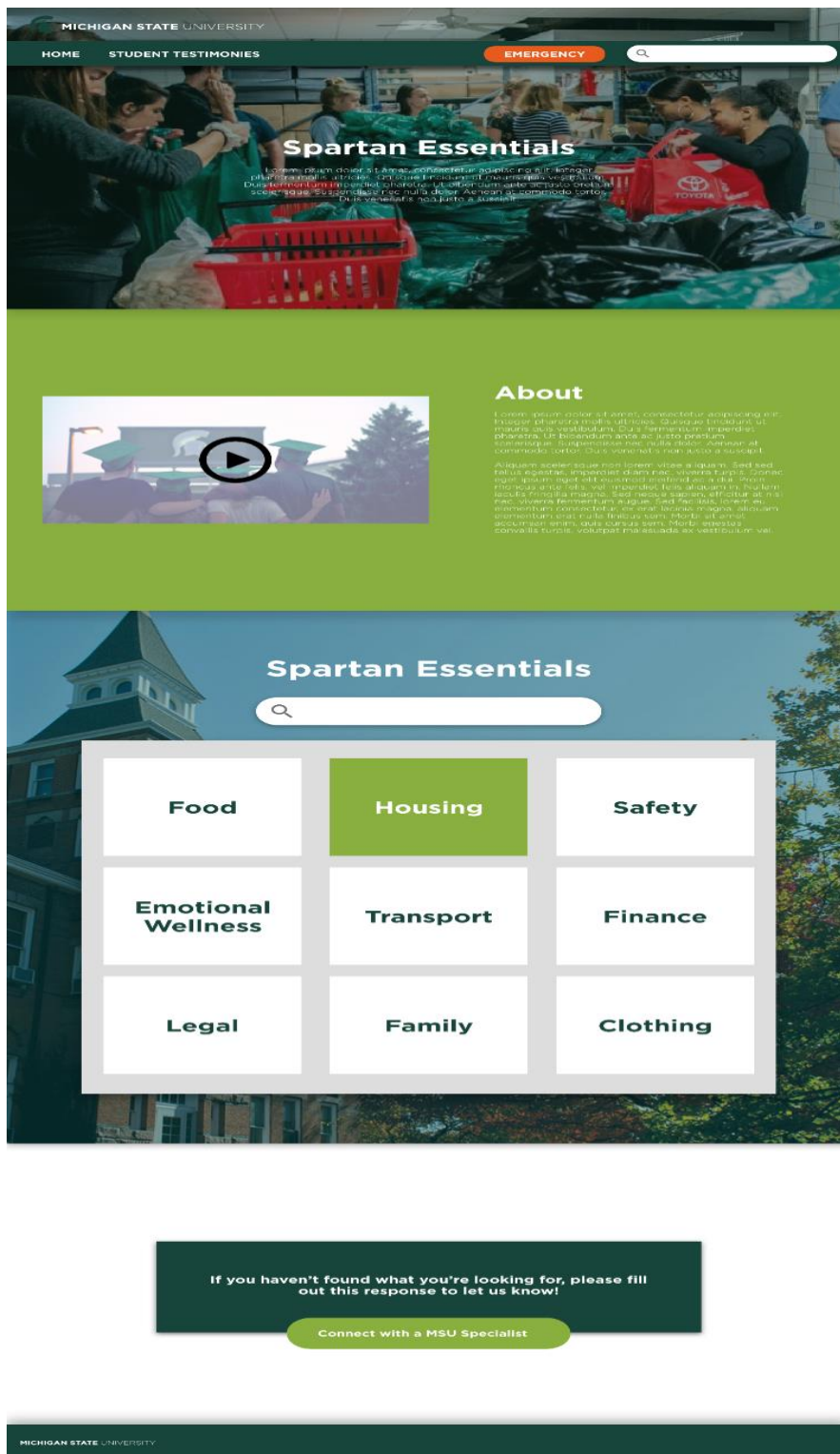
Figure 3: This prototype used the language of 'essential,' expanded resources included, worked with MSU primary and secondary brand colors, included a request form if the user was looking for something they couldn't find, and included an emergency button in the top-bar menu.
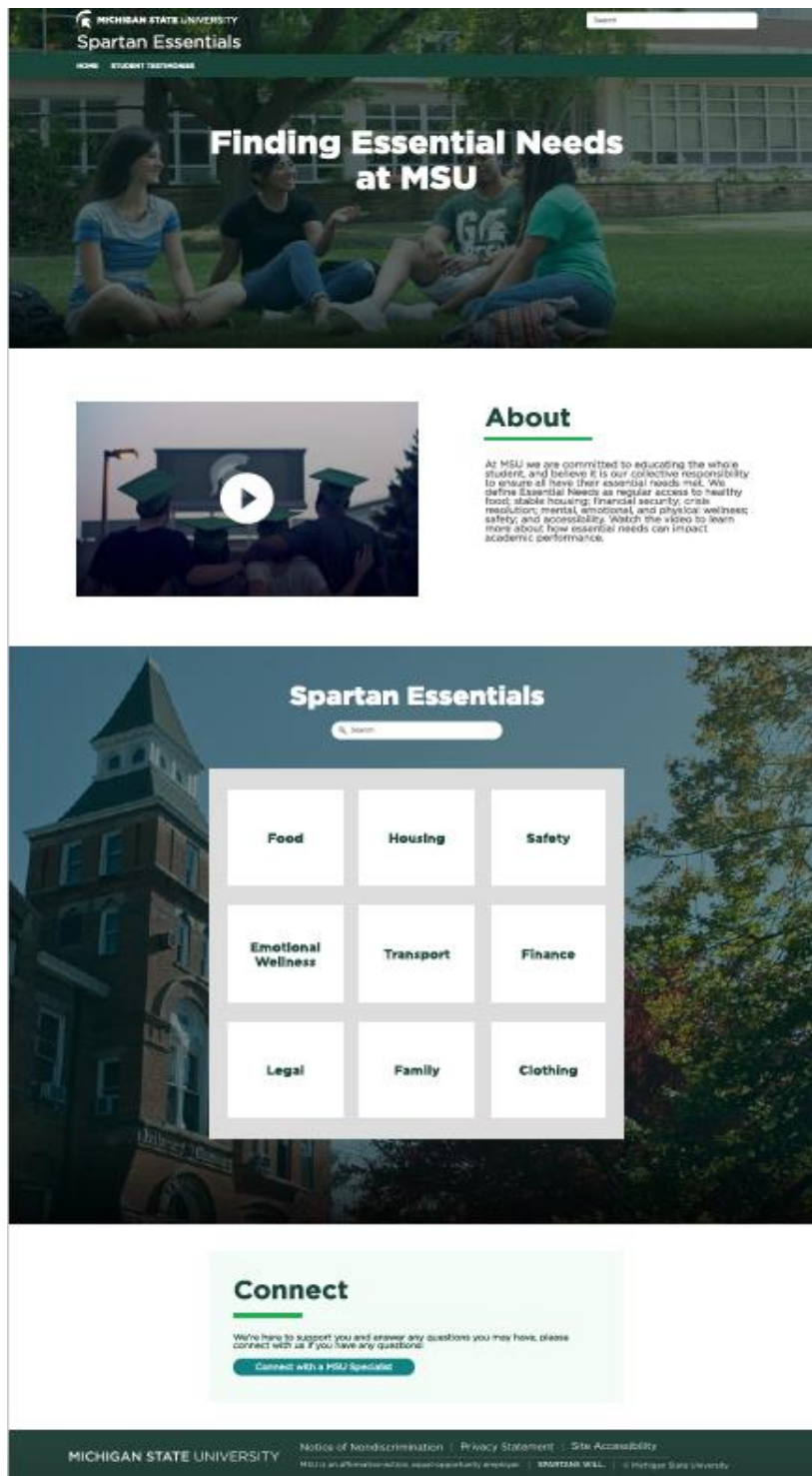
Figure 4: The final portal prototype shows three significant changes: 1) the title was revised to better invite user interaction; 2) color design was changed for accessibility concerns regarding contrast; and 3) the emergency button was removed because of concerns about users and comfortability with the police and who an emergency would be reported to.
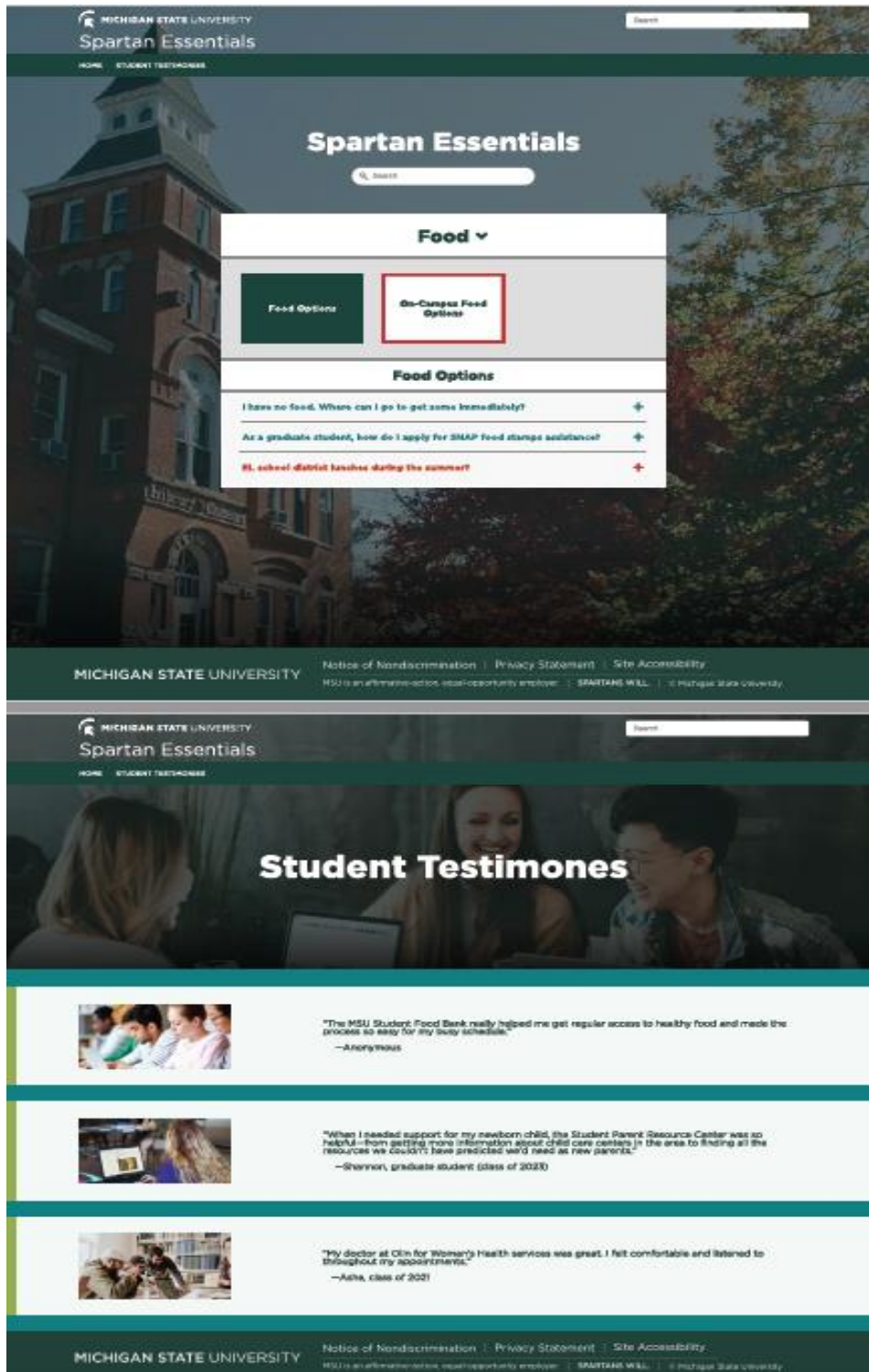
Figure 5: This image continues the single-scroll site of the final portal prototype on the previous page. This screen capture shows expanded resources if a user selected "Food" under the resource menu. The student testimonials here are displayed on the homepage and don't require additional clicks to access.

Artifact 2: Faculty and Staff Expertise in SEEN

Culminating documents, like the PowerPoint pitch P1 delivered to upper administration, is another example of how SEEN brought together and valued every team member's feedback and expertise over an extended period. This PowerPoint was a culmination of the staff interviews and student focus groups and in it, P1 shared student personas based on stories shared with our team to illustrate for upper admins what students go through trying to navigate and access resources on campus. P1 is trained in user experience research methods and so he was able to draw on his background as a researcher and storyteller to draft and present the student personas. Additionally, SEEN team members all participated in giving feedback to the pitch and the solutions it forwarded, including the SEEN research portal shown in the previous example, and the case-worker model that would eventually become The Trust Network, importantly influenced by the expertise of the team's social workers. The pitch started with a posed problem: "A problem: How does MSU make students feel seen?" and then shared two connected stories to illustrate: "A student struggling to manage a chronic condition and the impact of unmanaged chronic conditions on others" (WA P1.2). Then a student persona further illustrated along with the example journey map below and walked listeners through a real student experience in an MSU classroom in which a student made violent remarks, other students in the class filed a report with the Behavioral Threat Assessment Team (BTAT) on campus, only to have nothing happen until campus closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Behavioral Health Journey Map

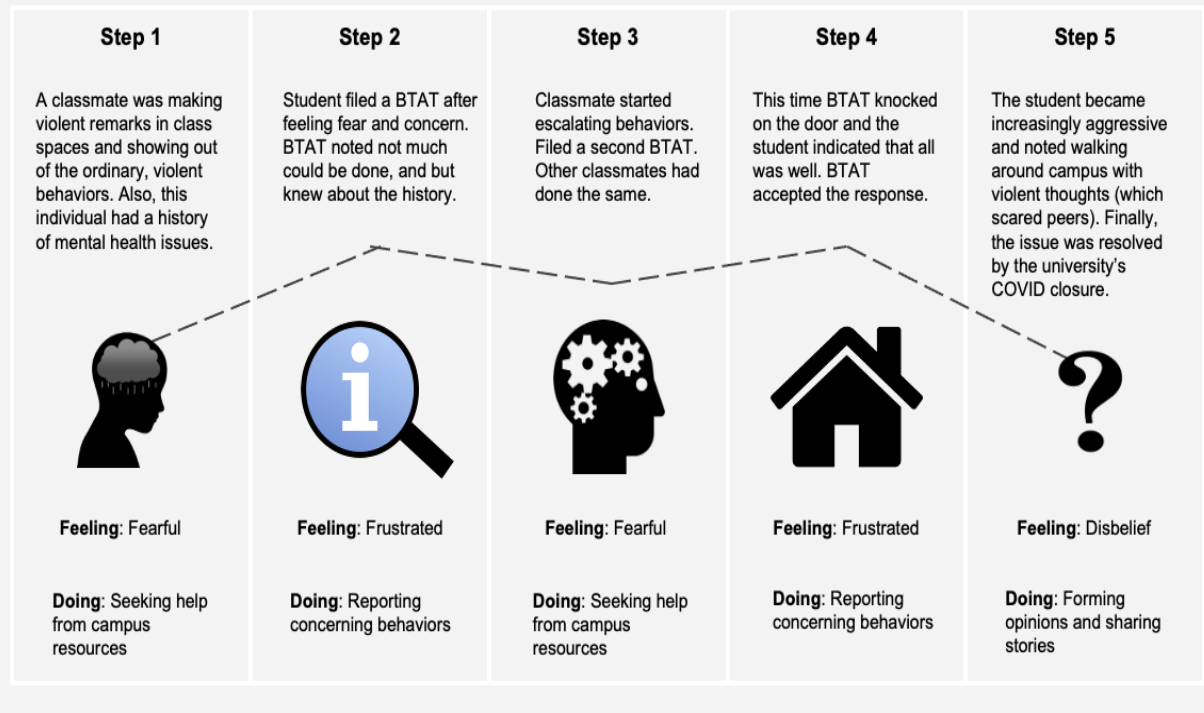| Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
A classmate was making violent remarks in class spaces and showing out of the ordinary, violent behaviors. Also, this individual had a history of mental health issues.	Student filed a BTAT after feeling fear and concern. BTAT noted not much could be done, and but knew about the history.	Classmate started escalating behaviors. Filed a second BTAT. Other classmates had done the same.	This time BTAT knocked on the door and the student indicated that all was well. BTAT accepted the response.	The student became increasingly aggressive and noted walking around campus with violent thoughts (which scared peers). Finally, the issue was resolved by the university's COVID closure.
Feeling: Fearful	**Feeling:** Frustrated	**Feeling:** Fearful	**Feeling:** Frustrated	**Feeling:** Disbelief
Doing: Seeking help from campus resources	**Doing:** Reporting concerning behaviors	**Doing:** Seeking help from campus resources	**Doing:** Reporting concerning behaviors	**Doing:** Forming opinions and sharing stories

Figure 6: Student behavioral health journey map shows the details of the case, the feelings expressed, and the actions taken that failed result in a satisfactory outcome for the frightened students.

The way the student examples are delivered in this pitch leveraged P1's expertise and incorporated the team's feedback and various expertise in designing the proposed solutions. The case-worker design was described as increasing the Spartan Experience and being able to intervene and offer help early when issues arise for students thereby also increasing student retention. The solutions were also designed from a trauma-informed approach between the portal design and the personal help offered by case workers. Additionally, this design would leverage technology by being "High Tech/Hi Touch/Hi Impact…and meeting students where they are and how they communicate" arguing that MSU will only increase its high-tech usage for students and interacting with students (WA P1.2). This pitch along with the previous example of the portal

prototype illustrate the ways SEEN drew on its varied participants' expertise to create trauma-informed solutions that were designed with and for students. And the collaborative writing of these documents is in part what helped to make them so effective.

Diverse team members are important to effective teams, which necessitates being able to learn from and integrate every team member's expertise. And yet, working with other people, especially across differences of position, rank, and perspective can be hard, and fraught. The final claim that surfaced in my attempts to wrestle with the difficulties posed by collaborations is that differences of perspective and dissensus can be constructive features of teams. In other words, this requires getting more comfortable with disagreement.

Claim Three: Different Perspectives and Even Dissensus are Constructive Features of Diverse, Coalitional Teams

What Literature on Teams/Teaming Says

The proliferation of documentation and teams in workplaces also necessitated better understanding of conflict in collaboration. As early as 1991, Rebecca Burnett was studying what she named "substantive conflict" as an essential part of collaborative writing, especially for rhetorically complex documents. She defines substantive conflict as "considering alternatives and voicing explicit disagreements about both content and rhetorical elements" (p. 534). In order to ensure that conflict is productive, Burnett suggests only voicing alternatives that are serious, relevant to the present task, and supported with reasoning and evidence (Burnett 1993). Such conflict is useful in deferring consensus to consider more alternatives, improve group decision making, and to more critically determine what consensus should eventually be reached. For substantive conflict to be possible and effective in workplaces, teams also need what Amy Edmondson has called "psychological safety" in order to disagree, take risks, and pose alternatives with one another without fearing that one's reputation or credibility will be harmed.

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This is of course even more difficult in workplaces that privilege knowing as opposed to learning. Edmondson's work on team psychological safety (1999) and Edwin Hutchins (1995) oft-cited description of distributed cognition centers the importance of collaborative thinking and problem solving that could not happen in the same way—or at all—if individuals were thinking and working alone. This work makes the case for knowledge often being communally constructed and so dependent on communication, and in the early 2000s, Dorothy Winsor (2003) extends this idea by asking how texts and knowledge interact with each other and with power. Winsor studies how texts act as mediating tools between power and knowledge in a for-profit corporation to better understand how power functions, and to be a more thoughtful practitioner and participant (p. 20). Along with power, positionality and privilege are also important to consider in terms of dissensus, and who is positioned and protected enough to take the risk of voicing disagreement, and who will be heard and acknowledged if/when they dissent. How might identity be connected to *how* someone is heard? (E.g., women being considered aggressive in the workplace when they assert ideas.) And how do leaders invite, facilitate, and respond to critical feedback and disagreement? Feeling comfortable to voice disagreement is deeply connected to psychological safety that allows for substantive conflict, but participants on teams also need to be aware of and reflective about their own positionality, privilege, and power, like claim one discussed above, in order to voice and invite dissensus from colleagues. Similar to claim one's discussion on psychological safety, substantive conflict and voicing dissensus don't necessarily happen organically on teams but require intentional practice and self-reflection on the part of collaborators.

What My Study's Interview Data Surfaces

Another important aspect of diverse teams being effective is that difference of perspective and even dissensus, disagreement, or delaying agreement on a team can be constructive features. Too often rushing to agreement can silence voices and different perspectives that can help create better solutions that include and serve more participants in the long run. At predominantly white institutions, white supremacy culture[6] values agreement and politeness, and disagreement can seem aggressive and there is often an institutional tendency to blame the person who voices said issue rather than addressing the issue (Okun, 2021, p. 25). Given that many people are not immediately or inherently comfortable with disagreement, it's important for the institution, department, or team to model and discuss what disagreement means and to be open about what disagreement feels like and how it's being experienced in feedback processes. In other words, it requires practice and emotional intelligence to stay with the discomfort that dissensus can cause, and to collaboratively work through it. Also of note, agreement is not always the end goal. That is, dissensus can be an important stop on the way to consensus, but not always. It's important not to maintain that agreement is the end all, be all goal. Instead, sometimes disagreement is sustained and fosters ongoing collaboration.

For the first two claims, I've been drawing on the touchstone story that opens this chapter, but what's also underneath this story and not so obvious is the role of dissensus on the team that I'll use two different stories from my data to now surface. In contrast to the previous section's definition of a team being a group that shares a common goal or objective, interestingly, SEEN

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[6] White supremacy culture was originally defined in a 1999 article by Tema Okun and updated in 2021. She explains that "white supremacy refers to the ways in which the ruling class elite or the power elite in the colonies of what was to become the United States used the pseudo-scientific concept of race to create whiteness and a hierarchy of racialized value to define who is fully human and who is not" (p. 2). In the workplace, white supremacy shows up as perfectionism, sense of urgency, discomfort with conflict, individualism, and worship of the written word, to name just a few characteristics. I return to Okun's work in chapter seven on implications and recommendations.

members had different perspectives on how much the group should agree on the same goal. P2 brought up the point that he didn't think SEEN's collaboration was leading to cohesion in our work together, and that when a team is working on a new-to-the-institution initiative, it was necessary that everyone talk about the initiative the same way. For example, P2 shared: "I feel like there's a lot of ideas, and they're good ideas and they're being shared and we're being transparent and getting feedback, and at the same time, we're still operating in adjacent columns, but they're not quite touching or merging into a cohesive something. And the signal I get on that is that I still hear people talk about the project in different ways in our own meetings, and so I'm not getting the sense that collaboration has had an effect of cohesion" (Personal communication). For P2 this was a problem that hindered the efficacy of SEEN and a problem he thought we could potentially solve through collaborative writing and goal setting together. However, in a follow-up conversation with SEEN's project manager, when I talked about the possibility of hosting collaborative writing sessions to work toward greater cohesion, P1 posed the question: "do team members all need to agree on the same goal in order to do good work together?" This difference of perspective was partly a difference in leadership style, and also, I think importantly a difference in these two participants' comfort with dissensus being an issue to solve or a feature of a diverse team working differently together on a goal.

The second story that surfaces team dissensus had to do with feedback received from staff on SEEN's focus group findings. After conducting fifteen student focus groups with a total of 40 graduate students (MA, PhD, and MD) and 29 undergraduate students (including first year through seniors) involved, with 36 unique majors represented, SEEN drafted a report to share with MSU administrators and staff about student experiences with essential needs issues on campus. At a staff focus group where the report was shared, the director of a gender and

sexuality resource center on campus offered feedback that queer students were not represented. P4 recounted: "We as a group had heard in our staff work groups, and [name redacted] was in one of the work groups and was very vocal about, 'Where's the LGBT representation? They have different needs, you know?" (Personal communication). So instead of moving forward with the report, SEEN paused research production, and explored what it would mean to slow down and include a specific focus group for this student population. But not all SEEN participants believed we needed to do a specific focus group for this student population, as I'll discuss further in the second writing artifact below.

While SEEN wasn't in agreement about the need for this focus group, we also didn't need to agree on it for everyone to ultimately support slowing down our timeline to do it. And P4 shared further: "My perception or belief of whether or not that needed to happen is really unimportant, what's important is that for them [the director of the center] to be willing to share access to what they know are very vulnerable students they really needed to believe that we were a group of our word, we were going to follow through" (Personal communication). Here, it's evident that P4 approaches research and relationships with a willingness to listen and believe feedback. When she says that her perception of whether the LGBTQIA+ focus group needed to happen was really not important what is important is that she listened to feedback from someone who said it was important for the population they are a part of, and then she facilitated the conversation for the focus group because it wasn't up to the team to determine if it was "true" or necessary. P4 trusted the feedback she received and in turn created trust in that relationship for future collaboration. In this way, being "right," or in some cases one's opinion about a topic, isn't as important as being willing to listen to feedback and make changes that includes more people

and supports representation of marginalized groups. I'll work with this example further in the second writing artifact below.

What My Study's Writing Artifacts Illustrate

The following two writing artifacts illustrate how different perspectives help better research findings and outcomes. It's difficult to "see" dissensus in finished documents, but SEEN ultimately got to more effective, inclusive research because we didn't initially agree. Instead, we poked holes in ideas together, and we listened to each other through disagreements. The dissensus itself isn't necessarily illustrated in these artifacts because disagreements eventually were worked out. But artifact one allowed the team to have a conversation that helped us learn whose voices and perspectives were missing from the conversation we'd been having about student essential needs issues, and this conversation allowed for future collaborators to be included in the moving forward. And artifact two exists because institutional norms required the document be no longer than three pages, resulting in dissensus about what to include. In both examples, importantly, dissensus led to more inclusive, representative research and required that the team be open to and willing to act on feedback.

Artifact 1: Excluded Perspectives as an Important Feature of Coalitional Teams

The importance of different perspectives as a key feature of diverse teams might seem obvious but cultivating or seeking out different perspectives takes patience and relationship building. P4's second writing artifact is a conference abstract for a session from MSU's 2019 Conference on Teaching, Learning, and Student Success. Two significant things happened during the conversation this session allowed for: the team introduced the language of educating the "whole" student, which P4 explains as: "what we mean by that is students are everything they brought with them to MSU, and whatever's picked up along the way. So, we've admitted them,

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[and] it's our obligation to support their success. All the things. And that looks different for each student" (Personal communication). The second significant outcome from this conversation is that it allowed the team to see who was missing from our early conversations on student essential needs issues. P4 recounted, "I remember in that particular session there was someone from admissions who talked about reading admissions' applications and seeing from the beginning students were writing about their experience of being homeless… and that for us really sparked the conversation of 'who's missing?' So of course admissions, of course financial aid. These are folks who are getting information that the university isn't doing anything with at the entry point of a student at MSU" (Personal communication). It's one thing to cultivate different perspectives within a team, and it's also crucial to make opportunities to broaden that conversation beyond the team to continue learning what a team doesn't yet know and who they haven't yet talked to or included. In this example, the conference session submission allowed for a conversation the team didn't previously know we needed to have, and then how the team responded to these different perspectives moved the effects of this conversation forward.

Artifact 2: Dissensus as an Important Feature of Drafting

Team dissensus is a difficult thing to observe in a finished document like the focus group findings report. But the drafting, or document cycling, of this report helps in surfacing how dissensus in feedback worked effectively to surface themes in the findings. The constraints on this document were extensive: the team had to take data from twenty 90-minute staff interviews, and data from 15 focus groups with a total of 40 graduate students and 29 undergraduate students and whittle all this data down to what would fit in three pages of text to share with upper administrators. Eventually, after many rounds of feedback and discussion, the team surfaced six themes from the staff interviews, and five themes from the student focus groups. Here, dissensus

in feedback helped to distill this data down to broadly representative themes in the findings, showing the importance of having differently positioned team members across the institution to try to gain a fuller picture of what was happening with resources on campus and the kinds of student need in a decentralized system. Dissensus, in this case, was important given how the institution is structured and siloed because it ultimately helped create a more representative findings report. However, as I've discussed above and as many participants have mentioned, this report ended up inviting more dissensus following the staff working group when we received feedback that it didn't represent LGBTQ student experiences. In response, P5 explained that in trying to winnow research findings into just a few pages for upper administration to read, findings were cut:

> I happen to kind of disagree with them. I think it's a fallout from the kind of writing that P6 and I had to do to give to the Big Boys, you had to keep cutting things out, and cutting things out in order to get it to just a few pages, and so things like impact of essential needs and securities on LGBT that was in our data, but it starts to fall away because you're getting to themes that are mentioned more and more. And also the undocumented student piece is something that was in, certainly, was in my interviews but...you know it just infuriates me that these four guys can't read five pages. I mean, really? (Personal communication)

Team dissensus around the report themes helped in the drafting process of the report, and given how SEEN values participatory research, the drafting process didn't end with the team. Rather, we sought feedback on the report from staff who could further validate, and/or complicate our findings. So when the report was shared with staff in the working group described in the previous section, the report brought in more dissensus. This iterative process of inviting feedback from the team and from other campus stakeholders ultimately supported better, more representative research but it also required a willingness to listen, especially across disagreement, to slow down our research timeline and include more perspectives.

Conclusion: A Key Tension of Collaboration: The Need for Trust and Vulnerability

The three teams claims—cross-functional or coalitional teams navigate relationally across hierarchical institutions, coalitional teams need to acknowledge and integrate every team member's expertise, and different perspectives and even dissensus are constructive features of diverse, coalitional teams—show up throughout PWTC's scholarship on teams, and they emerged over and over in both my interview data and writing artifacts. The key tension that I saw within each claim was that change is constant, in workplaces, with technology, and in terms of how and why people collaborate. It's interesting to see just how early PWTC was researching cross-functional teams, seeing a need for better understanding how these teams work more nimbly within clunkier, slow-moving bureaucracies. And more recently, cross-functional teams have proliferated in workplaces as many wicked problems, design issues, and projects necessitate different specialists working together as opposed to a single expert working in isolation—if this was ever actually the case. And better understanding how teams can be successful and personally rewarding for participants offers one way to counteract issues of siloing and a lack of lateral communication endemic in many institutions; an issue I discussed at length in chapter four as a major problem facing many organizations. Understanding how to manage, assess, and participate in change initiatives is something I will take up as the focus of chapter six. But before then, the role of change in how, where, and with whom we work also surfaced the necessity of trust and vulnerability to accomplish any of these three teams' claims. That is, without interpersonal trust and the feeling that it is possible (and supported) to engage vulnerably, it's not possible to work cross-functionally, to navigate relationally across institutions, or to value diverse expertise.

In my data, the need to build trust and support and encourage vulnerability underscored every story from my participants about how teams successfully collaborated, and how team

members were able to navigate relationally via their own and colleagues' institutional networks.

Trust is also a touchstone of psychological safety, and it's a foundational element of being aware

of one's own positionality, power, and privilege as well as one's colleagues' unique positions. An

important voice in conversations on vulnerability interpersonally and at the workplace, and the

need for cultivating emotional intelligence, is Brené Brown, a social worker and shame

researcher. Brown's work is largely responsible for bringing vulnerability into the popular

imagination with her bestselling books on courage, vulnerability, and shame (*Daring Greatly*,

2012; *Rising Strong*, 2015; *Braving the Wilderness*, 2017) and her book *Dare to Lead* (2018)

brings this research specifically into leadership studies and cultural issues in workplaces. Brown

defines vulnerability as "the emotion that shows up during times of uncertainty, risk, and

emotional exposure" (p. 19), explaining that "our ability to be daring leaders will never be

greater than our capacity for vulnerability" (p. 11). This work on leadership can also be extended

to how team members collaborate and the extent to which they can develop psychological safety

and cultivate substantive conflict that requires both structural and interpersonal trust. As Brown

puts it, "Adaptability to change, hard conversations, feedback, problem solving, ethical decision

making, recognition, resilience, and all of the other skills that underpin daring leadership are

born of vulnerability" (p. 43). The necessity of vulnerability certainly doesn't make it easier to

practice, but it does make working to build trust and "reciprocal vulnerability" even more

important for team efficacy and interpersonal safety in collaboration.

Issues of psychological safety, positionality and power in conflict, and incorporating

every team member's expertise orbit around issues of trust and vulnerability. To cultivate

workplace vulnerability, Brown explains that "we should always be clear about our intentions,

understand the limits of vulnerability in the context of roles and relationships, and set

boundaries" (p. 39). Boundaries and understanding appropriate vulnerability in terms of roles

and relationships are part of Walton, Moore, and Jones' 3Ps. Positionality, privilege and power

are a framework for structured reflection in coalitional work. These are also shifting categories of

identity as opposed to fixed, and they require ongoing reflective practice to engage and to build

trust around. For example, on the SEEN team, I was a graduate student, which has precarity in

terms of income and rank at the university as opposed to a full-time MSU employee in a director

position on the team. However, I am also a white, cis-gendered, non-disabled woman working on

a PhD and so I have other systemic privilege and power at a research university that a SEEN

colleague who's a person of color may not have even when their rank or employment is higher

than mine. Awareness of how the 3Ps intersect and shift in different settings and at different

moments is crucial for building reciprocal trust on a team. Like P4 discusses in the opening story

to this chapter, SEEN colleagues understood these shifting dynamics, and all of us were "willing

to use our positionality for good to be a support to someone else on the team, to be an ally to a

particular population," to initiate a conversation or to send an email (Personal communication).

And positionality in particular, as Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) teach us, "allows for people

to recognize, account for, and hold as true conflicting, contradictory aspects of their identity, as

well as that of others" (p. 66). This point is so important in both naming our identities as

complex and at times contradictory, and that these conflicting contradictions can all be true at the

same time. As P4 said earlier, none of us is any one thing (e.g., a parent, or a student, or an

employee) without all the other aspects of ourselves also showing up and influencing how we are

in the world and how we work together. Supporting trust and engaging vulnerability in

coalitional teams requires a willingness to listen, to reflect, and to use one's various and shifting

3Ps for the team's common goal(s).

In the next chapter, I'll keep building on what I've come to call *relational institutional change* by adding change to the conversation started in chapter four on how institutions are experienced, and then deepened in this chapter on how coalitional teams form, collaborate, and navigate institutions. To do this, I'll zoom in on change, what it is, how to assess and measure it, and the importance of naming and centering that change is often uncomfortable and can feel destabilizing, especially in a workplace when one's material well-being is connected to an institution's ongoing status and stability. This work requires individual effort, team collaboration, and cultivating resilience to the ups and downs of change within systems that privilege stasis. And relationships continue to be integral to navigating institutions, teams, and now, change.

CHAPTER SIX: CHANGE FEATURES: A FRAMEWORK FOR ENACTING, ASSESSING, AND MANAGING INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

In the previous chapter, I offered a historical sketch of teams/teaming in PWTC literature from the 1970s to the early 2020s focusing on collaboration to see how teams form, work together, and navigate organizations. In this historical overview, I situated three main claims about teams—cross-functional or coalitional teams navigate relationally across hierarchical institutions; coalitional teams need to acknowledge and integrate every team member's expertise; and different perspectives and even dissensus are constructive features of diverse, coalitional teams—before turning to my interview data and writing artifacts to illustrate the claims in the context of my study and one specific team working on institutional change. Studying teams with a focus on how, where, and with whom we work (in this case SEEN colleagues) also surfaced the necessity of trust and vulnerability to accomplish these three claims for effective collaboration. Effective collaboration requires encouraging, supporting, and sustaining trust via team psychological safety, and an ongoing reflective practice on one's positionality, privilege, and power and how the 3Ps shift in different settings. Understanding how teams collaborate and create trust and reciprocal vulnerability are key parts of what I have come to call *relational institutional change*.

Now, I'll turn my attention to another ambiguous and at times slippery practice—not unlike institutions in that it is often best understood through how participants experience it—change. In higher education in 2022, it can feel like the only constant is change and that everyone wants to change something. But the previous chapter's historical overview helped illustrate that a sense of change has been constant in American workplaces and institutions of higher education since at least the latter half of the twentieth century. Noticing that change is a constant action helps to both alleviate some of what can feel like a constant demand for change,

and to realize that life and work are sustained by a series of changes. While we—practitioners, teachers, writers, administrators, and collaborators—can't stop the flow of change, we can influence the direction of change in our departments, on our teams, and throughout our institutions. To do so requires individual effort, team collaboration, and cultivating flexibility to remain open to change, which is a kind of learning process.

Similarly to chapters four and five, I want to begin this chapter on change with a participant story. This story captures many of the change characteristics I'll cover in the rest of this chapter: barriers to change, the time it takes to make change, the mindsets participants and stakeholders bring to change, the discomforts of change, and the need for a willingness to make change when presented with reasons to do so. This discussion of change was shared in response to me asking P4 what roadblocks to change she's experienced. This question brought up the ways in which many barriers begin with a person and are then supported by the institution, and the many feelings associated with change—frustration, confusion, wondering if change is actually possible and taking place, discomfort, tentative hope, and, sometimes, excitement. The emotions associated with change are something I'll take up further in chapter seven on cultivating resilience and emotional intelligence. This story sets the stage for how I'll work to define and assess change while centering the discomfort and risk often associated with being asked to change one's processes and procedures at work. Feelings of precarity and fear must be included in change discussions because they help make sense of resistance, and work to create greater psychological safety, and thus, participation.

> P4: So, a lot of the barriers come individually, but then they're supported by the institution. Many people who have risen through the ranks of academia have reinforced and supported [these barriers] and specifically the administration's goals may be implicit, unstated, behind closed doors…so it's a combination of things but it's really getting those folks who actually have the decision making ability to step out on faith and expertise and

data, which is why data is so incredibly important at the university because MSU understands data.

Everything has to be able to show impact, and I don't have a problem with that. We should make sure that we're not just providing stuff because it looks good, but is that actually what students need? I don't have a problem with data. I support data. I support assessment.

But then when you get the data, what're you prepared or willing to do? What will you change? If the data supports it.

And I don't mean data just in numbers because you know we've got to be careful about data because we know that not everybody shows up in data, so there's issues around that as well.

But I think, but we also have to start somewhere…Sometimes it feels like it's taking a long time to make change, and I'm like, 'are we [SEEN] making change?' But we are. I really believe we are making change, and I believe that we're on a path to make lasting change as opposed to kind of a moment-in-time thing.

I mean, we're asking people to change their whole mindset. We're asking an institution, essentially in small pods, asking an institution to change the way they do business, and to change the way they think about supporting students, and student success, which is huge.

As I reflected on this story, I also started to see a framework emerge from it that helped me define something as slippery as change, and ways to assess and measure it. That organizing framework is what, why, when, who, and how change happens, or not. Because change can seem so big and even temporarily hard to stabilize to make sense of, I wanted to offer a tool for visualizing and summarizing these features of change before I further develop and situate each section in my interview data. Below, in table format, I offer each characteristic and claim I will make regarding change and how to understand, approach, and facilitate it.

Table 1: What, Why, When, Who, and How Change Characteristics

What is institutional change?	• Change is rhetorical and happens through acts of persuasion
	• Change is incremental and constant
	• Change is sustainable and sustained
Why are there barriers to institutional change?	• Change is uncomfortable
	• Change is often characterized by resistance
	• Resistance can indicate that change is needed
When can/does institutional change happen?	• Change is slow, in part because it's a learning process
	• Change is slow because it relies on relationships
	• Change can be misused/abused
	• Failed or abandoned change initiatives can tell us a lot about the 'when' of change work
	• People burn out of change work
Who can make or engage institutional change?	• Change can surface precarities
	• Change is anchored to power and politics
	• Change can be refused
	• Change work must be compensated
	• Change is bigger than the individual person or office
How is institutional change made?	• Change is made by prototyping and sustaining relationships
	• Change can be approached as a research project
	• Assessment must be an anchor of change to know if change is happening or not, and successful or not

Exploring the What, Why, When, Who, and How of Institutional Change

From my work in chapter three o on institutions from writing studies literature and chapter four's work to situate institutions from participant experience, I continue orbiting around the seeming paradox that institutions model stability, and institutions model change. From my experience with SEEN and in this dissertation project, I've learned that these two truths aren't opposed to one another. Instead, they live in relationship with each other—institutions are both. Remaining in the space between constant change and grounded stability allows us to practice and facilitate change with intention while also acknowledging the need for stability and a sense of safety. In other words, multiple things are true about institutions concurrently. Not unlike how an institution can have multiple purposes.

In what follows, I offer five sections that develop the What, Why, When, Who, and How of change in more detail, explaining features of these characteristics and illustrating experiences of each from my interview data. Then I will zoom in on two tensions that span these five characteristics of change to discuss the ongoing role of emotion and emotional intelligence in managing change work, and ways to approach institutional change through a learning mindset. This chapter demonstrates that an ability to remain in the tension between stability and change is an important characteristic for emotionally aware, participatory institutional change work.

What is institutional change?	• Change is rhetorical and happens through acts of persuasion
	• Change is incremental and constant
	• Change is sustainable and sustained

Figure 7: Excerpt from Table 1, "What" Change Characteristics.

In chapter three, I shared how writing studies literature, borrowing from social science fields, conceptualizes institutions, and in chapter four, I shared how my participants experienced

institutions to illustrate the active, living processes of institution-ing. Here I'll add change to the equation and share from my interview data how my participants conceptualize institutional change. Change is, by definition, to modify, alter, or make something different. In this way, it can feel destabilizing, and it can also be innovative. The rhythms of higher education also invite frequent changes in that academic terms begin and end and begin again multiple times during the calendar year, and change initiatives come and go as priorities and goals of administrators change and develop. In these ways, academia is an ideal space for a workplace study on institutional change and being able to see how change is rhetorical, happening through many, incremental acts of persuasion.

One way my participants described change was as a persuasive process of convincing others that a change was necessary. For example, in discussing a change process, P1 explained that "Changing hearts and minds about stuff is always step one. And you know, that's challenging. Changing somebody's mind about anything is hard" (Personal communication. The difficulty of persuading someone to change their mind about a topic or procedure depends on what is being asked of them, but P1's point that it is always difficult to change hearts and minds is a key aspect of change to be aware of and work from and can potentially act as a barrier to change. Similarly, P1 described change as changing the practices of the people who make up an institution. And more specifically, he assessed part of SEEN's "success" as each team member's professional development. He shared that, to name just a few of the developments for SEEN team members: P4 was seen as a campus leader around topics of essential needs; P2 had become a consultant for other organizations on essential needs; P3 was able to put her design experience to work in becoming a leader in trauma-informed user-centered design in her next position; I was able to write a dissertation on the project. The individuals who participated in the SEEN project

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engaged change in their practices and in their professional development, and the impacts of that change rippled beyond the initial initiative and collaborations.

Saying that change is rhetorical is another way of saying that change is relational. P2 described change being relational when he explained SEEN's strategy for organizing the team: "we understood the nature of change on a campus to be relational, so we knew how to bring connections in" (Personal communication). Approaching change as relational is important both for team make-up, and for how the team will work within the institution. This relational focus connects to the next point about what change is—change is both incremental and constant. P2 went on to define change as "asking people to spend their time differently," and that this behavioral change invites all kinds of barriers to be cognizant of—sometimes self-imposed, sometimes political, or supervisory, or dysfunctional organization barriers (Personal communication). And as P4 shared in the opening story to this chapter, the incremental nature of change can be slow and at times she wondered if SEEN was making change because it felt like it was taking so long, but that in the slow, accumulation of change work, for SEEN, she felt that "we're on a path to make lasting change as opposed to kind of a moment-in-time thing" (Personal communication). This might sound obvious, but different kinds of change happen for different reasons and for varying lengths of time, as I'll discuss further in the When section. Length of time to make change, and length of time a change initiative lasts or for how long it changes participants' practices are dependent on context and purpose and thus shape the What of change.

Change can also be accumulative, as P1 offered in discussing the changes he helped facilitate at a former institution that started by first creating a digital writing studio, then working to create a certificate in writing within an English department, then built out to an undergraduate

degree program, and eventually a master's program with an emphasis in rhetoric and writing (Personal communication). Not only can incremental changes accumulate and reshape an institution or department, but they can also build out into sustained changes that then become temporarily stabilized until they need to change again. In this way, the sustained/sustainable aspect of change refers to a situation being able to make and sustain a change, and also to the ways in which today's change will become tomorrow's stasis. Change is cyclical, and however permanent it may seem, continually subject to revision.

Why are there barriers to institutional change?	• Change is uncomfortable
	• Change is often characterized by resistance
	• Resistance can indicate that change is needed

Figure 8: Excerpt from Table 1, "Why" Change Characteristics.

Another way of asking the question that begins this section is: why is change difficult? Barriers emerge because change is often uncomfortable, it feels precarious, and it can feel corrective in that being asked to change means someone's ways of working were in some way ineffective and, like P6 put it: "the way they have things set up is going to be threatened" (Personal communication). In other words, there are a lot of feelings wrapped up in the experience of change. In addition to feelings of discomfort, barriers to change emerge individually and systemically. As P4 describes in this chapter's opening story, many barriers come individually but then are supported by the institution, and importantly, she names that many of the people who can navigate the institution have "risen through the ranks of academia" and then reinforce and support the status quo of how things are done. This point is especially salient because barriers are often experienced individually, and these barriers are reinforced through individual actions that sustain particular procedures. So, in trying to understand why

there are barriers to change, naming and acknowledging the felt discomfort with change is key, and it's also useful to pan back and forth between the relationship of individual actions that sustain and enact systemic barriers.

One of the individual change barriers my study participants repeatedly named was a refusal to share data within MSU units to support student success change initiatives, something that was only rectified by the retirement of a particular barrier-creating individual, or their departure from the university. I discussed this refusal to share data in chapter four, and here, it's related given that it's an individual action that becomes a systemic barrier. It also pertains to another nuance of data issues: institutional incentive not to collect or share data that reflects poorly on the institution or office. In other words, a refusal to collect data that could require change. P2 described this issue in the context of working on a different MSU change initiative. He explained that various offices were talking about and tracking the initiative differently, so the data to make change was sitting on a bunch of different servers and desktops and they couldn't "aggregate into anything meaningful like a pattern" (Personal communication). He goes on to explain that partly this inability to aggregate and share data was from the politics of sharing internally, but also partly because the units didn't want to share data that could make them look bad. P2 put it this way: "the overall assessment culture wasn't one of organizational learning, it was one of organizational defense, where it's like, 'we're only going to put up things that make us look good so we can get our next budget" (Personal communication). Resistance is a common response to change, like P6 also discussed, in that units have reason not to collect data that points to the need to change how they do things (Personal communication). This kind of resistance begs the questions: do the participants in a department or unit want to know the reality of a situation

and how bad it might be, and like P4 shared in the opening story, what are they willing to change when faced with such data?

Another aspect of resistance to change is political, and institutional politics can be personal, historical, and inherited even as personnel come and go. P2 defined politics with a small 'p' as being about "the distribution of scarce resources" and more specifically, referring to "people making choices about their time" (Personal communication). Distributing resources within an institution and making choices about time in terms of what's worked on and paid attention to are steeped in a scarcity mindset and worry or discomfort about possible changes. Asking participants to make certain choices about their time is a change issue. Similarly, P6 shared a story about a change initiative he worked on at a different institution that was intended to support greater equity for incoming students in self-selecting their level of writing courses. But in this example, the academic advisors were "vociferously against this" in part because they worried students would make a bad choice, and because it asked them for more time to which they responded, "we're too busy, we can't have a conversation with a student about whether they should take 100 or 101. We just need a score so we can tell them you have to take 101…you're asking me for more time" (Personal communication). This feeling of discomfort toward change and the exhaustion of being asked for more time are very real. I don't take those responses lightly, nor judge them as wrong. Change is essentially a risk, and when one's livelihood feels like it could be on the line, even if this isn't entirely true or likely, it becomes all the more difficult and painful to initiate or sustain change. It's crucial to be aware of institutional politics, and the discomfort and worry change can cause for participants. As P5 put it, the need to be strategic about politics is necessary to moving people toward change: "If you really want to

make social change, and if you don't want to get into the politics, you will fail...you can't not see the politics, or you won't get the thing done" (Personal communication).

Resistance to change can also be an indicator that a project or initiative is needed. P5 shared this idea in the context of SEEN's work and the resistance the team faced as upper administrators responded to our proposed solutions. Some administrators seemed like they wanted their deputies to instead manage the project or to neutralize it (e.g., not wanting to know SEEN's results that would require change). As the team worked to implement solutions and respond to administrator feedback and priorities, P5 described this resistance as "old hat" to her, stating that "it's probably not worth doing your project if you're not getting a ton of resistance" (Personal communication). Resistance emerges in various ways, and it can mean a variety of things. So paying attention to responses of resistance interpersonally helps with managing and implementing an initiative. Institutional resistance can be an indicator of individual resistance scaling to create systemic barriers, and it can also be an indicator that an initiative is needed. Noticing what direction the resistance is coming from (e.g., bottom-up can indicate individual resistance, whereas top-down can indicate institutional resistance) helps in understanding why change is difficult and what kinds of care and response a particular resistance necessitates.

The three "why" characteristics I shared above are helpful for understanding and navigating resistance, which is often born out of emotional responses to change at various institutional levels. Understanding that change is uncomfortable, political, risky, and requires resources and time in systems in which both are scarce better equips change practitioners to respond and manage these variables. Managing the emotions of change can be fraught but avoiding them as a part of change experiences and resistance is even worse. Developing

emotional intelligence in change management is something I'll return to throughout this chapter and the next.

When can/does institutional change happen?	• Change is slow, in part because it's a learning process
	• Change is slow because it relies on relationships
	• Change can be misused/abused
	• Failed or abandoned change initiatives can tell us a lot about the 'when' of change work
	• People burn out of change work

Figure 9: Excerpt from Table 1, "When" Change Characteristics.

Five variables emerged from the "When" category of institutional change characteristics and most of them are related to time and experiences of change happening slowly. Stability and system reproduction are key attributes of institutions, and to some extent, for good reason, as I explained in chapter three on defining institutions and chapter five on teams in bureaucracy. When institutions employ more than 12,000 staff and faculty like MSU does, and work to support almost 50,000 students to degree completion across more than 200-degree programs, stability is a worthwhile priority. And yet, institutional resistance or even ineptitude to adapt and respond to a changing student population and contemporary issues also causes dissatisfaction and frustration from institutional participants. It's necessary to remain in the tension between understanding the need for institutional stability while also helping an institution be more responsive to desired changes that improve student and employee experience. To do so, it's useful to understand the When of institutional change—why institutional change can be slow, and what the temporal features of change work can teach practitioners.

One reason that change work takes time and happens slowly is because it's a learning process. It takes time to understand an institution, its history, priorities, and stasis—what and how it does things. P5 shared this idea of learning processes when she described the tension between wanting to show a product or success but also needing to try out different solutions. In responding to a follow-up question about how to assess SEEN's changes, she explained: "Well first of all, it's going to take time. It's hard to do this stuff because you want to show a thing, right? But it doesn't work that way. There's a long time of nothing happens while you take the wrong path and then you come back and then you think a different thing" (Personal communication). In this way, even when SEEN determined there were issues of student access to essential needs resources, we still needed to learn how widespread the problem was, and how to centralize resources on a decentralized campus to ensure greater access. So, there are various learning processes at work within a project lifecycle that take time to pilot and attempt a solution, wait for results, assess, and then iterate differently. This kind of learning process takes time, resources, and patience, and it can be difficult to sustain, especially around pressing issues like essential needs resources in which a team wants to move quickly to better support students. Similarly, P2, working from organizational psychology and change management, explained that it takes "five years to change a culture or subculture" and these changes require sustaining moves over time (Personal communication). For him, SEEN was a good example of a change initiative that required time to change the campus's mindset about student support and choric essential needs issues, and part of this change required first even getting campus leaders to understand essential as opposed to basic needs. There were many steps within SEEN's work to enact and support learning processes on campus, all of which take varying amounts of time.

A related reason that causes change to happen slowly is because it relies on relationships, which take time to initiate, build, and sustain. P1, as SEEN's principal investigator, explained the change process as collaborative: "Part of SEEN's approach to doing stuff is we invite people to participate. And we do so in a way that makes them collaborative partners; that brings about a win-win for everybody" (Personal communication). To illustrate this claim he offered the example of working with the LGBT Center that I shared in chapter four and five: "So the LGBT Center said, 'We don't see LGBT experiences in this. We need to see more of them in order for this report to be accurate.' So that allowed us to pump the brakes on distributing the report to realize we needed to add more" (Personal communication). Working at the speed of relationships and with participatory partners requires a willingness to slow down when necessary and to act on feedback to include more voices. Faculty franchise building, like I shared in chapter four, is a useful contrast to the participatory action research P1 explains with SEEN: "A lot of times when you're building franchises you've got to move quick, it's like flipping a house. You can't really put the most expensive, personal touches in it. You can't slow down. Time is money. To be inclusive takes time, and that's why it's expensive" (Personal communication). In this example, SEEN itself had to be willing to change its plans and timeline to adapt to feedback, and SEEN's willingness to do so affected both team dynamics and the research outcomes. P3, for example, expressed appreciation for watching her teachers and colleagues on SEEN practice an openness to change that they wanted the institution to practice. She described it as an influential moment of change in seeing SEEN be "open to change, and that they [the SEEN team] were willing to make that change happen" (Personal communication). Relationship building for change management can happen both internally and externally and sustaining team relationships is an important part of doing participatory research.

Responsive, participatory research moves slowly because relationships take time, but it's also important to note that taking the time to be inclusive and careful with a project's representation and relationship building can ultimately end up saving time (and money) because it makes the work more effective, and, ideally, longer lasting even if the upfront time investment takes longer. As P1 put it in terms of a "sweat equity" change model: "I knew that sweat equity could change an institution if you were just persistent and you showed up" (Personal communication). This consistent willingness to show up is also key in relationship building/sustaining for institutional change. Of course, project teams need to show results, and as I discussed in the previous section, a unit's relationship to data collection and willingness to learn (or not) are also on the line in securing next year's budget, but it's necessary to balance the pressure of budgets and results with the need for more inclusive, effective research. Variables of time and relationship building depend on an initiative's scope and purpose, and in that way, they remain emergent, much like change.

A potential misuse of change can be creating new initiatives to get around personnel issues. For example, P5 discussed this (mis)use of change in terms of MSU institutional history and new administrators trying to make changes to avoid terminating someone or attempting to work around dysfunctional departments or units. In naming example change initiatives she shared: "I'm just going to say about the whole change thing: the Hub, the neighborhoods, these were political decisions to get around something that didn't work that they didn't want to just fire somebody. A lot of it is that. And so then a new provost comes in and is like, 'this makes no sense.' And it does make no sense, they're correct, but they didn't have the thirty years of working [that led to this]" (Personal communication). This example connects to When in terms of institutional relationships *not w*orking. Additionally, like P5 describes, these change initiatives

can seem muddled, and perhaps temporary, which can be even worse for engaging participants than the fact that change is slow. While not all change initiatives need to last forever in order to support institutional learning, like I'll address more fully below, the (mis)use of change as a way to sidestep political/personnel issues can become a problem because participants weary of another new, shiny initiative, especially when it seems like something won't last long and will be dissolved and revised if one can wait out the current project or refuse to participate. In terms of P5's example, the Hub[7] is an initiative that has now turned over again and dissolved as administrators leave or turn to new projects. When personnel issues drive change, it can negatively impact trust between participants and disrupt possibilities for change due to the risk participants may face and/or feel.

Another temporal variable of change initiatives is that not every change needs to last forever and failed or abandoned initiatives can teach practitioners a lot. Multiple participants in my study shared examples of change work that either made an unintended but equally useful impact than its initial goal or worked for a while and then ended. The idea that changes don't have to last forever in order to be beneficial is a key change lesson because it's all too easy to approach these as failures, especially in a dominant culture obsessed with ongoing impact and assessment. For example, P2 shared a story about an initiative that had incentivized faculty to develop online pedagogy and "behave differently" to move online at MSU, a die-hard brick and mortar institution, and this initiative had garnered impressive results but eventually its funding structure interfered with a campus-wide strategy to develop online learning, so the initiative ended, but, as P2 put it: "So you know, not every change needs to last forever" (Personal

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[7] P5's example here refers to the Hub for Innovation and Learning that I briefly mentioned in chapter two as SEEN's major sponsor on campus. The Hub is also an initiative that has now turned over and dissolved after administrators left.

communication). This is a particularly poignant example because it changed faculty teaching, something that is costly and difficult, especially at a research-intensive institution, and can be uncomfortable to do, but eventually, the institution had changed enough that the initiative had run its course.

Similarly, P1 shared that a project he initially was hired to work on at MSU ultimately couldn't continue because of a dysfunctional office on campus but working on that taught him a lot about managing future change initiatives, like SEEN (Personal communication). SEEN itself in some ways exemplifies a "failed" initiative in that the solution we initially proposed (a centralized web portal and office for campus resources) didn't end up being the solution upper administration would support. However, the team's research developing, prototyping, and iterating a trauma-informed web portal supported institutional research and learning that informed other eventual campus solutions that wouldn't have happened without SEEN's work. P6 discussed this learning with the example of researching other web portals on basic needs and learning about another site using the word "essential" as opposed to basic. He then suggested that SEEN should change our language given that resources essential to being successful in college are not "basic": "And it does go back to 'basic writing,' it really wasn't basic. Basic is just not a good word in higher ed" (Personal communication). These examples all share a willingness to learn from one's research and what worked before but no longer does, or what didn't end up working but can inform a different initiative or team down the road. The necessary orientation to these "failures" is an openness to believing that nothing is wasted from attempts to improve an institution if we can think more expansively about "endings" being something other than defeats.

A final element of the time-based variables of change has to do with burnout, and the difficulty in sustaining change, especially if employees are repeatedly asked to do so. P5

discussed burnout specifically within a frustrating experience: "I was a neighborhood director for six years. And [name redacted] and I hung in there for that length. We were the constants though. You know, there was tons of leadership change. Because it was very, very hard and I viewed it as a community organizing, systems change position. Then I quit because I was so pissed off. I'm not kidding. I was just infuriated at some of the shenanigans" (Personal communication). While this is a specific example from an exhausting leadership position, it echoes what other participants shared about the difficulty in maintaining the energy and time commitments that change work requires. There's a reason stability is desired and the comfort of it can't be overstated. Change work requires personal discernment to know when the time is to walk away from an initiative, if that's possible given one's position and job requirements, and as a project manager, it's important to keep in mind the emotional tax of change for participants. Being aware of burnout as a common outcome of or variable in change work is also connected to the previous point about change initiatives not needing to last forever—emergent assessment (i.e., being responsive to and open to unintended learning outcomes) and project life cycles are key to supporting good work with realistic timeframes and outcomes.

An ever-present tension in this section on "when" characteristics of change is the need for discernment and listening to know when change is possible; when to bring in collaborators; when something has been learned, changed, or achieved; and when it's time to be done and move on. This discernment is, of course, also connected to one's positionality, privilege, and power, and so it's a shifting process without a clear how-to. But being aware of the time and energy that change requires and when the right time is to initiate change can help in supporting participants through the risks of change and, ideally, toward institutional learning and avoiding burnout.

Who can make or engage institutional change?	• Change can surface precarities
	• Change is anchored to power and politics
	• Change can be refused
	• Change work must be compensated
	• Change is bigger than the individual person or office

Figure 10: Excerpt from Table 1, "Who" Change Characteristics.

Ending the previous section with a brief mention of positionality, privilege, and power was intentional in that discussing characteristics of "when" begged questions of "who"—who can participate, refuse to participate, or make change happen? In the figure above, I offered five characteristics under this "who" category, all of which circulate around Walton, Moore, and Jones' 3Ps: who is asked to change, who can decide change, and who can refuse to participate are issues of how and where one is situated within an institution, and the institutional politics related to one's position. Some of the data and stories from my study participants that I share below might seem familiar as I continue analyzing and arguing for, in the higher education setting specifically, staff-faculty-student collaborations in institutional research. Change work requires diversely situated teams to surface an issue, understand it from various experiences and angles, and then collaborate toward solutions. In addition to diverse teams, "who" questions also require engagement with stakeholders who have institutional power. As P4 described in the chapter's opening story, SEEN's change process was a "combination of things," but to make change happen is: "really getting those folks who actually have the decision-making ability to step out on faith and expertise and data" (Personal communication).

Similarly to the When section, Who also importantly begins with feelings people bring to change, and how precarious and uncomfortable change can be. While discussing assessment, P2 shared that people also carry mindsets about change and teams. Like I shared in chapter four on institutions, "mindsets form early, and then those mindsets change again, or are shaped further, by the kinds of jobs we do and the reward-structures in those jobs" (Personal communication). Mindsets, importantly, continue developing as people move through their professional and personal lives, and confirmation bias also plays a role in that it is easy to seek out or agree with things that confirm the mindsets one holds about a thing. P2 importantly distinguished between specific behaviors and mindsets: "People carry a mindset about assessment, not specific behaviors, not like, 'hey I'm gonna give you this test,' but how do I think about assessment? What's the cycle? How do I integrate it into my life?" (Personal communication). This point about a mindset encompassing more than a behavior, like testing in terms of assessment, is useful for understanding how deeply integrated mindsets are to one's beliefs about the world and how mindsets influence re/actions. Being aware of the mindsets people bring to change helps to center the felt experiences of change in important ways given that even positive change can still feel destabilizing. In this way, mindsets are useful for understanding attitudes and experiences people bring to change and the precarities that change often surface, regardless of where someone is situated institutionally.

The *who* in whether one occupies the role of being asked to change or asking others to change impacts change experiences. In other words, change is anchored to power and politics. Like P4 shares in the opening, those who occupy administrative positions at the university have more power to enact change via reorganizations, or a project funded by a Provost or a Dean. Similarly, P5 shared that as SEEN shared its research with more campus leaders and units, she

got the sense that there were others who wished they had thought to do the research SEEN was starting to get praise and recognition for. She described research as being "vicious," and that research "turf" can influence who supports and participates or gets credit for an initiative even though "there's plenty of room for everybody in student success, really. There's enough need" (Personal communication). The idea of research turf also connects with P1's discussion of faculty building franchises, but in this case, in the research turf on the student services side of the university. Units and teams are incentivized to be the first ones to a research problem as opposed to collaborating, supporting, and amplifying others' good work. Of course, there are plenty of counter examples for positive collaboration between units, but this element of turf is a consideration in when and how teams share research findings and solutions. As SEEN shared our work more and more broadly in the institution, we noticed a variety of responses regarding "turf." Some units responded by taking the idea of essential needs and trying to solve it themselves for their specific population. Whereas other units wanted to collaborate with SEEN and sought our support in trying to pilot an essential needs portal in their department. And others didn't want to be directly involved but tried to connect SEEN to different collaborators who could support the work. The point in including these different responses is to flesh out the politics of research, ownership, and credit claiming even internally in an institution that ultimately wants to support the same mission of student success.

Similarly to P5's argument that there's enough room and need for everyone in student success research, P2 tried to help the SEEN team approach it positively that other units in MSU wanted to take on essential needs research as opposed to feeling like they were stepping on our toes or stealing our research. He explained it this way: "Oh this other group came and they want to do their own prototype? Awesome, just track it, pay attention, make friends, listen well, see if

you can offer any support for the time being, ask them to share their data—politely at first, and then tell your boss to tell their boss to do it" (Personal communication). He also pointed out that when some campus units learned about SEEN's work, they wanted to collaborate with us, and others instead wanted to try to solve the issue on their own. Both responses, P2 argued, were useful for us to pay attention to and that we needed to keep all these units in relationship so that we could learn together. These responses allowed for "an organizational learning moment" that required our team to assume positive intent from these collaborators even in the context of a research university that could be "cutthroat" around turf (Personal communication). He continued, "But ultimately you have to put enough political trust in people to say, 'look, we need to learn together because this need transcends us all. None of us in principle can solve this, and yes, your approach may be incredibly effective for your niche of work" (Personal communication). Not unlike the felt risk of being asked to change one's work practices by higher ups, the need to assume positive intent to be able to collaborate across units on a problem as wicked as chronic essential needs issues feels risky to folks whose research reputation and livelihoods are wrapped up in impactful research and publishing. P2 could approach the need to trust other units more nimbly because his continuing appointment wasn't tied to research production in the same way. In other words, there are different orientations to research and relationship building in change projects because of very real material safety and well-being, even if the *feeling* of risk is greater than the actual risk. P2 explained his ability to take "turf" less seriously this way: "I've also come to terms with that [people taking my idea] as a change consultant, there's a version of my work where people need to feel like it was their idea, or else it didn't happen" (Personal communication). This point is important to include because it offers another perspective on change work that both explains why research faculty need to protect

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"turf" in some cases, and why institutional research happening in a centralized location on campus, like The Hub that I explained in chapter two, is important to manage the politics of change initiatives at research institutions. And this is another good reason to support faculty-staff-student collaboration because each of these positions can move more nimbly in different situations to achieve institutional change.

Another dynamic of power and politics is who can refuse to participate in change initiatives and not lose their job or reputation. P2 and P5 both shared stories about the data sharing culture at MSU changing after different leaders retired. More specifically, P5 detailed a change initiative aimed at improving graduation rates that an upper administrator stymied by refusing to share the relevant data with directors leading the initiative. In retelling the story, P5 described this refusal as part of the "we don't want student affairs to take over, but we didn't work for student affairs, we worked for [this administrator]" (Personal communication). Further, she explained this approach to data as "generational," noting that this administrator wasn't alone in refusing to share data that reflected poorly on the institution. As is, unfortunately, often the case, sharing such data could have positively changed students' institutional experiences, and in this case, African American male students who had the lowest graduation rates of all students. P5 continued, "so, the victory is that [this administrator] retired" (Personal communication). Refusing to share data because of institutional politics, worry about institutional rankings, or upcoming budgets isn't uncommon. P2 shared that working in student life, he would hear things like, "Well my Dean of [division name redacted] or the VP didn't want us to publish that data because it might make them look bad. So, I can't actually do anything with my data that I just spent months and months collecting" (Personal communication). For P2, part of working on change management was getting MSU to share and consume its own data more effectively,

which he described as happening between 2012 and 2019 following a couple retirements (Personal communication). In all these examples, change is political, connected to power, and it can also be refused depending on politics, power, and position.

Institutional politics and power are also good reasons for change initiatives to be bigger than a single person or office. This point came up over and over in my data that in order for change to be lasting and to garner more participation, it couldn't be tied solely to a charismatic leader or even solely in student or academic affairs. Of course, this depends on the scale of the change work, but it is also connected to supporting change managers/participants with the labor of these efforts and avoiding burnout. As a change manager, P2 explained needing to make relationships across the institution without making them too individual in case people leave. For example, "If somebody quits or leaves or gets promoted, then what? All their knowledge goes with them. So I wanted this thing to be sustainable, so I had to think about that in terms of an organizational horizon of like ten years, not one career" (Personal communication). This is also important for thinking about how to not get too mired in the relational politics of a single person or leader. In other words, making relationships with the registrar's office is different from making a relationship with a director in the registrar's office, because as P2 shared with me, the registrar left at some point during his work on a co-curricular initiative and he had to rebuild that relationship with an interim director.

Regarding SEEN more specifically, the work being tied to a single person was a recipe for burnout, especially with such emotionally intense, potentially re-traumatizing subject matter as hearing about students struggling to access essential needs resources and the situations they were facing that put them in such need. As the primary investigator for the project, P1 shared that he worried he hadn't invited enough collaborators into the work and so the project wasn't

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proving to be bigger than a single person, which is a sign of burnout even though the work is institutionally important. He put it this way: "If I would have dropped it this summer, if I would have just said, "I'm done with SEEN." It would have died, which is a real shame. One of the challenges actually of SEEN is that it has not proved to be bigger than a person just yet" (Personal communication). It can be difficult to balance inviting in participants while also helping new participants feel they have ownership over a project. Zooming out from SEEN, P5 argued for the need to have all campus units involved in developing an essential needs resource response as opposed to a single college proposing a pilot for their students. She explained, "This is why a pilot in [college name redacted] is fine, but it's not really it because you need the police, the registrar's office, the office of financial aid, non-academic, and resident life, you need all of those pieces to really see the fuller picture, and a functioning office of student affairs would have done this years ago, but it's not a functioning office" (Personal communication). Again, this example is rife with institutional politics and different offices refusing to work together or vying for turf in their corner of the institution, and the implications of this in-fighting is that it makes it difficult to understand systemic issues and how to respond to and remedy them. While this situation isn't unique to higher education, it is an important lesson that to work institutionally requires relationship building that includes individuals and exceeds a single career or point person.

The final characteristic under the interpersonal and political category of 'who' focuses on the need to compensate people for their change work, and the importance of having people with dedicated hours (time and money) to facilitate and manage these projects. All too often, as P5 explained, the institution is "wonderful at finding somebody who's good [at their job], and then saying, 'here, do two more jobs so you can be bad at all of them'" (Personal communication).

Similarly, in discussing a different successful change initiative, P2 put it simply that to make lasting institutional change with a big co-curricular initiative it takes more than making a new flashy thing: "And even, like the design and the presence of the thing [technology for collecting data] wouldn't have made the thing successful, you need people and in my view, you need someone to run it with committed time, and you need people to support it culturally" (Personal communication). Making sure an employee has committed time to run the thing is crucial, especially with When in the background here, with time as money and the distribution of time needed for change to work.

Another important aspect of compensating change participants has to do with students, who are often asked to participate in initiatives or offer feedback and ideas for how to improve something without being monetarily compensated. This is a good example of congress woman's Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's argument that "experience doesn't pay the bills," in that claiming an experience will help students down the line in their careers is not enough. SEEN was aware of these dynamics, and so, raised money from administrative stakeholders in order to pay every student (undergraduate and graduate) with a gift card for participating in focus groups and sharing their stories (data). This data informed the solutions and web portal prototype that SEEN recommended to administrators following the research collection phase. Additionally, the student designers hired to work with SEEN were paid hourly for their design work and attending meetings. Not asking students for their expertise without compensation is also an issue of power and positionality, and whether students feel like they can choose not to participate in something. So, hiring students, having job descriptions and roles delineated, and compensating research participants are good starting points from which to include students without putting undue pressure on them to participate without being compensated for their knowledge.

This Who section covers thorny interpersonal and personal dynamics that show up in different ways when participants enter the institution, like P4 shared way back in chapter three, we bring all our various individual identities with us to work. So, paying attention to how one's identity and institutional situation intersect with internal politics *and* are steeped in issues of power and institutional history helps people who want to engage in change management understand how to approach and enact change in a particular setting. While the examples shared above are unique to MSU, they also illustrate common interpersonal dynamics, like worries about recognition and "turf" at work, or being fairly compensated for one's participation, or feeling precarious and frustrated about another new initiative that requires learning, yet again, how to do once familiar processes differently. The feelings that people bring to issues of change echo with familiarity even as the setting or institutional specifics might be different. But, as I'll return to in the conclusion to this chapter, the Who characteristics are so important to center and not ignore in any collaborative endeavors because people are far more feeling creatures than they are rational. So, starting from a place that recognizes and centers the discomfort of change and attempts to intentionally support practitioners through this process is not only care based and humane, it can also create better long term results, as I'll attempt to show in the following How section and ways of assessing change.

How is institutional change made?	• Change is made by prototyping and sustaining relationships
	• Change can be approached as a research project
	• Assessment must be an anchor of change to know if change is happening or not, and successful or not

Figure 11: Excerpt from Table 1, "How" Change Characteristics.

In my interview protocol, I asked multiple questions about how participants knew when a change initiative had been successful, how to measure impact, and how participants knew when SEEN, more specifically, had achieved moments of institutional change, or not. I also asked participants to share examples of the impact of their work with SEEN, how they assessed their impact, and what were indicators of their impact (see Appendix B). Because of SEEN's diverse team makeup, I was especially interested in how people positioned across the university in terms of unit, rank, and background described, assessed, and measured change, whether it had been successful or not, and their contributions to the work. The answers and ideas on assessing change ranged from the institution adapting SEEN's language to discuss essential needs, to individuals' changed practices creating institutional change, to change being "one of those things you know it when it happens" (P5, Personal communication). But the three characteristics that emerged within and across the various examples were: the need to create and sustain relationships for lasting change, change as a kind of research work, and the importance of assessment throughout change work.

Prototyping relationships is a way of seeing relationships as a type of institutional infrastructure that can then support and sustain change initiatives. This idea came from P2's discussion of a previous change initiative in which part of the team's work was to create a technology that could collect data from across the institution, but in order for participants to be able to contribute their data, they needed relationships: "Our big conclusion was, 'yeah, you gotta prototype,' and we already knew this, but what we prototyped even more than the technology use and the workflow were new relationships around the work because we were creating a whole new construct of work for a lot of people." This is key background information

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for how P2 then goes on to define SEEN's indicators of successful institutional change. He

shared:

> So we've moved the name [of basic to essential needs], that's a really good marker. We
> have new data, that's a really good marker. We have new partners, that's a really good
> marker. We have people talking about it with the name we chose, right, we have new
> hires coming out, or at least new job descriptions, right? So those are all really good
> cultural markers. But again to sustain those changes, you've got to reinforce with data
> collection, or new FTEs (full-time employees), or both, or money or priority assigned.
> (Personal communication)

These cultural markers indicate a changing institution in the process of moving toward SEEN's

goal to prioritize chronic (as distinct from acute) essential needs issues on campus by increasing

access to resources. But, P2 continued, we also needed relationships to sustain these in-process

changes. For example, he argued that SEEN needed to: "Create a sustained set of relationships

by expanding the number of relationships. The light doesn't go out if you keep communicating

[with stakeholders]. But we have to prototype these relationships, we have to teach people to

engage with this construct of essential needs differently than they have" (Personal

communication). I include these quotes at length here to demonstrate how this change process

builds via relationships, and how prototyping relationships is a learning process for units and

departments being "on boarded" to a change initiative. Building relationships is an active process

that takes effort and time to prototype, enact, and then sustain change work. This approach to

relationships as something that sustains change requires a mindset shift toward interpersonal

work as being central to making institutional change. That's a big difference from seeing

relationships as a possible positive byproduct of collaboration but not central to enacting the

work in the first place. This relationship building requires both paying attention to cultural

markers of a changing institution like P2 outlined, and also teaching participants how to form the

relationships necessary to continue and support those changes.

The relational work shared from P2 is one way to do incremental work toward change when change can seem so big and amorphous. A second approach P6 shared on how to approach big change projects from manageable steps is to "approach change like a research project" (Personal communication). For example, when he was redesigning a writing major in his department or learning how other comparable institutions to MSU talked about basic needs resources, he turned these into research projects with a series of steps to determine what needed to happen next. He explained this idea as a learning process in terms of stasis theory beginning with: "Does it [the problem, issue, or question] exist? Is it a good or a bad thing? What's there or what's happened in the past?" He defined these first steps as being "the easy part," but they provide necessary background information to inform what should be done about a thing. Change initiatives can seem flashy and exciting and it can be tempting to jump to solutions without spending an adequate amount of time in the problem space to really understand background, institutional landscape, what's been tried before, and why the current stasis exists in the first place. P6 then shared that while research is important, "the hardest part of any kind of work is to envision what's not there yet. The policy question, what to do about [a thing], is the hard part" (Personal communication). The work of imagination in response to stasis may well be the hardest part, but to make change as effective as possible, it helps to approach change as a series of research projects that can work toward how things could be otherwise. Change approached as a research project can also better inform solutions and help support ongoing assessment throughout a change initiative.

To know if change is happening and successful or not, change projects need ongoing assessment. Part of assessing an initiative's impact is paying attention to "process indicators that function as milestones, and then organizational behaviors that are indicative of the culture

change, and patterns within incentive structures" (P2, Personal communication). For SEEN's work, these cultural changes were stakeholders: 1) adopting our specific language of essential needs; 2) recognizing SEEN as the research team responsible for starting this work; 3) crafting new job descriptions that supported future work on essential needs; 4) responding to the data we'd collected; and 5) for top-level administrator stakeholders specifically, assigning staff to partner with SEEN on project activities. A missing piece that would have been helpful in sustaining SEEN was employees with dedicated time for the work. To be successful, change requires ongoing effort from people compensated to do so. P4 explained this as an indicator of change when she shared that it was one thing to have campus administrators acknowledging SEEN's research and leadership in this area but that, "It will have to be fed and nurtured, you know, as a part of a regular thing. When it becomes common language to think about and ask about essential needs first, then to me that would really signal some change" (Personal communication). These examples help illustrate how change must be sustained with ongoing support, and I would add, assessment to know how to acknowledge and build on periodic milestones that signal cultural changes.

Approaching change as a process as opposed to a sudden disruption helps support better collaboration with realistic timelines and can help participants avoid burnout because they can more effectively pace themselves and update stakeholders accordingly. Assessment can feel risky in that it's evaluative, but when assessment is treated as an ongoing process with the intention of team and organizational learning, it can alleviate feelings of discomfort and that one's individual performance is being evaluated. This might sound simple but assessment as a learning tool requires a mindset shift that is not often the case in workplaces or higher education, especially when institutional culture privileges "knowing" as opposed to "learning." One way to support

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developing mindsets toward assessment as a learning process is to build this into reward structures, something I'll return to in chapter seven.

Before I close this How section, I want to briefly return to an example I shared in the Who section on turf issues in research that surfaces the role of reward structures in managing change. The key point I want to draw attention to is that incentive structures are crucial for understanding how to get differently positioned people to make change happen. P2 named the role of reward structures in change management when he explained that he didn't consider it a bad thing if another unit "took SEEN's project" because that would also be an indicator that we'd made them change their behavior, and, importantly for P2: "my rewards are aligned to getting people to move, not necessarily having my name on things" (Personal communication). Faculty and graduate students are incentivized differently. None of these incentivizations are bad per se, but they need to be understood and then utilized strategically to leverage change in ways that get people to move depending on their institutional position and subsequent reward structure. As a writing studies researcher positioned in an academic department, I've noticed repeatedly how the first response to any proposed change is, "How is that thing described/defined/outlined in the department bylaws?" Understanding the rules, procedures, and reward structures of a department, unit, or more broadly, an institution is *how* to make change legible within a specific system. It sounds simple, but it requires knowledge about institution-ing within bureaucratic structures with review and promotion structures, and a dizzying number of different processes and procedures.

The last feature on assessment as an anchor to change work from Table 1 was intentionally included as the final feature to both the How section and the change tool. Assessment does and should act as an anchor to change initiatives, like P4 shared in the opening

story to this chapter—every institutional initiative must show impact. Assessment is needed both to determine what change initiatives should take place *and* to inform project teams' ongoing work as they learn and continue refining and designing their proposed solutions. In my study interviews, assessment and data were key features across the varied answers participants shared regarding how to measure impact and how to know when change had occurred. Institutions, especially huge decentralized systems like MSU, understand data, and so what counts as data to enact ongoing assessment is something I'll take up next in the conclusion.

Conclusion: Surfacing Common Tensions in Change Work

To weave together these many characteristics, experiences, and perspectives on change, I want to return to the story that opened this chapter. I included this long interview excerpt because in it P4 surfaced the framework I developed to hold the unwieldiness of change: the What, Why, When, Who, and How variables of change. These variables emerged in my data as defining change; understanding barriers to change; making change and the time it takes to do so; centering positionality, power, and privilege in who is asked to change and who decides change; and ongoing assessment as a learning process. Across these variables, I noticed two tensions emerge repeatedly: 1) the need for ongoing assessment to support and sustain change work, and 2) feelings of discomfort and precarity from being asked to change or experiencing change. To address the first tension on assessment, I want to zoom in on P4's discussion regarding data, decision-making power, and how a focus on assessment must be intentional and requires awareness of who is not represented in findings. In the opening story, she argued:

> Everything has to be able to show impact, and I don't have a problem with that. We should make sure that we're not just providing stuff because it looks good, but is that actually what students need? I don't have a problem with data. I support data. I support assessment.

> But then when you get the data, what're you prepared or willing to do? What will you change? If the data supports it.

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> And I don't mean data just in numbers because you know we've got to be careful about data because we know that not everybody shows up in data, so there's issues around that as well. (Personal communication)

The point she articulates here about needing data *and* data not just meaning numbers is key to the kinds of data (stories, personal experiences, exit interviews, numbers, etc.) that inform assessment and administrative action for change. In institutions obsessed with impact and data, P2 also added a crucial point when he argued that "data is only as good as its end use" (Personal communication). These two points about what constitutes data and data's efficacy in terms of end use are key to informing the kind of relational institutional change I have tried to amplify, define, and illustrate in this chapter. That is, numerical data is not the end-all-be-all that units and departments should rely on to inform both what makes them look good and what determines potential change efforts. In addition to what we—practitioners, teachers, writers, administrators, and collaborators—consider to be data in the first place, we also need to intentionally and carefully notice who is not represented in our data. Noticing who our data excludes resonates with what I argued in chapter four on understanding institutions via participant experience in that paying attention to who is excluded from and disadvantaged by how our institutions work has a lot to teach us about how our institutions *should* work moving forward. Similarly, paying attention to who isn't represented in our data has a lot to teach us about the reality of our institutions and how to change them. Attending to exclusion also requires what P4 names as a willingness to change, so when administrators are presented with data that is not just numbers, questions of "What're you prepared or willing to do? What will you change?" become even more compelling. More expansive definitions of data and considering who is not represented in data are ways to better support ongoing assessment as a learning tool that can sustain and determine change initiatives. One way to do this work and shift an institutional culture around data is via

coalitional teams with diverse institutional experiences that can share perspectives on who is missing from data and how to effectively define data that "counts."

The second tension that surfaced throughout the five sections on change had to do with all the feelings change brings up for participants. Over and over, the suggestions my participants shared about how to manage change related to how to care for and manage people's feelings. To practice relational institutional change, it's important to acknowledge that change surfaces discomfort and it can feel risky to people's jobs and material well-being. As change facilitators, taking these feelings and worries seriously is a way to build trust with participants, and to reassure them that risk isn't taken lightly or disregarded. For example, P2 explained discomfort regarding change as an individual barrier to participating: "somebody at the ground level who doesn't understand that [their job isn't at stake], that's a barrier. That's a real experience for people who are trying to be good practitioners and trying to get their work done" (Personal communication). Another important element of asking participants to change is support and transparency throughout the process, and upskilling or training for whatever practices must be learned and done differently. In this way, it requires intention and care to manage resistance *and* change.

The emotional experience of change isn't always or often discussed in institutional change literature. In thinking about change as a learning process, I was reminded of one of my teachers, Julie Lindquist, describing how learning is often uncomfortable, and even in some cases, traumatic in that it requires revising and changing one's mindset or belief system. While it's easy to approach learning as a positive thing, it's also important to recognize that it can be difficult and certainly effortful. Similarly, it's important to be open to change, but such openness and flexibility also require an emotional resilience that is not often considered part of the work

despite requiring a great deal of labor. Naming it as such helps ease change processes, while also recognizing the time, energy, and emotion such processes require.

Throughout the examples that make up this chapter, it is apparent that change is multi-faceted, requiring many perspectives and differently situated practitioners to enact and sustain. One way to make such arguments in a way that acknowledges the complexity of change, the need for expansive conceptions of data, and the importance of managing emotions to facilitate change work, is using the tool I offered in Table 1. In weaving together the five sections, it's easier to see how change is dynamic and rhetorical, and so can be strategically influenced and managed via writing and relationships. Conversely, in separating each section it's easier to see how change is made, or prevented, through many different actions and from multiple directions, and so can be assessed and designed more effectively. In moving back and forth between the big picture of change and the individual characteristics that compose it, practitioners can better define, observe, and manage institutional change.

In reflecting on the stories that surfaced this change tool, I've thought more about the idea I introduced in the chapter's introduction that can seem like a paradox: institutions model stability, and institutions model change. Both these things are true, and I've realized that part of managing change is actually supporting stability. Put differently, an important part of assessment is celebrating what's working well and discerning when change is needed and when it's not. This discernment requires a willingness to remain open to change and communicate with stakeholders, and an attitude of institutional learning as opposed to defense. A starting point to support institutional learning is allowing two things to be true concurrently, like institutions are always changing and always stabilizing. Remaining in the space between these two things

demonstrates an openness to possibility and feedback, and models an openness to the work of learning, and thus, changing.

Now that I have situated and defined institutions, teams, and change from my study participants' experiences, in the next chapter, I'll turn my attention to what it means to do relational institutional change elsewhere and in different institutions. What I've learned from my study and work with SEEN is that as project managers, colleagues, or leaders, it's not enough to invite participation without also carefully and intentionally planning for *how* participants and teams will interact and collaborate. In other words, we need to center people and relationality. This kind of management requires attention to positionality, privilege, and power, and one approach for doing so is through trauma-informed practices that SEEN worked to develop and practice. In the next chapter I detail a set of trauma-informed managerial recommendations, with examples for practices based in each of SAMHSA's six trauma-informed principles. Additionally, I offer four principles for change management mindsets that are values-based and encompass but exceed specific administrative actions. I also share SEEN's conclusion story, something I argue is an important part of project lifecycles, and I describe the different kinds of change SEEN enacted at various institutional levels. In what's to come, I hope to offer useful and actionable takeaways for doing relational institutional change in a variety of settings.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ON BUILDING AND SUSTAINING RELATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Old Questions and New Realizations

In chapter one of this dissertation, I shared that hearing stories of colleagues claiming that institutional participants (e.g., students, faculty, and others) didn't understand how institutions functioned shaped my interest both in better understanding institutional procedures and my desire to develop a tool or framework to support engaging institutional change. In my role as an assistant writing program director, I heard from English faculty colleagues that undergraduate and graduate students didn't know how institutional structures worked or how to make change within the system of higher education. And in my doctoral program in an independent writing program, I heard colleagues say that faculty members didn't understand how to advocate for themselves or to make change within the institution, even within faculty governance. When I started this research, I thought a large part of the problem was a pattern I'd noticed in which institutional participants spoke about the institution as a separate entity from their participation within it. That is, I first wanted to elucidate how the institution *is* its participants, documents, physical infrastructure and to make change simply required seeing oneself as part of the institutional changes already at work within an institution's seeming stasis. In fact, my initial research question was: How do we (e.g., administrators, employees, students) create and facilitate conditions that allow participants to see themselves as part of the department, institution, or office they work in and thus be able to change it?

I worried that the distancing I observed many colleagues make between themselves in contradistinction from their units, departments, and colleges was an example of what Jenny Rice, writing about public spheres, calls "exceptional subjects," which she explains as a "subjectivity grounded in *feeling*, which makes this rhetorical position so difficult to change" (p. 5). Rice

continues in describing that the "exceptional subject can often seem apathetic, distant, uninterested, and even lazy" in how they participate in public—here I would add *institutional*—discourses and that these responses are particularly exasperating to "those of us who wish to promote active participation in the public sphere" (p. 5). Rice defines "public subjectivity" as "the roles we inhabit when we speak and act about matters that put us into relation with others" in the various public spaces we occupy (p. 45). Rice's main rhetorical focus is on urban sprawl and development and the ways in which common responses allow participants to disengage and feel themselves removed from a conversation as if they are not stakeholders or actors and experience a lack of agency. However, her analysis of public subjects can also be usefully extended to the public sphere of an institutional unit, department, or college and the claims and discourses that circulate within this public that participants engage with (or not) via their various responses. For Rice, it's a problem that feeling too often "serves as the primary connective tissue" between oneself and any number of public spaces given that as citizens and colleagues we are often asked to respond to, vote for or against, and engage with any number of topics we have no immediate or discerning feeling toward. The exceptional subject participates in the discourses that make up and make meaningful a public (e.g., deliberation, argument, counter discourse) but they do so predominately through feelings of injury, nostalgia, and ambivalence, and so refuse to participate in ways that move an initiative forward or enact a shared future and desired outcome.

At first, I saw my colleagues' distancing responses between themselves and the institution as something that positioned the institution as happening *to* them, always beyond their control to effect or influence. I heard my department chair exasperatedly respond to statements like, "The department is____way," or, "the department does____" with "*we*, all of us, are the

department." But in the course of my research I've realized two main things: 1) It can be a healthy response not to identify with an institution whose stability relies on all of its participants being replaceable, albeit with different felt implications (i.e., replacing an institutional president or leader is different from a graduating class of students or a faculty member leaving for another position); and, 2) As leaders or administrators, it's not enough to invite participation in shared governance or change initiatives without also carefully facilitating and attempting to ensure participant safety; one way to do so is through a trauma-informed approach. I'll more fully expand on this approach throughout my takeaways in the next section.

While my mind has changed about the potential benefits of keeping a healthy distance between oneself and an institution, in conversations with department administrators and cross-functional teams I participate with, I've noticed another kind of exceptional subject position emerging: institutional participants who create a professional identity in opposition to the institution. That is, a response perpetually critical of and in disagreement with "the institution," and in some cases portrays institutional structures as actively harmful so as to explain a refusal to participate. When this oppositional stance remains solely in the realm of critique, it limits creative possibilities and stymies change efforts. I don't mean to suggest that institutions are neutral, that they do not at times betray their participants through poor leadership and harmful procedures (MSU has many recent, painful examples of participants experiencing institutional hurt and betrayal), or that institutions are not founded in white supremacist logics. However, acknowledging these truths and engaging within institutional systems to work toward better institutions is limited when participants engage only through critique without offering alternative action or ideas.

As someone who studies how people work together (or not), it's been useful to learn from my research that encouraging "active" participation is not always the answer I thought it was and that there are ways of participating that are a problem. This realization may sound simple, but Rice's exceptional subject framework is useful for noticing patterns in how participants respond in ways that disengage from moving a team or initiative forward but are still participatory. In other words, sometimes, paradoxically, our ways of participating in change initiatives can contribute to stalled or failed initiatives. Noticing these rhetorical patterns and working to facilitate different kinds of engagement (and limit unproductive kinds) is something I'll take up in my takeaways.

Where I've Been and What I've Argued in this Dissertation

In this work, I set up a framework for how to listen to a coalitional team from my participation in and study of a group as they gave rise to a particular institutional context and change initiative: that we approach institutions as composed of documents, relationships, and physical structures, understanding that they also change in this order; that we look at writing as one of the central ways participants navigate and manage teams, institutions, and change; that we pay attention to the emotional/felt experiences of collaboration and change; and, the importance of relationships in facilitating teams and institutional change. All three of these ideas suggest a particular kind of rhetorical orientation: they direct our attention to the people and experiences who make up institutions, to writing, processes, teams, and the transformative possibilities of relational institutional change that requires attention to positionality, privilege, and power. Rhetoric and writing are central to this work because change is an act of persuasion, and we write our way toward and through change. While change can feel both destabilizing and risky, it's also a constant in living institutions. There is no standing still, but, as my yoga teacher says

in the second epigraph of this dissertation, we can influence the direction of change in our lives and, I would add, our institutions.

In recognizing the centrality of writing in and for institutional change work, in chapters one and three I made a case for writing studies' role in and possible contributions to institutional change, management, and design work. Technical and professional communication has long cared about mundane documents, and the ways in which documents organize, support, and disrupt our working lives, and so, paying attention to how documents are experienced and designed is important institutional work. Writing program administration is also concerned with how documents, procedures, and processes support or disrupt teaching and learning both in terms of student support to degree completion and staffing and professional development for faculty. After all, writing studies is known as a teaching field with a managerial unconscious (Harris, 2012; Strickland, 2011). What Donna Strickland has named the "managerial unconscious" in composition studies is expertise writing studies can leverage to improve how our institutions work, and how students, staff, and faculty experience institutional spaces and procedures. Writing is a constant through all these examples: writing shapes our institutional experiences, writing is how we make meaning and communicate, and writing is how we make change and communicate with stakeholders. So, there is rich overlap between writing studies' foci and practitioner expertise with how institutions function and communicate. While institutional landscapes differ, and my project focuses on a specific university during a particular change initiative, writing is a constant within our workplaces and so many of the findings from my specific change case study extend and apply to other institutional contexts.

Allowing for writing, both collaborative and single authored, to be a way to navigate, manage, and change institutions required a different approach to thinking about institutions and

collaboration. So, in chapter three I introduced situational analysis (SA) as my methodology in order to attend to the various parts of a situation (e.g., agents both human and non-human, language, materials, and relationships) that compose, maintain, and change institutions, and the particular participants and their positionality that make up a specific team. From working on institutional change projects, I realized we only do this work in relation to each other, and so how we work together is of the utmost importance. SA allowed me to include in my frame of inquiry all the pieces, human and non-human, that affect how people can work together, manage projects, and communicate change. In other words, SA allowed for my sometimes-unwieldy focus on collaborative writing, project management, and relationality within an institution. Collaborative writing helped me see various ways of participating on a team that can otherwise remain illusory as opposed to seeing participation through who spoke the most in meetings or offered to write the first draft of a document. Instead, the range of documents participants shared with me illustrated ideating via email correspondence to be an important form of participation, as well as visual design work in drafting the web portal layout, and a conference abstract submission that supported a conversation to take place between disparately positioned stakeholders. Across these examples, it became clear that sustained change often happens by accumulating over time in many kinds of documents written for a wide range of audiences. Writing was a way to understand people-centered institutional change work through who was involved and how people worked together (i.e., project management) and the importance of attending to how people are together and treat one another (i.e., relationality). Triangulating these areas through SA allowed me to work toward *relational* institutional change via studying writing.

This focus on participants and relationships is where I began building my own method for rethinking rhetorical interventions into institutions. Rather than defining institutions solely

through social science research, I chose to focus more words and attention on the experiences and lived realities of participants from my study within the institution to illustrate a people-centered approach to defining and understanding institutions. A major finding in my study was that my participants largely experienced the institution through barriers, and so, this emergent approach to analyzing my data shaped how I shared my findings in chapter four. That is, every institutional characteristic that surfaced was followed by an explanation of how that created a barrier for different participants. This approach is in line with Black feminist methodology in calling for centering marginalized perspectives in decision making (Combahee River Collective, 1986), and also in line with trauma-informed approaches that ask during the design or research process questions like: "who is most impacted by this decision? Whose voices are we missing? Do we have representation for those who are directly impacted?" This barrier focused approach to institutions allowed me to practice and forward a user experience mindset to define institutions through the lived realities of some of its participants. Importantly, these participants were disparately positioned across the university in terms of rank, tenure at the institution, and employment status (e.g., student, staff, faculty) in addition to other aspects of diversity such as age, gender, race, and ethnicity. It is between people (relationality, collaboration) and in institutional design with a focus on participants (project management) that rhetoricians can make the strongest impact.

Chapter five offers a brief historical overview of teams in technical and professional communication (TPC) literature from the last fifty years, and posits that collaboration is an important method for studying teams through how they work. I specifically looked at three claims about teams that recur in the field's literature and that emerged in my study data: 1) the need to build coalitional teams that can navigate relationally across hierarchical institutions, 2)

the need to acknowledge and integrate every team member's expertise, 3) and the need to hear, respect, and integrate different perspectives and even dissensus as constructive features of diverse teams. All three of these claims require emotional intelligence to support, participate in, or facilitate effectively. That is, emotional intelligence is required to cultivate relationships necessary for coalitional teams, work that requires awareness of one's own and others' positionality and power, and how these identity factors can shift depending on context. Emotional intelligence is part of acknowledging and integrating a wide range of expertise from team members positioned differently in an institution and to divest from the idea that a team leader holds the most or the most important expertise. And emotional intelligence is also required to acknowledge and support dissensus on diverse teams that can feel uncomfortable and/or confrontational for participants who have been socialized in white supremacist workplaces that value politeness and agreement (Okun 2021). To cultivate emotional intelligence, I argue, requires a focus on vulnerability, appropriate relational boundaries, and trust building for psychological safety—recommendations I'll take up further in the next section. In studying the SEEN team via collaborative writing, I included two writing artifacts per claim to illustrate the productive tensions often associated with collaborative writing: drafting, synthesizing disparate ideas, integrating feedback, and disagreement about drafting and integrating feedback. SEEN ultimately created more effective and more inclusive research because we were able to work through our emotional desire to immediately agree and remained (for as long as it took) in the interstitial space of ideating and iterative drafting. Acknowledging and including, as part of the work, the wide range of emotions participants experience about writing, while writing collaboratively, and the role of dissensus in drafting is another area in which rhetoricians have a lot of expertise to leverage for industry and workplaces that function largely via teams.

Finally, in chapter six, I worked through the third aspect of relational institutional change: change itself, what it is, how to assess and measure it, and the emotional experience and labor of change. To (temporarily) stabilize something as amorphous as change, I offered a detailed description of what, why, when, who, and how institutional change gets done, and my data showed that understanding these elements of institutional systems are crucial for managing and facilitating change initiatives in equitable and responsive ways. The two significant tensions that arose from studying change characteristics included needing ongoing assessment aimed at learning and improving and needing to name and center the emotional experience of change that is often uncomfortable, risky, and feels destabilizing for participants. In chapter six, I argued that a key part of managing change is actually supporting stability and using the change tool I designed to discern when change is necessary, what kind of change, who will be affected and involved, how it will take place, and why it needs to happen. To do so well, requires a culture of institutional learning as opposed to defense.

Trauma-Informed Management as Part of Relational Institutional Change

One thing I've mentioned in almost all my previous chapters and that shapes the larger picture of relational institutional change is a trauma-informed (TI) approach to management and collaboration. In chapter two I explained the impetus for developing TI research methods from the community engaged project Ben Lauren and I were working on with formerly homeless people who wanted to share their stories to change hearts and minds about issues of housing (in)security. In chapter two I also shared that SEEN first coalesced around issues of food and housing insecurity at MSU, which started from conversations with the MI Homeless Voice collaborators. The reason that TI approaches are so central to relational institutional change is because whenever people are asked to work together on a project or initiative, it's necessary to

try to design such interactions for safety and inclusion. That is, working to manage and facilitate collaboration that respects each participant's positionality and incorporates individual expertise on the team, reduces the possibility of participants harming one another, and when an issue occurs between participants, attempts to respond in ways that mediate the issue and allow the team to move forward. This is where my focus on relationality connects with project management: when we (managers, administrators, leaders) ask people to work together we must also consider and plan for *how* that collaboration happens. Or, what I explained in chapter three as how people are together.

The *how* part of collaboration and getting along with colleagues to work and make change is at the heart of relational institutional change. More specifically, trauma-informed methods in combination with Walton, Moore, and Jones' 3Ps is how relational institutional change works. The influences I've drawn from in developing relational institutional change include the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) trauma-informed principles (safety, trustworthiness/transparency, peer support, collaboration/mutuality, empowerment, voice, and choice, and cultural, historical, and gender issues), and the Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care's (ITTIC) organizational handbook. While SAMHSA's sixth principle names identity and historical background as a core part of TI care, I find the specificity of Walton, Moore, and Jones' positionality, privilege, and power more useful in thinking back and forth between the individual level and organizational systems. That is, the various and sometimes conflicting parts of one's identity and background and how that affects one's encounters and possibilities within a larger structure like an institution.

Being trauma-informed essentially means recognizing that everyone has a complex and unique backstory and a lifetime of experiences they bring with them to the present moment and

current collaboration. Additionally, being TI means understanding that experiences of trauma are very common, with the CDC reporting that about 61% of adults surveyed across 25 states reported having experienced at least one type of adverse childhood experience which are defined as potentially traumatic experiences (CDC, 2021b). ACEs include experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect, witnessing violence in the home or community, and environmental factors that affect safety and stability. Additionally, and more specific to a higher education context, Janice Carello and Lisa Butler report that by the time young people reach college, "66%–85% report lifetime traumatic event exposure and many report multiple event exposure" (p. 157). Similar to defining the difference between chronic and acute essential needs issues, acute trauma is from a single experience like a car accident or an assault, and chronic trauma is from prolonged or recurring experiences such as war or a pandemic or racism[8]. So, to be trauma-informed means recognizing that all my colleagues have a lifetime of experiences specific to their positionality and affected by their privilege as well as understanding the prevalence of trauma in our society. In this way, I try to understand that what is happening in front of me in a work setting is influenced by someone's past, and various professional and personal experiences. In a presentation to a trauma-informed design group in September 2022, Janice Carello offered a broader institutional definition to add to my interpersonal explanation: "to be TI means to understand the ways violence and victimization impact individuals, families, and communities AND to *use that understanding* to design policies, practices, and relationships that seek to prevent harm and promote thriving."

When people are asked to participate in change initiatives—in higher education institutions, in department governance, on a variety of committees—or invited to offer feedback,

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[8] See Dora Winley's (2020) work on racial trauma as a public health emergency.

it's not enough to espouse valuing transparency or asking for feedback. How participation is facilitated and whether there's psychological safety present between participants determines whether it feels safe to engage or to share honest and potentially critical feedback. Similarly, leaders must be honest and realistic about what is actually actionable and within their power to change. Otherwise, as I detailed in chapter six, people burn out of change and feel like regardless of participation, nothing changes. I saw this in my data particularly from marginalized communities who are asked to share their stories to improve institutional initiatives but sharing their stories doesn't improve their institutional conditions or experience. From TI principles, this is an example of safety, trustworthiness/transparency, and empowerment, voice, and choice. While it's useful to separate the TI characteristics to account for nuances, they are interconnected, informing one another, and adapting to different situations. For example, safety is a component of trustworthiness, and experiencing psychological safety informs feelings of empowerment and choice about participating and in what ways. The change tool I designed in chapter six works similarly in that engaging people in change works requires trust created through being as clear as possible with answers to what, when, why, who, and how the work will be done. Setting realistic expectations, being open with information and responsive to feedback, and centering feelings of risk and discomfort associated with change work are all part of engaging relational institutional change.

Naming and engaging TI approaches in combination with positionality, privilege, and power is important for creating patterns of interaction that participants can expect, rely on, and then return to when an issue arises. Importantly, being trauma-informed doesn't always prevent harm or re-traumatization, although that's certainly a goal. Interpersonal conflict is likely to occur when people collaborate, but TI principles help to set up intentional and care-based ways

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of responding if harm occurs. In other words, TI is a harm reduction approach. It's not perfect, and it can't guarantee safety, but one of the universally trauma-informed actions is to practice honesty, and to be transparent about the limits of safety. Often, safety on a team or in a unit becomes defined *after* something unsafe has occurred and participants experience how the group responded and whether the response created safety and trustworthiness for moving forward. From TI work I've learned that safety is only possible when conflict is navigated openly and with deep intention for harm reduction, and conflict avoidance is one of the hardest institutional and collaborative habits to change. In other words, interpersonal conflict during collaboration is not in and of itself a problem. In fact, on diverse coalitional teams, disagreement and opposed ways of approaching, talking about, or solving an issue can be important for learning and doing better work. But *how* conflict is mediated and how participants are treated during the process is of the utmost importance for continuing collaboration.

Questions of how people collaborate also raise questions about agency. For example, what choices do team members have and can they make? In what ways can participants disagree, voice dissent, or abstain from some interactions? Similar to trauma-informed approaches, supporting (and respecting) participants' agency is something that happens in how we respond to our colleagues and/or employees during collaboration and if a problem occurs. TI approaches don't mean we control or manage relationships. What is manageable are the procedures and processes for how to engage collaboration and how to respond to conflict. Doing so in TI ways that appreciate how positionality, privilege, and power affect our interactions with each other and with institutions allows for responsive, people-centered collaboration.

Recommendations for Trauma-Informed Management

To make the work of this dissertation as actionable as possible, below I offer take-aways that are broad and nimble enough to work in a variety of settings but anchored in my study findings from a coalitional team trying to practice trauma-informed collaboration and research. As a rhetorician who thinks about how audience and context affect meaning, I find it most useful to offer recommendations for management as a situation that could bridge higher education and industry contexts. While every context has its particularities, and every team is situated to enact certain work or change given its specific participants, there are broader collaborative recommendations applicable across situations. To begin, I define SAMHSA's six TI principles for workplace settings, and I offer specific examples to apply each principle. Then, I share four recommendations that focus more on engaging and managing relational institutional change.

Practicing trauma-informed management is all about intentionally and carefully setting up the conditions in which people collaborate—including community agreements that determine expectations, standards for engagement, and how conflict will be handled—and doing so in participatory ways. With the following table, my goal is to offer small, potent practices that can be engaged to invite and facilitate institutional change work in equitable, open, and relational ways. Of note, I made two editorial changes to SAMHSA's principles: I renamed "cultural, historical, and gender issues" as diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) because DEIJ terminology is more recognizable and familiar in workplaces. I also added a category on supporting institutions as learning spaces that are open to change and improvement, given my argument in chapter six about change to support institutional learning through ongoing assessment.

Table 2: Trauma Informed Management Examples: Table shows SAMHSA's six TI principles and one category I developed on supporting institutional change as a learning space.

Safety: create environments in which participants feel safe, respected, and accepted, including psychological safety that allows for people to make mistakes and learn from them.	• Encourage participants to engage as they are comfortable in virtual meetings (e.g., blur background, change screen name, include pronouns, turn off their camera, etc.)
	• Provide seating options for bodies of various sizes and abilities in physical spaces
	• Ensure "clear means of egress" (e.g., access to and exit from) physical and virtual spaces
Trustworthiness/Transparency: as managers/leaders, make expectations clear and consistent in practice to minimize disappointment, and maintain appropriate boundaries.	• Respond promptly to emails
	• Provide clear instructions and seek feedback on clarity
	• Practice and respect consistent working hours (e.g., do not send emails on the weekends or after the organization's working hours)
	• Be as clear as possible about the who, what, where, when, and how of work being done
Peer Support (in a work setting): connect participants to appropriate resources and support so they can succeed professionally.	• Provide information about institutional and community resources and events
	• Introduce people, groups, and forums (e.g., social networking, inviting guest speakers, sharing department listservs, etc.)
	• Connect and institutionally support mentors (e.g., paid time for relationship building)
Collaboration/Mutuality: invite and act on feedback, share power and decision making through appropriate channels/committees, and act as a collaborator/ally as opposed to a gatekeeper or adversary.	• Develop community agreements for engagement and participation as a team, unit, or office
	• Integrate formative annual review processes and self-evaluation
	• Involve employees/users in design and, as appropriate, decision making
	• Mediate conflict and follow-up/provide relational support after conflict

Table 2 (cont'd)

Empowerment, Voice, and Choice: build in opportunities for participants to make choices, determine their involvement as appropriate, be heard, develop skills, and demonstrate their expertise and lead.	• Provide opportunities for multiple modes of expression and/or engagement
	• Build in choices where possible
	• Scaffold projects with realistic timelines
	• Provide professional development funds for ongoing development training or paid time-off to attend trainings
Diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice: be aware of and respond to issues of positionality, privilege, and power, and acknowledge, respect, and integrate as appropriate diverse perspectives, experiences, and identities.	• Use correct names, pronunciation, and pronouns
	• Address stereotypes, biases, and microaggressions
	• Integrate content/resources/research from diverse sources and perspectives
	• Create spaces where participants can speak using various Englishes, dialects, and writing conventions
Institutional learning, change, and care: work to recognize strengths, support what's going well, and provide feedback for continued learning and growth.	• Share what people are doing well and/or what's improving
	• Model self-compassion and personal learning (e.g., managers don't have all the answers, can make mistakes, seek out feedback, etc.)
	• Build self-care into the system and value community building (e.g., time "on the clock" during meetings to eat together or check in with each other personally)

Principles for Engaging Relational Institutional Change

Within trauma-informed management, I also want to elaborate more fully on four

principles for change management that go beyond specific managerial practices. These are

values-based recommendations that require different mindsets for relational change management.

I've tried to keep these principles broad and nimble to be actionable and applicable in a variety of situations.

Principle One: Embrace Change as Asset-Based, Not Deficit-Focused

Embracing change as asset-based as opposed to deficit-focused also comes from TI practice. That is, when doing TI training with organizations, Janice Carello recommends asking, "what are you already doing that's trauma-informed?" This asset-based approach helps build on the work participants are already doing in an organization, and is improvement focused as opposed to punitive or corrective. Similarly, I argued in chapter six that an important part of managing change is supporting stability and practicing discernment regarding when change is appropriate and necessary. Asset-based change also resonates with my claim in chapter five that coalitional teams need to acknowledge and incorporate every team member's expertise. Focusing on assets means valuing the skills, knowledge, and connections that individuals already within the institution bring and contribute to both change work and the institution's workaday operations. This approach allows for (and needs) active participation from the larger institutional community in the planning, delivery, and outcomes of change initiatives. Like P1 shared back in chapter five, inviting people in before a solution is fully realized allows for participants to feel ownership over the outcome and thus listened to; that their perspectives are needed and sought out, and that they are integral to the functioning of the institution—because they are.

Principle Two: Include a Range of People with Different Institutional Experience and History

Including a range of diverse users (participants) helps to ensure that change initiatives are actually useful for as many institutional participants as possible. In other words, change initiatives need to engage a range of voices and experiences, including those with long-term

institutional knowledge and those who are newer to an institutional context. Diverse perspectives in terms of institutional longevity are especially important because it can be harder to change from within an established position in the institution given that the felt risk of change is higher. Like P4 described in chapter four, "status quo mindsets," those who have been at the institution for a long time, can make it difficult to engage in "possibility thinking." Importantly, though, both perspectives are necessary to relational institutional change—it's important to know institutional history: what's been tried before, who was in positions previously and who can work with whom (or not), when different things were tried, and how previous initiatives have gone. And there's also something to be said for a beginner's mind and being able to see anew what might be entrenched ways of doing things that are no longer working. For example, people new to the situation are more likely to ask, "Why is_____ procedure done this way? Is this way of doing it still working for people?" as opposed to letting "we've always done it this way" set precedent. The key is balancing these different perspectives and not over-privileging or discrediting either position—the long timer or the newcomer. Developing a culture of institutional learning and growth benefits from both.

Principle Three: Recognize that Change Initiatives Can/Will/Should End

One area of change initiatives that can seem counterintuitive is that change work is meant to end, and it's important to end projects with intention. adrienne maree brown illustrates this idea of sunsetting an initiative after it has accomplished its goal instead of contorting it into something new:

> One of the things I saw all the time is an organization would have served its purpose, or served the initial purpose it came into existence for, and what would've been great and possible was to just sunset the organization, just be like, 'Great. We did a good job. Let's call it. Let's learn what we need to learn and move on.' And instead of doing that, the organization was like, 'No, we need to persist. So let's change our mission, we'll update

our mission, and here's what the philanthropy is willing to fund.' And they get contorted. (On Being interview, 2022)

What brown names here is a common cultural and institutional idea that when something ends it's a failure, and that for an initiative to *really* have made an impact, it must continue ad infinitum. But as SEEN learned, change initiatives have a lifecycle and part of this work is recognizing when a task has been completed or a goal has been met. brown continues with the point that "everything dies…because we live in cycles, not perpetuity" (On Being interview, 2022). Not to get too existential here, but her point can importantly inform expectations about project lifecycles and integrate ending initiatives as part of the work. Change returns to stability and then is changed again during future institutional cycles. Seeing this as an ongoing process can help participants not overly identify with any present change or the idea that things will always be the way they are now. Instead, recognizing change as an ongoing process helps build emotional resilience to adapt when needed and to coast with the current way of doing things at other times. As P2 shared in chapter six: "not every change needs to last forever," because eventually the result of a current change will get in the way of or become the problem a future initiative sets out to change. This cyclical rhythm is natural for "living" institutions that must continue adapting for current and future participants.

Principle Four: Incentivize Faculty Research Careers Based in Institutional Research

Institutional research as an area and topic for faculty research agendas can help support the kinds of faculty-staff-student collaborations for change I've illustrated and argued for throughout this dissertation. Taking institutional research seriously helps to both improve institutions for participants, leveraging faculty expertise and research skill to improve institutional systems and can help lessen faculty franchise building and the common lack of interest to participate in institutional change unless it aligns with one's research agenda as I

detailed in chapter four. Institutional research is a rich area that could benefit greatly from leveraging faculty expertise in a wide range of disciplines while partnering with staff who may have longer-term institutional memory and knowledge. One common way that faculty participate in institutional management is through administrative positions but remaining in faculty roles while also participating in the learning and working of an institution is another way faculty members could contribute to and participate in their institutions.

These four principles require changes in managerial approach whether that means approaching change from a position of plenty as opposed to deficiency, developing the emotional wherewithal to know when and how to end change initiatives, seeking out and valuing diverse lived experiences in the institution to influence change work, or developing different ways to count, encourage, and value faculty leadership in the institution. These principles emerged from the situation of higher education, but even the fourth value can be applied to a non-academic workplace via dedicating some percentage of employee responsibility toward workplace research and improvement. These values stem from, support, and extend trauma-informed management for change within institutions.

SEEN's Outcome and Accomplishments

As I mentioned in chapter two, this dissertation project focused on a coalitional team during a specific period: roughly spring of 2019–spring of 2022. During the time we worked together, two of SEEN's seven core members left MSU for different positions but stayed involved in SEEN's work. A third team member who was also our project manager left the institution after SEEN's work ended and was being redistributed in units and amongst colleges. My data collection took place during the spring of 2021, as much of SEEN's work was beginning to conclude and we shifted our focus to recommendations for institutional administrators.

SEEN's research was crucial to supporting and making arguments to upper administrators to acknowledge, understand, and do something about students' chronic essential needs issues. In other words, we couldn't have been as successful as we were without our research focus, another example of leveraging faculty expertise combined with staff institutional knowledge. As SEEN's focus shifted from research to recommendations, our team met less frequently, and our collaboration slowly ended. I draw attention to this timeline of events because while SEEN was a successful change initiative that garnered support and influenced action at the institution's highest administrative levels, it also ended, as institutional units tried to enact different ways of sharing resources and student services continued reorganizing internally with administrative changes. I intentionally maintained my focus on this snapshot of time. So, even when I was tempted to expand my data collection and include ways that MSU was reorganizing student service units to address essential needs issues while I was drafting these chapters but after SEEN had ended, I resisted doing so. Instead, keeping SEEN's collaboration as my focus, I'll highlight four levels of change that SEEN accomplished: the team itself, the department four of seven collaborators worked in, the college this department is housed in, and the university.

Team level: In chapter six, P1 illustrated ways SEEN had allowed for different avenues of professional development for its team members. He shared that he knew we had made institutional change by assessing our own changed practices: P4 was considered a campus leader around topics of essential needs, and SEEN recommended to administrators that she lead the office of essential needs on campus; P2 had become a consultant for other organizations on essential needs; P3 was able to put her design experience to work in becoming a leader in trauma-informed user experience in her workplace; I was able to write this dissertation. P4 also

shared with me that working with the students involved with SEEN informed the way she

collaborated with interns in other areas of her professional life. She explained:

> This group [has] really informed the way I support my interns and the experiences that I
> give to interns. I did some of my own reflection, was I letting them shine enough? Was I
> letting them take the lead and do things? So, for me, it's helped inform my thinking,
> expand my thinking in other areas…to be supportive in different ways. (Personal
> communication)

In these ways, SEEN team members engaged in change to our own practices, and the impacts of

this work influenced future SEEN participants' workplaces and team collaborations beyond

MSU.

Department level: From presentations and conversations with colleagues, many faculty

in our academic department developed syllabus statements regarding essential needs resources

on campus and talked about essential needs (as opposed to basic needs). Additionally, I heard

from our department chair that she began hearing colleagues referring to essential needs,

something she had never heard before learning about SEEN's work. This change signals that

institutional participants were using SEEN's language, and that SEEN's work had helped faculty

understand the importance of essential needs to student success and how to play a role in helping

connect students to needed resources. As writing faculty involved in institutional service, many

of these instructors have connections across campus that bridge different areas of the university,

and so their use of essential needs and knowledge about available resources has the potential to

spread these resources across campus by word of mouth and via collaboration.

College level: A dean of undergraduate studies was interested in implementing SEEN's

Trust Network as a pilot in the college where most of SEEN's members worked. This initiative

stalled as the COVID-19 pandemic continued and college staff were feeling overburdened

(SEEN learned this from hosting staff listening sessions to seek out feedback). As of now, the

Trust Network has not been implemented, but the dean remains committed to implementing SEEN's recommendation for centralized essential needs resources in the college, and in the meantime, continues to center student essential needs as an integral part of student support and success. One way the college demonstrates this commitment is through having a dedicated staff person for student health and wellness specifically within the college who acts as a liaison between faculty and students to connect students with resources and support faculty in doing so. The college level is especially important for furthering the need for institutional activities that ensure understanding of essential needs and student access to them.

University level: SEEN's goal in conducting institutional research and hosting student focus groups was so that we could speak to administrators on their behalf in order to improve the lived experience of students in the university. SEEN presented our findings and shared deidentified student experiences of struggling to find, determine eligibility for, and access resources, all while having to take time away from their work and/or repeat their story many times to many different people to find the necessary help. All four of the upper administrators agreed about the recommendation for an office of essential needs on campus, and some of the ongoing restructuring of student services is meant to support this office. These structural changes are huge, especially at a massive research institution with a decentralized and siloed structure. This structural change marks a specific successful change that SEEN worked toward for years. In this way, SEEN did something unprecedented at our institution.

In an institution of higher education, SEEN was able to be this successful and accomplish structural change because we had strategic sponsorship, namely an administrator who was willing to go to bat for the project to the provost, secured early funding for SEEN's research, and let SEEN use the Hub for Innovation and Learning's name behind the project, which kept it

centralized on campus so it didn't "belong" to a specific unit or college. Additionally, the administrator assigned an employee from the Hub a certain percentage of dedicated time to the project, and this administrator then trusted an assistant professor to determine the scope, design, and implementation of the research. These strategic moves were key—they allowed SEEN to get started, gain momentum, and work both strategically and relationally across the institution. Without this sponsorship, SEEN wouldn't have had access to the upper administrators we needed to both educate regarding essential needs on campus and move to action.

And yet, even after SEEN influenced the institution's restructuring process of student services, P1 shared with me that the hardest kind of change is to change people's hearts and minds about something; to change the way people understand and talk about a thing. In this way, relational institutional change is an ideal method for change because it works by navigating across the levels of an institution outlined above, moving back and forth between the interpersonal, the unit, and the institution.

Conclusion: Relational Institutional Change

In this dissertation, I've offered an example study for institutional research, created a framework to study and assess institutional change, and most importantly, suggested ways to engage and support institutional change initiatives through trauma-informed management. Change work requires individual effort, team collaboration, and cultivating emotional resilience to the ups and downs of change within systems that privilege stasis. And what my data showed again and again is that relationships were integral to navigating institutions (chapter four), teams (chapter five), and change (chapter six), and a primary way that participants navigate relationally is through/with/by writing.

Instead of asking, how do groups or individuals change an institution? One of my secondary research questions for this study was, how do groups or individuals build relationships to make change? From this question, what I have come to call relational institutional change emerged. Relational institutional change is people-centered, participatory, and emergent, requiring a great deal of listening and different ways of engaging to respond to the specificities of a certain place, team, and participants during a particular period of time. In my study, it functioned via faculty-staff-student collaboration that leveraged relational networks across and at different levels of the university. Before I conclude, I want to draw attention to the *relational* aspect of this approach because it mirrors a lesson from trauma-informed practice: one trauma-informed person on a team cannot make an institution or organization trauma-informed. Similarly, it's not possible to do relational institutional change alone. Relationships are key, and these include relationships between people and others, people and materials, people and writing, and people and institutions.

What I've learned from working with TI designers, social workers, and technologists is that TI work in organizations is often an inverted pyramid meaning that individuals bring TI practices into the organization because they care, but an individual cannot make an institution trauma informed. Any approach that relies on an individual to change entire organizations is unsustainable and often just a matter of time to burnout. Instead, there must be an inflection point in which the organization—through leadership—sees its responsibility as being the foundation of the pyramid that supports individual practice. TI institutions need leaders to engage, practice, and require these approaches at a structural level. Relational institutional change is similar in that it's enacted by individuals but needs structural support for coalitional teams across rank and unit, and it works via collaborative writing to enact and convince participants to change. In this way,

rhetoricians are well positioned to do so given that change is an act of persuasion. And because relational institutional change works across the relations that make up an institution at all levels, it provides a framework for making more equitable and responsive departments, programs, and ideally, institutions.

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APPENDIX A: SEEN PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Hello, <Name>:

    <Personalized greeting to the individual>

    I'm writing today to request your participation in a research study that I am conducting on the SEEN community for my dissertation. As a member of SEEN and the researcher, I want to understand participation and change management from SEEN's institutional change work. My focus for studying change initiatives is to specifically look at the collaborative writing SEEN produced.

    The interview would last approximately ninety minutes, and I'd also request that you select a piece of writing from SEEN's work together to discuss with me. This can be a piece of writing (e.g., presentations, reports, emails, memos, visualizations) that represents an important moment of contribution for you from your work with SEEN. You might think about words you wrote, feedback you gave, or even your role in drafting a piece of writing. It is okay for you to choose something that you did not draft on your own but felt that you helped shape in important ways. The purpose of this discussion is for me to learn how you talk about your participation on the research team specifically through writing and documentation.

    I imagine my dissertation research will take the next 10-12 months. I hope to collect interview data this spring, and then draft my dissertation during fall and spring semesters.

    As my dissertation co-chair, Ben is serving as one of the PIs for my IRB protocol and also a research participant. Since Ben is a member of the SEEN community, he will not have access to my interview data until it is de-identified for coding and analysis in order to maintain confidentiality. You'll also notice that Ben is listed as the PI on the research study and it's for the same reasons (and also because grad students can't institutionally act as PI).

    To read more and consent to participate in my study, please visit: <Qualtrics consent link>

    I'd be happy to answer questions you may have. Thanks for considering!

Sincerely,

Shannon

APPENDIX B: SEEN RESEARCH PROTOCOL: INTERVIEW SCRIPT AND QUESTIONS

Hello, and welcome. We're part of the SEEN research community together so we know each other. I'm conducting research on institutional change management and how the SEEN group worked together to change the institution. My purpose is to develop a heuristic for change projects that can improve university initiatives at MSU and be replicated elsewhere. Thank you for agreeing to participate. Is it okay if I audio record this conversation? (ask for verbal confirmation)

<start recording>

I know you had a chance to review and sign the electronic consent form I sent, but do you have any questions about that form? Do you need me to send you a link to the electronic consent form again?

I want to provide a brief overview of what we'll be doing today. I shared with you the following interview questions and the coaching script for the piece of writing you chose to share. Our time together is scheduled for 90 minutes. The interview questions are split into two areas: your professional background, and your work with SEEN. Then I'll ask you about the artifact you chose for our conversation.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Participant's professional background
1. Tell me about your background/professional training. Degrees, etc.
2. Tell me about what you do/did at MSU.
   a. What different institutional roles, formal and informal, have you had at MSU?
3. How long have you worked or studied at MSU?
4. Have you been involved in change initiatives while at MSU? If yes, follow-up below. If no, move on to question 5.

   a. Can you tell me a bit about that initiative or initiatives?
   b. What was your role working on the initiative?
   c. If there was a team of people involved, what was the team structure?
   d. Do you have any victories that you can share?
   e. Can you tell me about a roadblock that you encountered during that project and what, if anything, you did in response?

5. Is there anything else I should know about your background that you think would be helpful for me to understand your work with SEEN?

Work with SEEN
1. Why and when did you start working with SEEN?
2. Why did you continue working with SEEN?
3. Does your professional training shape your involvement in SEEN? Explain your response.

   a. Possible follow-up: Can you talk about a moment when you felt that you were able to bring your expertise to this work in a helpful way?

4. Is SEEN different from other institutional change groups you've been a part of? Explain your answer.
5. What were the most important moments of institutional change for you in your work with SEEN?
    a. Choose one of those moments you just named and explain why it was so important to you.
    b. Possible follow-ups: How did you know these were important moments? What were the indicators of change for you?
6. Did you detect any changes in relationships within the group and to others in the institution?
7. Describe the impact of your work with SEEN? What changes emerged? Possible follow-ups:
    a. How are you measuring impact?
    b. What are the indicators of this impact?
8. Is there anything else about your work with SEEN that you think would be helpful for me to know?

Discussion of a Piece of Writing

To prepare you for the next questions, I asked you to choose a piece of writing (e.g., presentations, reports, emails, memos, visualizations). "Writing" doesn't have to only mean putting words on a page, but it could be feedback you gave or notes you took during a meeting, or even an agenda item you brought up for group discussion.

I asked you to choose a piece of writing that represented an important moment of contribution for you from your work with SEEN. You might think about words you wrote, feedback you gave, or even your role in drafting a piece of writing. It is okay for you to choose something that you did not draft on your own but felt that you helped shape in important ways.

1. Why did you choose this piece of writing?
2. Why is this writing important for SEEN?
3. How did you see this piece of writing being used?
    a. And by whom?
    b. And in what ways?
4. Describe your role in making this piece of writing.
    a. What do you remember about the drafting process?
5. What else should I know about this piece of writing?

Closing Script (still audio recording)

Thanks so much for your time today. I really appreciate your knowledge and experience. After I've coded my data and drafted my dissertation chapters, I will reach back out to you and share the chapter drafts with you as a participant check to make sure I have captured your point of view fairly, and whether or not there is anything else at that point you would like to share or change about what you have shared with me. I plan to be in touch with chapter drafts in the fall of 2021 and spring 2022. Do you have any questions for me before we wrap up?

Thank you again. I'll stop the recording now.

<Recording ends; interview ends>